Latino/a Families Be Like…:

Constructing Immigrant Latino/a Identities and Family Relations in U.S. Popular Culture

An Analysis Based on Selected Media Examples by LeJuan James, Jenny Lorenzo and ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?
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Graz, 2019

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Laura Anna Mandl
Danksagung

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Introduction

This diploma thesis focuses on the construction of immigrant Latino/a identities and family relations in U.S. popular culture. It examines how the selected media sources portray immigrant Latinos/as in the United States as well as their kinship and their parenting strategies. As this representation is based on the contested assumption that Latinos/as constitute a homogeneous minority group, it primarily draws on stereotypical features and characteristics that are said to be specific for Latin Americans living in the U.S. The thesis aims to explore how and in which ways this construction of a collective identity is generated in selected examples of pop culture. In addition, it highlights the respective aspects of Latino/a identities that are frequently used in order to facilitate this portrayal of immigrant Latinos/as. The primary emphasis in the analytical part of the thesis lies on three selected sources, namely the satirical YouTube videos of the social media personalities LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo as well as the bilingual TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? In order to connect the pertinent theoretical approaches and scientific research to the analysis of the selected media examples, relevant terminology and concepts need to be clarified beforehand. Therefore, the various theory chapters on identity, media representation, language as well as kinship and parenting support the examination of the selected sources. Additionally, the introduction of the media serves to outline the context of the respective audiovisual material.

This thesis aims at foregrounding, challenging and deconstructing common stereotypes regarding assumed Latino/a identities and family relations. It contributes to the already existing research by analyzing and explicitly elaborating media representation and the reinforcement of Latino/a stereotypes in several audiovisual examples. With its primary focus lying on the investigation of YouTube videos by Jenny Lorenzo and LeJuan James as well as of chosen episodes of the bilingual TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, this thesis adds an innovative and unprecedented approach to the contemporary research in this field.

Even though humor, exaggeration and ridicule serve as basis for dealing with stereotypes in the selected sources, it has to be taken into consideration that the chosen media do not intentionally foster stereotypical (and homogenizing) assumptions concerning Latino/a immigrants in the United States; using self-deprecating humor and satire to make fun of one’s own culture, as shown in the examples, can also function as means to critically question and dismantle popular clichés, while still provoking laughter and enabling personal identification.
After all, media representation, homogenization and stereotypes are founded in social constructions and thus need to be read against the grain, as they generally rather reflect widespread presumptions than actual reality. Making aware of these assumptions and stereotypes in order to deconstruct them thus forms a major part of this thesis.

The first chapter concentrates on identity, which later also constitutes a major theme in the analysis, as its focus lies on collective Latino/a identities and the respective assumptions in connection to them. Consequently, individual as well as collective identities are explained in detail. To do so, secondary sources by Richard Jenkins (2008), Stuart Hall (1996, 1997) and other scholars are consulted. Then, ethnic identity, as a particular type of collective identity, is thoroughly discussed, which primarily draws on Joane Nagel’s (1994) and Richard Jenkins’ (2008) work. Based on the works by scholars such as Juan Flores (2000), Suzanne Oboler (1995, 2011), Ángel Oquendo (2011), and José Morín (2011), immigrant Latino/a identities are discussed. Particular emphasis lies on Cuban, Puerto Rican and Dominican Americans, as these collective identities are also decisive in the analysis of the respective media, since LeJuan James is of Dominican and Puerto Rican descent, while Jenny Lorenzo and the Peña family in ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? are Cuban immigrants to the United States. Hybrid or mixed identities, which result from the migration from Latin Americans to an Anglo-American country, are presented in the last section of this chapter, as they portray the reality of the Latino/a characters in the YouTube videos as well as in the TV sitcom. Living in-between two cultures, speaking (and blending) two languages and relating to both (Anglo and Latino/a) sides at once, even though they are quite conflicting at times, appears to be the everyday life of the Latin American characters in the chosen videos and episodes.

The second theory chapter of this thesis is concerned with the media representation of immigrant Latinos/as in the United States. First, media representation in general as well its most common features are foregrounded and the specific concept of popular culture is clarified. Then, the depiction of Latinos/as in U.S. popular culture, which is often based on stereotyping and homogenization, is elaborated on. Specific emphasis will be put on the politics behind media representation and the means of subordination resulting from it. This chapter primarily draws on theories by Stuart Hall (1996, 1997), Mary Beltrán (2016), Frederick Aldama (2016) and Charles Ramírez Berg (2011), among others.

The topic of language, which is mainly based on approaches by the Chicana author Gloria Anzaldúa (2012), Patricia Fernández-Kelly (2002), Ana Ramos Fernández (2007), Ed Morales (2002), and Glenn Martínez (2006), constitutes the third chapter of this thesis and opens up a discussion about the connection between language and (Latino/a) culture.
When exploring the various particularities regarding language use within the Latino/a minority in the U.S., the aspects of bilingualism, code-switching and the language phenomenon of Spanglish need to be focused on, as they form a substantial part of the immigrants’ linguistic experience when living in the United States. Relevant definitions and explanations of these terms and concepts are put forward in the respective subchapters.

Another essential aspect that needs to be elucidated in the theoretical part of this thesis deals with kinship and parenting in the Latin American immigrant community. This chapter goes into detail regarding typical Latino/a family structures and gender roles, which is supported by texts by Adelaida Del Castillo (2011), Ani Mari Cauce and Melanie Domenech-Rodríguez (2002), Linda Halgunseth et al. (2006) as well as by Vincent Guilamo-Ramos (2007). Furthermore, it stresses specific strategies related to Latino/a parenting, which tend to deviate from the assumed Anglo-American norm. Then, it also highlights the intergenerational differences concerning assimilation/Americanization within Latino/a families. In addition to the above-mentioned sources, theories by John Berry (1997, 2006), Angelica Ferreira (2014), Elizabeth Lanier (2014) and Laird Bergard and Herbert Klein (2012) are consulted.

Then, the selected media examples are introduced. The most relevant information about the YouTube celebrity and influencer LeJuan James is presented and the background of the Puerto Rican-Dominican living in the United States as well as the idea behind his hilarious videos about Latino/a parenting and growing up in Latino/a households are emphasized. Furthermore, this chapter concentrates on the YouTube channel of the Cuban actress and producer Jenny Lorenzo, whose role as Cuban abuela, among other ridiculous characters, entertains her fans and enables them to relate her videos to their own experiences of growing up in a Latino/a community. Finally, the TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, which is about a Cuban family living in Miami, Florida, is presented. Their everyday struggles as immigrants to the U.S., including language barriers, intergenerational conflicts and the maintenance of cultural values, are underscored.

The analytical part of the thesis aims to closely examine the media sources mentioned above in order to discover how the construction of stereotypical Latino/a identities is enabled. The various aspects used to represent Latino/a families as a homogeneous, but also relatable and life-like group are underlined. Therefore, the analysis is divided into four subtopics, which are based on four aspects that seem to be most salient in the construction of Latino/a identities, namely language use, intergenerational family relations and parenting, traditions and cultural values, and attitudes and behavior.
These four categories serve to structure the analysis and to investigate if and how each of the media sources provides examples of the respective features: Does the selected media reflect stereotypical assumptions linked to Latino/a identities and family relations? Do the analyzed aspects mirror and satirically challenge common suppositions in regard to Latinos/as?

The subchapter “Language Use” (5.2.1.) primarily concentrates on the mix between Spanish and English in everyday conversation as well as on the languages skills of the particular characters in the media. The intergenerational differences in language use and proficiency are foregrounded, language barriers and misunderstandings in the media examples are discussed and recurrent linguistic patterns within Latino/a families are highlighted. In addition, the frequent application of Spanglish as natural choice and widespread phenomenon among the Latino/a community is explored. The question whether language use and linguistic skills depending on the different immigrant generations also reflect the degrees of assimilation within Latino/a families is elaborated on.

Next, the emphasis is put on “Intergenerational Family Relations and Parenting” (5.2.2.). In this subchapter, the structure of intergenerational kinship and individual roles in Latino/a families are explored. Topics such as (corporal) punishment, authority, Americanization within Latino/a households, gender and obedience are dealt with in detail. Thereby, the media sources serve to foreground those elements of family relations and parenting that are frequently included to construct stereotypical images and narratives. The concept of Latino/a parenting and the various principles connected to it are examined in selected scenes, which is supposed to lay bare the most prominent features and characteristics that are commonly used in the stereotypical representation of Latino/a parenting and family relations. For instance, these parenting aspects and family principles include authority, strictness, monitoring and control, discipline, protectiveness, family-centeredness and the transmission of cultural values.

The following subchapter deals with “Traditions and Cultural Values” (5.2.3.) connected to stereotypical Latino/a identities. The various forms of preserving rituals, events and values of their own ‘Latin American culture’ are analyzed, based on the Latino/a families in the selected media. Thereby, recurrent themes including language, religion, superstition, food and customs are investigated, as they clearly deviate from the Anglo-American norm and hence serve as prime examples in the construction of Latino/a identities.

The last topic that is subject to examination in the media examples concentrates on “Attitudes and Behavior” (5.3.4.). This aspect refers to several stereotypical forms of conduct and ways of thinking that are frequently associated with Latin American immigrants.
Within this category, aspects such as being late, being loud, watching telenovelas and attitudes toward sleepovers or having the ‘wrong’ friends are discussed. Common clichés about Latino/a behavior and attitudes are emphasized in detail.

Even though in the YouTube videos of LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo as well as in the bilingual TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A., common assumptions regarding Latino/a identities are drawn on and even (re-)constructed in a highly exaggerated and stereotypical way, it has to be considered that these examples much rather ridicule popular clichés about Latin Americans in order to deconstruct them than to foster popular stereotypes. Addressing and representing widely held assumptions about Latinos/as in popular culture thereby not only functions as means to (re-)create and (re-)negotiate the assumed Latino/a culture itself, it also actively participates in the deconstruction of harmful stereotypes by explicit discussing and questioning the issue.

1. Identity: Knowing “Who’s Who”

This chapter on identity includes various postmodern approaches to identity and its many definitions. Several ideas concerning identity and identification (intentionally or unintentionally) draw on postmodern theories, as they refer to identity as ever-changing, inconsistent and somewhat ‘fluid’, which mirrors the “emphasis on ruptures, disjunctions, tensions, instabilities, and other inconsistencies” (Mease 2017: 1), which can be considered as fundamentally postmodernist. Since postmodernism “reject[s] the notion of absolute definitions” and “challenges the conventionally accepted notions of universal truths and norms” (Mease 2017: 2), the presented theories also forward a more relational, modifiable and dynamic description of identity, which is always “grounded in a particular context” (2017: 3). Hence, identity and many other concepts that are examined through a postmodern lens are considered to be more or less instable, ever-changing and multifaceted, rather than representing static or coherent entities. Along the lines of postmodernism, the consulted theories and pertinent research presented in this chapter “foster the creative integration and mixing of seemingly disparate […] logics” (Mease 2017: 4) that are presented as shifting, overlapping, relational and always in flux.

“As a very basic starting point, identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’” (Jenkins 2008: 5). Even though this simplified definition of identity by the British sociologist Richard Jenkins indeed appears legitimate, identity has proven itself to be a much more complex and extensive field of investigation.
Researchers and cultural theorists have already provided numerous definitions of identity and have thereby established a wide range of possible aspects to investigate. Regarding identity studies, the approach of sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall inevitably needs to be mentioned. His most basic definition of the concept is the following: “In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of the recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (1996: 2). This quotation emphasizes the aspect of comparison and association in the identification process.

Additionally, Hall (1996: 3) considers identity to be a deliberate or positional concept, rather than an invariable one, as it is always incomplete and ever-changing. According to him, “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being” (1996: 4). Hence, Hall understands identification rather as a continuous development than as a fixed state. In the course of his research, the cultural theorist repeatedly refers to identity as a social construct that simultaneously depends on inside as well as outside factors. He highlights that identities are formed on the basis of difference and exclusion; so, instead of representing a unity, identity is grounded in demarcation and segregation. Furthermore, Hall defines identity as a socially constructed “meeting point” (1996: 5), which is created through interaction, discourse and other practices. Thus, he considers the individual to be part of a social structure. Along the lines of other scholars’ theories, Hall regards identity as temporary and constantly changing, which clearly highlights the postmodern approach of his theory. Another significant definition of identity, in this case by the Polish-British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, is the following:

One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other’s presence. (1996: 19)

This quotation demonstrates how identity can be understood as a point of reference, a placement in a social environment as well as a reference for oneself and others in the process of categorizing people. Bauman, similar to Hall, underlines the inherent incompleteness that forms part of the identification process. According to Bauman (1996: 19), identity has always been related to a steady, individual process of searching for certainty. This, once more, stresses that one’s identity is in a constant flux, which can be changed, renewed and discarded at any given time.
Another scholar, who primarily stresses the relevance of difference in his definition of identity, is Lawrence Grossberg. He argues that, when looking at identity, there always needs to be “a logic of difference; a logic of individuality; and a logic of temporality” (1996: 89). This illustrates well that identity can be seen as an ongoing process of distancing oneself from others while simultaneously creating one’s own points of references. In addition, the cultural theorist explains that, on the one hand, there are some intrinsic or authentic aspects to identity, which are more or less inherent in every individual; on the other hand, however, there are other aspects that are “always relational and incomplete, in progress” (1996: 89).

Hence, identity can be said to be constructed simultaneously through a variety of temporary, dynamic factors as well as through inherent, individual features. The interplay of influential factors that shape and re-shape identity can be quite complex and sometimes even contradictory. Also, identities can always be fragmented, hybrid and multi-layered, which makes it difficult to get a grasp of the concept. Grossberg states: “The instability of any dominant identity – since it must always and already incorporate its negation – is the result of the very nature of language and signification” (1996: 90). Thus, identities seem to be more or less contradictory in themselves. Grossberg promotes the idea that “identity is always constituted out of difference” and “socially constructed” (1996: 93).

Further theories by Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2006) as well as by Richard Jenkins (2008) focus their research on identity studies. Both approaches strongly remind of the postmodern idea of a relational and ever-changing identity. While Kirk and Okazawa-Rey elucidate that “[o]ur identity is a specific marker of how we define ourselves at any particular moment in life. Discovering and claiming our unique identity is a process of growth, change, and renewal throughout our lifetime” (2006: 8), Richard Jenkins proposes “talk[ing] about ongoing and open-ended processes of ‘identification’” (2008: 9) that are dynamic and negotiable rather than fixed. Consequently, creating and determining one’s identity is seen as a lifelong endeavor that is frequently redefined, renewed and adjusted, according to the individual’s or group’s needs. Also, context and audience generally influence individual or collective identification, which additionally renders this process of defining oneself even more challenging.

In the selected videos and TV episodes that are going to be examined in the analytical part of this thesis, the malleable and dynamic nature of Latino/a identities is foregrounded, as especially the younger Latinos/as in the examples seem to choose or stress elements of their own multidimensional identities depending on the context and their audience.
For instance, when being surrounded by Anglo-Americans or English-speaking friends, they highlight aspects (language, behavior) of their Americanized identity, whereas they speak Spanish and perform Latin American traditions and rituals when they are in the family setting or around Latin American friends.

In addition, the identities presented in the sources also develop and change depending on the time the immigrants have already spent in the U.S. Once they start gradually assimilating to the Anglo-American majority, specific aspects of their former identities fade and, in turn, new elements are added, which clearly highlights the ‘fluid’ nature of identities. This postmodern approach to identity and (individual as well as collective) identification that has been expounded so far can be detected in several instances in the *YouTube* videos by Jenny Lorenzo and LeJuan James, and in scenes of *¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?*.

1.1. Collective Identity

Since much emphasis of this thesis is put on the media representation of immigrant Latino/a identities, the concept of collective identities and what it means to belong to a community in general needs to be discussed as well. Latino/a identities, which can be understood as collective identities drawing on (assumed) ethnic and cultural similarities, are frequently based on stereotypical characteristics that must not necessarily hold true for every individual belonging to the community. Nevertheless, collective understanding of shared commonalities represents the basic human desire to interact and function within a social setting, which is also relevant in the analysis and is illustrated with the help of different media examples. Hence, belonging to the (immigrant) Latino/a community or, in fact, to any group, bears much significance for its members and thus needs adequate explication.

Even though individual and collective identity both stem from social interaction and comparison, they diverge from each other in some aspects: “The most significant contrast between individual and collective identification in this model may be that the former emphasizes difference and the latter similarity” (Jenkins 2008: 38). In this quotation, Jenkins proposes the idea that individuals identify themselves on the basis of difference or uniqueness, while collectivities rather focus on commonalities or a “shared sense of ‘groupness’, of group membership” (2008: 8-9). The sociologist, then, elaborates how similarity enables the formation of groups: “Collectivity means having something in common, whether ‘real’ or imagined, trivial or important, strong or weak.
Without some commonality there can be no collectivity” (2008: 132). Consequently, by sharing common features or interests, the formation of collectivity enables a sense of *us* versus *them*.

Benedict Anderson, who first presented his thoughts on *Imagined Communities* in 1983, primarily focuses his research on the concept of nation and a national community; however, the scholar also includes more general and universally applicable notions regarding communities in his research. For Anderson, communities are solely imagined, as “the members of even the smallest [community] will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (2006: 6); that way, they can never even know whether all members of said community do actually share their experiences, values, mindsets, traditions or attitudes. Consequently, Anderson understands every community that goes beyond “face-to-face-contact” (2006: 6) as inherently imagined because, although the understanding of community “is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (2006: 7), there can never be consistent commonalities within a community that are shared by every single member – the larger the imagined community is, the more difficult it gets to ascribe uniform characteristics to its members. Nevertheless, “it is this fraternity that makes [the sense of belonging and being part of a group] possible” (2006: 7).

These short excerpts of Anderson’s work underline how he considers communities of all kinds to be abstract and solely based on imagination and “the attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations” (2006: 141). For him, there is a particular sense of union and comradery within every community, even though those belonging to the collective might not even know all of the members and thus do not know whether they actually share commonalities or not. Based on Anderson’s argument, the shared identity that serves as basis for (imagined) communities is a) always socially constructed and b) established through assumed experiences that are supposedly shared by all members of the same community. This, then, enables the individuals to perceive themselves to be part of a collective identity, even though they can never be sure to fulfill all of the assumed criteria attributed to it.

As has been mentioned, collective identity is based on social construction and imagined/assumed similarity, which facilitate the sense of belonging to a community. This concept then draws on symbolism to stress its unity and shared values. For example, the relevance of symbolism becomes evident when looking at language, rituals, traditions and practices, but also with focus on designations. Jenkins clarifies: “The nominal – the name or description of an identification – is always symbolic.
In addition to language, it may be further symbolised in heraldry, dress, ritual or other material and practical forms” (2008: 136). Therefore, the interaction as symbolic construction of meaning, among others, is in part responsible for the creation of collective identities.

In his theory, Jenkins describes collective identities as internally heterogeneous and inconsistent, as “they can and do vary from context to context; they can and do vary from person to person” (2008: 140). In common language, however, collective identities are often understood as a unity or homogeneous group, which can be attributed to stereotyping and over-generalized categorization. This method of simplification, which aims at the comprehensible classification of individuals and groups, enables us to understand the complex nature of the human world, even though, simultaneously, it reduces individuals and collectives to limited characteristics and features. Consequently, stereotypical representation or definitions of collectivities often seem to be incomplete, too restrictive or even misleading.

Nevertheless, Jenkins also underscores the usefulness of stereotyping, as he sees it as “a collective process, involving the creation and maintenance of group values and ideologies and the positive valorisation of the in-group” (2008: 152). Thus, stereotypes can also serve to strengthen the sense of belonging to a group and the appreciation for it. When drawing on stereotypes to categorize people, it still has to be borne in mind that they are also (externally) constructed, condensed and simplified and can therefore never fully represent reality. Thus, Jenkins rejects the idea of groups as homogeneous entities. For him, groups per se can never be ‘real’ or coherent; it is much rather the sense of belonging and ‘groupness’ that is real. Jenkins’ statement “groups are real if people think they are” (2008: 12) underlines this idea and implicitly connects his argument to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* that were mentioned above.

The sociologist considers groups to be solely social constructions on the basis of the creation of common meaning and explains: “[O]ur necessarily systematised and carefully drafted view of the human world is, after all, just that, a view. It is a necessarily abstract and simplified view, which we should not mistake for reality; and, what is more, it is a view that is always from a point of view” (Jenkins 2008: 105). This quotation illustrates how the understanding of collectivities is (at least in part) created by outside observers who always promote a particular view on groups. Hence, the definition of collective identity does not solely stem from members of the group itself; it is also externally shaped and (re-)defined. On the one hand, group members themselves establish their collective identity from the inside, as means of distancing their group from others, while, on the other hand, they are also categorized by individuals, other groups or institutions.
Jenkins specifies: “Collective internal definition is group identification; collective external
definition is categorisation” (2008: 109). One prominent example of collective identity is
ethnic identity (or ethnicity), which is elucidated in the following chapter.

1.2. Ethnic Identity

As (immigrant) Latino/a identities, which constitute a major theme in the analysis at hand, are
based on ethnic commonalities and shared experiences, the idea of ethnic identity per se needs
to be clarified in advance. As can be deduced from the previous chapter on collective identity
and Benedict Anderson’s argument regarding ‘imagined communities’, ethnic identity and
ethnic groups can also be considered somewhat abstract and solely based on solidarity and
mutual attachment (cf. Anderson 2006: 7), as no ethnic community can ever be entirely
homogeneous or consistent. Nevertheless (and without knowing all of the other members of
the community), people feel a sense of union and belonging, which is not only dynamic and
relational, but also subject to (re-)negotiation and (re-)definition throughout the members’
lives.

The following definition and explanation of ethnicity is primarily based on the
approach of the American sociologist Joane Nagel, whose article “Constructing Ethnicity:
Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture” (1994) outlines quite well how ethnicity
can be considered an ever-changing social construct instead of an innate feature of
individuals. Nagel closely links the issue of ethnicity to identity, which she describes as one
of the “basic building blocks of ethnicity” (1994: 152). She then goes on to define ethnicity as
“a dynamic, constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organization”
(1994: 152). The sociologist explicates that ethnic identity is formed in a dialectic interaction
between different (ethnic) groups and individuals. Similar to other collectivities and the
above-mentioned definitions of them, Nagel approaches ethnicity as follows: “Ethnicity is the
product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition
and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political
processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions” (1994: 152).

It becomes evident that, just like with the formation of individual and group identity,
ethnic identity can always be altered and adjusted to new contexts. Thereby, it is not only
defined by the members of the ethnic community itself; it is also categorized by external
forces. By constantly underlying redefinitions, ethnic identity appears to be “fluid, situational,
volitional, and dynamic” (1994: 152).
In reference to the establishment of ethnic identity, Nagel claims that it “is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or regionality” (1994: 152-153). In addition, the scholar points out that the most basic components of ethnicity are identity and culture. This, then, suggests that ethnic identity is based on personal and on collective factors that influence and potentially alter it. Meaning and ethnic boundaries are constructed by individuals as well as by the surrounding culture that inevitably affects ethnic understanding. When it comes to boundaries and differences between ethnic groups, Nagel emphasizes: “Ethnic identity is most closely associated with the issue of boundaries. Ethnic boundaries determine who is a member and who is not and designate which ethnic categories are available for individual identification at a particular time and place” (1994: 154).

The symbolic construction of meaning does in fact contribute to the formation of collective identity. Consequently, this can also be said for ethnic identity, in which “nostalgia, allegiance to a culture of immigrant generation, old country, traditions [and] pride” are “mirrored in everyday behavior” (Nagel 1994: 154). These aspects actively contribute to the construction of ethnic identity. For example, religion, superstition, the performance of rituals, particular ways of dressing, passing on family values, cultural norms, language use or the preservation of traditional events can be considered symbolic of ethnic belonging.

Contrary to the common notion that ethnicity is inherent in a person, Nagel suggests that ethnic identity is somewhat situational and variable, as it can be adjusted to different contexts and audiences. The scholar sees ethnic identification as “mutable”, since it is “the product of social ascriptions, a kind of labeling process engaged in by oneself and others” (1994: 154). Similar to the approach to collective identity above, Nagel also refers to ethnicity as “a composite of the view one has of oneself as well as the views held by others about one's ethnic identity” (1994: 154) and thereby highlights the inside as well as the outside factors that influence ethnic identification. According to Nagel, ethnicity can change depending on the situation. In addition, people have various layers of ethnic identity and can foreground them according to their audiences and needs. However, ethnic labels and stereotypes can also be imposed on collective groups and foregrounded for them, rather than by them. Therefore, Nagel suggests that ethnic identity is based on innate aspects, imposed assumptions and personal choices. On the one side, this opens up a myriad of ethnic options; on the other side, however, the potential ethnic identities to choose from are always restricted to those categories available or imposed by others. Linked to ethnic labeling, Nagel exposes:
If informal ethnic meanings and transactions can shape the everyday experiences of minority groups, formal ethnic labels and policies are even more powerful sources of identity and social experience. Official ethnic categories and meanings are generally political. As the state has become the dominant institution in society, political policies regulating ethnicity increasingly shape ethnic boundaries and influence patterns of ethnic identification. There are several ways that ethnicity is "politically constructed," i.e., the ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities, cultures, are negotiated, defined, and produced by political policies and institutions. (1994: 156-157)

This extensive quotation opens up a political dimension of ethnicity, which needs to be considered in close connection to institutions and state policies. In the case of formal ethnic labels, the political labeling process has a strong impact on the ethnicities in question. External classifications and designations can indeed change the social reality of ethnic groups and minorities. However, it needs to be considered that labeling in general serves as means of deliberate construction; Nagel underscores that ethnic labeling becomes particularly influential when referring to immigrant policies. She points out that governments even change their ethnic labels according to their needs and policies, knowing that “today's immigrant groups become tomorrow's ethnic groups” (1994: 157). In the same manner, ethnic boundaries can be (re-)shaped, erased or (re-)established according to immigration rules. The following quotation emphasizes how policies affect ethnic identity and its construction: “Political policies designed to house, employ, or otherwise regulate or assist immigrant populations can influence the composition, location, and class position of these new ethnic subpopulations. Thus the politics of immigration are an important mechanism in the political construction of ethnicity” (1994: 157).

Subsequently, politics and state policies are able to control and even manipulate ethnic organization, which can potentially lead to new group formations. At the same time, formal ethnic labeling can also reinforce ethnic boundaries, construct new meaning and thereby exclude particular individuals and ethnicities from a larger community. Then again, “the construction of ethnic boundaries (group formation) or the adoption or presentation of a particular ethnic identity (individual ethnic identification), can be seen as part of a strategy to gain personal or collective political or economic advantage” (1994: 159). In this case, the labeling and demarcation of ethnic groups can be traced back to internal forces that strive for advantages, such as political access, the distribution of resources or other advantages.

For Nagel, ethnic meaning is constructed through culture and history, since those elements “create the meaning and interpretative systems seen to be unique to particular ethnic groups” (1994: 161). The content of ethnic identities is frequently constructed via cultural pre-settings, such as language, art, religion, traditions or everyday practices.
Hence, the connection between ethnicity and its basic building blocks, identity and culture, becomes obvious. Nagel, then, summarizes the basic points of her own theory on ethnicity and ethnic boundaries as follows:

In sum, the construction of ethnic boundaries through individual identification, ethnic group formation, informal ascriptions, and official ethnic policies illustrates the ways in which particular ethnic identities are created, emphasized, chosen, or discarded in societies. As the result of processes of negotiation and designation, ethnic boundaries wax and wane. (1994: 161)

Along the lines of this postmodern approach, the sociologist and university professor Patricia Fernández-Kelly emphasizes that there “is nothing static about ethnicity” (2002: 179). When defining ethnicity, Fernández-Kelly draws on its etymological meaning:

The Greek *ethnikos* loosely translates as ‘nation or people’ and the derived *ethnos* is thus used to designate ways of life common to the members of a particular group. It is in that sense that an elementary definition of ethnic applies to large categories of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. (2002: 180)

This extract underlines how commonalities and shared meaning contribute to the formation of ethnic groups, which strongly reminds of the definitions of collective identities above. The members of ethnic groups share assumed features or a similar background that connect them and enable the formation of a common ethnic identity among them.

Additionally, Fernández-Kelly opens up another perspective on ethnicity, namely the aspect of assimilation. According to the scholar, there is a “continuum between assimilation and ethnicity” (2002: 181), since immigrants to a new country mostly either assimilate to the larger community or gradually become a member of an ethnic minority. Nevertheless, due to being faced with disadvantageous stereotypes concerning their ethnic community, their darker skin tone, ‘foreign’ surnames, or lack of English skills, assimilating to the larger society proves to be challenging. Still, and despite belonging to an immigrant group or an ethnic minority, assimilation can happen to some degree, which then, in turn, reduces the distinctiveness from the majority and enables the individuals or groups to become more like the Anglo-American majority. That way, they distance themselves more from their ethnic and cultural heritage and become, for example in terms of language use, mindsets or behavior, more ‘Americanized’.

Thus, ethnic identity plays an important role “in the process of assimilation” (2002: 181). An immigrant group might have a specific concept of collective self-identification when moving to a new country – this, however, can change through social interaction processes, the pursuit of material distribution and self-(re-)definition throughout time.
“Contact, friction, negotiation, and their eventual incorporation into distinct sectors of the larger society” (2002: 203) will finally determine whether people of ethnic minorities will assimilate to the larger society or stay within their ethnic group.

Similar to Joane Nagel, who considers ethnic identity as “situational and changeable” (1994: 154) as well as multi-layered, Richard Jenkins claims that the “characteristics of ethnic identities allow individuals in principle to move in and out of them. It also means that ethnic identities are not immutable. They are capable of change over time” (2008: 121). Hence, Jenkins supports Nagel’s postmodern understanding of a flexible and dynamic ethnic identity and rejects the idea of it being a static and fixed feature of an individual or a group. Furthermore, Jenkins mentions the continuity of ethnic collectivities, since he thinks of them in procedural and interactional terms: (re-)created, (re-)defined, (re-)shaped or discarded in the course of social interaction (cf. 2008: 121).

