

Latino/a in (con)text: *Latin-a* magazine and the making of a Latino community in Japan

Latino/a en (con)texto: Revista *Latin-a* y la constitución de una comunidad Latina en Japón

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〈Resume〉

Pocos estudios académicos sobre Latinoamericanos en Japón se han fijado en medios producidos por y para Latinoamericanos en Japón, o las implicaciones de los mismos para el desarrollo de comunidad. Esta investigación responde a este vacío al enfocarse en la creación de una comunidad Latina en Revista *Latin-a*, una revista gratuita, en español y para la comunidad, publicada por un grupo de ayuda a inmigrantes en Kobe, Japón. A fin de entender como una comunidad es creada en y a través de la revista, este estudio utiliza el concepto de 'comunidad textual' (Eichhorn 2001). La interpretación resultante del texto de la revista sugiere que *Latin-a* funciona como un espacio textual en el cual Latinidad es (con)textualizada y comunidad es realizada.

Palabras Clave: Comunidad, Revistas, Medios de Comunicación, Japón, Migración

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I . Introduction

While the concept of community has traditionally been linked to the idea of geographic and physical locations with defined boundaries, this has been challenged by globalization, the increasing mobility of people, and the development of new communication technologies. In light of this, it's not difficult to conceive of how "we might think of communities as effects of how we meet on the ground, as a ground that is material, but also virtual, real and imaginary" (Ahmed & Fortier 2003, 257). Moreover, it becomes useful to consider how "community is an aspiration envisioned as an entity" (Creed 2006, 22) and that "as is true of so much of social life, the fiction, the belief, indeed the myth of community may be more significant than the actuality" (Keller 2003, 266). Keeping this in mind, how might one approach the study of community today? One potential lies in the study of media texts and their ability to provide a useful lens by which to analyze the creation of communities. Beng-Huat Chua (2006), for example, analyzes the features of an imagined transnational Chinese community he terms, 'Pop Culture China'. Daily newspapers play a key role in this community, as "they provide the multitude of readers with a sense of 'synchronicity' in inhabiting the 'same' space and time, a synchronicity that is essential to engendering a sense of identity derived from a presumption of being inhabitants of the 'same' reading community" (Chua 2006, 80-81). Chua's study focuses on newspapers but magazine studies also have much to offer in terms of understanding how community is imagined in media texts. For example, Sheila Webb analyzes how in Reiman magazines, community is

created through narratives that “provide a normative model for the ideal life” and “organized around core values” (Webb 2006, 869; 867) and Bill Reader and Kevin Moist how magazine texts “play a key role in the reflexive collective- and individual-level construction and articulation of community values” (Reader & Moist 2008, 834). These magazine studies suggest the ability of magazines to foster community, through the articulation of shared values and the creation of unique spaces for expression and coming together. On the other hand, communities can create texts which give rise to communal textual spaces. Such spaces could also be associated with the creation of textual communities. Kate Eichhorn defines these as,

...communities that emerge when people are brought together through a shared text, a shared set of texts, or a shared set of reading or writing practices. These textual communities are unique in their ability to link people across geographic boundaries, and in the emphasis they place on reading and writing as forms of human interaction and community building. (Eichhorn 2001, 566)

In this study, a comprehensive perspective of textual community is used, whereby the same is inclusive of its members (writers and readers), as well as the structures and relationships that make membership possible. In acknowledging that communities are emergent and in associating the same process with texts, as well as reading and writing practices, the concept of textual community suggests the possibility of examining the realization of community in media texts.

II. Research Questions and Methodology

This study is concerned with the making of a Latino textual community in Japan, broadly speaking, and the construction of a textual community in and through the magazine *Revista Latin-a*, specifically. *Revista Latin-a* (simply referred to as *Latin-a*) is a free Spanish-language magazine with a monthly circulation of 12,000. It has been published by Hyogo Latin Community/Comunidad Latina Hyogo (HLC), an independent self-help group based in Takatori Community Center in Kobe, Japan, since 2006. The magazine's production team consists of volunteers, based throughout Japan, who work and write for the magazine without monetary compensation. The magazine is directed primarily at Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Japan and has consistently covered topics relating to marriage, parenting, immigration, and disaster preparedness in Japan, as part of its ambition to help the Spanish-speaking community adapt to life in Japan. The manner in which *Latin-a's* mission gave coherence to the magazine text and served as common ground for its writers and staff, ultimately inspired this study to focus on aspects which the magazine itself stressed as essential to its style, intended audience, and purpose; namely, community and Latinidad. Thus, building on the notion of 'textual community' (Eichhorn 2001), as well as on studies which focus on the construction of community in magazine texts (Reader & Moist 2008; Webb 2006), this study attempts to answer two questions. The first of these—what kind of communities does *Latin-a* create or advocate in its text?—refers to the intent to *identify* community. The second—how do these communities come into being in the text?—addresses

the building blocks of community and/or forms of belonging, thereby attempting to *deconstruct* community. In other words, the *what* and *how* of community are the main concerns of this study. By focusing on community and its relation to a particular text, this study hopes to expand understanding of what encompasses a 'textual community,' as well as the relevance of the concept to magazines.

Much in the same manner that Eichhorn considers the textual community of zines as the site of her fieldwork, this study identifies the magazine text as a site (a sort of textual space) in which analysis is conducted (Eichhorn 2001). This analysis is also informed by experiences outside this space, in the larger social context of the text, through my interactions with writers and readers of the magazine, as well as through observations conducted in Japan. The intent of this textual analysis is to identify what constitutes community within *Latin-a's* magazine text - comprised in this instance by the first eight issues of *Latin-a*, issues no. 25-32,¹⁾ from June 2010 to June 2011. By concentrating on the manner in which the form and content of the magazine create, define, and give purpose to a shared textual space. It considers aspects such as: (a) the main concerns addressed by the magazine, (b) the presentation and treatment of these issues, (c) the structure, layout, and use of language and visuals in the magazine, and (d) how the aforementioned pertain to the creation and representation of communities. My use of textual analysis follows other work done on community or alternative magazines, in which "cultural textual analysis" which "calls for an open-ended interpretation of texts grounded in the

1) The numbering of the issues continued from a precursor titled *Mujer Latina*.

researcher's understanding of the cultures most likely to view/read those texts" is used (Reader & Moist 2008, 827). Textual analysis is seen as particularly useful for understanding how *Latin-a