The majority of the consulted theories on ethnicity has demonstrated that ethnic belonging is a quite complex and multi-facetted issue, which is frequently described as dynamic and mutable. In the examples above, ethnicity is not primarily based on primordial or innate features of individuals, but rather on personal choices and a collective sense of ‘groupness’, which can also be based on abstraction and imagination (cf. Anderson 2006: 6ff.). In addition, it has been illustrated that ethnic identification and classification happen internally as well as externally, since they are determined by several individual, social and institutional factors. Ethnicity does not exist in an isolated vacuum, as it is always socially constructed, (re-)defined and (re-)shaped through human interaction. The differences and established boundaries to other ethnic groups enable the formation and maintenance of a sense of ethnic belonging. While ethnicity can be categorized and labeled by institutions, political policies or the state to exclude particular individuals or groups, it can, simultaneously, be used by the members of the ethnic group to achieve personal or collective goals, which are oftentimes linked to financial or political advantages.

1.3. Immigrant Latino/a Identities

All of the media examples that are going to be examined in later chapters of this thesis include immigrant Latinos/as as their protagonists and are created/produced by immigrant Latinos/as as well. In addition, the analysis itself investigates the representation of immigrant Latino/a identities and consequently, the definition of the term ‘Latino/a’ per se as well as relevant information in connection to it need to be expounded.
First and foremost, the preference of the label ‘Latino/a’ to ‘Hispanic’ needs to be explained: “Settling on a name never comes easy” (Flores 2000: 203). This statement by the U.S.-American sociologist Juan Flores already suggests that the process of subsuming several million individuals under one homogenizing term such as ‘Latinos/as’ provokes complications, since this categorization has the inherent and “obvious effect of blurring distinctions and treating peoples with roots in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Colombia, and many other countries as though they were all of common stock and circumstance” (2000: 7). Flores argues that this homogenization inevitably fails to consider the various national, historical, cultural, regional and economic backgrounds underlying each collective group and person (cf. 2000: 7). In line with his arguments, the Peruvian-American scholar Suzanne Oboler criticizes this clash between the “diversity of the various population groups both in Latin America and in the United States” and the “culturally homogeneous representation of people” (2011: 9).

Even though the Latino/a population might not be able to be traced back to one common history or origin, there is a need for subsuming Latin Americans under one name in order to facilitate referring to this collective group in a comprehensible manner. Before the term ‘Latino/a’ came into public use, the subsuming name ‘Hispanic’ was frequently used in censuses as well as in common discourse. Oboler explains that ‘Hispanic’ was used to “refer to all people […] whose ancestry is predominantly from one or more Spanish-speaking countries”, without considering “their varied racial, class, linguistic, and gender experiences” (2011: 8).

The scholar highlights that this denomination is quite problematic, as it also includes European Spanish-speaking people and therefore takes into consideration other nationalities than those of Latin America. In addition, by inherently linking Latin America to Spanish and European presence in the hemisphere, ‘Hispanic’ carries a close association with Spanish colonization and oppression. According to the Puerto Rican Ángel R. Oquendo, many people reject the term ‘Hispanic’ due to those reasons. “They prefer ‘Latino’ because it lacks any such connotation and is more inclusive and descriptive. ‘Latino’ is short for ‘latinoamericano’” (2011: 36) and solely “refers to the people who come from the territory in the Americas” (2011: 36) that were once colonized by Latin-derived nations such as France, Spain and Portugal, without including the colonizers themselves.

Oquendo suggest that “the term ’Latino’ should be favored over ‘Hispanic’ because the latter is linked to the brutal Spanish colonization of America” (2011: 36). Furthermore, the academic strongly supports the implementation of ‘Latino/a’, as it stresses the struggle of
Latin Americans for equality in the U.S. Moreover, ‘Latino/a’ derived from activists of the collective community itself and thereby, Latinos/as were “giving themselves a name” (2011: 36-37), which contributed to their self-definition and self-identification. The above-mentioned explanations for favoring the term ‘Latino/a’ with its possible variations over ‘Hispanic’ appears legitimate and is thus exclusively and deliberately used in this diploma thesis.

Also, Juan Flores highlights that the “‘Latino community’ [can be understood as] an ‘imagined community’” (2000: 193) and serves its people to promote a sense of we as a collective group. In this statement, Juan Flores implicitly refers to Anderson’s concept of Imagined Communities (1983), which is based on assumed commonalities and perceived comradeship that enable collective identification. Basically, those people who are frequently referred to as ‘Latinos/as’ in common discourse are the descendants of Native-Americans, European colonizers and African slaves, as well as of a mixtures of these groups, which have evolved throughout the last centuries and thereby represent the rich “mestizaje or social infusion in Latin America” (Oquendo 2011: 39). When talking about Latinos/as, people generally relate them “to home countries in Latin America, the landscapes, life-ways, and social struggles familiar, if not personally, at least to one’s family and people, and in any case indispensable to Latinos in situating themselves in U.S. society” (Flores 2000: 198).

‘Hispanic’, on the other hand, was used as a “state-imposed bureaucratic label” (Oboler 1995: xiii), conveniently categorize individuals of “Latin American national-origin groups” (1995: xiii) to establish censuses and regulate policies. Also, the term ‘Hispanic’ fails to represent the rich descent of Latin Americans, who do not only have European roots, but also Native American and African ones (cf. 1995: xiv).

Therefore, Suzanne Oboler, similar to Juan Flores, Ángel R. Oquendo and myself, prefers to use the term ‘Latinos/as’ to subsume those “communities bound by language, by cultural heritage, by an acknowledgement of [their] Latin American heritage, by the common goal of expanding and protecting Latinos’ rights, by the aim of improving [their] lives and the communities’ standards of living” (1995: xv). Additionally, being called a ‘Latino/a’ is said to be preferred by Latin Americans themselves, which highlights the uniting self-identification of this large ethnic group, particularly within the U.S. setting.

1.3.1. The Latino/a Immigrant Population in the United States

In order to outline the demographic and cultural influence of Latino/a immigrants on the United States, this chapter serves as theoretical basis. Latinos/as already compose the largest
and fastest-growing minority group in the United States. Statistics suggest that “by the year 2050, Latinos will constitute nearly a quarter of the U.S. population” (Maldonado-Molina et al. 2006: 403), which underlines the need to take into consideration this minority group’s current condition. Already in 2003, the Latino/a population was estimated to constitute around 37 million and 13% of the total U.S. population by the US Census Bureau (cf. Darder and Torres 2011: 303).

Other studies of 2011 show that the Latino/a community was “about 15 percent of the population” at that time (Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 3). In a more recent study, the cultural studies scholar Paul Allatson emphasizes that the “Latin@ population increased from 35.3 million (12.5 percent) in 2000 to 55.4 million (17.4 percent) in 2014” (2016: 128), which, once more, highlights the significance of Latino/a communities in the United States as well as their potential to alter the U.S. population entirely. Although this rapid increase in population seems to benefit the cultural variety in the United States, it nevertheless causes problems within the predominantly white majority of U.S. Americans. These concerns are fueled by the fact that “recent census projections suggest that by 2050 Whites will make up less than 50% of the United States national population” (Chacon Mendoza 2011: 48), which, by then, is estimated to have already increased to about 420 million people altogether (cf. 2011: 49).

Within the Latino/a community in the United States, including immigrants as well as autochthons, Mexican Americans constitute by far the largest sub-group, making up about two-thirds of U.S. Latinos/as (cf. Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 3), closely followed by Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans and other Central and South Americans. Already in 2000, Mexican Americans composed about 60% of the total Latino/a population living in the United States with approximately 21 million individuals, followed by Puerto Ricans with roughly 3.4 million immigrants (cf. Chacon Mendoza 2011: 49). Interestingly, the Latino/a communities mainly concentrate on large urban areas, such as New York City, Miami or Los Angeles, where they are “expected to become the majority” (Darder and Torres 2011: 303) by 2050. Juan Flores, therefore, calls these urban areas typical “pan-Latino cities” (200: 147).

Critical race theorists Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic explain in detail that “[m]ost Mexican Americans reside in the Southwest, California, and the Midwest, most Puerto Ricans in New York and other East Coast cities, and most Cubans in Florida” (2011: 3). As these minority sub-groups comprise the largest numbers of Latinos/as living in the United States, their presence has altered cities such as New York City, Miami or Los Angeles to become buzzing centers of Latin American life and culture.
However, it has to be kept in mind that many Mexican Americans do not count as ‘typical’ immigrants, as the territory they have been living on their entire lives was integrated into the United States after 1848 without the consent of its population. Hence, many Mexican Americans have been living on former Mexican soil ever since, but U.S. citizenship was imposed on them and consequently, they are not immigrants in the traditional sense.

1.3.2. Immigration History of Latinos/as in the United States

“Immigrating to America, where gold grew on trees and could easily be found on sidewalks, was synonymous with entering Paradise. To leave, never to look back and return, was an imperative” (Stavans 2011: 33). This statement by the U.S.-Mexican cultural critic Ilan Stavans describes the hopes and aspirations of Latin Americans coming to the United States. Frequently, Latino/a immigrants have wanted to improve standards of living and fulfill their dreams by moving to the United States and establishing a life far away from poverty, social insecurity and political persecution. Even though many immigrants “have dreamed of America as [this] paradise on earth” (2011: 33), their actual experiences often did not meet their expectations.

In search for better opportunities, work, economic as well as political security and social upward mobility, millions of Latin Americans have left and continue to leave their home countries ever since the late 19th century in order to escape from political tension, crises, unemployment, poverty and oppression (cf. Oboler 1995: 120f.). In addition to conflicts in their home countries, thousands of Latinos/as have settled in the United States due to U.S. military interventions and imperial expansion, as in the examples of Cuba, Puerto Rico or Mexico. The occupation of Central and South American regions has strongly contributed to the constant growth of the Latino/a population within U.S. territory. The U.S. American sociologist Joe Feagin names another reason for the growing number of Latin American immigrants on U.S. soil:

Accompanying the economic, military and political intervention in Latin America is a periodic multitude of labor recruiters seeking workers for the growing United States economy. Over time, those who immigrated spread the word as well, thereby extending the recruitment along informal family and friendship workers. (2011a: 67)

As demonstrated in Feagin’s quotation, the United States actively called for workers from Latin American nations to provide affordable labor and thereby boost the U.S. economy. Consequently, those Latino/a workers who had come to the U.S. in order to earn their living and support their families back home profited from this labor shortage and began to inform
other Latinos/as such as their family members and acquaintances about the opportunity to pursue a similar ‘career’. Ever since the early 1900s, the U.S. has offered low-paid jobs, particularly in agriculture, manufactures, construction, food and cleaning services, which were filled with people from Latin America, who were willing to accept the low wages, if they could only enter the United States and earn money there (cf. 2011a: 67). Gilbert Carrasco supports this idea and stresses that, whenever there was a labor shortage in U.S. history, “the United States has enthusiastically welcomed immigrants to fill gaps in the labor pool” (2011: 78). However, frequently, the “available employment has included harsh working conditions, enormous amounts of physical labor and low pay” as well as “discrimination and resentment” (2011: 78).

The very first wave of Latin American laborers primarily concentrated on Mexicans and began after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which officially declared Mexico’s defeat in the U.S.-Mexican war and granted the United States the annexation of former parts of Mexico, which then became the U.S. states of California, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Texas, Nevada and parts of Colorado. This immigration wave was triggered by the call for low-wage workers in California, which mainly focused on the so-called “Gold Rush” (Carrasco 2011: 79). Mexicans were particularly desired workers in the gold industry, as they brought knowledge in mining, in building tools and in developing techniques that were necessary to extract the valuable good. Already back then, negative attitudes and unfavorable stereotypes as well as violence, racism and discrimination were directed at the ‘foreigners’, even though the mining happened to take place on former Mexican territory.

Common accounts of Latinos/as in the 19th and 20th century put forward narratives that favored “discrimination, threats, violence, and restrictive legislation directed against Mexicans and Mexican Americans” (Carrasco 2011: 79). Nevertheless, as long as the low-wage job offers were abundant and Latino/a laborers could be exploited for little money, they were at least tolerated within U.S. territory, which changed quickly, once the national depression struck in 1929. All of a sudden, “Latinos found themselves unemployed and unwanted” (2011: 80). There were no more jobs that needed to be done by low-wage workers and hence, anti-Latino/a attitudes started to intensify.

In addition to unemployment, bad housing conditions, poor food and oppressive social circumstances complicated the situation of Latinos/as in the United States (cf. Carrasco 2011. 81). On top of that, U.S. Americans started to fear the disintegration of their nation, as they considered the immigrants “as a source of disunity or cultural fragmentation” (Cornelius 2011: 94). What they did not consider in their concerns, however, was that
“Latinos/as [once] inhabited what now comprises the Southwestern and Western states of the United States – approximately one-third of its continental territory – long before European settlements in North America” (Morín 2011: 123). At the end of the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, the United States absorbed large parts of Mexican territory, including its people, to either integrate them as part of their empire or to simply deport them. By doing so, the United States did not only gain control of Mexican land, but also spread its imperial power and control over other parts of Latin America.

For Anglo-Americans, colonialism, with its constant occupation and suppression of Latino/a nations, automatically transformed the countries as well as their populations into inferiors. Throughout the 19th and 20th century, Latinos/as were seen as uneducated, uncivilized and primitive, while Whites were considered noble, civilized and belonging to the elite. José Luis Morín further elucidates: “The notion that racial and cultural deficiencies rendered Latin American peoples unable to govern their own nations effectively laid the foundation for a foreign policy grounded on achieving and maintaining U.S. hegemony over the Americas” (2011: 125).

This common narrative, then, served as justification for wars, military interventions and suppression of several Latin American nations. Additionally, specific historical developments, such as those of Mexicans (Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848) and Puerto Ricans (Treaty of Paris in 1898, Jones Act in 1917) in the United States, cannot be neglected, as they stand out in terms of immigration and imperialism. Since Mexico was deprived of parts of its territory and the local population was either expelled or annexed to the United States without their consent, Mexicans living in the United States cannot be regarded as ‘typical’ immigrants, as many of them were much rather absorbed into the U.S. Similarly, Puerto Ricans were annexed in 1898, after the Treaty of Paris, which enabled the absorption of Puerto Rico into the U.S. commonwealth (cf. 2011: 128). Even though the Puerto Rican population did indeed become U.S. citizens in the course of this process, they were considered second-class citizens and “could not exercise full citizenship and constitutional rights” (2011: 128). With particular focus on Mexico and Puerto Rico, while also taking into consideration other Latin American nations, Àngel R. Oquendo elucidates the following:

[W]hat really unites Latino/as is their unique history of oppression. Unlike other immigrant groups, the largest Latino/a groups – Mexicans and Puerto Ricans – did not come into the United States via Ellis Island; they entered through the brutal process of U.S. imperial expansion. They were militarily attacked, invaded, colonized, and annexed. This common experience has caused them to form a unified community, which now includes other people of Latin American ancestry. (2011: 34)
This citation highlights once more that, regarding U.S. interventions, Latin American countries have lived through similar historical instances of colonization, military occupation and imperial expansion. Even though the annexation history of Puerto Rico and Mexico is unique to Latin American countries, “[b]etween 1898 and 1934, the United States used its military forces to invade and/or occupy Latin American countries on more than thirty occasions” (2011: 131) and thereby used its military power to intervene in various nations without the consent of the local population. Flores adds: “Colonial relations of hemispheric inequality underlie not only the historical logic of Latino migration but also the position and conditions of Latinos here in [U.S.] society” (2000: 199).

1.3.3. Hardships of Latinos/as in the United States: Living as ‘The Other’

Much research has been devoted to the discrimination that Latino/a immigrants have had to face in the United States. According to human rights scholar Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, Latinos/as have had to deal with numerous “problems caused by the inhumane conditions in which migrant workers live as well as those that result from the creation of an uninsured underclass of persons who provide domestic help, such as nannies, housekeepers, and gardeners” (2011: 27). Instead of being accepted into a country of (economic) opportunities and success, Latin Americans often have to adjust to a system of discrimination and exploitation with little to no social upward mobility.

Latinos/as are frequently singled out from of the white majority, due to their surnames, skin tone, language skills, accent or ‘Hispanic look’ and thereby have to deal with discrimination and negative stereotypes on a daily basis (cf. Chacon Mendoza 2011: 49). Chacon Mendoza underlines: “To this day, Latinos are seen as bringing an inferior welfare and crime-prone culture into the United States” (2011: 52). Due to this reason, Latinos/as seem to be underprivileged when it comes to wages, to their economic status and education. Even though they might have been living in the U.S. their entire lives, Latin Americans are still considered ‘other’ or ‘foreign’, due to them being (or at least looking) different from Whites (cf. Feagin 2011a: 65).

The status of Latinos/as within U.S. society is frequently compared to that of African Americans. Feagin expounds: “The white view of Latinos sometimes stresses their similarity to black Americans in terms of racial status and inferiority, but at other times accents their ‘alien’ and ‘foreign’ character” (2011a: 65).
This exclusion of Latinos/as from white society has hindered them from fully assimilating into the U.S., as they are not given equal opportunities regarding education, politics, housing and employment. Suzanne Oboler names only some of the issues Latino/a immigrants have to face in a predominantly white society, including “personal family problems, inability to adapt to the new land, nostalgia, or more structural causes such as lack of jobs, insufficient income, or immigration laws” (1995: 125).

Due to the fact that the three media sources that are examined in the analytical part of this thesis are created by immigrant Latinos/as and feature Latino/a protagonists, the particular roots of the respective national groups need to be concentrated on as well. While Jenny Lorenzo and the characters of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? share a common Cuban descent, LeJuan James traces his heritage back to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The subsequent sections attempt to highlight the histories and particularities of the three above-mentioned nationalities, so that the circumstances and backgrounds of the respective immigrant groups in question can also be taken into consideration in the analysis.

1.3.4. Cuban Americans

In 2011, “[t]he slightly more than one million persons of Cuban origin or descent account[ed] for approximately 5 percent of the Hispanic-origin population of the United States” (Grenier 2011: 110) and are primarily centered in the city of Miami, Florida. Hence, Cubans have contributed much to the growth of the metropolitan area in and around the city itself. Miami is now the “third-largest Latino community” (Genier 2011: 110) in the United States, with its population making up about 50% of the composition of Latin American immigrants in the U.S. According to the scholars Edward Funkhouser and Fernando A. Ramos (1993: 553-554), additional (but much smaller) Cuban enclaves can be found in New York City, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, Orlando, Jersey City, Newark, Patterson and Philadelphia, among others.

Cuban immigration to the United States started after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, as there were large numbers of Cuban exiles who left their home country after Fidel Castro had come to power. Suddenly, they had to search for a new place to stay (cf. Flores 2000: 142) and their first destination, even before settling in Miami, was New York City. “The first wave of Cubans, approximately 250,000, arrived from 1959 to 1964. As with most revolutions, the first to leave Cuba were those in the middle and upper classes” (Grenier 2011: 110). This statement by sociologist Guillermo J. Grenier highlights the rather privileged and elite status of the first Cuban immigrants coming to the U.S. Because of their light skin, anti-communist ideology, high professional positions, social security and good education, the first wave of
Cuban immigrants assimilated rather quickly and experienced upward social mobility and financial support in a welcoming receiving country (cf. Oboler 1995: 10). Grenier explains how Cubans have always differed from most other Latino/a immigrants to this day:

The socio-economic selectivity of migration from Cuba during the past forty-plus years has created a community with relatively large numbers of professionals and entrepreneurs. This socioeconomic profile, although at times overstated, has had implications for the participation of Cubans in leadership positions within the national Latino population, especially in such visible sectors as media and government. (2011: 110)

Due to the arrival of the first Cubans as “self-defined exile community” (2011: 110) in the early 1960s, who managed to stand out in a positive way, more Cubans started to move to the United State to pursue a similar accomplishment. The second wave of Cubans was made up of approximately “300,000, [who] arrived during the ‘freedom flights’ from 1965 to 1973” (2011: 111) and settled in South Florida, which soon became a Cuban enclave as well as a magnet for future immigrants. Grenier describes the Cuban-American immigrant story as special, as they are seen as the perfect example of immigrant success in another country (cf. 2011: 111-113).

Several scholars, among them psychologists Ana Mari Cauce and Melanie M. Domenech-Rodriquez, highlight “four phases of migration among Cuban Americans” (2002: 7), namely the first from 1959 to 1965 after the Cuban Revolution, the second from 1965 to 1973, resulting in the ‘Freedom Flights’, the third in 1980, which is known as the phase of the ‘Marielitos’ and the fourth between 1991 and 1994 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. While the first wave, as mentioned above, brought many middle- and upper-class families, “[t]he second wave brought middle- to lower-middle-class professionals” (2002: 7). The third phase, then, was composed of lower-class Afro-Cubans and the last wave brought many impoverished and often unemployed individuals (cf. 2002: 7-8).

In the 1960s, first-wave Cubans “benefited from some $957 million worth of official federal, state, and local level programs initiated to help their adaptation. They received food, clothing, and healthcare, assistance in finding jobs, financial aid, employment and professional training, bilingual education (including for adults), and college tuition loans” (Eckstein and Barberia 2002: 804). This, however, changed quickly. Since so many Cubans arrived in the U.S. and were later joined by less educated/skilled and partly unemployed ‘Marielitos’, hostility started to grow and Cubans were increasingly seen as a burden (cf. 2002: 804). Soon, laws against the immigration of Cubans were sanctioned and more regulations and limitations were implemented to stop the ‘Cubanization’ of Florida.
Later Cuban immigrants, who came to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s “bore little resemblance to those who first left – in social class, cultural background, and motives for emigration” (2002: 807) and hence, were treated less welcomingly and accepting in their new environment. Especially in the 1980s, Cubans had a relatively low status in the U.S. They mostly worked as operators, service workers, craft and repair workers. Very few of them had higher positions, which could be attributed to their lower education. Social and financial support by the government as well as welfare declined, which quickly became visible in falling immigration numbers and rising returns to Cuba. “By 1990, in fact, Cubans no longer even counted among the five largest Latino groups” (Flores 2000: 144). Nowadays, “[m]ore than forty years of the U.S. Embargo against Cuba and of the Cuban emigré communities in the U.S., especially South Florida, have produced distinct differences between Cuban and Cuban-American cultures” (Rowe 2002: 140). Recent immigrants and Cuban Americans who have grown up in the U.S. have adapted to the white Anglo society, its culture, its traditions and its mindset (cf. Armitage 2002: 133f.). While former immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s seemed to “attempt to recreate ‘la Cuba de ayer’ (the Cuba of yesterday) in Miami” (2002: 134), today’s Cuban Americans appear to have combined the best of both worlds by being Americanized to some degree, while still maintaining traditional cultural values from Cuba.

1.3.5. Puerto Rican Americans

Puerto Ricans comprise the second-largest Latino/a group in the U.S., right after Mexicans. Puerto Ricans primarily center in the New York City area, where they constitute the largest and oldest Latino/a minority group and about nine percent of the New York population altogether (cf. Flores 2000: 141). Besides New York City, there are also numerous Puerto Rican enclaves in Florida and New Jersey. The number of Puerto Rican immigrants to the United States “has been hovering, astoundingly, at around half of the total Puerto Rican population” (2000: 11). In line with Flores, the U.S.-American historian Roger Daniels (2011: 106) elucidates that there are already more Puerto Ricans living in New York City than in San Juan, Puerto Rico’s capital.

Historically, Puerto Rican Americans have had quite a different ‘immigrant’ experience than Cubans, for example. Puerto Rico was annexed by the United States after the Spanish-American war and the American conquest of the island 1898. Hence, technically, they are not ‘real’ immigrants at all. Occupying Puerto Rico was strategically calculated by the United States, as the island served as a significant military station and “thus was included […] as part of the gains of the United States in the Treaty of Paris that ended the war” (Oboler
1995: 36). Instantly, Puerto Rico was absorbed into American territory and in 1917, Puerto Ricans were transformed into U.S. citizens (cf. Daniels 2011: 106) through the Jones Act. Unluckily, the U.S. citizenship was imposed on the Puerto Rican population without their consent. Later, in 1952, Puerto Rico also became an “estado libre asociado” (2011: 106) of the U.S. Besides numerous Puerto Ricans who were involuntarily turned into U.S. Americans, many other islanders were displaced to the United States. Thus, according to José Luis Morín, it has to be kept in mind that “the colonization of Puerto Rico by the United States has played a direct role in causing Puerto Ricans to come to the United States, not as ‘immigrants’, but under a second-class form of citizenship” (2011: 123).

The first Puerto Ricans to arrive in the U.S. migrated in the 1940s, but after the establishment of Puerto Rico as part of the U.S. commonwealth in 1952, more islanders started to move to the mainland (cf. Flores 2000: 39ff.). Until the 1970s, large numbers of Puerto Ricans moved to the U.S., with the primary destination of New York City. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a drop in new arrivals, which has not recovered until this day (cf. Flores 2000: 144). Ángel R. Oquendo argues that “Puerto Rican society might have been bifurcated along racial lines” (2011: 38), which has led to social, economic and cultural problems separating the two racial groups like castes. Once settled in the United States, the Puerto Rican (light-skinned) elites and upper classes have Americanized and adjusted to the North American way of life. At the same time, the (dark-skinned) lower social classes have remained ‘Puerto Rican’ without assimilating to the white majority (cf. 2011: 38). Race has played a relevant role in social issues concerning Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. ever since.

In addition, up till now, “Puerto Rico stands as ‘exceptional’ by still being a colony in the context of postcolonial globality” (Flores 2000: 36). This becomes evident as the island “remains an unincorporated territory of the United States, and thus the U.S. Congress retains plenary powers to determine the rights of Puerto Ricans” (Morín 2011: 129). Therefore, Puerto Rico is considered “a U.S. possession subject to most federal laws” (Daniels 2011: 106). The island is still not independent from the United States, since, besides the laws imposed on it, there is a close dependence on the U.S. dollar, which functions as a constraint for Puerto Rico and prevents it from developing a national autonomy (cf. Flores 2000: 9). Because of its history as a suppressed nation, “Puerto Ricans have been compared to the separate and unequal treatment accorded to African Americans in the United States for more than half a century” (Morín 2011: 126). There is still a structural inequality and domination concerning Puerto Ricans visible in today’s U.S. society.
Even now, this minority group suffers from “rampant socioeconomic misery, direct and total political and military control, and peripheralized public life contrasting graphically with that of the metropolis” (Flores 2000: 36).

Puerto Ricans can be considered “the ‘exception’ to the Hispanic rule” (2000: 8), as their experience differs significantly from that of other Latinos/as. As for Puerto Ricans, “the principal ethnic influences are African and European” (Oquendo 2011: 38) and their culture is mainly influenced by its African roots, rather than by its European ones, many Puerto Ricans have a darker skin tone as well as an Afro-Antillean background. Hence, they frequently face racism and discrimination in the predominantly white environment. Their inferior status in society can be attributed to their African heritage and the racist connotations attached to it, but also to poverty, economic insecurity and low-paid jobs. This is foregrounded by Roger Daniels who states that “[m]ost Puerto Ricans who have come to or been born in the United States face two related problems: poverty and race prejudice” (2011: 107) and adds that because of their low social status, their poverty and lack of professional opportunities, “Puerto Ricans are at the bottom or near the bottom according to most of the criteria by which disadvantages are measured” (2011: 108). Consequently, economic struggles and discrimination are the daily order for many Puerto Ricans in the United States.

Even though Puerto Ricans count as U.S. citizens, they still do not have the same rights as the U.S. majority. José Luis Morín describes their ambivalent circumstances as follows:

Puerto Ricans do not share equal rights with U.S. citizens in the United States: They serve and die in U.S. wars, but cannot vote for the President who can send them into battles; U.S. laws apply to Puerto Rico without the consent of Puerto Ricans; Puerto Ricans have no say in treaties and foreign affairs that affect them; Puerto Ricans have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress; trade, maritime, immigration and monetary policies in Puerto Rico are all controlled by the United States; the U.S. Federal Court is present in Puerto Rico and operates in English, rather than in the native language of Puerto Rico; and the ‘commonwealth’ status continues out of compliance with United Nations decolonization requirements. (2011: 130)

As this citation lays bare, the position of Puerto Ricans living in the United States is far from uncontroversial, as, on the one hand, the citizens are considered to be part of the U.S. and underlie its laws, restrictions and limitations imposed on them, but, on the other hand, do not share the same rights and opportunities as white U.S. Americans. In addition, they are discriminated against, as Juan Flores shows in the following quotation: “[I]t is the Puerto Rican population that is most commonly pointed to as the most nagging ‘problem’” (2000: 8). Oftentimes, Puerto Ricans are also seen as inferior, criminal and uneducated, similar to African Americans, who also have to face discrimination on a daily basis.
As mentioned above, most Puerto Ricans settled in New York City. In this metropolitan area, there have been “impoverished Puerto Rican neighborhoods since the late 1980s” (Flores 2000: 63), such as South Bronx and East Harlem, which is commonly called El Barrio. In these neighborhoods, African-Americans and Puerto Ricans have been living side by side ever since the middle of the 20th century. Therefore, they have frequently been compared to each other in terms of economic status and social position. Unluckily, South Bronx is considered the poorest area in New York City, which inevitably poses issues for the local residents. Due to the poverty spread among Puerto Ricans in New York City, they have oftentimes been called the “Latino problem” or “unassimilable” (2000: 155). Consequently, “Puerto Ricans are bearing greater similarities to Blacks than to any other Latino groups” (2000: 163). This ‘underdog status’ was imposed on them for their ethnicity and skin color, their language and their social position within society: “Marginalized in segregated and neglected urban and rural ghettos, many had no access to adequate schooling, housing, plumbing, or electricity” (Oboler 1995: 48). These professional, social and educational deficiencies have rendered “Puerto Ricans […] the poorest of the Latino groups” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 7).

1.3.6. Dominican Americans

The Dominican Republic is one of the countries that send most migrants to the United States, in particular to New York City. Unsurprisingly, “by 1990, Dominican New Yorkers totaled 332,713 or 18.7 percent of Latinos in New York, making them by far the largest Latino community after the Puerto Ricans” (Flores 2000: 143). Similar to Puerto Ricans, Dominicans prefer to settle in this particular metropolitan area, which already has the largest concentration of Dominicans in the nation. According to the Argentinean-American sociologist José Itzigsohn, there are already so many Dominicans in the city that, “[n]umerically, the Dominican population in New York City ranks second to that of Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic” (2004: 51). Within New York City, the Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan seems to be the “hub of the Dominican population” (2004: 51), as there, Dominicans already constitute the majority and have been settling ever since the 1960s. Besides this primary enclave, other cities in New Jersey and Florida appear to be the primary destinations of Dominicanos/as.

Like Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic has lived through numerous U.S. military interventions since the beginning of the 20th century. Between 1903 and 1965, several U.S. military interventions in the Caribbean nation “provided [the United States with] direct
control over the economy of the Dominican Republic” (Morín 2011: 131). In the 1960s, the first wave of Dominican immigrants to the United States settled in the New York area. This was due to the death of former president Trujillo in 1961, as he had imposed restrictive emigration laws on his population throughout his presidency, which were immediately lifted after his death (cf. Flores 2000: 142ff.). As the Dominican economy was plummeting at that time and the political tension was high, many decided to move from the island to the U.S. mainland. “[T]he overwhelming majority of them (by 1990 a full two-thirds)” (2000: 143) decided to head for New York City.

Those who arrived in New York after the 1965 revolution and U.S. invasion were welcomed in their new environment, as they were mostly middle-class people and skilled workers. However, when Dominicans started to immigrate in larger numbers, the attitude towards them began to change. This is also emphasized by José Itzigsohn, who expounds that

[t]he context of reception for Dominicans varied over time. In the 1960s and 1970s the United States encouraged migration from the Dominican Republic as a way to relieve political pressures in that country. Dominicans encountered in the United States a passive and neutral context of reception. As the numbers of Dominican immigrants grew as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s, obtaining an immigrant visa became increasingly difficult and the context of reception turned discriminatory. (2004: 49)

Nevertheless, in the 1980s, when the Caribbean nation was hit by a financial crisis, the number of immigrants increased rapidly, as many of them fled the economic misery at home (cf. 2004: 45-46). During that period, many unskilled laborers and lower-class people entered the U.S., which led to further discrimination that is still noticeable today. According to Itzigsohn, “Dominican[s] enter American society at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy and as such suffer all the problems of American working poor: unemployment, poverty, high rate of school drop-out” (2004: 50).

The status of Dominicans within U.S. society strongly reminds of Puerto Ricans, who also face racism and discrimination as well as poverty and a lack of professional opportunities. They commonly serve as low-wage workers, concentrated “mainly in clerical, operatives/labor, and personal service occupations” (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000: 230). Furthermore, Dominicans suffer from a high percentage of unemployment. Along these lines, the Cuban scholar Jorge Duany underscores that the labor of lower-class Dominicans is primarily concentrated on “low-paying unskilled jobs such as domestics, porters, waiters, and parking attendants” as well as “carpenters, mechanics, and seamstresses” (1996: 262).
In sum, the life of Dominican immigrants in the United States is characterized by “low wages, little prestige, poor working conditions, lack of occupational mobility, few fringe benefits, high turnover, and little employment security” (1996: 264).

Despite the unfavorable circumstances of Dominican immigrants, they attempt to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions, even when living far away from their home country. The identity of Dominican immigrant communities in the United States encompasses aspects of Caribbean as well as Anglo cultures and combine both of them. “Dominican migrants attempt to reproduce their life on the island in the streets of New York City” (2000: 231) and therefore have to merge U.S. elements with traditions and values imported from the Dominican Republic. Supposedly, “Dominicans in the United States maintain close ties with the island” (2000: 231), which is resembled in the lifestyle of numerous Washington Heights residents who frequently eat Dominican food, speak Spanish in the streets, buy Dominican groceries, visit the Catholic mass, listen to Latino/a music on the radio and watch Latin American TV shows and telenovelas (cf. Duany 1996: 271). It becomes evident that most Dominican immigrants seem to be “firmly attached to Dominican rather than North American culture, although they increasingly mix [...] the two” (1996: 271). Consequently, it seems as if Dominican immigrants rather tend to avoid complete assimilation/Americanization in order to maintain their own cultural traditions, attitudes and values. This way of combining traditional elements of one’s culture and heritage with those of the receiving country, while not letting go of Latin American values, rituals, arts, customs or mindsets, even when living in the United States, could be described as immigrant ‘acculturation’, which is further discussed in chapter 4.3.1., titled “Immigrant Assimilation”.

1.4. Hybrid Identities: A “Synergy of Two Cultures”

In its most basic sense, ‘hybrid’ can be defined as “made by combining two different elements” or as having a “mixed character; composed of different elements (Oxford Dictionary: online), “so it has qualities in relation to both of them” (Cambridge Dictionary: online). When moving towards ‘hybrid identities’ and focusing on humans in particular, the Merriam Webster online dictionary provides the definition of a hybrid individual as “a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions” (Merriam Webster: online). Even though all of the above-mentioned definitions describe hybridity and ‘being hybrid’ adequately, the last quotation seems to be most suitable to refer to the hybridity meant in relation to combined identities.
In this sense, ‘hybrid identity’ means possessing features of two or more cultures and combining them in order to create a novel hybrid identity that is neither like the one nor the other, but something innovative and blended, which includes elements of both (or more) influences.

In order to elucidate this quite complex idea in more detail, the theory of the ‘third space’ by Homi Bhabha, which first appeared in his work *The Location of Culture* in 1994, is consulted. In his book, Bhabha introduces the idea of a ‘third space’ that is established when a person feels situated in-between two or more cultures and in-between the cultural differences they produce. Due to this “emergence of the interstices [when living in-between two cultural influences] – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” (Bhabha 1994: 1) seems to be inevitable and hence, one’s identity always needs to be renegotiated and adapted. This ongoing process of identification and (re-)creation does not always happen smoothly, as “the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable” (1994: 1).

In his work, Bhabha underlines the emergence of “cultural hybridities” (1994: 1) due to transformations in society as well as in the individuals themselves. In order to clarify his understanding of a hybrid identity, he explains that it refers to the “liminal space, in-between the designations of identity” (1994: 3) that “it is the space of intervention, emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence” and thereby enables the “re-creation of the self” (1994: 8). Consequently, Bhabha’s idea of hybridity does not solely mean mixing and combining aspects of two or more cultural influences; he emphasizes the possibility to generate an entirely fresh and new “in-between space” (1994: 37), a ‘third space’, which might draw on different cultures, but simultaneously invents a “newness of cultural practices” (1994: 216). This ‘third space’ is then based on ambivalence and cultural (re-)negotiation. Allegedly incompatible elements of different cultures serve as foundation for a new cultural identification and cultural hybridity, which ultimately facilitates “the process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences” (1994: 251).

This idea of a new, hybrid state or ‘third space’, as Bhabha terms it, can also be applied to the immigrant Latino/as that are represented in the media examples, as their heritage culture with its values, traditions and mentality is the Latin American one, while their environment in the United States centers around Anglo-American cultural norms and standards. Thus, the characters in the *YouTube* videos as well as in the TV sitcom are faced with contrasting cultural influences and consequently have to juggle between their identity.
that is anchored in the cultural values of their home countries and their Americanized identity, which is similar to that of the U.S. majority. In regard to this inherent blend between cultural influences and values, Latinos/as living in the United States can be described as “bi[- or multi]cultural being[s]”, “where the inherited cultural traditions collide with the alternative standards of an adopted country” (Durán 2016: 162).

Drawing on the article “Arts of the Contact Zone” (1991) by Mary Louise Pratt and her very notion of ‘contact zones’ as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (1991: 34) without explicitly indicating it, Isabél Durán details that this life in-between two worlds can be seen as “a conjunction of cultures, working in the very ‘interzone’ where different languages and cultural ideologies of self-overlap” (2016: 164). Both quotations function in accordance with Homi Bhabha’s ‘third space’ and once more underline how living in-between cultures leads to the creation of a new identity, space, or interzone.

This is further emphasized by the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa, who primarily concentrates her writing on Mexican Americans (Chicanos/as), but whose approaches can also be applied to Latino/a immigrants to some degree. Anzaldúa focuses on the “dual identity” (2012: 85) of Latin American people living in the Anglo-American setting of the United States. First, it has to be clarified that Anzaldúa is not a Latina immigrant to the U.S., but a Chicana who has been living in the borderlands between Mexico and the U.S. her entire life. Additionally, it has to be considered that the author mainly concentrates on Mexican Americans with their various influences of Native American/Indian, Spanish and Anglo-American culture as well as on the borderlands between the Southern U.S. and Mexico in particular. However, her arguments can also be considered valid and applicable to many other Latinos/as living in the U.S. as well.

For Anzaldúa, this particular “dual identity” (2012: 85) results from living in-between two or more worlds and not being able to fully identify with either side. Instead of holding on tightly to their indigenous/Latin American roots or Americanizing entirely, many people who are influences by cultural ambivalence can also create their own, innovative identity by combining elements from their heritage and their surroundings and establishing something unprecedented. Anzaldúa describes this hybrid state as the “synergy of two cultures” (2012: 85), where the “transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another” (2012: 100) happens on a daily basis. As Latinos/as living outside their home country oftentimes experience an estrangement from either side and might feel “sandwiched between two cultures” (2012: 100), they feel the need to create a new, “shifting and multiple identity”
by combining their Latin American roots with their Anglo-American cultural influences. This innovative identity, then, “turns the ambivalence [between two or more cultures/identities] into something else” (2012: 101), which has never been there before: “This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness” (Anzaldúa 2012: 102).

For example, the elements passed on from Latino/a culture include the Spanish language, food, religion, traditions and the common mentality, while those characteristics developing through the Americanization process include newly acquired English skills, rituals, attitudes or mindsets. Said aspects are significant in the analytical part of this thesis, as hybrid identities, ‘contact zones’ or ‘third spaces’ are adopted by the respective immigrant Latino/a characters who live in an Anglo-American setting. This inevitably influences their media representation to a great extent.

2. From Stock Characters to Multi-Dimensional Beings: Constructing Latino/a Identities through Media Representation

As this thesis aims at highlighting how immigrant Latino/a identities and family relations are constructed in popular culture, an overview regarding the media representation of Latino/a characters seem to be essential. This chapter first introduces the concepts of media and popular culture in general and then provides a summary of the history of media representation concerning Latinos/as. In addition, the issue of stereotypical media constructions and labeling is foregrounded. Since many of the audiovisual examples that are going to be analyzed in later parts of this thesis are based on YouTube videos, the differences between TV programs (including the bilingual sitcom ¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.? and the video platform YouTube) are stressed in particular.

In general, media can mean “any form of communication by which people are informed, educated and entertained” (Mauk and Oakland 1997: 324). The media serve as a communication system to transmit words and/or pictures to a large audience, such as TV spectators, social media users or radio audiences, among others. Nowadays, the media have become “an inevitable part of daily life” and are quite “powerful, influential and controversial” (1997: 324). In order to distinguish the selected media sources from high culture, such as literature, philosophy or art, the definition of pop(ular) culture needs to be clarified in advance.
Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that media per se can indeed be considered high culture, as it may include “cultural objects of aesthetic value”, “exemplary art”, or even “intellectual works considered to be of supreme philosophical, historical, or literary value, as well as the education which cultivates such aesthetic and intellectual pursuits” (Wikipedia: online).

In contrast, popular culture deviates from high culture, as, generally, it does not refer to highly intellectual works or particularly aesthetic art. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, popular culture much rather refers to “music, TV, cinema, books, etc. that are popular and enjoyed by ordinary people, rather than experts or very educated people” (Cambridge Dictionary: online). On the Oxford Bibliographies website, sociologist Dustin Kidd defines popular culture as “the set of practices, beliefs, and objects that embody the most broadly shared meanings of a social system” (Kidd 2017: online). According to Kidd, this basically refers to mass culture, including “media objects, entertainment and leisure, fashion and trends, and linguistic conventions” (2017: online). The sociologist elucidates that this pop(ular) culture is frequently associated with artists that create culture and share it with audiences who, in turn, interpret and reinforce it as well. In alignment with Kidd’s theory, the selected media sources clearly fall into the category of popular culture, as they entail the “representation of specific groups and themes in the content of cultural objects or practices, the role of cultural production as a form of social reproduction, and the extent to which audiences exercise agency in determining the meanings of the culture that they consume” (2017: online).

Concerning U.S. American media and pop culture in particular, sociologist Todd Gitlin characterizes it as “a popular culture with all the appeals of fun” or, in short, a “fun culture” (2002: 123), which also becomes visible in the selected media sources. This definition by Gitlin primarily concerns TV shows, series and talk shows. For him, the U.S. media “is in the process of becoming everyone’s second culture” (2002: 126), since it has such a strong influence on the audience by automatically (and subconsciously) rendering cultural values and popular beliefs within society.

In regard to representation, Stuart Hall argues that it can be understood as “one of the central practices which produce culture” (1997: 1) by connecting “meaning and language to culture” (1997: 15). Representation can be understood as an exchange of meaning between different people who share one common culture. In order to represent these meanings, language, images and signs are used. This way, members of the same culture share and exchange common beliefs, attitudes and values that constitute their respective cultural landscape.
Nevertheless, the media are powerful and “clearly influence [...] public opinion” (Mauk and Oakland 1997: 324). Thereby, the mindset of the audience is shaped and manipulated in a certain direction. Hence, it is essential to keep in mind that media producers “seek to impose a particular meaning over their audiences/consumers, and often these meanings are linked to particular ideological perspectives” (Lewis 2008: 214).

In addition, media representation is often exaggerated, over-generalized and simplified (cf. Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 177). Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic discuss racism and ethnic representation within popular media and underline the issues resulting from one-sided and biased media constructions. As popular culture indeed has the power to affect a widespread understanding of what minorities in the United States ‘are like’, “ethnic imagery thus comes bearing an enormous amount of social weight” (2011: 179). The two scholars mention that, unfortunately, “[r]acism forms part of the dominant narrative” (2011: 180), which the majority of the audience just accepts at face value without questioning the ideologies and intentions behind manipulative mainstream media:

We subscribe to a stock of explanatory scripts, plots, narratives, and understandings that enable us to make sense of – to construct – our social world. Because we live in that world, it begins to shape and determine us, who we are, what we see, how we select, reject, interpret, and order subsequent reality. (2011: 181)

In order to contest and deconstruct said stereotypes and pre-fabricated assumptions about ethnic identities, they need to be addressed and investigated in detail. This thesis serves to read assumed ideas about Latino/a identities and family relations against the grain and to challenge them in a critical way. By elucidating and thereby revealing stereotypes that are too often accepted at face value, this thesis actively contributes to their deconstruction.

2.1. Latino/a Media Representation Throughout the Years

When observing popular media such as Hollywood movies or network TV shows, Latinos/as appear to be excluded from the screen in most cases, taking into consideration their actual presence as largest minority in the United States and contrasting it with their respective TV appearances. Whenever they do make it on the screen, however, Latin Americans are usually portrayed in an either simplified or exaggerated and stereotypical way (cf. Dávila 2011: 209). This non-realistic and non-representative depiction of Latinos/as in the media is further highlighted by the U.S. scholar Tanya Golash-Boza, who describes Latinos/as on TV as “low in number, low in social status, and lowdown in personal character” (2011: 430).
When researching the historical development of Latino/a representation in U.S. media, it becomes evident that “Hollywood movies have [always] negatively characterized Latinos” (Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 5) throughout the years. From their very first (if only rare) TV appearances in the 1950s and 1960s, “television show creators have imposed negative traits on Latino characters, including being uneducated, unmotivated, poverty-stricken, lazy, criminals, and as people who appear only to work jobs such as maids, janitors, or gardeners” (2017: 8), which has automatically contributed to a quite unfavorable attitude of the audience towards Latinos/as in general.

In early movies and TV shows of the 1950s and 1960s, Latin Americans were mostly portrayed as brutal criminals or uneducated servants (cf. Beltrán 2016: 24). This unfavorable image was fostered through Western movies, in which “Mexican villains and bandits” as well as “the immigrant speaking gibberish” (Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 179) appeared. According to the media critic Mary Beltrán, the Western genre primarily focused on Mexican criminals and comic characters, who were simple-minded, naïve and of low status (cf. 2016: 25). Also, Latinos/as oftentimes appeared on TV as uncivilized sidekicks and domestic servants, such as Pancho, the sidekick in the 1950s Western series The Cisco Kid or numerous characters in the roles of Latina maids and housekeepers, such as Marisa Ventura in Maid in Manhattan, Rosario Salazar in Will & Grace, Paz Vega in Spanglish, or even Consuela in Family Guy.

In the 1970s, U.S. society experienced a boom in Latino/a activism calling for more rights. As part of this campaign, activists “fought for more visibility and ‘positive’ Latina/o representation” (2016: 27) in the media, with particular focus on racial diversity and social issues. This change, however, did not happen until the late 1990s and early 2000s. Even though there was very little media representation of Latin Americans in the 70s and 80s, the rapidly growing Latino/a immigrant population in the United States started to pressure “the television industry to improve their outreach to Latino/as” (2016: 29). Due to the large numbers of Latin American immigrants living in the U.S. and consuming U.S. media, the “[a]ppeal to Latina/o viewers thus was becoming more integral to the success of series and networks” (2016: 29).

Even though the number and quality of representation in popular culture improved throughout the 2000s, Latinos/as “were still substantially underrepresented” (2016: 29), which only changed gradually once TV series started to portray Latino/a characters in a more realistic, diversified and multidimensional light.
Ever since, this positive development has been reinforced by the two most “successful Spanish-language networks reaching U.S. audiences, Univisión and Telemundo” (2016: 30). Following 2010, there was a massive “rise of online/cable networks and channels with a Latina/o flavor” (2016: 31) that featured Latino/a communities, were written by Latino/a writers and served to large Latino/a (as well as Anglo-American) audiences. The move away from a negative depiction of Latinos/as as unskilled, solely Spanish-speaking, low-paid and uneducated minority group was successful and ultimately suspended the common stereotypes in order to portray the rich Latino/a identities with all their facets and dimensions (cf. 2016: 32).

Finally, their obvious “demographic presence has led to a greater existence of Latina/os (and Latina/o culture writ large) in the mainstream—a mainstream itself that has changed by the very presence of Latina/os and Latina/o pop culture” (Aldama 2016: 3). Nowadays, U.S. culture is strongly influenced by Latin American elements such as food, dances, rituals, festivals and the language. Author Frederick Aldama explains that “[c]reators of shows, comics, films, blogs, and any other media formats pull the building blocks from this reality in the making of their stories” (2016: 4). Latino/a identities and culture have become visible, not only in everyday life in the United States, but also in the media landscape. This development is additionally stressed in the following quotation by Arlene Dávila: “It is becoming increasingly common to see aspects of Latino culture popularized in mainstream culture, with salsa outselling ketchup and taking over dance floors, and a growing number of corporate sponsors interested in Latinos as a target market” (2011: 208). Obviously, media creators have understood the potential of streaming more Latino/a-oriented shows and movies, including sitcoms, telenovelas and bilingual shows, in the mainstream channels.

Today, Latinos/as are generally not portrayed as “poor, uneducated, unclean, illegal aliens and prone to teenage pregnancy” (Golash-Boza 2011: 430) anymore. They now appear on screen as multi-faceted individuals and groups, which is emphasized by Frederick Aldama:

Latina/os are actively educating the way people in the U.S. hear, taste, see, smell, touch, think, and feel. To varying degrees of complexity, as creative agents or subjects of created cultural phenomena, Latina/os appear in all variety of today’s pop culture: TV (web and otherwise), film, animation, comic books, video games, art, slam poetry, music, food, sartorial wear, and so much more. (2016: 1)

The scholar adds that, nowadays, “Latina/os exist as a vital presence in all layers of today’s U.S. pop cultural tissue” (2016: 4), which, among others, enriches telenovelas, sitcoms, sports or reality shows, not only on Univisión and Telemundo, but also on typically Anglo-American
TV channels. Furthermore, “Spanish-language television has […] contributed to the Latina/o imaginary, or Latina/os’ understanding of the imagined Latina/o community, regarding discourses of race, gender, class, nationality, citizenship, and global politics” (Beltrán 2016: 23). Bilingual shows have recently found a niche in mainstream media and primarily serve “to younger, acculturated Latina/os interested in media that connects with their culturally hybrid identities and lives” (2016: 23). That way, Latino/a-oriented media has ultimately experienced a push towards more authentic and empowering narratives.

**Differences between Television and YouTube**

Since the chosen media sources, which are examined in the analytical part of this paper, include several *YouTube* videos by the internet personalities LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo as well as episodes of the TV sitcom *¿Qué Pasa, U.S.A.?*, the most salient differences between TV programs and *YouTube* videos need to be discussed. Ever since the global introduction of the internet (as we know it today) in the 1990s, numerous new genres and means of transmitting content have been developed. One of these revolutionary means of addressing large audiences all over the world is the U.S.-based video sharing platform *YouTube*, which was founded in 2005.

While television generally aims at providing large audiences with already revised and edited content on various topics that are assumed to be of interest for young and old, *YouTube* enables its users to actively engage in the process of creation, as it gives producers as well as actors, content-creators, comedians, musicians and many others the opportunity to present themselves in front of a video camera – that way, self-portrayal, showing talents and spreading user-generated content is facilitated. Videos on *YouTube* can always (and without any external edition or intervention) be uploaded, edited and deleted. In this sense, *YouTube* serves its users to promote agency and engagement in the process of self-description and transmitting information to other *YouTube* users all over the globe, which promotes “universal distribution” (Uygur 2010: online) to a worldwide online community. Hence, instead of solely watching TV programs and particular shows at a certain time and on a pre-selected channel, *YouTube* offers possibilities that go far beyond receiving content in a passive way.

By creating and uploading their own videos, users are given the chance to show their own personality without any outside intervention. Thus, *YouTube* can be described as more dynamic and sovereign than television. Content can be changed, adapted or erased at any given time, which clearly revolutionizes the way of providing and receiving information.
In contrast to TV audiences, consumers of YouTube videos can choose when and what they want to watch without having to wait for the program to be streamed on TV at a fixed time. Additionally, viewers can (dis-)like, subscribe, rate, share, report and comment on the videos, which actively engages them in the process of revision and editing. This opens up a new dimension of communication, contribution and critique, which is missing when consuming TV content (cf. Uygur: online).

While television faces us with issues concerning pre-selected and already determined content as well as with restrictions concerning when and where to watch desired programs, YouTube poses other disadvantages. Due to its lack of revision, censoring and editing, videos on YouTube can indeed contain inappropriate, illegal or copyright-violating content. As it is not always legally used or monitored, YouTube can be problematic in terms of the protection of information distributed through its many channels. In this sense, TV networks enjoy more credibility than YouTube videos, as they have already established their names as enterprises that are based on a more ‘official’ level (cf. Uygur 2010: online).

The postmodern approach, which has already been introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, can also be applied to the description of audiovisual content on YouTube. As countless new videos are being uploaded on the platform every day, YouTube can be understood as a medium that is constantly in flux and reinventing itself. Also, by being able to delete, edit, share, rate or report the videos, YouTube users always renegotiate the content, question and challenge it, comment on it and thereby change the entire YouTube landscape, the social network can be considered dynamic and interactional. This clearly highlights its relational and inconsistent nature, which can be compared to the postmodern idea of a ‘fluid’, shifting and instable reality.

In regard to YouTube and the online representation of Latin Americans, “we’re witnessing a renewed emphasis on Latina/o support of Latina/o media production, as digital media tools have enabled communities and individuals to take media representation once again into their own hands” (2016: 32). Social media platforms have altered the attitudes and consumption of millions of consumers and audiences worldwide. Among others, “YouTube has become a daily interaction of leisure within the lives of Americans” (Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 13). The video platform does not only offer well-known social media personalities the opportunity to show their talents and qualities, it also opens up perspectives and chances for the average person to share their skills, ideas and thoughts on a platform with millions of users around the globe.

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The representation of stereotypical ethnic behavior and minority attitudes seems to attract large audiences on the video platform, which “suggests the apparent use of racial stereotypes in order to attract viewers” (Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 14). Even though most of the stereotypical ethnic depictions on YouTube do not serve to foster negative images of ethnic groups, but much rather to celebrate them, many “characters are humorous in content and overall exaggeration” (2017: 14). These racial portrayals are often reinforced by Latino/a YouTubers themselves, who frequently use phrases such as ‘Latinas/os be like…’ or ‘When Hispanic parents…’ and thereby subsume their own community as homogenous and non-diversified. Male YouTubers, such as LeJuan James, even “dress up as a Latina woman by putting on an apron and a wig” in order to represent stereotypical Latinas (Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 15).

Undoubtedly, this “over-exaggerated depiction” of Latino/a identities “contradicts the true reality of Latinos” (2017:15) living in the U.S., as it mainly concentrates on uniform and allegedly ‘typical’ behavior of the largest minority group in the United States. This generation of Latinos/as on YouTube often uses their own culture, upbringing and traditions to poke fun at their community and make other Latin American immigrants relate to them. Nevertheless, “YouTube can also serve as a medium for Latinos to combat social stigmas and overall Latino misrepresentation” (2017:16) by using the stereotypes against themselves. Now, more than ever, “Latina/os themselves serve as storytellers and creative practitioners” in the media (Beltrán 2016: 23) and thus can create positive images of their culture to celebrate it with people who think alike.

LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo, whose YouTube videos about assumed Latino/a identities and the attached characteristics have already reached large audiences through their comedic and satirical content, both have a Latino/a background, as their parents are from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and Cuba, respectively. By making fun of their own Latin American heritage, Latino/a parenting and the way they were raised as Latino/a immigrants in the United States, the two internet personalities generate laughter and identification within their audiences. Self-deprecating humor and satire serve as means to make aware of common stereotypes that are assumed to be typical of immigrant Latino/a identities and family relations in order to question and dismantle them. By making their (Latin American) viewers relate to the upbringing and experiences presented in the videos, while making them laugh about the hilarious and highly exaggerated behavior of the (mostly female) characters, Jenny Lorenzo and LeJuan James actively use stereotypes for their own purpose.
They ridicule common assumptions by overdoing them and making them seem ludicrous. That way, their audience is entertained and can relate to some degree to the presented scenarios, while challenging and deconstructing said stereotypes happens on a more implicit, though hilarious and comedic, way.

2.2. Using Labels and Stereotypes in Media Representation

According to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, “[e]very form of creative work […] relies on stock characters” (2011: 180), which highlights the necessity for simplified and stereotypical categorizations in order to facilitate understanding in common discourse. Stuart Hall defines “[s]tereotyping as a signifying practice” (1997: 257) and thereby emphasizes how stereotypes create meaning and spread shared concepts within society. However, labels and stereotypes homogenize diversified groups and exaggerate their allegedly typical characteristics in order to classify them (cf. 1997: 258). Since the media landscape is predominantly white and elitist, the Anglo-American culture is promoted as dominant, ‘normal’ and appropriate, while anything that deviates from the norm is portrayed as strange or foreign. Consequently, minorities are automatically excluded from the standardized U.S. American society and thus are depicted as different from the majority (cf. Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 5). This practice inevitably has (potentially negative) consequences for the portrayed groups, as the public subconsciously internalizes the presented images at face value without ever questioning them. Hence, “[s]tereotyping puts people in boxes and creates images that result in false presumptions accepted as incontrovertible truths” (Hernández-Tuyrol 2011: 24).

With particular focus on Latino/a stereotypes in popular culture, researchers have observed assumed innate linguistic, behavioral and cognitive aspects that are frequently foregrounded as ‘given’ for the entire Latino/a community. Hyper-sexuality, lack of English skills or a strong Spanish accent are only some of them (cf. Aldama 2016: 7). In numerous examples in popular culture, the typical Latino/a is caricatured as unintelligent or as “overly sexual character, gangster, snazzy entertainer, [or] the illegal immigrant” (Quinones Rivas and Saenz 2017: 1). The author Charles Ramírez Berg lists “six Hollywood stereotypes of the Hispanic” (2011: 183ff.): “El Bandido, The Halfbreed Harlot, The Male Buffoon, The Female Clown, The Latin Lover and The Dark Lady” (cf. 2011: 184-186), which have appeared in numerous (Western) movies throughout history.
While ‘El Bandido’ is a violent, dishonest criminal, the ‘Halfbreed Harlot’ appears to be lusty, flirtatious and nymphomanic. The ‘Male Buffoon’ is generally depicted as a naïve, childish and comedic loser. Other than the ‘Halfbreed Harlot’, the “Female Clown’ is not sexualized, but appears to be ridiculous, overly emotional and quite irrational (cf. Ramírez Berg 2011: 184). In addition, there are the ‘Latin Lover’, who is an erotic womanizer who commonly seduces and tricks girls, and the ‘Dark Lady’, a mysterious upper-class woman, who, despite being distant, fascinates and seduces men (cf. Ramírez Berg 2011: 185-186).

Apart from the above-mentioned prototypical Latino/a characters in (Western) movies, “minorities are typically represented as irrational, prone to violence, lacking in intellectual sophistication, oversexed, morally lax, and dirty” (2011: 186). All of these qualities do in fact carry negative connotations and thereby harmful stereotypes of Latinos/as. Due to these clichés, Latino/a immigrants “are often perceived as less intelligent or culturally advanced than Anglos, less affluent than whites or Asians, less intelligent, more prone to be on welfare, and more likely to be engaged in drugs or other criminal activity than whites or Asians” (Golash-Boza 2011: 430). The consequences for Latin American immigrants themselves are unfavorable, as popular culture has contributed to the U.S. majority’s perception of Latinos/as as inferiors. Thereby, the gap between us and them is maintained and the subordination of the Latino/a minority is reinforced. Berta Esperanza Hernández-Tuyrol, a Latina herself, complains: “It is this imagery – gender, race, ethnic, color and class stereotyping – that falsely imprisons all of us” (2011: 25).

Due to this ‘imprisoning’ and often harmful nature of stereotypes, challenging and ultimately deconstructing them is of utmost priority. While many assumptions concerning Latino/a identities solely perpetuate the cultural differences between Latin America and the U.S. and thereby hinder assimilation and damage Latino/a heterogeneity, explicitly addressing and challenging them can promote awareness of aspects that have formerly been accepted at face value. In the chosen media sources, the process of revealing and exposing popular assumptions happens through the use of satire, laughter and exaggeration – thereby, humor serves as vehicle to lay bare simplified and homogenizing notions of Latino/a identities. Thus, reading against the grain and questioning popular beliefs about Latinos/as and the many features/characteristics attributed to them can enable a more holistic understanding of the significance and dangers of labeling and stereotyping.
2.3. Politics and Means of Subordination in the Media

As mentioned in the preceding section, negative stereotypes of Latino/a immigrants are frequently fostered by the mass media. Unsurprisingly, “[t]here is in fact a close […] relationship between the news media and public authorities” (Mauk and Oakland 1997: 331), which aim to convey their ideologies and policies via pop culture to the general public. Dominant political elites thus contribute to the formation of the public opinion through their particular narratives, which are transmitted to the population through the various media channels and formats. By reinforcing inequality and the power relations within the U.S. society, the dominant group ensures the maintenance of their hegemony and power (cf. Hall 1997: 259ff.).

Already “[i]n the 1800s, political cartoons in leading newspapers around the country were rife with demeaning and racist stereotypes of the peoples of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines” (Morín 2011: 126). José Morín discusses the intention behind the degrading images and states that they served to systematically suppress inferiors by making them look uncivilized and uneducated as well as in constant need of U.S. intervention in their home countries. Additionally, “[r]acism and a racialized vision of the peoples of the developing world also proved useful in the establishment of a framework for the unequal application of the law to Latinos/as in the United States” (2011: 126).

Charles Ramírez Berg also underlines the unequal representation of Latinos/as and Whites in his research. He clarifies that, while Latin American immigrants were depicted as criminals and savages, solely the good morals, sobriety, education and civilized character of Whites were commonly pointed out. This manipulative media representation clearly supports the dominant white Anglo supremacy: “Stereotyping in films slips effortlessly into the existing hegemony, the subtle, naturalizing way the ruling class maintains its dominance over subordinate groups” (2011: 183). Therefore, the media serve as a tool to promote elite, political narratives, “by representing dominant groups as ‘naturally’ empowered and marginal groups as disenfranchised” (2011: 183). Through this political employment of manipulation via media, ethnic exclusion is encouraged and the public opinion is led in the elite’s desired direction.

Along the lines of Ramírez Berg’s argumentation, Suzanne Oboler (1995: xvi) discusses the political agency in ethnic stereotyping and points out how these negative images are used to differentiate one minority group from the rest of the population, which, ultimately, determines the group’s inferior position within U.S. society.
Oboler’s understanding of the link between politics and media stereotyping becomes evident in the following quotation: “Labels are proposed from a political position and used by a particular social grouping according to the particular and changing social value attributed to them within specific contexts” (1995: xvi). Furthermore, the ethnic labeling process is closely connected to the distribution of goods and opportunities as well as to the justification of military interventions in various Latin American nations.

The Latin American content creators, producers and characters in the selected media sources, with particular focus on the YouTube videos, however, are not labeled by others. Instead, they label themselves and name their videos, for instance, “When Hispanic Parents lecture you about friends” (James 2017: online), “When Hispanic Parents Pick You Up Late” (James 2018: online), “When you ask your LATINA MOM if you can attend a SLEEPOVER” (Lorenzo 2018: online) or “Latina Moms During New Year’s Eve” (Lorenzo 2017: online). Thereby, the internet personalities automatically homogenize all Latina moms/Hispanic parents and put them in stereotypical roles, as they are constructed as a unified mass. The characters in question are thus subsumed under one identity or label, as they are represented as prototypical Latina mothers and Hispanic parents, without considering the various backgrounds and cultural differences within the Latino/a or Hispanic communities. By doing so, LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo reverse common stereotypes attributed to Latino/a identities and use them for their own purpose. They actively highlight and ridicule popular assumptions by exaggerating stereotypes and making fun of them. In this sense, it can be said that by labeling themselves as Latinos/as or Hispanics and poking fun at their own culture and heritage, the YouTubers challenge and ultimately deconstruct Latino/a stereotypes by reversing and playing with them. They draw on common assumptions about their minority and use satire and humor to generate laughter and thereby dismantle them.

3. Combining Language and Culture: “I Am My Language”

Linguistic skills and language use form a major part of the investigative chapters of this thesis. In the media examples by LeJuan James, Jenny Lorenzo and ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, language use is always closely related to culture, heritage and identity. The choice of language of the individual characters highly depends on their relation to the respective culture. While the use of Spanish emphasizes a character’s ties to the Latino/a community, speaking English rather represents the process of assimilating to the Anglo culture. Due to this reason, the link between culture and language needs to be emphasized in advance.
First, this chapter aims at elucidating the concepts of language and culture per se. Then, Spanglish, code-switching and bilingualism are focused on, as they frequently appear in the analysis of the media examples and represent language phenomena that constitute part of many Latino/a immigrants’ lives in the United States:

We use the term culture to refer to all the ideas and assumptions about the nature of things and people that we learn when we become members of social groups. It can be defined as ‘socially acquired knowledge’. This is the kind of knowledge that, like our first language, we initially acquire without conscious awareness. We develop awareness of our knowledge, and hence of our culture, only after having developed language. The particular language we learn through the process of cultural transmission provides us, at least initially, with a ready-made system of categorizing the world around us and our experience of it. (Yule 2014: 271)

This quotation by the British linguist George Yule already summarizes the main idea of what is commonly considered as culture, namely the concept of knowledge and meaning-making within a social group that serves to categorize and understand the world. Other scholars such as sociologist Patricia Fernández-Kelly describe culture as the “essential but slippery kernel within the concept of ethnicity” (2002: 180). This quotation already suggests that each ethnic group seems to have (at least some) respective cultural values in common. Joane Nagel sees culture as the production of meaning, which also “designates the language, religion, belief system, art, music, dress, traditions, and lifeways that constitute an authentic ethnicity” (1994: 161). Hence, it can be assumed that, on the one hand, values and beliefs are part of culture, while, on the other, they simultaneously influence and reinvent the culture itself, which then also renders the cultural members’ perception of reality. Culture with all its meanings, consequently, is internalized by all of its members as fixed, unquestionable and immutable. Nagel further explains that “[c]ultural constructions […] define the boundaries of collective identity, establish membership criteria, generate a shared symbolic vocabulary, and define a common purpose” (1994: 163) that enables “the construction of community solidarity and shared meanings” (1994: 164) through customs, traditions, practices and mindsets. Consequently, culture facilitates the development of a sense of we.

For Stuart Hall (1997: 1), language serves as the ideal medium to create and exchange meaning within a certain cultural group. For him, meaning can solely be produced and transmitted through a common language, as it is created through discourse and communication. According to the renowned Jamaican-British sociologist, “language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meaning” (1997: 1). This inherently foregrounds the link between language and culture, which is strongly visible in Hall’s research, in which language “operates as a representational system” (1997: 1).
Other scholars such as Juan F. Perea describe language as “the carrier and vessel of culture, which in turn shapes language and perception” (2011b: 599). In addition, Perea sees language as one of the main symbols that people use to identify with a particular culture. The Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa also emphasizes the relation between language and culture, in particular with ethnic identity and the respective culture, by stating that “[e]thnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language” (2012: 81).

Specifically regarding the language of the Latino/a community living in the United States, “Latinos are perhaps more attached to their language than is any other non-English speaking [immigrant] group” (Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 563). Despite residing in an English-speaking country, many Latin American immigrants do not want to lose their Spanish skills and usually continue to communicate in Spanish at home and with their relatives. In addition, “bilingual schooling, bilingual driver’s tests, bilingual welfare forms, even bilingual assistance in the voting booth” (Crawford 2011: 565) are offered by the U.S. government and thereby enable Spanish-speaking immigrants to navigate their way through their new environment with the help of linguistic support in their mother tongue.

For Latinos/as, Spanish seems to constitute a major symbol of their culture and an indicator for ethnic belonging (cf. Perea 2011b: 599). However, as they are living in an English-speaking nation, Latino/a immigrants generally have to improve their English skills and use the English instead of the Spanish language in the public setting in order to find employment, communicate with the Anglo-American majority, advance in educational settings or conduct official/administrative business. Thus, immigrant Latino/a lives “are divided between the two [languages], very often using Spanish as their private tongue and English as their public language” (Durán 2016: 168).

Besides having the distinction between a public (English) and a domestic or private language (Spanish), many Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. have started to combine both languages and mix them in the most creative ways, thereby creating Spanglish, a blend of English and Spanish, which is going to be discussed in the subsequent section. Gloria Anzaldúa describes this language phenomenon as “un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir” or a “language which [Latino/a immigrants] can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés, but both” (2012: 77).
3.1. Spanglish: “Un Lenguaje Que Corresponde a un Modo de Vivir”

Spanglish is a language variety that results from mixing English and Spanish and primarily applies to the speech community of Latinos/as living in the United States. Alone the term ‘Spanglish’, combining Span-(ish) and (En)-glish, already points out the blended nature of this linguistic phenomenon, which combines two language systems and thereby creates a whole new way of communication. This mixed variety then also offers the opportunity to take advantage of a new, hybrid identity. Blending English and Spanish thus enables the creation of a fresh and innovative way of speaking, which strongly reminds of Homi Bhabha’s ‘third space’ (1994) as well as of Mary Louise Pratt’s ‘contact zones’ (1991) mentioned in chapter 1.4. Instead of choosing one or the other, Spanglish speakers draw on both languages and thereby establish a new tongue.

Gloria Anzaldúa describes the emergence of this linguistic coinage as follows: “[W]e became aware of our reality and acquired a name and a language […] that reflected that reality” (2012: 85). For Anzaldúa, Spanglish is a bilingual way of speaking that is applied by U.S. Latinos/as in everyday conversations and comes naturally to them. They generally speak both, English as well as Spanish, and frequently switch between these two language systems. Along these lines, John Lipski describes Spanglish as a “hybrid language” (2004: 18), “arising from the head-on collision between English and Spanish” (2004: “Introduction”), which Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. are constantly exposed to. Like Anzaldúa, Lipski does not promote the idea of choosing one language over the other, but considers the language variety “from an additive rather than a subtractive viewpoint”, enabling “cross-fertilization” (2004: 18-19) and the creation of a new, innovative, linguistic identity.

Several academics such as Ana Ramos Fernández (2007: 53) claim that nowadays, “Spanglish is so widespread in the U.S. that somehow it has become a normal way of speaking”. She adds that, in the U.S., “Spanglish is as common as English or Spanish” (2007: 53). Even though this comparison might seem slightly exaggerated, Spanglish has indeed become the linguistic reality of millions of Latin Americans in the United States. In simple terms, “Spanglish is the blending of two languages: Spanish and English” (2007: 53) that constitutes the basic speech pattern in Latinos/as’ daily conversations. Along with the numerous Latin American immigrants to the U.S., the Spanish language has entered the public sphere as well. Spanish has become part of the U.S. culture and has thereby changed the way of speaking in the Northern hemisphere.
Many Latin Americans do not wish to give up their mother tongue, as it forms part of their culture and identity. They oftentimes pass it on to their children in order to keep it alive, even in an entirely English-speaking environment (cf. Ramos Fernández 2007: 44f.). The scholar explains:

[T]here is a high number of Latin Americans that use Spanish just within the family environment and English for the rest of their normal lives. In this sense, we could affirm that the great majority of Latin Americans that live and work in the United States are immersed in a bilingualism of Spanish and English in which one language dominates above the other. (2007: 54)

As Ramos Fernández mentions, Spanish in the U.S. is often used within a private, domestic setting of immigrant families (regardless of the generations that have been living in the United States), whereas in the public sphere, English dominates the conversations, in particular for the younger generations. This mix of the two languages and the respective code-switching connected to it indicate a mutual “cultural fusion: the hispanization of the United States and the anglosaxonation of Latin Americans” (2007: 54). The academic adds that “Spanglish represents for many people a sign of identity” (2007: 55), which inevitably connects the use of Spanglish to the immigrant Latino/a culture.

Journalist Ed Morales discusses different aspects regarding Spanglish: He does not only see Spanglish as a language (variety), but much rather considers it a way of living. He firmly believes that we “are moving toward a Spanglish hemisphere” (Morales 2002: 273) and thus attaches high priority to this linguistic phenomenon. Morales traces the origins of Spanglish back to the middle of the 19th century, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo took place. He explains that “Spanglish speaking began informally in barrios and along the southwest borderlands, it gradually became part of the living cultural history of Latinos in the U.S.” (2002: 96). For him, Spanglish is characterized by its particular lexicon, morphology and syntax. However, the main feature of this language mix is its vocabulary (cf. 2002: 25f.).

The journalist clarifies that Spanglish offers the opportunity to take on a third identity, which neither stays purely Latino/a, nor becomes fully American. This idea draws on Homi Bhabha’s ‘third space’ (1994), which has already been mentioned in chapter 1.4. Due to being in-between two cultures and linguistic influences, Latino/a immigrants tend to create another, innovative language that manages to reflect their new, hybrid identity resulting from said influences. Hence, language (as essential part of culture and identity) can be considered the ‘third [linguistic] space’, which enables a new form of identification that is neither English nor Spanish, but an additional creation.
Therefore, Morales moves away from solely focusing on linguistic elements and enters a more social dimension. He expresses that “Spanglish is the ultimate space where the in-betweenness of being neither Latin American nor North American is negotiation” (2002: 95) and equates it with living in multi-subjectivity. The scholar explains that there “is no better metaphor for what a mixed race culture means than a hybrid language, an informal code” (2002: 3). Morales closely connects his Latino/a community to Spanglish and expounds that, in his opinion, it is not only the way they talk, it is also how they are. Furthermore, he defines Spanglish as a “dynamic, continuing recombination of cultures” (2002: 4) and a “state of perpetual, chameleonlike flux” (2002: 5) at once, which enables people to avoid having to choose between black and white by offering them to be both. Spanglish represents the in-between state that results from the “displacement from one place, home, to another place, home, in which one feels at home in both places, yet at home in neither place” (2002: 7).

Cultural theorist Ned Crouch (2004: 55) juxtaposes the idea that language serves as means of interpreting, transmitting and shaping culture and consequently becomes part of the culture itself. With primary focus on Mexican Americans and life at the borderlands between the U.S. and Mexico, the Chicana author Gloria Anzaldúa discusses Spanglish in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, by defining it as a natural process that occurs when two cultures or two identities meet: “Spanglish comes more naturally to me. I may switch back and forth from English to Spanish in the same sentence or in the same word” (2007: 78). Already in 1987, the author claimed that by “the end of this century, Spanish speakers will comprise the biggest minority group in the U.S.” (2012: 81). Anzaldúa personally identifies with Spanglish and understands ethnic identity as inseparable from linguistic identity. With the statement “I am my language” (2012: 81), she foregrounds this relationship. Consequently, introducing an innovative language variety such as Spanglish, which draws on different languages in order to create a novel and unprecedented way of communicating, goes hand in hand with the (re-)invention of a new kind of identity.

### 3.2. Bilingualism

The U.S. linguist Glenn Martínez describes bilingualism as “the cornerstone” (2006: 3) of the immigrant Latino/a experience, which already suggests that it is essential to touch on bilingualism when focusing on Spanglish and immigrant Latino/a identities in the United States. In very basic terms, bilingualism is understood as “the knowledge and use of two languages” (Martínez 2006: 42).
However, this definition seems to be lacking exactitude, as the focus should also be on the respective proficiency in both languages. Consequently, Martínez specifies that bilingualism is the native-like control of two different languages (cf. 2006: 4). This mostly refers to people who have learned two languages ever since they were little and hence, dominate both languages like their mother tongue.

Thus, bilingualism is closely connected to the reality of Spanish-speaking Latinos/as in an English-speaking environment such as the United States. Most of the people of Latin American descent who reside in the U.S. mostly talk Spanish with their family and English in school, at work or with English-speaking friends and acquaintances. The use of one or the other language highly depends on the social situation and the content of the conversation (cf. Martínez 2006: 5). Bilingual speakers generally know when it is appropriate to use which language. Most of the time, the younger generation’s use of Spanish is solely limited to a family setting, when having conversations with relatives and other members of the Hispanic community. The rest of the time, English serves as a means to communicate in public, as it is the language of the U.S. majority and is needed in institutional as well as in labor domains.

The American sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine explains that bilingualism already evolves “when the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language” (1995: 11). Again, this definition seems to lack substance, as it is very simplified. Romaine later adds, similar to Martínez, that bilinguals need to be able to control both languages just like native tongues, but also points out that bilingualism is “entirely relative because the point at which the speaker of a second language becomes bilingual is either arbitrary or impossible to determine” (1995: 12). The linguist precisely describes the first language or mother tongue of a speaker as a language that is applied during the speaker’s childhood, especially at home (cf. 1995: 19).

In the case of Latinos/as, it is quite likely that the first language of most of them is Spanish, as it was spoken in their family setting when they were children. English, then, would be considered the second language of the speakers. However, this does not mean that English has to be the less-mastered language of the individual; throughout the years and through the contact with English at school and at work, the individual might be even better in speaking and writing in their second language. Romaine elucidates that “many bilinguals might know one language better because they have been schooled in it [in the U.S. mostly English], yet feel a stronger affective attachment to another language which was learned and used in the home [Spanish]” (Romaine 1995: 22).
In addition, the linguist (1995: 181) points out that learning two languages can either happen simultaneously (when one parent speaks to the child in one language and the other parent in another) or consecutively (when Spanish is learned at home and English later on in kindergarten and school). Either way, actual bilinguals should be able to express themselves spontaneously in various situations, without stammering or having to look for words. Since Spanglish, as a bilingual variation, does not underlie any official lexical, grammatical or syntactic rules, it “gives free reign to the creation of hybrid vocabulary and even verbs” (Ramos Fernández 2007: 71).

3.3. Code-Switching

Code-switching is a useful tool in the creation of Spanglish utterances. This term refers to the use of two codes (or two language systems) in the same sentence, utterance or discourse (cf. Martínez 2006: 101). Gloria Anzaldúa declares the following in connection to her use of Spanglish and code-switching in her everyday conversation as well as in her literary texts: “The switching of ‘codes’ […] reflects my language, a new language (2012: Preface). It becomes apparent that the Mexican-American writer intentionally switches between English and Spanish and thereby creates a new language, Spanglish, which automatically reflects her cultural and linguistic hybridity as well as her dual identity. Glenn Martínez expounds that the “most salient characteristics of [Spanglish] is not to be found in either Spanish or English, but rather in the sustained usage of both languages in a single sentence or discourse event. Scholars refer to this linguist practice as code switching” (2006: 94).

Martinez adds that in “bilingual communities, the potential for this type of linguistic dexterity is multiplied” (2006: 94), which clearly applies to immigrant Latino/a community in the United States. The bilingual speakers can decide for themselves when to switch from one language to the other. By combining English and Spanish elements within one sentence or discourse, unique constellations of words and phrases are used to bring particular points across. The bilinguals usually know when, where and how to use code-switching in order to express themselves effectively (cf. 2006: 94-95). Furthermore, code-switching can be applied in different ways. This is emphasized by the following quotation by Glenn Martínez, who lists ways of mixing languages that are frequently used by bilingual speakers: “A speaker may decide to include a single Spanish word (with Spanish pronunciation) within a stretch of English discourse. A speaker may instead decide to include an entire Spanish phrase within an English sentence or to produce one sentence in Spanish and the other in English” (2006: 95).
In many occasions, code-switching is used to fill lexical gaps, which means that the speaker might not be able to think of a particular word in Spanish or English and thus needs the other language to fill the gap (cf. 2006: 100ff.). According to the scholar, code-switching demonstrates high linguistic dexterity and fulfills various social functions. Linguist Suzanne Romaine (1995: 120, 169) defines code-switching as the controlled alternation between two language systems, including their grammar, syntax and vocabulary. In its most basic form, code-switching is used “to provide what is perceived to be the best way of saying something” (1995: 169) and hence, serves Latino/a immigrants to communicate effectively and effortlessly by using their native tongue as well as the language of their new home country. This is going to be illustrated in several media examples, in which Latino/a immigrants frequently switch from English to Spanish and vice versa in order to get their point across.

4. Family First: Latino/a Kinship and Family Relations

The focus of the thesis at hand lies on the media representation of Latino/a identities and family relations, which already stresses the importance of approaching Latin American kinship in this theory chapter. The examined media sources all deal with Latino/a parenting and intergenerational family structures as well as with their construction in popular culture. In order to provide a basis for the analysis, this chapter aims at outlining Latino/a family structures, gender roles, parenting and different degrees of assimilation to the United States within intergenerational immigrant families.

Commonly, Latino/a family relations are represented as deviating from the assumed Anglo-American norm, not solely in terms of size and intergenerational closeness, but also in regard to parenting methods and the transmission of cultural values. The following subchapters concentrate on how the “transfer of the cultural and spiritual values” (Anzaldúa 2012: 100) of one generation to the next takes place in Latino/a immigrant families living in the United States. All of the aspects mentioned in the following sections will also re-appear in the analytical part of this thesis, as they are included in the selected media in order to construct stereotypical Latino/a identities and kinship relations.

4.1. Latino/a Family Structures and Gender Roles

In general terms, Latino/a families are perceived to be “hierarchical in structure” (Del Castillo 2011: 501). This means that the elders of the family have the most authority and power in an intergenerational setting.
Grandparents, who usually constitute the eldest generation in the household, are represented as those who make decisions and deserve the most respect, since they are very knowledgeable and have more life-experience than the others. The parents, then, appear to follow the grandparents’ lead and transmit the values and knowledge that they have received to their children (cf. 2011: 501). In this hierarchical structure, the children need to show respect and have to listen to their parents and grandparents, as they are in the lowest hierarchical position in the household. Gender-wise, male family members are generally hierarchically higher than females and therefore, men can exercise more authority than women. The ethnic studies expert Adelaida R. Del Castillo expounds that, “while the older have authority over the younger, the father remains the ultimate authority over the household and family matters” (2011: 501).

Apart from this hierarchical structure, Latino/a families commonly also differ from Anglo-American ones in size. “Latinos tend to have relatively large families” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 9) with more members living under one roof than in white families. Most Latino/a households also have a lower income as white homes in the United States. Thus, according to the psychologists Ana Mari Cauce and Melanie Domenech-Rodríguez “poverty is especially great for Latino families: about 23% of Latino families were living in poverty in 1999, almost three times that of non-Latino Whites” (2002: 9). The combination between large households and low incomes poses risks for Latino/a families, as they often have to struggle financially, work several low-paid jobs and have little opportunities for upward social mobility.

Concerning gender, the Latino/a family structure is quite unequal. As gender describes the socially constructed male and female roles in society (cf. Del Castillo 2011: 501), these fixed roles and norms also influence individual’s positions in the family. According to the gender studies expert Mary Holmes, “[g]ender refers to the social and cultural expectations and practices involved in acting as feminine or masculine” (2011: 186). These expectations and practices that are referred to behaving in feminine or masculine ways are already imposed on children at a very young age. Holmes even argues that “boys and girls are socialised differently from birth” (2011: 190). Due to this desired and also subconsciously internalized behavior of either sex, boys and girls as well as men and women are treated differently within society. These prescribed roles are then “reinforced by social institutions”, including “the school and the workplace” (2011: 191). Nevertheless, gender education and socialization primarily stem from parenting and customs in one’s own family.
Latino/a kinship is usually portrayed as patriarchal and unequal, since “fathers [are often thought of as] oppressive as well as negligent with their family responsibilities, Latina mothers [are perceived as] burdened by male oppression while raising and supporting their families” (Cammarota 2011: 437). Julio Cammarota (2011: 438) details how Latina mothers are usually responsible for raising the children as well as for performing household chores. The fathers, on the other hand, function as breadwinners for the family. Hence, the gender relations in the families appear to be asymmetrical and rather fixed. Del Castillo describes Latino/a family structures as follows: “According to the traditional ideal, men wield authority over women, the husband enjoys authority over his wife as does the brother over his sister” (2011: 501).

This statement foregrounds the gender inequality and culturally prescribed gender-roles in Latino/a households, which seems to be accepted within the Latino/a community as traditional custom. Similar to Del Castillo, Jenny Rivera describes the Latinos/as as a “male-centered community” (2011: 518), in which men are often machos, while women are rather domestic and submissive. The scholar further comments that Latinas are generally limited to their roles as mothers and wives, detailing that a “Latina must serve as a daughter, a wife, and a parent, who places the needs of family members above her own” (2011: 518), which represents the quintessential idea of marianismo, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.2.

For women, it is especially important to practice traditional and religious rituals in order to pass on these values to their children. As loyal mothers, they are expected to raise their children appropriately by teaching them the Spanish language (even when living in an English-speaking country), the rituals and traditions of the community, “including the importance of religion and church attendance” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 16) as well as respect towards elders. This can be attributed to the fact that “Latin American societies continue to uphold the idea that a respectable woman’s place is in the home” (Oboler 1995: 115). Although this patriarchal idea might seem estranging to Anglo-Americans, it has its roots in the Latin American community and is often maintained in the United States.

Extensive research has illustrated that the specific gender relations in the Latino/a culture can be traced back to the Roman Catholic insistence on male domination. Law professor Laura Padilla describes Latinas’ relationship with the divine as intimate and relevant. According to her, “Latinas’ view of family also colors their religiosity. As mothers, Latinas are primarily responsible for inculcating religious values into their children” (2011: 503).
Since the majority of Latinos/as practices their religion, mothers are also responsible for instructing “children in the faith” (2011: 503) and for teaching them the virtues of Christian life. Hence, religion plays an important role in Latino/a families, as can be seen in the “devotion to the Virgin Mary, a strong belief in the intercession of saints, and the habit, particularly among women, of lighting candles or establishing home altars” (2011: 503).

The Christian faith in Latinos/as is said to go back to the colonization era, starting in 1492, during which European Christian missionaries tried to convert the Americas to Christian faith and imposed their religion on the indigenous people on the American continents. The European invaders tried to dominate the indigenous people by rendering them inferior and uncivilized and wanting to force their alleged superior knowledge onto them. By doing so, they “systematically destroyed the natives’ religious traditions” (Padilla 2011: 504) and involuntarily converted many indigenous people to Catholicism. During that time, “[a]ll women, regardless of class, shared many forms of oppression and subordination, and no woman could exercise leadership within the Church” (2011: 504). Females only served as housewives, housekeepers, mothers and procreators, which has had and continues to have a strong impact on today’s gender roles within the Latino/a community, which is still predominantly (65%) Catholic (cf. Stevens-Arroyo 1998: 172). Even today, there are “limited Church-defined roles for women” (2011: 507) and female church members continue to have little to no power within the religious community.

Nevertheless, in the United States, the gender roles attributed to women and men nowadays seem to be less rigid, since women usually earn their own money, which supports them in their spatial and social mobility. Additionally, they can make more decisions on their own and are not solely restricted to the domestic sphere. This is further underlined in the following statement: “In the United States, Latinas, who typically work outside the home, likewise report less rigid gender roles than may have traditionally been the case”, so “Latino families are becoming more egalitarian” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 15).

It is essential to question and challenge the above-mentioned stereotypes regarding hierarchical family structures and gender roles in order to gradually deconstruct them, as it is very improbable that these assumptions apply to the entire Latino/a community as if it was one homogeneous, unified mass. In addition, to overcome such hierarchical structures and gender expectations, which might form part of the reality of some Latino/a families, these issues need to be explicitly addressed and made aware of. As has been shown, women are said to be responsible for child rearing and passing on cultural values to their children.
This could also be the reason why, in the media sources, women are much more present as men. Since children presumably spend more time with the female adults (primarily their mothers and grandmothers) in the household, women are the ones who are mostly represented in regard to parenting and family values.

Especially in the chosen YouTube videos, gender stereotypes concerning Latina (grand-)mothers are being ridiculed. Frequently, moms and grandmas are made fun of, as they appear to be the primary caregivers or persons of reference for their children (in LeJuan’s case the son and in Jenny Lorenzo’s the daughter) and hence, their parenting principles and childrearing strategies are oftentimes highlighted, mocked and implicitly challenged. Female caregivers are frequently displayed as overprotective, highly monitoring, hot-tempered, aggressive and choleric women, which certainly puts them in a bad light regarding their parenting strategies.

The (grand-)fathers, who rarely (if ever) appear in any of LeJuan James’ or Jenny Lorenzo’s YouTube videos, in contrast, do not seem to play a relevant part in the upbringing of their children and thus are not the primary target of mockery, satire or ridicule. That way, Latino/a upbringing in general and female Latino/a conduct in particular are not only focused on in detail, but also questioned and dismantled. The hilarious and quite exaggerated representation of ethnic as well as gender stereotypes that are foregrounded in female Latino/a parenting in the videos mainly serve to generate laughter in the audience; however, by poking fun at them and thereby making their behavior look absurd, they also contribute to the deconstruction of said assumptions, as they expose how ludicrous this stereotypical conduct actually is.

4.2. Parenting in Latino/a Families

Concerning parenting and the socialization process in general, Ani Mari Cauce and Melanie M. Domenech-Rodríguez explain the following:

The goal of socialization within the family is to develop individuals who will be capable of functioning as competent adult members of a social group. It is through the socialization process that children acquire the attitudes, beliefs, roles, and competencies that are a prerequisite to successful participation in their society. (2002: 12)

Since, according to the scholars, the socialization at home is supposed to prepare the individual for their participation within their respective cultural environment and social community, parenting methods and strategies usually differ from one culture or ethnicity to the other.
With specific focus on Latino/a identities, therefore, it has to be kept in mind that Latin American “cultural norms and values are different than those of majority White Americans”, due to their “different socioeconomic status, family structures, and risk environments” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 12).

For Latin Americans, as for any other ethnic group, the primary socialization agent is the family. In detail, the parenting and childrearing is mainly attributed to the mothers. As they are the ones who spend most time with the children, Latina mothers are responsible for teaching them the right values and respect for the elders (cf. 2002: 12). In addition, it is very important for Latino/a upbringing to “maintain family values, norms, and traditions” (2002: 14) that are rooted in the Latin American culture. Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez name different parenting principles that appear to be quite common in Latino/a families: “Values that have been considered distinctly Latino include familismo, personalismo, marianismo, and machismo” (2002: 12). Similarly, Linda Halgunseth et al. name slightly different “cultural childrearing goals such as familismo (familism), respeto (respect), and educación (moral education)” (2006: 1282).

Since familismo is represented as the fundamental principle underlying Latino/a parenting and upbringing, this term requires further explanation. First and foremost, it has to be said that Latino/a parenting is frequently described as “household-centered rather than child-centered” (Villenas and Deyhle 1999: 424). This means that the child has to fit into the family, contribute its part to the overall prosperity of the household, care for its members, do its chores and show responsibility by helping out. Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez detail: “Familismo refers more specifically to the importance of family closeness and getting along with and contributing to the well-being of the family” (2002: 12). Hence, familismo includes collective values, solidarity, loyalty, authority and obligation. Additionally, the maintenance of “strong family ties” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1285) is ensured by promoting reciprocal help, commitment to the family’s needs and intergenerational financial as well as emotional support. Thus, it can be assumed that Latinos/as generally “put a much higher premium on family closeness and respect for authority compared to independence and assertiveness” and put “greater value on conformity to authority than on autonomy” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 13). This is frequently highlighted in the chosen media sources, with particular emphasis on ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, in which familismo and close family ties are of high importance.

Another family value that is widely spread across Latin America is respeto. Gloria Anzaldúa elucidates: “Respeto carries with it a set of rules so that social categories and
hierarchies will be kept in order: respect is reserved for la abuela, papa, el patrón, those with power in the community” (2012: 40). It becomes evident that respeto is closely connected to the hierarchical structure of Latino/a families, as it is reserved for the elders and males in the family. The traditional hierarchical divide enforces respect towards elder generations and higher authority status, which demands children’s obedience and appropriate manners (cf. Ferreira 2014: 7-8). The goal of the respeto principle is to preserve harmonious interpersonal relationships through the exercise of parental authority, the children’s adherence to said authority and proper conduct (cf. Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 25). Some of the essential signs of respect include “verbal and nonverbal rules of respect such as politely greeting elders, not challenging an elder's point of view, and not interrupting conversations between adults” as well as “respecting the role of each member in the family” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1286).

“Another consistent Latino childrearing goal described in the literature is educación. The term educación […] refers to training in responsibility, morality, and interpersonal relationships” (2006: 1286). This moral education should teach children good manners and positive qualities such as politeness, responsibility and honesty, which should be practiced within the family or the community. Personalismo is also often referred to when discussing Latino/a family values. “Personalismo and familismo are related values that have been defined in a variety of ways” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 12). Basically, personalismo puts high importance on a good personality, inner qualities, the practice of good deeds and getting along well with other members of the family and community – qualities such as “warmth, trust, and respect form the foundation for interpersonal connectedness, cooperation, and mutual reciprocity” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 19) are desired.

Marianismo and machismo are gender-based values that carry prestige within the Latin American community. While marianismo is “based on the Catholic ideal of the Virgin Mary [and] emphasizes the woman's role as mother and celebrates the mother's self-sacrifice and suffering for her children”, “machismo […] stresses the man's role not as father but as head of household” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 14). This might also be the reason why the stereotypically constructed female characters appear more frequently in the selected media examples than their male counterparts and consequently are chosen as the main targets of ridicule. These gender-related principles determine fixed roles for male and female members of the family and are taught to children at a very young age. This underlying understanding of expected female or male roles can be observed in the way Latino/a parents raise their children differently according to gender:
[Latino/a] parents may use a more permissive parenting style with adolescent sons than with daughters due to gender biases in Latino parenting practices. It is also thought that Latino parents are more prone to adopting authoritative and egalitarian parenting styles with adolescent sons, but stricter and more authoritarian parenting styles with adolescent daughter. (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 20)

These values become visible in regard to having boy- or girlfriends, going out, staying somewhere overnight or doing household chores. In general, boys are raised with more freedom to decide and act freely, while girls are more restricted in their liberty, since “in relation to [Latino/a] culture, the woman belongs to the home and the man belongs to the streets” (2007: 23). These aspects of marianismo once more highlight the gender expectations and differences between male and female members of the Latino/a community.

4.2.1. Particularities of Latino/a Parenting

By stressing particularities of Latino/a parenting in contrast to U.S. (Anglo) childrearing, the cultural differences between the two are inevitably stressed. However, it is not the aim to foster common stereotypes about Latino/a parenting principles and their deviation from the assumed Anglo-American norm; much rather, this chapter serves to introduce common notions regarding Latino/a parenting that are going to re-appear in the analysis later on. The chosen examples of popular media construct Latin American family relations and parenting in a stereotypical way and thus draw on popular assumptions that distinguish Latino/a from Anglo parenting in terms of strictness, monitoring, corporal punishment, or passing on cultural values. Said stereotypes are then mocked, challenged and ultimately deconstructed, as they are made fun of and laughed at. Nevertheless, these particularities, which are frequently attributed to Latino/a identities and parenting, need to be introduced first.

Studies conducted by Halgunseth et al. have illustrated that Latino/a parents are both, “highly indulgent and highly controlling” (2006: 1284) in contrast to Anglo-American parents in the United States. For them, physical guidance, physical closeness, providing comfort through soothing and cuddling as well as sharing kisses and hugs are quite important (cf. 2006: 1284). Additionally, Latino/a parents are said to spend much time doing activities with their children and thereby supporting a positive parent-child relationship. This includes playing sports, spending time outside, doing crafts or playing board games, among others (cf. Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 23f.). As children get older, Latina moms are thought to become stricter and more demanding, as rules such as chores and curfews are established.
According to Halgunseth et al., “Latino parents tend to implement more rules than Euro-American parents” (2006: 1289). Researchers have also hinted at “a positive relation between child age and maternal use of corporal punishment” (2006: 1285). Corporal punishment is perceived to be more common among Latino/a parents as among Anglo-Americans, which it is mostly deployed when children consciously misbehave or disobey their elders. The gradual increase of strictness and punishment in relation to age appears to stem from the assumption that after the age of six, children should be old enough to think rationally, so “deviations from parental expectations may now be interpreted as willful disobedience” (2006: 1285).

Generally, Latina moms are characterized as highly monitoring and protective in regard to their children’s conduct and freedom. “Monitoring refers to parental awareness of children's whereabouts and behavior” (2006: 1288). Commonly, Latina moms want to know everything about the children’s day. Especially with teenage children, mothers tend to expect “their adolescents to adhere to parental guidelines and to obey their rules” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 22). Through parental control, Latino/a parents aim to supervise the activities of their children and have an idea of their whereabouts, friends and activities. Guilamo-Ramos adds:

> Latino parents have, at times, been characterized as authoritarian and control oriented in their interactions with their adolescents and as more insistent on discipline and obedience than white families […] Latino parents are said to make unilateral decisions affecting their adolescents rather than engage their adolescents in a democratic decision-making process. They are thought to expect their adolescents to conform to parental guidelines and assist parents and siblings. (2007: 19)

This idea of control and authority especially applies to raising girls, as gender differences are said to require particular rules, discipline and strictness in Latino/a families. While Latin American parenting towards boys is thought to be more lenient and yielding, the childrearing of girls is assumed to be much more restrictive, rigorous and monitoring. This gender inequality could be linked to the importance of *marianismo* and *machismo* within the Latino/a family setting, which suggests distinct treatment of girls/women and boys/men.

### 4.2.2. Issues Regarding Latino/a Parenting in the United States

Most importantly, it has to be taken into account that immigrant Latino/a parents generally experience “acculturative stress and control” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1285), which clearly influences the way they raise their children in the United States. Halgunseth et al. discuss the unfavorable influences of social insecurity, economic pressure, language barriers, unemployment and low wages on parenting methods in Latino/a families and highlight that “stressed parents may assess children's behavior more negatively than they would if they were
living under more secure, relaxed circumstances [...] parental stress is positively related to higher use of discipline and directiveness in Latino families” (2006: 1285). Hence, it was not surprising that in studies concerning acculturative stress and its impact on parenting, “economic pressure was linked to depressive symptoms for both mothers and fathers, and parental depressive symptoms, in turn, were related to the marital problems and combined parent-child reports of hostile parenting (strictness, punishment, and nagging)” (2006: 1290).

Moreover, U.S. parenting strategies are often characterized as a negative influence on Latino/a children, as it deviates from Latin American values and practices. Since Latina mothers aim to educate their children in a culturally appropriate way, which is rooted in Latin American traditions and mindsets, “they worry about the effect of American culture on their adolescents”, as they “view American culture as being more permissive than Latino culture and, as such, a threat to their own vigilance as parents” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 27). The cultural differences between Anglo-American and Latin American upbringing are said to be numerous and thus, Latino/a parents have to “rely solely on the family to teach cultural values such as familismo, respeto, and educación” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1289). Oftentimes, this leads to enforced restrictions regarding social contact outside the family in order to control the negative influences U.S. parenting could have on Latin American children. This can be attributed to the fact that children’s misbehavior or disobedience might “not carry much literal meaning in the United States” (2006: 1285) as it is considered harmless, but could still cause distress in Latina mothers because, in their culture, disrespectful conduct reflects “terrible behavior” (2006: 1285) and requires punishment.

In addition, typical Latin American family values might decline over generations, as immigrant children, particularly those who already comprise the second and third generation living in the U.S., become Americanized and assimilate to the Anglo-American culture, including its parenting methods and mentality. Above all, familismo tends to diminish in accordance to the years Latin Americans have spent in the United States, since immigrants and their children automatically assimilate to the less family-centered and more individualistic Anglo-American majority, which consequently poses a threat to the traditionally strong Latino/a family ties (cf. 2006: 1285f.).

4.3. Intergenerational Differences

The relevance of intergenerational differences in Latino/a immigrant families becomes evident when examining the selected media sources. Intergenerational gaps between the
members of the (mostly three-generational) immigrant households in respect to the strong ties to their heritage, different degrees of Americanization (or assimilation to the Anglo culture), the importance of Spanish skills or holding on to *familismo* are laid bare in the videos. In the examples, every generation living in Latino/a households has their own characteristics, behavior, linguistic skills, and attitudes towards immigrant assimilation – thus, these aspects need proper clarification in advance.

Intergenerational differences inevitably become visible when various generations are living in the same household. Even though this does not solely count for Latino/a families, they generally have larger families within one home and hence, intergenerational issues might occur more frequently. On top of that, immigrant Latinos/as living in the United States might have to deal with various degrees of assimilation/Americanization within one single household and thus, these differences could become even more noticeable. While most first-generation immigrants living in the United States might still reminisce about their Latin American home countries and the ‘good old days’ in their native culture, second- or third-generation immigrant children might not even feel connected to their parent’s heritage anymore, as they have been living in the U.S. their entire lives. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult for Latino/a immigrants to teach traditional values to their children. Latino/a children who have been living in the United States ever since they were born (or little) oftentimes lack the ties to their Latin American roots, which could easily provoke intergenerational conflicts and misunderstandings. Even though Latina moms are characterized as “invested in transmitting cultural values to their [adolescent] children” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 27), they automatically compete with outside influences that teach their children other values, mindsets and cultural practices. In a household where barely assimilated grandparents, partly assimilated parents and predominantly (or fully) assimilated children live under one roof, the different degrees of immersion in the Anglo-American culture frequently cause intergenerational disagreements “that may arise from adolescents growing up in a markedly different culture than that of their parents or caregivers” (2007: 27).

4.3.1. Immigrant Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process of immigrants adjusting to a new social context. This concept is commonly applied to immigrants and their relationship to the culture they have recently immersed in. Assimilation processes can slightly differ in the degree of change that the immigrant undergoes.
Defining assimilation in detail has proven itself to be rather complicated, as the pertinent literature provides a myriad of different definitions of it. In simple terms, “assimilation means being or becoming similar” (Schunck 2014: 12). In the case of immigration, assimilation usually means that the individual immigrant or group of immigrants tries to become more similar to the host society of their new place of residency. This process of adaption and assimilation entails that the immigrant (group) takes on certain patterns of behavior, values and attitudes from their social surrounding. Reinhart Schunck further defines assimilation as a “concept that describes the process by which individual immigrants become culturally and socially more similar to the autochthonous population” (2014: 11). He adds that “[t]his understanding of assimilation is inherently relational—it describes one group (or person) and its relation to another group (or person)” (2014: 11). In other works, assimilation is explained as erasing social and ethnic differences between two groups, while one of the groups assimilated to the other and integrates their elements.

The Canadian psychologist John Berry stresses that, in the assimilation process, “culture is such a powerful shaper of behavior” (1997: 6). He refers to the fact that, while trying to assimilate to another social group, the respective individual inherently loses their own habits, values and attitudes in order to be able to fully integrate into the desired community. Berry et al., among others, consider assimilation as the logical choice “when there is little interest in cultural maintenance combined with a preference for interacting with the larger society” (2006: 306). Thus, assimilation always functions a dual process, as it usually entails losing one’s own cultural traits to some extent, while becoming more similar to a new culture.

Scholar James Marrone comments on “the dual nature of cultural assimilation: people simultaneously un-assimilate from their native culture as they assimilate to a new one” (2017: 3) and adds that “people specialize in one culture or identity at the expense of the other” (2017: 4). These quotations illustrate that the assimilating individual or group needs to give up some of their own attitudes and patterns of behavior in order to adapt to those of the dominant society. Immigrants do not solely assimilate in language and behavior, but they also live through changes in their identity, as they move away from their former self, un-assimilate from their old identity and evolve into a rendered person with a (slightly) altered identity.

Giovanni Facchini et al. characterize immigrant assimilation as “a process of convergence of immigrant behavioral and attitudinal outcomes to the outcomes of the native-born” (2014: 2). Facchini et al. go on to list different dimensions in which immigrant assimilation can be measured.
Among others, they name factors such as language, citizenship acquisition and employment, while only mentioning religion peripherally. They elucidate that assimilation can be considered an absorptive process on the immigrants’ side (cf. 2014: 2f.).

The Hungarian university professor István Kónya states that “[m]inority members can choose whether or not to assimilate into the majority” (2002: 1). In the case of Latino/a immigrants in the United States, younger generations generally seem to decide in favor of assimilating quickly, as this adaption to the Anglo-American culture enables them to advance in educational as well as in professional settings and thereby experience a social upward movement. Elder immigrant generations (especially those who have just recently arrived on U.S. soil) do not seem to be willing to (fully) adjust to the Anglo majority and its norms, values and mindsets, as they might seem estranging and foreign to them. Additionally, they do not necessarily have to strive academically or professionally anymore and hence, are not urged to assimilate – neither linguistically nor culturally. Thus, their way of adapting to the Anglo-American surroundings clearly deviates from partial or complete Americanization or assimilation and can be termed ‘acculturation’.

The concept of ‘acculturation’ basically refers to adapting to some extent to another social group/culture, while simultaneously maintaining aspects of one’s own culture and including it in the new context and environment. In contrast to the concept of assimilation expounded beforehand, acculturation does not primarily consist of becoming like the dominant social/cultural group; it much rather refers to adapting some of the dominant social group’s elements, while still maintaining one’s own cultural components as well (cf. Berry 1997: 7ff.). This means that the acculturating group might learn the new language, follow the majority’s traditions and adapt their behavioral patterns, while still practicing their own social group’s rituals, maintaining their native language skills and expressing their own beliefs and values (cf. Berry 1997: 12-13). Even though this idea of ‘acculturation’ might apply particularly well to older and first-generation immigrant Latino/as, who still hold on tightly to their heritage and traditional values while living in a culturally different environment, this thesis solely uses the terms/phrases ‘assimilation’ and ‘different degrees of assimilation’ to describe the various levels of immigrant adaption to the United States in order to avoid complication and to facilitate references in the analysis.
4.3.2. Different Degrees of Assimilation across Latino/a Generations

As can be expected, there is a significant distinction between the assimilation processes of (recently arrived) first-generation Latino/a immigrants and second- or third-generation immigrants, who might have already been living most or all of their lives in the United States. Moreover, the adjustment to a new cultural environment also depends on the age of the immigrant, as younger Latin Americans coming to the United States still need to immerse in the U.S. educational and professional system, while elder immigrants most likely have finished their educational career in their home countries already. Grandparents immigrating to the United States might not feel the urge to adapt to U.S. norms as much, since they are not working or attending school/college anymore and thus can navigate their way through everyday life, even if they are not Americanized concerning their linguistic skills, behavior or mentality. Therefore, much research related to immigrant assimilation focuses on the various “changes between generations” (Waters 2011: 410) that usually result from deviating experiences of assimilation in new surroundings.

In most cases, once settled in the new environment, immigrants “try to fit in, not to make waves, to adopt prevailing manners and inflections” (Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 397) in order to successfully adapt to the receiving country’s majority. According to Suzanne Oboler, U.S. policy urges immigrants to become Americanized, as it strongly promotes conformity, adjustment, uni-identity and monolingualism (cf. 1995: 28ff.). Therefore, to be able to strive socially, economically, professionally or academically, immigrants feel the need to “mimic the style, preferences, and mannerisms of those who dominate” (Montoya 2011: 419). This is further stressed by law professor Margaret Montoya, stating that there is much “social and familial pressure on Latinos to abandon traditional values and lifestyles in order to achieve educational and economic upward mobility” (2011: 417). Above all, the educational system promotes “immigrant socialization and the Americanization process” (Oboler 1995: 95), which likely contributes to the fact that most immigrant Latino/a college students appear to be highly (if not fully) assimilated to Anglo norms and behavior. “To support their academic progress, Latinos have encouraged their children to speak English well and have tolerated other aspects of acculturation, such as changes in friends, clothes and recreational preferences” (Montoya 2011: 417).

One of the most noticeable forms of immigrant assimilation is language acquisition. Angelica M. Ferreira describes the importance of acquiring the English language as follows: “English is vital for daily communication, obtaining employment and earning income […] These necessities require immigrants to formulate abilities to speak and understand English as
a second language. With newer generations, English becomes the dominant language” (2014: 17). This quotation foregrounds the urge to learn English, as it enables social mobility, better educational as well as job opportunities. Without proper English skills, immigrants are limited to low-paid jobs that do not require them to speak in English or even have to face unemployment. According to Elizabeth G. Lanier, the Anglo school system suggests that “Hispanics would (and should) completely lose their heritage language altogether” (2014: 54), which fits neatly into the idea of an “imagined U.S. national identity by which all citizens should speak English and abandon their heritage languages” (2014: 54). So, frequently, when Latino/a immigrant children enroll in school, their Spanish skills and use start to “diminish […] at the expense of English” (2014: 78). This also explains why immigrant children, who grow up in the U.S. and inevitably become part of the Anglo school system, generally speak much better English than their parents and grandparents, who have not attended school in the United States.

Basically, immigrant “[g]enerations [can be] defined as follows: 1st generation, born outside the United States; 2nd generation, at least one parent born outside the United States; 3rd generation or more, both parents born in the United States” (Smith 2003: 315). In general terms, first generation immigrants usually have less education and a lower social as well as economic position as their children, who were born (or at least raised) in the U.S. and have thereby often experienced more years of schooling. Consequently, the younger immigrants tend to have better jobs, more money and more socioeconomic advantages. In addition, they “blend into the more general population, they lose their distinctiveness” (2003: 318) and thus manage to be successful in a predominantly white Anglo-American society.

Numerous studies emphasize how quickly children of immigrant Latinos/as blend into the U.S. American society once they start going to primary school. Suzanne Oboler clarifies: “In fact, increasingly, a significant number among the second and later generations are English dominant, and there are some, although relatively few, who do not speak Spanish at all” (1995: xvi), since English is becoming the first language of most second- (or later) generation immigrant children, “all of whom have been raised and socialized in the U.S. school system” (1995: 97). Doctoral researcher Paige Baralija underscores the negative impact that this monolingual as well as culturally one-sided education has on the immigrant children’s Spanish skills:
This extreme Americanization […] leads many young people to neglect their multilingual heritage in favor of adapting to and blending into a monolingual society. It appears that many immigrant children in the U.S. refuse to speak their heritage language [as] there is the constant pressure to fit in and use the English language as it is the language everyone else around them uses. (Baralija 2017: 18)

As becomes evident, immigrant Latinos/as’ children commonly favor linguistic and cultural assimilation over standing out as ‘other’ and thus adapt quickly to their new surroundings. This process of adaption distinguishes immigrant children from their parents or grandparents, who grew up in another culture, with another mother tongue and in an entirely different environment. Nevertheless, adult Latino/a immigrants also have to dominate the English language to some degree, if they want to find employment or establish social contact with the Anglo-American majority.

Throughout the generations, Latin American immigrants experience a common development “from speaking Spanish, to becoming bilingual, and then to an ever-greater portion who spoke English exclusively” (Bergard and Klein 2012: 324). In their studies conducted in 2005, the demographers Laird Bergard and Herbert Klein have demonstrated that “[n]early all adult Latinos born in the United States speak English well or very well”, whereas “nearly 48% of all foreign-born Latinos spoke no English or did not speak English well” (2012: 320). Due to this gap in language skills, already assimilated immigrant children often “serve as interpreters or language brokers for their non-English speaking parents” (Ferreira 2014: 18) by translating official documents, talking to teachers, lawyers or doctors and representing them vis-à-vis administration and authorities.

The varying degrees of assimilation within one household often lead to intergenerational issues. On the one hand, “newly arrived first generation immigrants are required to navigate through American lifestyle while simultaneously maintaining their cultural value and language from their host country” (Ferreira 2014: 7) and keeping alive cultural traditions, activities and beliefs, which is also highlighted in a study by Jorge Duany in 1996, in which “[f]irst-generation immigrants often referred to their country affectionately as mi país, mi tierra, or mi patria («my fatherland»), but talked about the U.S. derisively as este país («this country»)” (1996: 271).

On the other hand, immigrant children who are exposed to U.S. norms, customs, traditions and the English language, often distance themselves from their parent’s home country and respective culture in order to become more American. Hence, “[c]hildren's valuing of the native culture gradually diminishes and family conflict increases” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1283).
Frequently, however, it is not solely the immigrant’s choice to make “the sacrifice of giving up his or her culture, language, and national loyalty in order to conform to a different society” (Delgado and Stefancic 2011: 397), but they just do not see any other alternative if they want to be accepted by the majority and successful in their lives. Nevertheless, most Latino/a immigrants support the idea that the “culture of origin, practices, language, and identification are maintained or passed from one generation to another” (Ferreira 2014: 17), even in another country. For Latinos/as growing up in a predominantly English-speaking country, preserving Spanish language skills seems to not only be desirable but also expected: “You have pressure from elders to know Spanish if you’re Hispanic” (Lanier 2014: 45). Apparently, speaking fluent Spanish is considered “an essential criterion to claim full ‘Hispanic-ness’” (2014: 41-42) and it is often seen as a disgrace to not be able to talk Spanish as a Latino/a.

Due to the dual cultural influence and pressure, most Latin American immigrants attempt to preserve “aspects of language in American and Latino culture” (2014: 18). Angelica Ferreira argues that “achieving biculturalism [and bilingualism] is an indicator that a Latino possesses characteristics and understanding of American and Latino culture” (2014: 23). Thus, numerous immigrants choose to combine cultural and linguistic influences from both sides to establish a blended identity that can draw on Anglo-American as well as on Latin American elements whenever needed. In order to be able to become somewhat Americanized and still be part of the Latino/a community, immigrants additionally decide to distinguish between their public and private identities. While public identities are “reflecting the values, norms, and behavior of the dominant ideology” (Montoya 2011: 419), private identities mirror Latin American cultural values and are based on the Spanish language. This is further underlined by Susan Armitage, who elucidates that “ethnic groups maintain […] cultural traditions within their own families privately while learning to put on a conformist American face in public” (2002: 132-133).

With particular focus on language, English appears to be the public code used in professional and academic settings, while Spanish is usually spoken in the domestic sphere. Regardless of their English skills, immigrant generation or years living in the U.S., most Latinos/as still use Spanish as the language to communicate with their nuclear family and relatives. Bergard and Klein specify how high the percentage of Spanish-speaking households in cities with a large Latino/a population was in 2005: “In Miami […] with its large foreign-born Cuban population, about 87% of all Latino households reported Spanish as the dominant language in 2005. In Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York about three-quarters of all Latino households spoke Spanish as the principal language” (2012: 347).
5. “Representing Hispanics Around the World”: Latino/a Identities and Family Relations in the Selected Media

This chapter aims to lay bare how the audiovisual media examples by the two YouTubers LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo as well as by the bilingual TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? represent family relations and immigrant Latino/a identities by drawing on stereotypical aspects that are frequently associated with Latin American culture. As the respective content creators/producers and characters in the examples are Latino/a immigrants in the United States themselves, their personal identification and experiences add to the depiction of immigrant Latino/a identity and family relations. The sources are examined in detail and relevant features used in the process of constructing Latino/a identities will be foregrounded. In the analysis, particular emphasis will be put on the language use (5.2.1.), intergenerational relations and parenting (5.2.2.), traditions and cultural values (5.2.3.) and attitudes and behavior (5.2.4.) of the respective immigrants, as these elements seem to be most salient in the ethnic media representation.

5.1. Introducing the Sources

In order to ensure the understanding of the subsequent analysis, the respective sources of popular culture, which are going to be examined in detail, need to be introduced first. Initially, the two social media personalities LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo are going to be presented, and their comedic work focused on typical Latino/a family life, which is regularly published on the video platform YouTube, is outlined. As has been highlighted in chapter 2.1., there are indeed considerable differences between episodes of TV shows and YouTube videos, since the latter have enabled a digital revolution of content as well of mindsets in global users and audiences alike. By providing content-creators, actors, singers, and YouTubers of all kinds with a medium and a network to present themselves and their ideas to a global community, YouTube has opened up new ways of sharing ideas, information and experiences. In the examples of Jenny Lorenzo’s and LeJuan James’ videos, which focus on the humorous portrayal of Latino/a identity and upbringing, satire, ridiculous exaggeration and the self-deprecation of their own Latino/a culture and experiences serve to reveal and challenge common assumptions and stereotypes.

Additionally, the bilingual TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, which centers around a Cuban immigrant family living in Miami and stresses typical issues in connection to language barriers, cultural clashes and different degrees of immigrant assimilation, is introduced.
Even though the content presented in the episodes of this TV show differs from that of the YouTube videos in terms of production, distribution and structure, all three sources share a common comedic background, as they parody immigrant Latino/a family life and parenting in a culturally as well as linguistically different setting than Latin America, namely the United States. Also, the creators of the audiovisual material as well as the characters appearing in them are all Latino/a immigrants themselves and thus represent the hilarious content in a relatable manner. The short presentation of the selected material is then supposed to facilitate the comprehension of the context that the analysis is based on.

5.1.1. LeJuan James

LeJuan James, a 29-year-old Dominican-Puerto Rican social media personality and influencer, published his first videos on the online platform YouTube in 2013. Ever since, the Latino, who grew up in Orlando, Florida, and now resides in Los Angeles, California, “rose to fame by hilariously documenting Hispanic family life and culture on YouTube” (John 2017: online). In his videos, the comedian draws on his own experience as an immigrant child of Latino/a parents living in the U.S. He intentionally parodies his own Latino/a heritage and upbringing in highly stereotypical and oftentimes exaggerated videos: “The comedian post[s] LOL-worthy videos on social media about growing up in a Latino family, and it looks like many could relate” (John 2017: online). In order to attract a large (Latino/a) audience on the video sharing website, LeJuan, whose actual name is Juan Antiles and who has invented his celebrity name as “an ode to his favorite basketball star, LeBron James” (John 2017: online), pokes fun at Latino/a parenting and cultural differences between U.S. and Latino/a families. His main target of parody seems to be the typical Latina mom, whom he frequently impersonates by wearing wigs, aprons, dresses and headbands.

Since LeJuan himself moved from Puerto Rico to the United States when he was in elementary school, the YouTuber manages to realistically (but, at the same time, hilariously) portray the intergenerational differences and conflicts within Latino/a immigrant families, the various degrees of assimilation depending on the respective generations and the controlling and monitoring personality of stereotypical Latina moms. By laying bare the allegedly realistic behavior of Latina mothers, who do not respect privacy, occasionally apply corporal punishment and frequently appear as hot-tempered and strict, LeJuan has already attracted millions of views on YouTube and more than 2 million followers on Instagram.

The social media star is even going to publish his first humorous autobiography, titled Definitely Hispanic: Essays on Growing Up Latino And Celebrating What United Us, in June
According to his own channel description on YouTube, LeJuan aims at “[r]epresenting Hispanics around the world” (James 2013: online) by reproducing his own experiences of living in a Latino/a household in a funny way. In one of his Tweets, the internet personality summarizes his comedic videos as follows: “My content is family driven. It’s clean, relatable humor intended to be enjoyed with your loved ones” (James 2019: online).

5.1.2. Jenny Lorenzo

Like LeJuan James, Jenny Lorenzo has been using her YouTube account, which she created in 2014, to upload entertaining videos about Latino/a life. In her short clips, the 33-year-old Cuban actress, comedian and producer frequently plays the Cuban grandmother (la abuela) or mother (Maruchi), who represent traditional Cuban culture and values, but at the same time have to navigate their way through an Anglo-American environment. Lorenzo, who was born in Miami, Florida, is the daughter of Cuban immigrants to the United States. Just recently, the social media personality moved to Los Angeles, California, to pursue a career as actress and comedian. On her own YouTube channel, she describes herself as “a tiny Cuban-American geek from Miami”, as well as a “comedic actor and content creator”, who “helped kickstart Latin content at BuzzFeed with ‘Pero Like’ and continued on to produce for ‘We Are Mitú’” (Lorenzo 2014: online).

On her autobiographic website, Lorenzo writes about herself that she has become well-known “with her beloved Abuela character that has garnered millions of views online along with her relatable, Latino-based content seen through the comedic and nostalgic lens of a 1st generation Cuban-American” (Lorenzo: online). Her hilarious personifications of Latinas, mainly concentrated on la abuela and la madre, aim to mirror Cuban parenting, upbringing and family life in Miami, Florida. Among other topics, Lorenzo highlights Latino/a protectiveness, the importance of Spanish skills, traditional events, religion, Latino/a food as well as stereotypical Latina (grand-)mothers’ behavior towards their children and grandchildren. Her ridiculous and playful videos have turned the Cuban comedian into a well-known YouTuber within the Latino/a community, who now, in addition to her 138,000 YouTube-fans, has also large numbers of followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

5.1.3. ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?

¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? is a bilingual TV sitcom that tells the story of a Cuban exile family, the Peñas, in 1970s Miami, Florida. The show centers around the family’s struggle to adapt to their new environment, including the new culture and language.
Additionally, it shows how the Peñas maintain their ‘Cubanness’, despite their residency in a predominantly Anglo-American society. The writer and editor of the comedy sitcom, Carlos Frías, describes ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? as “una serie que ayudara a los cubanos recién llegados y sus hijos de primera generación a adaptarse a la vida en su nuevo país” (2017: online). Instantly, “el primer programa bilingüe en la televisión estadounidense” (2017: online) was a huge success in Florida and soon became well-known all over the U.S. It aimed to realistically and amusingly represent the life of a three-generational Cuban immigrant family in the Little Havana neighborhood of Miami. Frías summarizes the theme of the show as follows:

¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? was created by Manny Mendoza and streamed by the PBS Network from 1977 until 1980. Altogether, four seasons and 39 episodes were published on TV. It is often described as “a true, albeit humorous, representation of life and culture in Miami” (cf. Wikipedia: online), which explores the obstacles the Cuban-American family has to face, due to the cultural and linguistic differences between their home country and their new country of residency. More specifically, the sitcom focuses on intergenerational differences resulting from deviating degrees of assimilation, identity crises, misunderstandings due to language barriers and the preservation of Cuban values and traditions in a new setting.

Since the show is bilingual, the language used by the characters appears to be realistic and life-like. Spanglish and code-switching seem to be the norm in this Cuban-American home, especially for the younger generations in the household. While the grandparents, Antonio and Adela Peña, still hold on to their Cuban values and memories and try to solely use the Spanish language to communicate with their beloved ones, the parents, Pepe and Juana Peña, who were born and raised in Cuba and have moved to the U.S. in their 40s, are bilingual as well as bicultural and live between the two worlds. While they, just like the grandparents, hold on to their Latin American roots, they also Americanize to some degree and learn how to speak English in order to be successful in the professional sphere.

Their teenage children, Joe and Carmen, are quite assimilated to the Anglo-American majority, as Joe has grown up in Miami and Carmen was even born there. They, in contrast, seem to be fluent in English and quite Americanized in their way of thinking and behaving, which frequently leads to misunderstandings and intergenerational conflicts.
Because of the varying English skills and knowledge of the U.S. mentality within the family, the children often function as cultural as well as linguistic translators for their parents and grandparents. Especially Cuban-Americans living in Miami describe ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? as “being very true-to-life and accurately, if humorously, portraying the life and culture of Miami's Cuban-American population” (Wikipedia: online), including cultural clashes, numerous misunderstandings, language barriers and humorous conflicts between the generations, which form part of everyday life, not only in the Peña family, but also in a myriad of other Latino/a immigrant families who now live in the United States and still struggle to find their place in their new environment.

5.2. Analysis of the Selected Sources

This analytical chapter aims to investigate how the aspects of language use, intergenerational family relations and parenting, traditions and cultural values, as well as attitudes and behavior are used in the selected sources of popular culture in order to construct typical immigrant Latino/a identities, with particular focus on the representation of Latino/a family values and relations. To do so, satirical YouTube videos by LeJuan James, Jenny Lorenzo and comedic episodes of the TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? are examined in detail to detect those elements that facilitate this construction of stereotypical (but supposedly also life-like) Latino/a identities.

Regarding the representation of family relations, intergenerational differences in language use, behavior, attitudes and holding on to Latino/a traditions and cultural values, as well as varying degrees of assimilation to the Anglo-American majority within one household are emphasized. Each of the subchapters draws on examples by all three of the selected sources and thus aims to detect recurring features that are frequently used in the process of representing an ethnic minority via popular culture. Even though there is still a myriad of other aspects that could be taken into consideration in this analysis, solely the four subtopics mentioned above are going to be discussed.

5.2.1. Language Use in Latino/a Families: “No Me Hables en Inglés a Mí”

In most of the media examples, language use and language skills form a major part of the meaning-making process. Usually, the grandparents or elder relatives, who barely have any contact to Anglo-Americans and do not have jobs that depend on the English language, (almost) exclusively use Spanish in their everyday conversations.
In contrast, parents, who are approximately in their forties and still work in an English-speaking environment, are represented in a rather bilingual way, as, even though they do prefer to use Spanish in the domestic setting, they can speak English as well and use their skills in professional settings or when talking to Anglo-Americans outside of their house. Even though their English skills appear to be good and they mostly communicate without complications, the parents talk with a strong Spanish accent, which immediately hints at their Spanish-speaking descent. The younger generations, such as teenagers and children, seem to be quite Americanized and assimilated, as they generally speak in English inside and outside of their homes (cf. Ferreira 2014: 17, Baralija 2017: 18). However, when talking to elder family members, they also use the Spanish language to get their point across. For the parents as well as for the (teenage) children, Spanglish comes in handy, as they frequently switch from one code to the other, sometimes even within one single utterance.

Intergenerational Differences in Language Use

The very first episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, “Piloto/Fiesta de Quince” (MA Milián 2014: online), already stresses the intergenerational differences regarding language use, since the grandparents, Adela and Antonio, solely speak in Spanish (0:55-01:40), while their grandson, Joe, mostly uses English to communicate with others. It quickly becomes evident that Joe can talk in Spanish, but solely shows poor language skills when it comes to writing or speaking more elaborately, as he has been living in an English-speaking environment for most of his life. Also, he has never acquired proper Spanish skills in school, which occasionally results in errors and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, Joe also switches between English and Spanish and includes Spanglish expressions and phrases in his discourse. This can already be seen when Joe is about to leave the house, wearing a kerchief around his neck. When his mom, Juana, asks him in Spanish if his throat hurts (“¿Qué te pasa? ¿Te duele la garganta?”) (02:05), Joe responds in Spanglish by combining English and Spanish within one utterance: “No chica, I don’t have a sore throat.” (02:08). A similar Spanglish phrase by Joe follows shortly afterwards: “Well, these sweet fifteen parties are really corny; están de madre!” (02:26).

Alone in these two examples, the use of Spanglish by the younger immigrant generations, including Joe, is laid bare. Even though he generally uses English, he is also prone to frequent code-switching. In addition, it becomes apparent that Joe’s teenage sister Carmen constantly switches between the two languages and functions as a linguistic and cultural translator for her Anglo-American, English-speaking friend Sharon, who does not
understand Spanish at all. This appears to be quite common among Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. (cf. Ferreira 2014: 18). This becomes visible when Carmen and her mother Juana talk about the price of Carmen’s *fiesta de quince* in Spanish and Sharon keeps asking “What is she saying?” (13:23) or “Carmen, please, I’m dying of curiosity” (14:07). Yieldingly, Carmen tells Sharon in English what her mother has just explained to her in Spanish (cf. 14:12). Hence, Carmen serves as an interpreter between her Spanish-speaking family and her English-speaking friend, which shows that the bilingual teenager dominates both languages quite well.

The parents of Joe and Carmen, Pepe and Juana, stick to Spanish most of the time, but their English skills are quite good, as they are both working in the United States and thus need appropriate language skills in their everyday conversations. Both of them switch to English now and then, but generally use their native tongue to talk to their family.

This linguistic pattern in which elder immigrant generations who have grown up in a Spanish-speaking country continue to use their native language in the United States, and younger generations, who have lived in the U.S. during their childhood and adolescence, mainly use English in discourse (while still code-switching now and then), seems to be recurrent in the Latino/a community (cf. Ferreira 2014: 17f.). In one of LeJuan James’ videos, titled “Hispanic Parents with their Daughters when their Boyfriend comes over” (James 2018: online), for example, the daughter primarily talks in English, while her mother speaks in Spanish most of the time. This can already be seen in the very first seconds of the video, when the teenage daughter announces “Mom, Christian is here. We’re gonna go to the room and watch a movie, ok?” (0:00) and the Latina mother immediately responds in Spanish, asking “¿Cómo… ¿Cómo fue? ¿Qué ustedes van para, para dónde, para el cuarto?” (0:04). Even though the daughter responds “¿Qué pasó?” (0:08) in Spanish, she later answers with “Whatever, mom” (0:20) in English when she is told to stay in the living room with her boyfriend and tells him to follow her, telling him “vete” (0:23) in Spanish.

In another scene of the same video, the mother tells her daughter and her boyfriend to sit further apart and not to touch each other on the couch, using solely Spanish. The daughter, then, gets annoyed and asks her mother in English: “Mom, seriously?” (0:33). Later on, the Latina mom comes into the living room and cleans the TV, complaining about the dust on it in Spanish, so she could actually monitor the couple on the couch (cf. 1:11). Again, the daughter uses English to express herself and includes a bit of Spanish at the end of her utterance: “Mom, you’re being really annoying. First you tell us to where we need to sit, then you’re on the phone and now you wanna clean the TV? Por favor” (01:19).
Shortly afterwards, the mother is having a private conversation with her daughter in another room and keeps addressing her in Spanish. Even though the girl mostly answers in English, she also uses Spanglish, as in this utterance: “Tu siempre piensas que estoy haciendo algo malo. I’m just watching a movie” (01:50). Along with the instances above, this statement by the teenage daughter draws on English as well as on Spanish and thereby results in a Spanglish utterance. Although the mother solely talks in Spanish, despite understanding and being able to talk in English, and the daughter mostly sticks to English, there are scenes in which the daughter also uses Spanish to address or respond to her mother, which clearly shows that she is bilingual and able to use both languages in discourse; nevertheless, both women mainly use the language they have been more exposed to and feel more proficient in.

An additional video by LeJuan James, which reflects this linguistic pattern, is called “When Hispanic Parents lecture you about friends” (James 2017: online). Again, the Latina mom uses Spanish to talk to her daughter and teach her about fake friends, while the teenage daughter replies in English to her mother. This becomes evident when the mother claims “[a]y, mi niña, que poco tu sabes de la vida” (0:02) and the daughter immediately reacts in English, asking “[w]hat?” (0:04). In response to her daughter’s question, the mom explains her concerns regarding the daughter’s friends in Spanish and the daughter gets angry, which she expresses by saying: “Let me guess. You have a problem with her? Tell me, mom! ¡Cuéntame!” (0:10). The conversation between the two Latina women continues along the line of these examples, where the mother primarily sticks to Spanish and the daughter to English, while in some instances, code-switching between the two languages and the inclusion of words or phrases of one language in an utterance that is based on the other occur. This is demonstrated when the daughter complains: “Honestly, I don’t know what do anymore. Todo lo que yo hago, te molesta” (0:28). Once again, it seems as if, in general, the elder generation, who has grown up in a Spanish-speaking country, prefers to speak in Spanish, while the more assimilated younger generation, who has been living in the U.S. their whole life, rather speaks in English and solely switches to Spanish now and then (cf. Bergard and Klein 2012: 324).

**Code-Switching and the Use of Spanglish**

Concerning code-switching and the use of Spanglish in particular, the title and the theme song of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? serve as excellent examples. Not only does the title of the show itself reflect hybridity by being composed of a Spanish phrase (Qué pasa, eng. “What’s up” or “What’s going on”), it also includes the English acronym for the United States of America.
If the title was entirely in Spanish, it would be called *¿Qué pasa, E.E.U.U.?,* as this is the actual acronym for the United States (*Estados Unidos*) in Spanish. Thereby, the title of this bilingual TV sitcom itself already suggests a linguistic blend, combining a typical Spanish phrase with the English acronym of the United States.

In the intro, English and Spanish are also blended in order to represent the actual language use of Latino/a immigrants in the United States, which is generally based on both linguistic influences and therefore includes frequent code-switching within one text. While the first part of the theme song is entirely in English and goes as follows: “Say hello, America! We are part of a new U.S.A. People, listen, people, let us share what we have today” (0:00-0:23) (MA Milián 2014: online), the second part suddenly switches to Spanish: “Gente, oiga gente, hay que ver” (0:24-0:30). The chorus, then, combines both languages and (0:31-0:46) solely consist of the repetition of the title, *¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?* Hence, the two languages that are divided at first, suddenly blend, as they are used in the same phrase, which could represent the hybridity and linguistic blend of Latino/a immigrants living in the United States and constantly being surrounded by two cultures and two languages. This results not only in a new language, but also in a novel and unprecedented identity (cf. Anzaldúa 2012: 100ff.) or a ‘third [linguistic] space’ as Homi Bhabha (1994) terms it.

In addition, the intergenerational differences are frequently highlighted in media sources and it seems as if there was a particular focus on the Latina mothers. The parents’ generation in general, which, in the selected media, is approximately in its forties, might not be as assimilated to the Anglo-American majority as their children, but they are also not as traditional as the grandparents’ generation, which holds on tightly to its native language, its traditions and cultural values. This also becomes visible in their language use. In Jenny Lorenzo’s video “When your LATINA MOM inspects your HALLOWEEN candy” (Lorenzo 2018: online), contrary to the examples by LeJuan James, the Latina mother primarily talks in English and has a noticeable Spanish accent, but also switches to Spanish in her utterances. Although English is not her first language, the mom indeed dominates it pretty well, as she can express herself without hesitation or language barriers. Frequent code-switching can be detected in utterances such as “[t]engo que asegurarme that it’s safe to eat” (0:50), “[t]he lady that gave you the Reese’s Pieces has too many gatos, okay?” (1:09) or “[t]his is from the creepy viejo allí de la esquina” (1:35). The daughter, on the other hand, who has already grown up in an English-speaking environment, solely addresses her mother in English and never switches to Spanish in this video.
Similarly, in “When you ask your LATINA MOM if you can attend a SLEEPOVER” (Lorenzo 2018: online), the mom speaks English with a strong Spanish accent and constantly switches between the two languages, which becomes apparent in her numerous questions: “And the mother, does she have a husband? […] ¿Divorcioda? […] Boyfriend? ¿Primo? ¿Tío? Brothers?” (0:14-0:21) or “¿Cuándo fue last physical?” (1:03). The daughter generally sticks to English and does not switch codes at all, as is highlighted in her very first lines, saying “Mommy, I made a new friend in school today. Can I go sleep over?” (0:03). In addition, the little girl solely answers her mother’s nagging questions about the sleepover in English, without ever using Spanish.

The frequent code-switching of Latina mothers seems to be quite recurrent in Jenny Lorenzo’s work, as the use of Spanglish, just like in the videos above, is also included in “Latina Moms During New Year's Eve #2018” (Lorenzo 2017: online). Numerous times, the Latina mother switches between English and Spanish and thereby creates Spanglish texts, which apparently seem quite natural to her. “We need to give this house una limpieza” (0:02), “Oye, necesitas ponerte bloomer rojo y bloomer amarillo” (0:06) or “Your tía Gloria, she always said, ‘o I went to Europe’” (1:06) are only three examples of how the mother uses Spanglish in order to get her point across. Without even realizing it, she thereby combines two linguistic and cultural worlds and blends them together to create a new reality.

**The Relevance of Spanish Skills Within the Latino/a Community**

In all three selected sources, there appears to be much pressure on Latinos/as to use Spanish in their everyday conversations, particularly when addressing their family members or elder relatives, since this is seen as “an essential criterion to claim full Hispanic-ness” (Lanier 2014: 41-42). It seems as if Spanish was the traditional and official language of most households, as the immigrant parents and grandparents usually communicate in their native tongue, even when living in an English-speaking country. In the videos, it becomes evident that Latinos/as, especially the elder generations, expect other Latin Americans to know and use Spanish when communicating. For them, it is a disgrace to not be able to talk Spanish as a Latino/a.

The rules regarding speaking Spanish at home are highlighted in LeJuan’s “When Hispanic Parents don’t want you speaking English to them” (James 2018: online). In the video, the Latina mom addresses her daughter entirely in Spanish and complains about the mess in the kitchen, which was supposed to be cleaned by the teenager. When being asked to explain herself, the girl starts to answer her Spanish-speaking mother in English and immediately gets interrupted, yelled at and scolded for it:
Espérate, espérate espérate. ¿Por qué tú me estás hablando a mí en ingles a mí [sic]? […] ¿Qué yo te he dicho hablándome en inglés en esta casa? No me hables en inglés a mí. De esta puerta para allá fuera, a tus amigas, en el trabajo, en la escuela, al noviocito lo que tu tienes […] tu le hablas en inglés a él […], pero en esta casa, en este techo, en estas cuatro paredes que te ofrezco a ti, para que tu vivas como vives, en español, quiero que me hables en Español [sic].

The mother gets angry and instantly orders her daughter to address her in her native tongue. While the daughter replies that “it’s not even a big deal” (1:03), her mom seems to be very upset and starts to whisper to put even more emphasis on what she is saying: “No me hables en inglés, mi hija […] Yo quiero que tu me hables a mí en español […] En esta casa, Español [sic] only” (1:10-1:32). In this example the mother even juxtaposes the differences between the public and the private sphere, as she tells her daughter to use the English language with friends or in school, but certainly not at home. Her Spanish-only policy appears to stem from her desire to continue using her native tongue, so it does not become extinct in her family. The Latina obviously takes pride in her heritage and culture, including the Spanish language – for her, speaking Spanish equals keeping alive her culture and preserving her heritage, even if it is in another country (cf. Ferreira 2014: 7). Hence, she values the use of Spanish at home, while her teenage daughter, who has been raised in the U.S., does not seem to share her concerns.

In episode four of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, “We Speak Spanish” (MA Milián 2014: online), the title already suggests a cultural identification of the Cuban immigrant family with the language. In this case, the grandparents of the Peña household, Adela and Antonio, can barely speak English, as they have been talking in Spanish their entire lives. Consequently, when their grandchildren talk in English, language barriers occur and the two retirees do not understand the teenagers’ utterances. Additionally, the grandparents as well as the parents get angry when they realize how bad their (grand-)son’s Spanish is. Joe, a teenage boy who has been living in the U.S. ever since he was little, might be able to communicate with his family in Spanish, but still makes countless mistakes. He frequently invents Spanish expressions by adding Spanish endings to English words, such as “typear” (2:36) or “cheateando” (6:17), which provokes his grandfather to respond “Qué horror que ese muchacho no sabe hablar su propio idioma” (2:47) and to be very upset.

Later, at the dinner table, all three generations living in the Peña home sit together and eat. When Carmen is asked by father whether she went to the dentist that day, she nods, and her mother continues to ask whether she has had any cavities. As usual, Carmen answers in English and her grandparents complain that they do not understand what she has just said and ask her to repeat it in English (cf. 5:23).
The teenage girl, then, tries to express herself in Spanish and says that she has had “cuatro caverías” (5:30). Suddenly, the grandparents are surprised, since they have never heard the made-up word caverías in Spanish, which Carmen has just literally translated from the English word ‘cavities’ and has added the Spanish ending –ías to it. The grandmother angrily corrects her by saying “caries, niña, caries” (5:34).

As their (grand-)parents realize that Joe and Carmen do not speak proper Spanish, they get very upset. In addition, when the grandchildren speak English, grandmother Adela and grandfather Antonio cannot understand what they mean. Hence, Pepe prohibits his children to speak English in his house and thereby establishes a Spanish-only policy, saying “you cannot speak any more English in this house” (8:15). Again, it is laid bare that the Spanish language is of high cultural and traditional value to the elder generations of immigrant Latinos/as, as they expect every Hispanic to be able to talk and write properly in their native language (cf. Lanier 2014: 41f.). This could be linked to the fear of losing their heritage by neglecting or forgetting about their native language, which is then counteracted through constant reminders of the (grand-)parents to continue talking in Spanish instead of adapting the language of the Anglo environment. Even though Joe and Carmen agree to solely speak in Spanish, they only do so when their (grand-)parents are around. Whenever they are alone or with Sharon, Carmen’s English-speaking friend, they continue to use English, as it is much easier for them (cf. 14:04) and they consider the prohibition of English in the house as “the craziest and most idiotic thing [they have] ever heard of” (11:19).

A further example of language conflicts and the expectation of elder immigrant generations that all Latinos/as should be able to talk Spanish can be noticed in the video “When Abuela Meets La Novia” (2018: online) by Jenny Lorenzo. In the video, the grandmother (abuela) is very excited to meet her grandson’s new Latina girlfriend, which already highlights that cultural transmission and staying within the ‘Latino/a community’ is quite relevant for Latinos/as immigrants in the U.S. The grandmother automatically expects the Latina girlfriend to be able to speak Spanish and expresses her content, saying “¡Qué bueno, hablas español!” (0:48). Suddenly, the retiree is disillusioned when the girl tells her that she does not speak her native tongue, explaining “[o]h, yo no, yo no sa, sa, sabía mucho español [sic]. Estoy aprendiendo” (0:50) in broken and faulty Spanish. La abuela reacts in a bewildered manner, as for the elderly woman, every Latino/a should know their traditional language, even if they have grown up in an English-speaking country. She shows her astonishment by asking “pero… ¿tú no eres puertorriqueña?” (1:01).
Even though the grandson’s girlfriend does indeed have Puerto Rican immigrant parents, they have always solely spoken English to her and hence, she has not acquired adequate Spanish skills yet. From that moment onward, the grandmother seems to be quite distant and cold towards the girlfriend, which emphasizes how important the Spanish language is for her.

Since it has already been established that language can be seen as “the carrier and vessel of culture” (Perea 2011b: 599) and that “[e]thnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity” (Anzaldúa 2012: 81) in former chapters of this thesis, the Latina grandmother’s reaction comes with no surprise. The retiree seems to equal the loss of linguistic skills/identity with the loss of ethnic or collective identity. For her, not being able to identify with the Spanish language simultaneously means forgetting one’s Latino/a heritage and thereby neglecting one’s cultural background.

Also, in terms of Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’ (1983), which, in this case, refer to an assumed Latino/a identity, shared by all Latinos/s alike, not knowing the communities’ native language somewhat damages the retiree’s “image of […] communion” (Anderson 2006: 6). In principle, ‘imagined communities’ (such as that of Latino/a immigrants) are based on a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (2006: 7) that facilitates the identification with said collectives and generates a sense of belonging. But when the “attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations” (2006: 141), such as a linguistic or cultural bond, is disregarded by particular members of the community, a fracture of shared “fraternity” (2006: 7) occurs. Hence, the Latina grandmother appears to interpret the young woman’s lack of Spanish skills as estrangement from her culture and ethnic community and thus decides to turn her back on her.

Additionally, in the video, the younger generations, such as the grandson and the granddaughter, do seem to feel much more comfortable speaking English than speaking Spanish, as among them, the younger family members all talk in English to each other (cf. 1:24, 3:12, 3:53). In order to be able to communicate at least a little bit with the new girlfriend, the grandmother tries to speak a bit of English, even though her strong accent and her limited knowledge of vocabulary suggest that her English skills are rather limited (cf. 3:07). This language barrier between the elder immigrant generation, who wants to continue to speak in Spanish within their ethnic community, and the younger generation, who mostly talks in English and, at least in part, does not know Spanish at all, becomes once more apparent.
Public vs. Private

There appears to be quite a difference between the public and private language of Latino/a immigrants. According to the representation, they usually tend to speak in Spanish when at home or when communicating with people of the same ethnic (and linguistic) group, while in public, they prefer to speak English, as it is the language of the majority. This tendency, which is even predominant within the elder immigrant generations, can be illustrated in a video by LeJuan James, called “When your friends ask Hispanic Parents to sleep over” (2018: online). When the Latina mother is approached by her son’s English-speaking friend, who asks whether her son could sleep over at his friend’s house, so they could watch a football match and play video games, the mother uses her public language, English, to respond to him, saying “I have to talk to his father before I give you an answer” (0:11).

Immediately, it becomes apparent that the mother indeed masters the English language well, which she frequently uses in the public setting. This can be detected in several utterances, which are not only correct, but also do not show any signs of a Spanish accent. As long as she is talking to her son’s friend or he could still hear her, the mother prefers to speak in English. However, as soon as the boy’s friend has left the room and she talks to her son in private, the Latina instantly switches the code to Spanish, ordering “siéntate allí” (0:29). Then, she primarily stays within her native tongue, but eventually includes English expressions and sentences in her utterances, which leads to Spanglish phrases. Hence, the distinction between public and private language is stressed.

Misunderstandings and Language Barriers

In ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, the language barriers resulting from different English skills within the Peña family lead to several humorous misunderstandings. For example, in the first episode of the sitcom, “Piloto/Fiesta de Quince” (MA Milián 2014: online), an amusing misunderstanding between the teenage boy Joe and his (grand-)parents occurs. In his high school, Joe is considered as a potential member for the “Supercool Club” (cf. 10:37), which is a group composed of the most popular kids that carries prestige and respect among the students. As Joe tries to explain to his family what this club is all about and why he is so excited about being a potential member, his sister Carmen, who is also predominantly English-speaking, understands it right away. However, when explaining it to his parents and grandparents, Joe creates a Spanglish word by adding the Spanish superlative ending –ísimo to the English word ‘cool’. 
Hence, he invents the Spanglish word “coolísimos” (10:53), which is supposed to mean “the coolest”, but does not take into consideration that *culo* means “butt” in Spanish. This then results in confusion, as the (grand-)parents get upset when hearing that Joe wants to join a club called *culísimos*, meaning something along the lines of ‘the buttest’ or ‘those with the best butt’ (cf. 10:51, 18:13). This hilarious misunderstanding is provoked by Joe’s insufficient knowledge of Spanish and his incorrect coinage of a Spanglish word, which results from his lack of Spanish skills.

In episode two, “Ay Abuela” (MA Milián 2014a: online), another misunderstanding is caused by language barriers. After the grandmother, Adela, invades everyone’s private space, annoys her grandchildren and is, at least in the eyes of Joe and Carmen, too caring and monitoring (“Siempre se está metiendo en todo lo que hacemos” (6:55)), the Peña family thinks about ways to keep the elderly lady busy and still make her feel needed in the family, while distracting her from constantly getting into her grandchildren’s business (cf. 19:24). They come up with the idea to take her to a plant nursery to buy flowers, so she could take care of them, feel needed and be kept busy at the same time. However, the retiree, who is scared of going to a nursing home and hates the idea that U.S. families actually put their beloved ones into a nursing home as soon as they become a burden, secretly listens to her family talking and solely overhears how her daughter Juana says “Magnifico, mañana por la mañana llevamos a mamá a un nursery” (19:26). Since Adela’s English skills are not good and she does not know that the word ‘nursery’ can also stand for a place to garden and grow plants, she automatically assumes that her family wants to put her in a nursing home, which makes her very disappointed, sad and angry. This example foregrounds how language barriers and a lack of language skills can even lead to misunderstandings within one family. Luckily, the misconception disentangles at the end of the episode (“No abuela, nursing homes son para los viejos, nurseries are for plants” (26:09)) and Adela finally finds out that her family would never even think of putting her into a nursing home.

In episode four of the TV sitcom, which is titled “We Speak Spanish” (MA Milián 2014: online), numerous misunderstandings resulting from language barriers occur. Right at the beginning of the episode (cf. 0:50), Joe’s mother Juana, who does indeed speak English to some degree, but still does not understand everything and has a strong Spanish accent, attends a meeting with Joe’s guidance counselor in school. During their conversation, Juana frequently misunderstands what the counselor, Miss Peabody, tries to express and vice versa:
Ms. Peabody: The reason I called you here today concerns you.
Juana: ¿Yo? ¿Pero que hice yo?
Ms. Peabody: No, no, no. Not Joe, you.
Juana: ¿Tú?
Ms. Peabody: No, not me. You!
Juana: Ah, did I do something wrong? (0:54-1:08)

[...]
Ms. Peabody: I want to ask you why we’re having such a poor turnout of our Cuban parents at the PTA meetings.
Juana: Pity meeting? Oh, who do you pity?
Ms. Peabody: We don’t pity anyone, Mrs. Peña. PTA stands for Parent-Teachers Association. (1:11-1:35)

In this example, Juana and counselor Peabody constantly talk past each other and Juana is oftentimes puzzled because she misunderstands Miss Peabody’s statements, which provokes humorous confusion. Later in the same episode, further misunderstandings evolve, as there are several English-speaking people visiting the Spanish-speaking household. For instance, the man who is actually supposed to pick up the clothes for Goodwill is mistaken for the plumber, who is supposed to repair the dishwasher (15:50-18:30), a lotion saleswoman is mistaken for the person who picks up the clothes for Goodwill (19:00-19:50) and finally, counselor Peabody is confused with the lotion saleswoman (21:10-23:15).

All of this confusion is provoked by language barriers and the fact that the involved individuals talk past each other due to misunderstandings, mishearing and a lack of listening comprehension. At the end of the episode, after a huge argument breaks out among the people in question (cf. 24:40), however, the teenagers are allowed to speak English again, so they can translate what everyone has said and clear the situation. Father Pepe announces: “Right now, you are gonna translate in English for your grandparents, okay? English only!” (25:58). The (grand-)parents stop holding on to their Spanish-only policy and finally realize that it might be acceptable to solely speak Spanish within a Latino/a family, but it is advisable to talk in English when having a conversation with non-Spanish-speakers, as this could avoid many issues altogether.

Even though, in the examples, the language barriers and misunderstandings appear comedic and humorous, they represent real-life difficulties and everyday struggles that many Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. have to deal with. What is here portrayed in a satirical way in order to generate fun and laughter can actually hinder people from communicating effortlessly, understanding others, and getting their point across. In this sense, linguistic assimilation to the English-speaking majority appears to be a functional (though quite demanding) means to avoid misunderstandings, and to enable Latino/a immigrants to “interact [...] with the larger society” (Berry 2006: 306).
5.2.2. Intergenerational Family Relations and Parenting in Latino/a Households: “Cuando Yo Te Digo Que Es No, Es No”

In the process of constructing a typical Latino/a immigrant identity, it seems as if family relations and parenting strategies were of high importance, as they certainly deviate from stereotypical Anglo-American norms, not only in size and number of family members, but also concerning strictness, punishment and parental control. In LeJuan James’ video “When you tell Hispanic Parents ‘NO’” (James 2019: online), for example, the Latino father asks his son, who is playing video games, to help him in another room. When the son repeatedly refuses to help and to stop playing his video game, as he is in the middle of a mission, claiming “[q]ue no puedo, estoy jugando” (0:17) and “Papi, te estoy diciendo que no puedo. ¿Tú no me ves, que sigo ocupado?” (0:21), the father gets angry, takes off his belt and threatens his son to hit him with it (cf. 0:40). All of a sudden, the son stops playing, gets up and looks extremely scared. While in the video, the following scenes are humorous and absurd, as the father starts dancing with a burning belt in his hands (cf. 0:46) and appears to be in joyful anticipation of his son’s whooping, it represents Latino/a parents as prone to use corporal punishment to chastise their children when they disobey. This video clip portrays Latino/a parents as very strict and wanting their children to do whatever they say without refusing or talking back. According to the representation, when Latino/a children do not obey or dare to talk back to their parents, they are immediately punished.

In this video, just like in the other media examples, LeJuan James draws on common assumptions about Latin American parenting strategies and plays with them in a satirical manner. He deliberately chooses the aspect of corporal punishment to vividly highlight a popular Latino/a stereotype and use it for his own purpose. By ridiculing the son’s punishment and the father’s anticipation of it in a highly exaggerated and absurd way, James actively mocks this stereotype and thereby challenges it, which ultimately results in its deconstruction.

Parental Authority and Strictness

This is also represented in LeJuan’s “When you threaten Hispanic Parents” (James 2018: online). The video already starts with the exhausted and gasping Latina mother, who holds a chancla (flip flop) in her hand and yells “[y]a te cansaste, ¿eh?” (0:03), which suggests that she has been hitting her crying son with it. Then, she aggressively adds “¿o tú necesitas un poco más? ¡Dime!” (0:04). The son continues to cry, while his mom yells at him. Apparently, the mother in the video puts a lot of importance of “disciplina” (0:14), which obviously, at
least according to her, has been violated by the son (“Cuando yo te digo que es no, es no. No cuando tu quieras, es cuando tu mamá dice que pares, tu paras” (0:18)). This video depicts how Latina mothers supposedly reinforce discipline and rules and consequently expect their children to follow them without complaining or talking back, as they put “great value on conformity to authority” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 13). In addition, it foregrounds once more that corporal punishment seems to be widely spread among the Latino/a community when a child disobeys their parents. The mother justifies the physical punishment as follows: “Entonces, cuando yo te doy chancletazo [whooping with la chancla], es porque tu te lo ganas, no es porque yo quiero” (0:32), which clearly illustrates that the mother thinks that her son deserves the whooping, due to his misbehavior, which needs to be punished in order for the boy to learn from his mistake (cf. Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1285). Thereby, in this video, Latina mothers are represented as violent and relentless when it comes to strictness and the expected behavior of their children.

Another example of Latino/a parenting, which might not be as emphatic as the ones above, but is still linked to strictness, expected obedience and parental authority, can be found in LeJuan James’ video “When Hispanic Parents talk on the Phone” (James 2017: online). In this example, the Latina mother is in a store, looking for clothes, and her little son is waiting for her to finally finish and go home. When the boy starts complaining and whining because he becomes impatient, the mom first says “[n]iño, ¿te puedes callar la boca? […] Estoy buscando traje, estate quieto, que ya mismo nos vamos” (0:08-0:19) in a rather quiet way, but soon gets very upset due to the whining and threatens her son to hit him, saying “que te saquen los otros dientes” (0:28), which highlights her tendency to apply corporal punishment. Additionally, when the mother’s cellphone rings and she starts talking to her sister in a very loud voice, the already desperate son interrupts her to tell her that she is just too loud. The mom pauses her conversation and addresses her son in a serious voice: “¡Deja de ser tan malcriado y cállate y espera!” (1:36). Again, this example portrays Latina mothers as “authoritarian and control oriented” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 19), not tolerating their children to whine or to talk back and willing to use corporal punishment to chastise them, even if it is in public. Furthermore, they are characterized as frequently threatening their children, ordering them to be quiet and menacing them with whooping.

**Protectiveness and Monitoring**

In episode two of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, “Ay Abuela” (MA Milián 2014a: online), the teenagers of the family, Joe and Carmen, are annoyed by their grandmother’s over-protectiveness and
monitoring, so they complain about her in front of their father, Pepe. Their dad gets upset and is very angry at them, ordering them to sit down at the table and talk to him. In the course of the conversation, Pepe scolds his children for misbehaving and disrespecting their grandmother, demanding “que sea la última vez que te oigo gritarle a tu abuela” (6:29). He adds that “older people you have to respect” (6:37), which depicts the hierarchical family structure and relevance of respeto in Latino/a household (cf. Ferreira 2014: 7ff., Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 25). The younger generations are expected to respect and appreciate their (grand-)parents, as they are the authorities in the community. When Carmen claims that her grandmother “siempre se está metiendo en todo lo que hacemos” (6:55) and Joe calls her a “pest” (7:04) due to her supposedly annoying behavior, Pepe immediately starts yelling at them and tells them that it is a shame to disrespect elders. This example represents how respeto is expected to be maintained within Latino/a families, especially when it concerns the misbehavior towards elders, which is seen as rude and unacceptable.

Another parenting aspect, which is said to be particular for Latino/a families, is extreme monitoring (cf. Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1288). This is primarily the case when concerning teenage Latina girls and their freedom, which characterizes Latin American family structures as unequal in regard to gender roles, as with boys, they usually use “a more permissive parenting style with adolescent sons than with daughters” (Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 20). Latino/a parents are depicted as very restrictive, protective and monitoring when it comes to their daughters, especially in connection to boyfriends. In LeJuan James’ “Hispanic Parents with their Daughters when their Boyfriend comes over” (James 2018: online), it becomes evident that there is no way that Latina girls spend private time with their boyfriends when their parents are close by, as they are constantly monitoring what the couple is doing. In the video, the teenage daughter first wants to take her boyfriend to her room, so they could watch a movie together (cf. 0:00-0:04).

However, the mother appears to be quite surprised and tells her daughter right away that, when her boyfriend is at the house, they can solely stay in the living room and are certainly not allowed to go to her room all by themselves. The Latina mom explains that they have to stay on the couch in la sala, “donde les pued[e] ver a los dos” (0:18). It becomes obvious that the mother wants to observe what the two of them are doing. Reluctantly, the daughter obeys and takes her boyfriend to the living room. Then, when the couple sits close to each other and the daughter tries to touch her boyfriend’s knee, the mother suddenly interrupts by saying “[e]spérate, espérate, espérate” (0:27) and asking “¿Qué está pasando aquí?” (0:28). She then orders the teenagers to sit further apart and to not touch each other.
A few moments later, the mother returns to the living room, after complaining about the daughter’s relationship on the phone, to monitor the teenager’s actions with the excuse that “el telesvisor tiene un polvorín” (1:15). Again, the Latina mother invades her daughter’s privacy in order to have control over the situation and even warns her that she is constantly “velando” (1:45), meaning that she watching them. This does not solely represent gender differences in parenting, since Latino/a parents are characterized as stricter with their daughters than with their sons (cf. Guilamo-Ramos 2007: 20f.), it also shows that Latino/a children do not seem to have much privacy, as their parents constantly control and monitor their actions and thereby invade their personal space, not letting them behave freely.

Once again, the self-deprecating humor applied in this video ridicules the monitoring nature of the Latina mom and thereby challenges this popular stereotype in regard to Latino/a identity and parenting. Satire and mockery are used to address this common assumption and to display it in an overdone and ludicrous way. That way, the stereotype is not only made aware of, it is also questioned and dismantled, as it is depicted as entirely exaggerated and comedic.

Sleepovers

This type of “highly controlling” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1284) behavior and monitoring of children, which is portrayed to be prevalent in Latino/a families, is also stressed in LeJuan’s “When your friends ask Hispanic Parents to sleep over” (James 2018: online) and in Jenny Lorenzo’s “When you ask you LATINA MOM if you can attend a SLEEPOVER” (Lorenzo 2018: online). In LeJuan’s video, the Latina mother is asked by her son’s friend whether su hijo could stay over at his house, so they could watch a big Football match and play video games together. Even though, when first talking to her son’s friend, the mother appears to actually consider the idea of letting her son have a sleepover at another house, she suddenly calls her son and wants to speak to him in private. She starts off the conversation by explaining “[t]ú nunca jamás en tu vida vas a dormir en techo ajeno, porque yo trabajo para que tu tengas cama, para que tu tengas casa para llegar” (0:34) and continues to elucidate why this is so important to her: “Yo le dejo que él venga para esta casa, porque yo sé lo que está pasando y estoy velando” (0:44). It becomes apparent that the mother wants to watch her son and see what he is doing, which she can solely do when he is at home and not at his friend’s house. This is further underlined by the following statement: “Si tú te vas para la casa de John, yo no puedo ver lo que está pasando” (0:49).
In this video, the Latina mother seemingly wants to monitor everything her son does and can only exercise her parental control by supervising him and his friend in their own house. This is also why she rejects the idea of letting him stay over at his friend’s place, as she would thereby lose control over his behavior. The video once more represents the controlling and monitoring nature of Latino/a parents, which restricts their children in their freedom (cf. Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1284ff.)

A similar example can be found in Jenny Lorenzo’s “When you ask your LATINA MOM if you can attend a SLEEPOVER” (Lorenzo 2018: online). In the video description, Lorenzo already clarifies that, “[w]hen it comes to asking your Latina mom if you can sleep over a friend's house, an interrogation is part of the process” (2018: online). Even though this form of monitoring distinguishes itself from the one in LeJuan’s video, the Latina mother in this example also attempts to exercise her parental control in regard to sleepovers. When her daughter approaches her with the desire to have a sleepover at her friend’s house, the mother first reacts positively, saying “[a]y, que lindo, un sleepover” (0:07). Nevertheless, she instantly starts bugging the little girl with numerous questions about her friend, the friend’s family and the house she wants to spend the night at.

The first question, “[w]here does she live?” (0:10), might still seem common to be asked by a mother, but soon, the Latina starts asking for details that her daughter cannot even answer. Questions such as “[p]erro o perra?” (0:21), “[d]o they rent or own?” (0:26), “[d]o they have trap doors?” (0:42) or “[do they prefer] Doctor Who or Harry Potter?” (1:11) appear to be quite exaggerated when considering that the daughter solely wants to stay over at her friend’s house. On the one hand, this detailed interrogation emphasizes that the Latina mom only worries about her daughter and wants to ensure that she is in good hands when sleeping in another home; on the other hand, however, it reveals her controlling and monitoring personality, as she wants to know everything about the friend’s family and bugs her little daughter with pedantic questions that she cannot respond to. This video suggests that Latino/a parents, and Latina mothers in particular, are frequently represented as overprotective, precautionary and in favor of strict parental control, which might be positive to some degree, but also restricts their children in their liberty, their social behavior and their actions.

Expected Latino/a Parenting and the Importance of Passing on Linguistic Skills

When focusing on expectations concerning appropriate Latino/a parenting and the transmission of Latin American cultural values to future generations, teaching Spanish to Latino/a children, despite living in an English-speaking environment, is characterized to be of
utmost importance in this ethnic immigrant community (cf. Ferreira 2014: 7ff.). In two of the selected videos, namely Jenny Lorenzo’s “When Abuela Meets La Novia” (2018: online) and the fourth episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, titled “We Speak Spanish” (MA Milián 2014: online), the transmission of cultural and linguistic values is highlighted. In “When Abuela Meets La Novia”, the Latina grandmother is puzzled when she finds out that the parents of her grandson’s girlfriend, who are Puerto Ricans, have never taught their daughter how to speak Spanish. As they have been living in the state of Missouri, where the Latino/a population is very low, they seem to have never seen the point of teaching their daughter their native tongue. However, although the elderly lady, first, is content about the new Latina contribution to her family, she quickly turns confused when the girl tells her “[m]is padres didn’t teach me [Spanish]” (0:57) and asks “¿[p]ero…tú no eres puertorriqueña?” (1:01). This instance illustrates how the elder Latino/a immigrant generation considers it the duty of Latino/a parents to pass on their linguistic and cultural heritage to their children, even if they are living in the United States.

This representation of adequate parenting and keeping alive one’s heritage throughout various generations can also be detected in the fourth episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, called “We Speak Spanish” (MA Milián 2014: online). In this episode, Pepe and Juana, the parents of Joe and Carmen, are blamed for their children’s lack of Spanish skills, which often hinders the effortless conversation between the teenagers and their Spanish-speaking grandparents. During their family dinner, Antonio, the grandpa of the Peña family, asks in the room: “¿Tú sabes quién tiene la culpa del fricasé que hace este niño [Joe] con el idioma?” (6:42) and points at his daughter Juana and her husband Pepe, who are Joe’s parents, while mumbling the answer to his own questions: “Ustedes dos” (6:45). Pepe and Juana suddenly appear surprised and shocked, as they do not feel as if it was their fault that their children speak poor Spanish. Pepe asks in a startled manner: “¿Nosotros? Juana, do you really think we are responsible because our children speak more English than Spanish?” (6:47). By asking this very question in English, Pepe includes satire to generate self-deprecating humor. Thereby, he implicitly ridicules the entire argument about being responsible and taking the blame for their children’s lack of Spanish skills.

Just like Antonio before, Pepe responds to his own question: “Of course not! It’s the fault of this country, because here, everybody speaks more English than Spanish” (6:55). This example highlights how elder immigrant generations allegedly believe that Latino/a parents are supposed to teach the Spanish language to their children, even if they were born or have grown up in an English-speaking environment, so the Latin American linguistic heritage is
preserved. However, Pepe and Juana, who primarily speak Spanish themselves, seem to tolerate the assimilation of their children to the Anglo-American culture, including its language. They brush off their responsibility and blame their children’s lack of Spanish skills on the English influence of the United States. This also emphasizes how (linguistic) assimilation is considered as a negative influence by elder Latino/a generations, as younger generations “simultaneously un-assimilate from their native culture as they assimilate to a new one” (Marrone 2017: 3); thereby, the “valuing of the native culture gradually diminishes” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1283).

**Americanization and the Decrease of Familismo**

Especially in ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, where all three generations of the Peña family live under the same roof, the cultural clash between the Americanization of the younger immigrant generations and the maintenance of Latino/a values through the elder generations is focused on. As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, Latino/a parents are said to consider the United States as unfavorable regarding their parenting strategies, as the value of familismo, for example, is not as relevant in the Anglo-American setting as it is in Latin America. Episode two of the TV show, which is called “Ay Abuela” (MA Milián 2014a: online), and episode six, titled “Hombrecito” (MA Milián 2014b: online), concentrate on the importance of familismo in Latino/a families and illustrate how U.S. individualism and independence are portrayed as having a negative influence on this cultural family value.

The following examples explicitly highlight an important cultural difference between the U.S. and Latin American. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt’s article “Arts of the Contact Zone” (1991), the ‘contact zone’ “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (1991: 34) that is foregrounded in these episodes basically emerges within one single Latino/a household. Here, the cultural influences of the older immigrant generation clash with those of the younger and more Americanized generation. While in Latin American, the cultural value of familismo or family closeness is of utmost importance and is still perpetuated by the (grand-)parents in the Peña household, the Anglo-American culture rather values independence, autonomy and individualism, which seems to be favored by the assimilated teenagers Joe and Carmen – this clash of ideas inevitably leads to conflicts.

As grandparents, parents and children share one household and close family ties in ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, there is not much room for sovereignty and individualism.
The Latino/a community, including the Peña family, is said to be very family-centered (cf. Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 12ff.), as interpersonal relations are close and everyone contributes their part to create a harmonious family atmosphere. In “Ay Abuela”, the grandmother cares for her grandchildren as if she was their mother. She always wants the best for them and hence is very protective. Joe and Carmen, however, who have grown up in the rather individual-centered United States and are quite Americanized are embarrassed for the supervision by their grandmother, as they consider it annoying and unnecessary, which is reflected by Carmen’s utterance “You see? She is always in the way and making my life miserable” (3:47) and Joe’s claim that grandma Adela is “a real pest” (7:04). It seems as if the relevance of family closeness as well as of protectiveness and reciprocal care within the family, which is of high importance for the elder immigrant generations that are used to it from Latin America, declines within younger generations, as they have been exposed to an entirely different and highly individualistic setting throughout their lives and hence, do not consider close family ties as a priority anymore (cf. Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1285ff.).

In “Hombrecito”, this intergenerational difference concerning family ties is further represented when Joe returns from college and is greeted by his entire family at the airport. The fact that his whole family, composed of seven members, was waiting for him at the airport, greeted, hugged and kissed him when he arrived and also wanted to throw him a welcome-home party back at their house, is not well-received by Joe, as he considers this embarrassing (cf. 0:55). His family, who just wanted to surprise the teenager and make him feel welcome, does not understand why he feels ashamed for them and is hurt and disappointed, because they consider his reaction ungrateful and disrespectful. Joe, who is used to the Anglo-American culture and knows that this is not common for U.S. Americans, does not understand the nice gesture of his relatives, which is based on Latin American *familismo*, strong family ties and physical closeness.

The elder generations of the Peña household are very family-centered and caring, which seems normal and appropriate for them, as they have gotten to know these intimate ties in Cuba already. The children, however, have not been exposed to such closeness in the U.S. and hence consider it weird, unnecessary and embarrassing. This becomes obvious when Joe states: “You people really know how to embarrass a guy, don’t you? Why did you all have to come to the airport?” (0:56). Instead of being thankful for his caring family and for what they do for him, Joe complaints about their welcoming and thereby shocks his (grand-)parents. Consequently, his mother calls him “malagradecido” (1:02) and his grandmother refers to him as “ingrato” (1:09).
Then, Joe addresses his father and asks him “[d]id you have to kiss me in front of everybody at the airport?” (1:13), which suggests that he does not support the idea of physical closeness and the demonstration of affection, which is thought to be widespread among Latino/a families. Pepe responds startledly: “Un padre no puede besar a su hijo en público?” (1:18), whereupon Joe juxtaposes the difference between the U.S. with its family values and Cuba, where family ties appear to be much closer (“Sí, pero no aquí. American fathers don’t go around kissing their grown-up sons” (1:20)). Thrown off by his son’s ungrateful and disrespectful behavior, Pepe yells: “Well, I am a Cuban father y si me da ganas a darte un beso en público, te lo doy” (1:25). Even though Joe confirms that he is not ashamed of his family, he explains that “I’m just tired of doing everything together” (1:57). He then goes on to talk about his uncle Ignacio, with whom he stayed when he was at college. Ignacio is supposedly quite lenient with his children, as “they’re pretty much on their own up there” (2:25), which, according to Joe, is great, but which his elder relatives consider inappropriate for a father.

When grandpa Antonio then complains about “la gente del norte” (2:33) who does not have close family ties anymore, Joe elucidates that “just because kids are given more freedom, doesn’t mean they’re gonna turn out wrong” (2:38). It becomes evident that Joe would like to have more freedom and independence, while his (grand-)parents believe in “strong family ties” (Halgunseth et al. 2006: 1285) and reciprocal care, as *familismo* is highly valued in their culture. This example depicts how the elder immigrant generations still hold on to their cultural values and appreciate family closeness, while the younger, Americanized immigrant generations rather tend to prefer being on their own and long for more individualism and freedom.

### 5.2.3. Latin American Traditions and Cultural Values: Sharing “Memorias Preciosas”

In regard to the media construction of Latin American traditions and the transmission of cultural values in the immigrant Latino/a community in the United States, there seems to be a particular focus on language, family ties, traditional events, superstition and religion. Considering the linguistic tradition, which is based on the Spanish use within the immigrant group, much has been said in the preceding chapters already. All of the three media sources include examples of how important the transmission of linguistic skills and teaching Spanish to the younger immigrant generations is to those immigrants who have lived in Latin American countries before moving to the U.S.
As has been mentioned in chapter 5.2.1. and 5.2.2., the elder immigrant generations are represented as taking pride in transmitting their linguistic heritage to their children and grandchildren. In addition, they appear to consider it as a shame and as a failure in parenting when Spanish is not taught to the children of Latino/a immigrants, since they also belong to the Latino/a minority group and therefore should know the language of their ancestors. For many Latino/a immigrants, holding on to their Spanish-speaking descent seems to be closely connected to the maintenance of their culture and heritage. Preserving and reinforcing Spanish skills in younger generation of immigrants, who have been living in the U.S. ever since they were born/little, is seen as a challenge, as they are constantly surrounded by the English language and by the Anglo-American majority. Additionally, going to school, working in an English-speaking environment or having English-speaking friends automatically distances immigrants from their native tongue and loosens their cultural ties to Latin America, which can be detected in various media examples above.

**Family Values**

When concentrating on traditional family values and parenting strategies in the Latino/a community, ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? serves as a prime reference. Most of the aspects in relation to typical Latino/a family ties have been addressed in the previous chapter and hence, do not need further explanation. However, the two most significant episodes of the TV sitcom, namely “Ay Abuela” (MA Milián 2014a: online) and “Hombrecito” (MA Milián 2014b: online), can be described as portraying that, traditionally, there are two or more generations living under one roof, which is represented to be very common among Latino/a families. Beside the large size of the household members living in the United States, the close ties between the individuals and the high importance of harmony, reciprocal care, love and physical closeness, which deviate from Anglo-American norms, are emphasized. Especially in “Ay Abuela”, it can be deduced that Latin Americans usually do not push off their elders to live in nursing homes, but much rather let them stay at their own house and take care of them as long as possible.

“Hombrecito”, in contrast, stresses how the appreciation of family ties and a family-centered mentality is threatened to diminish throughout the immigrant generations, since younger immigrants mostly assimilate to the Anglo-American standards, which are rather individualistic and independent. Thus, U.S. influences might decrease familismo among younger immigrant generations, while the elder ones generally prefer holding on to their
family and parenting values, as they are still part of their heritage and upbringing (cf. Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 12ff.).

**La Fiesta de Quince**

One event, which is included in the media sources and functions as an example of Latino/a traditions, is the *fiesta de quinceañera*, which was originally invented in Mexico “as a symbolic rite of passage in a young woman’s fifteenth year” (Armitage 2002: 134) and quickly spread all over Latin America. This event could be compared to a similar U.S. tradition, the ‘Sweet Sixteen Party’, but just occurs one year earlier. Initially, the *quinceañera* evolved as a “religious ceremony – a special mass in which the girl is rededicated to the Virgin of Guadaloupe” (2002: 134). Nevertheless, for “Miami Cubans the quinceanera party quickly reached lavish proportions that indicated more about a family’s financial success in America than ‘traditional’ values” (2002: 134). Today, the *quinceañera*, or, in short, *quince*, is widespread among the Latino/a immigrants living in the United States and represents “an important ethnic tradition that affirms a young woman’s sense of pride and self-worth” (Armitage 2002: 134).

In the first episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?., “Piloto/Fiesta de Quince” (MA Milián 2014: online) Carmen is about to celebrate her *quinceañera*. Even though the teenage girl believes that her “parents will never go for the idea of a fiesta de quince” (3:57) because it “costs a lot of money” (5:07) and “sweet fifteen parties are supposed to be big with capital B” (5:40), her mother Juana eventually tells her that they are going to plan the party for her anyway (cf. 7:20). Carmen herself as well as her mother seem to be very excited about having this celebration. Even though Pepe, Carmen’s dad, first rejects the idea of throwing a *quinceañera*, he later agrees to having it, saying that “Carmencita sí va a tener su fiesta de quince” (12:18). Beside several issues with the unreasonably high prices for the entrance, decoration and the dance choreography of the event, everyone is preparing for the big night of Carmen’s *quince*.

When Carmen’s friend Sharon asks whether she is sure about her hairstyle for the party and calls it “a little bit out of fashion” (12:43), Carmen explains that it is a Cuban tradition to wear one’s hair in a specific style: “This is the way you’re supposed to wear your hair” (12: 49). This quotation underlines how there is a traditional Cuban way of dressing, doing one’s hair, dancing and decorating that is specific to a *quinceañera* party. This episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? clearly depicts how important the *fiesta de quince* for the Cuban community in Miami really is.
This celebration represents a traditional Latin American ritual, which is also spread among Latino/a immigrants living in the United States. Hence, Latinos/as all over the country continue to celebrate the fifteenth birthday of their daughters and relatives, so this tradition can be kept alive.

In one video by Jenny Lorenzo, “When our LATINA MOMS make us do PRE-QUINCEAÑERA videos” (Lorenzo 2018: online), the Latina mother has organized a pre-quinceañera video shoot for her daughter, who does not seem particularly happy about it. Even though for the mom, these videos are quite important and she takes them very seriously, the teenage girl seems annoyed, bored and exhausted of posing on the beach and next to palm trees. By complaining that “this is so stupid” (0:24) and “[w]hat’s the point of, like, posing next to a palm tree? Like, they’re so stupid” (1:09), the daughter clearly expresses her attitude toward the video shoot.

On top of that, the girl seems to dislike the idea of having a fiesta de quince altogether, which is foregrounded when she whines: “What’s the point of a quince? Like, congratulations, you’re fifteen. Like, what did I do?” (0:29). Thereby, she questions the purpose of this celebration and demonstrates that she does not care about her party at all. The Latina mom, who seems to be in favor of putting much work into creating a perfect quince explains to her daughter that, one day, she is going to look back at the “memorias preciosas” (0:43) and be happy that she did this video shoot. However, the Americanized girl does not appear to be interested in this Latin American tradition and solely celebrates her fifteenth birthday to satisfy her mother, who, in fact, does care about it. Once again, the elder immigrant generation still appears much more connected to Latino/a traditions and rituals, while the younger generation does not show much interested in their traditional events and celebrations, due to their assimilation to Anglo-American life and their gradual alienation from Latino/a culture.

Religion

Latino/a traditions and cultural values can also be detected in religion. For example, in “When Abuela Meets La Novia” (Lorenzo 2018: online), the Cuban grandmother puts much importance on Christian religion, which becomes apparent when she scolds her grandson by yelling “Oye, no cursing in front of Jesus!” (3:22) and pointing at a picture of Jesus Christ hanging on the wall, after he has used a swear word at the dinner table. This instance is supposed to represent her devotion to Catholicism, which is widespread among Latin Americans and hence, also among Latino/a immigrants in the United States.
The Christian traditions are further underlined when all of the family members sitting at the dinner table cross themselves before starting to eat (cf. 3:27). Later in the video, when the grandson curses for the second time, his girlfriend and his grandmother simultaneously yell “Jesus” (4:50) and the elderly lady suddenly appears startled and positively surprised. Her formerly rather negative attitude towards her grandson’s girlfriend instantly changes and she asks “¿tú, mi niña, tú eres religiosa?” (4:55). When the girl answers in the affirmative and responds that she goes “to Church every Sunday” (5:00), the grandmother appears to be relieved and overly excited, as she connects to the new family member on a spiritual level. All of a sudden, the grandmother seems to love the new addition to her family, whom she could share her religiosity with. She happily addresses her grandson and declares: “Encontraste una muchachita buena y católica” (5:08). When the girlfriend then clarifies that she is not Catholic, but non-denominational Christian, the grandmother’s attitude changes once more and she disappointedly turns her back to the girl and quietly walks away (cf. 5:17).

This significant example illustrates well how important the Catholic religion is for elder Latinos/as as, who have grown up in a religious setting in Latin America (cf. Padilla 2011: 504ff., Stevens-Arroyo 1998: 172). Apparently, the grandmother expects the Latina girlfriend of her grandson to be Catholic, as she comes from Puerto Rico. When she finds out that the girl is indeed Christian, she is very happy and instantly connects with her on a spiritual level. However, when the girl expresses that she is not Catholic, though, the grandma suddenly appears disillusioned and rather dismissive towards the young lady. This emphasizes the status of the Catholic religion in the elder Latino/a immigrant community and stresses that, for them, religion and practicing one’s faith is of high priority and thereby forms a large part in the construction of the Latino/a identities.

**Superstition**

Despite their devotion to Catholic religion, Latinos/as are also said to be quite superstitious, which is also represented in Jenny Lorenzo’s “Latina Moms During New Year’s Eve” (Lorenzo 2017: online) and the 20th episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, titled “Santería vs. Catholicism” (USA Havana 2017: online). In Jenny Lorenzo’s video, the Latina mother is preparing for New Year’s Eve. In order to have a prosperous new year, she ensures that she performs different rituals, based on superstition and popular Latino/a belief. First, she makes sure that everyone in the house is wearing red or yellow underwear, representing love and luck, respectively, as, according Latin America belief, “the underwear you wear on New Year’s Eve has a big impact on your year ahead” (Álvarez 2012: online).
Then, the Latina adds that “Walter Mercado said so” (0:11), which also underlines the lady’s tendency to be superstitious, as Walter Mercado is a Puerto Rican astrologer and psychic who predicts the future by interpreting the stars.

Later in the video, more superstitious rituals are performed by the Latina. She eats twelve grapes at midnight (cf. 0:38), “one for good luck in each month of the new year” (Álvarez 2012: online), puts lentils in her pockets (cf. 0:44) and in her purse (cf. 1:30), meticulously cleans the entire house (cf. 0:02, 0:13, 0:52) “to ensure they're ‘out with the old’” (2012: online), puts potatoes under her bed (cf. 1:17), pours out a bucket full of water (cf. 1:38) “to signify renewal” (2012: online) and circles around her block with a suitcase (0:36, 1:07), since “walking in a circle with a suitcase – either around your home or around the block – [is supposed to] bring jet-setting opportunities in the new year” (2012: online). It can be deduced that, in the video, Latinos/as are characterized as highly superstitious, since they perform numerous rituals that are supposed to bring them luck and success in the upcoming year.

In “Santería vs. Catholicism” (USA Havana 2017: online), the Peña family, and Carmen in particular, seems to be having ill luck, as an unusually high number of negative things are happening to them within a few days. For example, grandma Adela’s budgerigar passes away (cf. 0:59), Carmen’s plants die (cf. 2:05), Carmen sits down in poison ivy (cf. 2:17) and her father, brother and grandfather get a cold on the exact same day (cf. 5:53, 8:03, 17:07), among other instances. Even though Carmen initially claims that she is “just having a streak of bad luck, that’s all” (1:04), her superstitious friend Violeta insists that “it’s an evil spell” (1:07), which has been put on Carmen by her classmate Estrellita, “because she tried to take away her boyfriend” (2:28) by writing down the boy’s name on a piece of paper and putting it in a glass of sugared water - solely considering this ritual, which is supposed to make a boy fall in love with the girl who performs it, highlights the girls’ tendency to believe in supernatural powers. This is further underscored by the fact that Carmen’s friends and family members are worried because they think that Carmen is haunted by bad spirits.

However, when the teenage girl asks her mother whether she believes in brujería, Juana responds: “Ay no, mi hijita, nosotros somos católicos” (3:18) and thereby points out the supposed incompatibility between being Catholic and being superstitious. Although Carmen also states “[w]e don’t believe in those things, we’re Catholic” (3:29), Violeta advises her to wear protection, such as special bracelets, necklaces or a ribbon, and to put up Saint statues in order to protect her from evil spirits.
Then, the teenager states that she blames Carmen’s bad luck on Santerian Saints and explains that “Santería is an Afro-Cuban religion” (5:49) based on African Gods and Catholic Saints. According to Violeta, the Saints always need to be worshipped by offering them gifts and pastry (cf. 6:27), so they, in return, would treat people well and keep the evil spirits away from them. However, Carmen seems to have neglected her duty to do so. When the ill-fated girl admits that she has never even heard anything about Santería, Violeta responds: “Ay chica, no me explico qué Cubanos son ustedes” (7:03), suggesting that, as a Cuban, it is essential to believe in the traditional Santería religion and that it is a shame to not practice it.

After things get worse and the Peña family has even more bad luck, Violeta steps in to rescue them (cf. 17:47). With particular sprays to get rid of evil spirits, plants that are supposed to spiritually clean the house, a rock in the shape of a Santerian God’s face and various purifying liquids, the teenage girl tries to help her friend in need. This, again, represents the belief in superstition, which is said to be shared by many Latinos/as, who think that a person or a house can be liberated from evil spirits by creating tinctures from purifying ingredients and applying them on the respective bodies or surfaces. However, when Violeta’s plan does not work out, she decides to invite a medium, Asunción, to remove the evil spell from Carmen and the Peña household (cf. 22:05). The psychic immediately notices that “[e]sta casa está cargada” (22:15) with spirits and puts up a statue of Saint Barbara and a serving glass with an apple in it. Next, she lights up a cigar, pours a special liquid on some plants and starts dancing to chase away the bad ghosts (cf. 23:23). When grandmother Adela invites a Catholic priest to bless and purge their house with holy water at exactly the same time as the medium is performing her ritual, chaos evolves. At the exact same moment when the priest starts to pray for the Peña family and reads from the bible to help them, the medium starts singing loudly in the room next door. Just when the two spiritual rescuers meet in the living room, the house seems to be freed from evil spirits and positive things start to happen again (cf. 27:12).

On the one hand, this episode of ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? portrays how Latino/a immigrants tend to believe in supernatural powers, evil spirits and brujería in connection to Santería religion. On the other hand, however, it also shows the conflict between the Catholic religion and this superstition, as both spiritual approaches are said to have a strong impact on Latin Americans. While a streak of bad luck might be attributed to evil spirits and are thought to be altered by worshipping Santerian Saints, or by purging one’s house with various methods, such as inviting a medium, mixing purifying ingredients to create potions, fumigating the rooms or putting up Saint statues, the ill luck could also be ended in a Catholic
way, for example by inviting a priest and letting him bless the house, by praying, reading the bible or by pouring out holy water in the rooms. Even though the methods regarding the riddance of negative influences seem quite contradictory, Latino/a families are represented as performing them to improve their situation and thereby combine the religious, or rather Catholic, with the superstitious.

**Food**

Finally, the relevance of Latino/a cooking and preparing traditional Latino/a meals, such as frijoles, plátanos, yuca, arroz and churrasco can be detected in “When Abuela Meets La Novia” (Lorenzo 2018: online). Right at the beginning of the video, the Latina grandmother sets the table and puts various deliciously-looking dishes on it. Immediately, it can be seen that the prepared food clearly deviates from typical Anglo-American meals, as it contains much rice, beans and yuca, which is not as common in U.S. dishes as in Latino/a meals (cf. 0:00). La abuela appears to be very content and proud that she has managed to prepare everything perfectly and just in time before her grandson arrives with his new Latina girlfriend.

That the food is indeed traditionally Latin American is highlighted when the grandson’s new girlfriend says that “[t]his is like some of the rice of, let’s say, my abuela’s house in Puerto Rico. And she did that with the arroz con habichuela and the habichuela negra […]” (2:09). Apparently, this particular composition of rice and beans, along with the plantains and the churrasco steak are commonly served in Latino/a household, in Latin American countries as well as in the United States. For the grandmother, it appears to be of high importance to transmit these food-related traditions to her children and grandchildren, so they can continue to serve these typical meals to their children, even in another culture with different eating habits. Consequently, it can be concluded that the maintenance of culinary traditions in Latino/a families is also depicted as valuable and highly appreciated in the immigrant communities.

5.2.4. Latino/a Attitudes and Behavior: “Yo Trabajo Para Que Tú Tengas Casa”

The construction of immigrant Latino/a identities is often based on certain attitudes and ways of behavior that are specifically attributed to Latin Americans and clearly deviate from the Anglo-American norm. Although the respective attitudes are represented as gradually diminishing when Latinos/as assimilate to the United States, as they “try to fit in” (Delgado
and Stefancic 2011: 397) and consequently “lose their distinctiveness” (Smith 2003: 318), the immigrants still tend to hold on to some of the principles regarding their mentality, beliefs and conduct. Some of the respective attitudes and manners of behavior have already been laid bare in the previous chapters; however, others such as concerns regarding friendship, female subordination, loudness or tardiness, have not been mentioned in detail yet.

**Attitudes Toward Sleepovers**

In regard to sleepovers, it has become visible that Latino/a parents are often characterized to feel the need to know everything about their children’s friends, the respective house and the family they are going to be sleeping over at. This is primarily highlighted in Jenny Lorenzo’s “When you ask your LATINA MOM if you can attend a SLEEPOVER” (Lorenzo 2018: online). Before letting her daughter stay over at her new friend’s house, the Latina mom interrogates the little girl and bombards her with the most ridiculous questions. In the course of this examination, questions such as “[a]re there ghosts in the house?” (0:24), “[d]o they have good credit?” (0.28) or “[d]o they have cable?” (0:47) are being asked by the worried mother. Apparently, Latino/a parents are said to quite protective and feel the need to know every detail about the people they children are socializing with. This detailed interrogation appears to be specific to Latina mothers and therefore contributes to the construction of the typical Latino/a identities.

In contrast, LeJuan’s “When your friends ask Hispanic Parents to sleep over” (James 2018: online), foregrounds a different attitude towards sleepovers. In the video, the Latina mother forbids her son not only to sleep over at his friend’s house that night, but also to ever sleep at another house again, because, according to her, her son should take advantage of the house he is living in and thus sleep in his own bed (cf. 0:40). She then adds that he is living in the house she is offering to him (“yo trabajo para que tú tengas cama” (0:39)), so he can come home and stay there. Consequently, she does not seem to see the need for her son to sleep at another place.

In addition, she fears that her son would automatically act irrationally or inappropriately when staying over at someone else’s house and hence, prefers that he sleeps at home, as usual, so she could supervise his actions. This depicts how Latino/a parents are thought to be against the idea of having their children spend the night away from home altogether, since they already provide them with a bed and a roof over their head in their own home. Consequently, children are expected to appreciate their living circumstances and should not feel the need to sleep at someone else’s place, because “no va a pasar” (0:57).
Friendship and ‘Fake Friends’

Another relevant attitude that is represented as typically Latino/a concerns friendship. In “When Hispanic Parents lecture you about friends” (James 2017: online) by LeJuan James, for instance, the mother attempts to enlighten her daughter in regard to having fake friends. To do so, she starts off the conversation by saying “Ay, mi niña. Qué poco tú sabes de la vida” (0:02) and thereby implies that her daughter has not found out the truth about life and friendship yet. Then, the Latina mom claims that her daughter’s problem is that she thinks that her friends are her life (cf. 0:05). According to the mother, the teenage girl wastes her time talking on the phone, while she could do something more meaningful and productive, such as “enfocándo[se] en los estudios, y, sobre todo, Dios” (0:22). For her, by spending so much time talking to her friends, a lot of her daughter’s lifetime gets lost.

Concerning her friends themselves, the mother is characterized as very skeptical and rather disapproving, which becomes evident when she says “[t]ú no puedes confiar en nadie en este vida y en este mundo” (0:33). Then, she stresses that her friends are definitely not trustworthy, as they are all “backstabbers” (0:41). When the daughter, in response, asks what she should do instead and whether she should quit having friends altogether, the mother elucidates: “¿Tú sabes quién es tu mejor amiga? Yo. Yo soy tu mejor amiga, tu madre” (0:45). She explains that a mother would never betray her daughter and would always want the best for her, in contrast to her alleged friends, which she emphasizes by the repetition of “tu amigos no hacen eso” (0:56). This video shows well how Latinos/as are generally represented as skeptical about friendships and ‘real friends’, as they are worried about potential betrayals and deceptions by others. In this example, the Latina mother worries about her daughter and mistrusts the girl’s friends, since she considers them to be fake. In this case, Latina mothers are characterized as exaggeratedly wary when it comes to friendships, as they believe that nobody can be trusted and hence, it is more fulfilling and profitable to focus on one’s academic career than to waste time with the wrong people.

Caring Women and Marianismo

It has been mentioned in chapter 4.2. that marianismo is assumed to be one of the basic family principles in the Latino/a culture. This gender-based value “emphasizes the woman's role as mother [and wife] and celebrates the mother's self-sacrifice and suffering for her children” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 14). According to this concept, women are expected to put all their energy into caring for their families as well as into being affectionate and attentive towards the individual family members (with primary focus on their children and
husbands). *Marianismo* and the gender-based media representation of female Latina characters highly contribute to the construction of stereotypes and gender assumptions. In one of the selected examples in particular, the importance of female care and subordination, which draw on stereotypical expectations regarding women’s attentiveness, are addressed.

In “When Abuela Meets La Novia” (2018: online) by Jenny Lorenzo, another Latino/a attitude is being concentrate on. For the grandmother, it is very important to care for her family and to make sure they have everything they need. This becomes visible when *la abuela* meticulously prepares the food and cleans the house, so that everything is ready for her family members’ arrival. This overly caring behavior is further underscored when she gets up at the dinner table and, despite her granddaughter telling her that “se puede servir ya” (2:37), starts serving food to her grown-up grandson. With the words “I love to serve my precious grandson” (2:39) and “qué bien lo cuido yo” (2:44), along with a reproachful look at his girlfriend, *la abuela* seems to subtly tell the young lady that she would actually be the one who is supposed to serve him the food, so the grandmother has to shows her how it is (or should be) done. The elderly lady starts cutting her grandson’s steak, even though he insists that he is not a little boy anymore and hence, does not need her help cutting food (cf. 2:47). It seems as if, at least in the grandmother’s mind, a woman is supposed to care for men and that serving and cutting his food would only be appropriate and expected.

This representation does not solely imply that Latina women are expected to be caring and attentive, it also hints at female subordination, as the grandmother, a woman herself, thinks that women should care for men, including when serving and cutting their food. Thus, in this video, the accepted gender inequalities based on *marianismo* are constructed and reinforced.

**Being Loud**

When it comes to the representation of the stereotypical behavior of Latino/a immigrants, “When Hispanic Parents talk on the Phone” (James 2017: online) serves as an excellent example. The video constructs a well-known cultural stereotype that is frequently attributed to the Latino/a community, namely being loud. At the beginning of the video clip, the Latina mother is in a clothes store with her son and suddenly receives a phone call by her sister. Instead of talking on the phone is a low voice and store-appropriate manner, the lady start yelling loudly into her phone (cf. 0:49). Although the other clients immediately turn around and are shocked that the Latina would talk in such a loud voice, she does not even notice it and continues to shout.
Already embarrassed, the Latina’s son interrupts her call to tell her to be more quiet, whining “[m]om, lower your voice, mom!” (1:23) with a desperate look on his face. He adds emphatically: “Mami, que estás hablando duro [...] Por favor, te escuchan los clientes” (1:27). It seems as if the mother did not even notice how noisy she is or she just simply does not care, since, when her son points out the issues, she solely responds that “[a]quí, el único que tiene problemas con mi voz eres tú” (1:32), she tells him to be quiet and continues to talk loudly on the phone. The other clients, however, repeatedly look estranged and shake their heads due to the extreme noise, but the Latina still does not even seem to realize it.

On top of her ridiculously loud voice when talking, the mother even starts laughing hysterically, causing the other shoppers to be even more startled and annoyed (cf. 2:11). Even though, in the video, the Latina is characterized as exaggeratedly and unnaturally loud, Latinos/as in general are said to have an extremely loud voice and way of talking in comparison to Anglo-Americans, which causes them to occasionally be perceived as irritating or ‘loudmouths’. As this video fosters this stereotype even more, it actively contributes to the construction of this cliché.

**Tardiness**

Another behavior that is frequently associated with Latinos/as is tardiness. This becomes especially noticeable in the United States, where this habit is not as common and tolerated as in Latin America. “When Hispanic Parents Pick You Up Late” (James 2018: online) illustrates this well. In the video clip, the Latino son, along with another schoolmate, is waiting for his mother to pick him up after school. As he gradually becomes impatient due to his mother’s delay, he calls her on the phone and asks: “Mom, where are you?” (0:00). Obviously annoyed, the mother yells at her son through the phone and tells him that she is going to arrive soon and that he should stop bugging her about it. It becomes apparent that this happens on a regular basis when the boy complains in a desperate voice: “I don’t understand why everyday it’s the same story. I told you to please pick me up at 3:00... It’s 3:45, mom!” (0:08). According to the son’s statement, the mother happens to be late on a daily basis, which points out her tendency to fall into this bad habit over and over again. In addition, she does not solely arrive a few minutes late; she is already 45 minutes in delay.

When the mother then gets angry and tells him that she is about to arrive soon, he responds: “Tú siempre estás llegando, siempre que yo te llamo [dices] ‘estoy llegando, espérate’, pero nunca llegas” (0:18). In order to justify her delay, the Latina mom explains that she has just gotten out of work, is tired, and had to go to the supermarket (cf. 0:23), which
does not seem to be understood by her son. The boy’s impatience increases when even his teacher, who has to wait outside until all of her students are picked up by their parents, points out that “every single day, your mom is caught up in traffic, it’s just so weird” (1:11), which, then, causes the boy to cry because he is “always the last kid to get picked up, always!” (1:28).

This example suggests that immigrant Latinos/as tend to be late to appointments and that they do not even feel bad or ashamed for it, as, for them, this seems normal. For the more Americanized, younger immigrant generation, however, being late is considered impolite and inappropriate, since they have grown up in a culture where being on time is a desirable quality, which could lead to intergenerational conflicts and cultural clashes. The tardiness that is frequently attributed to Latinos/as thus is pointed in this example of popular media and thereby reinforces this stereotype as part of the ethnic representation of Latino/a identities.

**Telenovelas**

A final habit, which is primarily associated with the Latino/a community (and particularly with Latina women) in the United States, is watching *telenovelas* - TV series or soap operas that originally come from Latin America. This allegedly typical Latino/a behavior is portrayed in Jenny Lorenzo’s “Don’t Mess With Abuela's Novelas” (2018: online), in which the Latina grandmother watches a romantic telenovela in her room and, while doing so, is observed by her granddaughter. The elderly lady is riveted by the TV series and gets angry when she notices that her granddaughter is spying on her, which is first mirrored in her ‘evil looks’ (cf. 0:08, 0:26, 0:45) and then explicitly expressed when she orders “oye, déjeme tranquila, que estoy mirando la novela” (0:50). Because the girl still does not stop spying on her grandma, the retiree starts yelling at her and tells her to leave her alone. The *telenovela* appears to be very cheesy and dramatic (cf. 0:03, 1:10), but the retiree seems to fully immerse in the story, as she tensely follows every scene and even calls her granddaughter “malcriado” (1:31) and threatens her to tattletale it to her parents, so she would get a “chancletazo” (1:39) (whooping with a flip flop), for interrupting her TV experience. At the end, she even throws her own chancla at her granddaughter, so she could finally watch the *telenovela* in peace (cf. 2:17). This video illustrates the supposed relevance of watching *telenovelas* for Latina women, as they appear to be hooked on them, which causes them to really immerse in the story. Thus, disturbing them while they are being engrossed in watching their soap operas should be avoided for safety purposes.
Conclusion

In the course of writing this diploma thesis, it has been revealed that there is indeed a recurrent pattern in the construction of immigrant Latino/a identities and family relations, which can generally be traced back to a few common aspects. Although in the selected media sources, this representation is done by Latinos/as themselves, it still happens to draw on numerous stereotypes and thereby homogenizes Latin American immigrants in the United States. It has been laid bare that the representation of typical Latino/a identities primarily works through the aspects of language use (chapter 5.2.1.), intergenerational family relations and parenting (chapter 5.2.2.), traditions and cultural values (chapter 5.2.3.) as well as attitudes and behavior (chapter 5.2.4.). The analysis of these respective aspects has stressed various recurrent features that are supposed to enable a stereotypically, but at the same time preferably realistic, construction of Latino/a characteristics.

The findings concerning Latino/a immigrant’s language use mainly concentrate on intergenerational linguistic differences resulting from diverse degrees of assimilation and exposure to the English-speaking majority in the United States. While, in the media examples, immigrant children, who have grown up in the U.S, are characterized as mainly speaking in English and only occasionally switching to Spanish or using Spanglish, their parents and grandparents mostly talk in Spanish. Nevertheless, the parent generation as well as their children seem to be proficient in both languages (or bilingual), as they dominate both linguistic systems and frequently include code-switching and Spanglish in their utterances.

The elder immigrant generations, who have lived most of their lives in Spanish-speaking Latin American countries and have not (fully) assimilated to the English-speaking majority, generally use Spanish to communicate with their family and have very limited English skills. This is mirrored in language barriers and misunderstandings. Spanglish, which is based on the process of code-switching between English and Spanish, is portrayed to be frequently used in immigrant Latino/a families. While applying this blended language mix, the speakers often coin new words that consist of English as well as Spanish morphemes or switch between the two languages within one single sentence or utterance. This linguistic hybridity represented in the media attempts to reflect the cultural blend of Latino/a immigrants who now live in an Anglo-American environment. Thereby, a new ‘third space’, as Homi Bhabha (1994) termed it, emerges and enables the establishment of a renegotiated and adapted identity, or a “re-creation of the self” (1994: 8).
The findings in respect to the representation of linguistic skills in intergenerational immigrant Latino/a households is closely connected to the theoretical approaches to hybrid identities (chapter 1.4.) and language use (chapter 3), as they clearly illustrate the priorly described “head-on collision between English and Spanish” (Lipski 2004: “Introduction”), on the one hand, as well as the creation of an innovative, “hybrid language” (2004: 18), on the other. This “cross-fertilization” (2004: 19) resulting from combining the English and Spanish influences on Latino/a immigrants is highlighted.

Also, there seems to be quite a difference between the public and private/domestic language use of Latin American immigrants, as, in general, Latinos/as are represented as using Spanish as their medium of communication at home and with relatives, while English is illustrated as public language, which is primarily used in Anglo-American settings, including work or school. Especially in ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, the younger immigrant generation, who has spent most of their lives in the United States, is quite Americanized and linguistically assimilated. However, they also seem to have limited Spanish skills, as they frequently make mistake and coin incorrect Spanglish expressions. Their poor Spanish skills could be attributed to the fact that they have never been exposed to Spanish outside of their family and have never acquired it in an academic setting, so tend to lack academic vocabulary and elaborate expressions. Nevertheless, the younger immigrants, who are assimilated to Anglo-American norms and the English language, are frequently represented as translators and interpreters between their family and other English-speaking people, such as contractors, teachers or salespeople. That way, their bilingualism becomes useful and valuable when mediating between the two linguistic groups.

Particularly for the elder immigrant generations, who still have close ties to their native countries and heritage, it is seemingly very important to pass on linguistic knowledge, Latino/a traditions and cultural values to the next generations, even when living in another cultural environment. In the examples of popular culture, they seem to consider it a shame when Latino/a immigrants cannot speak Spanish anymore, as it is the language of their ancestors and their elder family members and thus forms part of their immigrant Latino/a identities. Therefore, most Latino/a (grand-)parents continue to talk in Spanish to their (grand-)children, so they can acquire the language skills of their own culture while simultaneously assimilating to their new linguistic environment.

Regarding intergenerational family relations and parenting, it has become apparent that, in the represented immigrant Latino/a families, it is quite common for three generations to live under one roof. The distinct degrees of assimilation to the U.S. within one household
are depicted as provoking intergenerational conflicts, since the cultures of the Americanized younger generations and the rather traditional and conservative elder generations, who still hold on to their heritage, seem to view things quite differently. In the media representation, *familismo* appears to be an essential value in Latino/a families, which promotes close family ties, including physical closeness, as well as reciprocal care, appreciation and support.

Concerning the relevance of *respeto* and obedience, Latino/a parenting is thought to be very different to Anglo-American childrearing. Disrespectfulness towards elders, interrupting grown-ups, talking back or disobeying is not tolerated at all – the respective punishment is consequent and sometimes harsh. In the media examples, it has been illustrated that corporal punishment (with a belt or *la chancla*) is spread among immigrant Latino/a families and is supposed to teach the children valuable lessons for their future. Nevertheless, Latino/a (grand-)parents are also characterized as loving, caring and protective towards their (grand-)children. They are often worried about their well-being and hence, act overprotectively, which reveals their monitoring and controlling parenting style. They seemingly want to know more about their children's whereabouts, actions and behavior than Anglo-American families and thus are frequently perceived as restrictive. Due to their (grand-)parents’ controlling nature, the children are depicted as having no individual privacy, since their adult family members frequently invade their private space and intermeddle in their business.

Regarding gender, there seems to be a significant difference between the childrearing of boys and that of girls, as girls are generally said to have less freedom and are treated in a more restrictive manner, while boys are not as controlled in their behavior and have more leeway. Especially concerning relationships and having boyfriends, Latino/a families are portrayed as skeptical and wary, which enables the construction of quite restrictive rules for girls, while those rules usually do not apply for boys. This mindset can be traced back to the assumed Latin American values of *marianismo* and *machismo* (see chapter 4.2.), which are gender-based principles and describe the expected behavior of girls/women and boys/men in society. These often stereotypically portrayed values stress “the woman's role as mother and celebrate[...] the mother's self-sacrifice and suffering for her children”, on the one hand, and “the man's role not as father but as head of household” (Cauce and Domenech-Rodríguez 2002: 14), on the other. The findings of the analysis of popular culture have laid bare several instances in which these popular assumptions come into practice. Especially the stereotypically constructed female characters in the media examples stand in close relationship to *marianismo* and fixed gender roles, which oftentimes lead to them being the main targets of ridicule and satire.
Similar to the transmission of linguistic skills to the next generations, it is supposedly also considered as good parenting to pass on cultural values and traditions to the next generations. Even when living in the United States, it appears to be of high importance for elder immigrant generations to teach their children Latin American values and to continue practicing cultural traditions, so the younger generations could still keep their heritage alive, even when they are not immediately surrounded by it. Beside the relevance of Spanish skills, several other traditions and cultural values that are commonly used in order to construct the typical Latino/a Identities need to be mentioned. One of the most salient values in Latino/a families has been pointed out through the media construction: Familismo, which refers to close family ties, harmonious interpersonal relationships within the family and reciprocal care and support, can be considered one of the most fundamental Latino/a family principle. This is demonstrated through aspects such as the close connection between the intergenerational family members, high protectiveness of (grand-)children and interpersonal appreciation, among others. However, the importance of familismo is represented as declining throughout the generations, as the Americanized immigrant children are gradually exposed to Anglo-American individualism and therefore do not consider family ties as relevant as their parents anymore.

In regard to traditional events, the fiesta de quince, or quinceañera, stands out as a prime example. Even though they are not living in a Latin American environment anymore, the Latino/a immigrants in the media sources still celebrate this traditional event, including a traditional dress, hairstyle, dance and decoration as well as pre-quinceañera video shoots. Furthermore, the Catholic faith is still practiced by many Latino/a immigrants living in the United States. Even though in the last few decades the Evangelic Church has become quite popular within the Latin American community, Catholicism still remains a relevant aspect of many immigrant Latinos’/as’ lives. Despite being surrounded by the rather secular Anglo-American society, Latinos/as are depicted as tending to exercise their faith by going to the mass, putting up pictures and statues of Jesus or crossing themselves and praying before eating.

Quite contrary to the Catholic believe, however superstition is highlighted in the media sources and seems to be widespread among Latino/a immigrants. For example, this becomes apparent when observing the represented New Year’s Eve rituals, such as eating twelve grapes at midnight, wearing red or yellow underwear and putting lentils in one’s pocket in order to have a successful new year. However, Latino/a superstition is also portrayed through the belief in brujería, in evil spirits haunting one’s house, and in the Afro-Cuban religion called Santería, which is based on a mix between Afro-Cuban Gods and
Catholic saints. According to the media construction, ill luck is linked to evil spirits and angry Saints/Gods, which need to be chased out of one’s home.

Finally, Latino/a values are also said to be passed on through culinary skills and food traditions. Latino/a families appear to transmit their cuisine to the younger generations by using typical Latin American ingredients such as arroz, frijoles, churrasco, plátanos, habichuela or yuca to prepare traditional dishes. Thereby, they do not only preserve their food culture, but they also celebrate the custom of sharing and eating together.

Attitudes and behaviors that are thought of as typical for Latin American immigrants include nosiness. Latino/a parents appear to be very interested in their children’s whereabouts or actions and thus frequently monitor what they are doing by watching them closely. Furthermore, in the media sources, Latina moms seem to mistrust other people and believe that most friendships are fake. Hence, they think that their children should not waste their time with the wrong people, but instead concentrate on school and God. Another interesting attitude that is depicted as typically Latino/a is voluntary female subordination. Latina women are portrayed as very caring and nurturing towards their husbands and (grand-)sons, which could be attributed to the Latin American value of marianismo, suggesting female devotion to their families, particularly to male family members. However, their care can almost be described as devotional and internalized, as they are depicted to feel responsible for the men’s well-being. In one media example, the grandmother even serves and cuts the food for her grandson and simultaneously expects his girlfriend to do the same for him.

In addition, Latino/a immigrants are represented as extremely loud, especially when talking on the phone, and somewhat ignorant when irritating others with their extremely loud voice and hysterical laughs. A different (bad) habit, which is depicted as typically Latin American, is tardiness. Latinos/as seem to be prone to delay, as they are always late for appointments. Even though this might be considered normal or common in Latin America, Anglo-Americans and assimilated immigrant children seem rather annoyed by it. Lastly, watching telenovelas is portrayed as a typical Latino/a activity, which is primarily practiced by Latina women. Those telenovelas, or soap operas, are commonly very dramatic and cheesy and the audience, at least as represented in the example of la abuela, seems to be captivated by the stories, as they are immersed in them.

It can be summarized that there are indeed various recurrent aspects that are frequently drawn on in the construction of immigrant Latino/a identities and family relations. These aspects are included in popular culture in order to represent a homogeneous Latino/a culture and thereby highlight stereotypes of an entire (supposedly coherent) ethnic group in the
United States. However, it always needs to taken into account that this deliberated homogenization and the cultivation of popular assumptions can be very restrictive and damaging for the people in question and hence, need to be addressed and challenged.

By seeing Latino/a immigrants as one unified and consistent community, their individuality as well as their various historical and cultural background are just simply neglected, which reduces this huge minority to simplified and overgeneralized traits. One way of challenging and deconstructing said stereotypes is to use humor, which is done in all three media sources, respectively. By picking up common assumptions of Latinos/as and ridiculing them, these stereotypes are not only made aware of, but also questioned and finally dismantled. After all, popular assumptions regarding Latino/a identities and family relations are just social constructions and do not claim truthfulness in any sense.

In respect to gender roles, it has been shown that there are many differences in the media construction of male and female Latino/a identities. While the (grand-)fathers in LeJuan James’ and Jenny Lorenzo’s YouTube videos are almost entirely missing from the screen, ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? features Pepe (as padre) and Antonio (as abuelo) and thereby enables the inclusion of male characters as well; however, even in ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.?, men appear to be of secondary importance when it comes to childrearing. Basically, it can be said that there is much more focus on female protagonists and their parenting strategies than on male characters. The most common stereotypes regarding the female gender are picked up and ridiculed on a frequent basis. Since women are portrayed as being primarily responsible for parenting and raising their children, they often become the main targets of mockery and satire. Their characteristics and traits, which are supposed to mirror the assumed ‘Latina identity’, are represented in a highly exaggerated, humorous and absurd way – thereby, these common stereotypes are revealed, challenged in a comedic way, and ultimately disassembled.

Nevertheless, the representation of immigrant Latino/a families and their respective identities also creates a sense of we within this large minority, which becomes especially visible when done by Latinos/as themselves, as in the selected examples. While the different aspects that are repeatedly used in the construction of the stereotypical ‘Latino/a-ness’ in the videos by LeJuan James and Jenny Lorenzo as well as in the TV sitcom ¿Qué pasa, U.S.A.? might appear to be simplified or exaggerated, they must also include life-like and relatable aspects, as the representation in the video examples resonates with large numbers of Latino/a immigrants in the audience and supposedly mirror their own experiences of growing up in the United States.
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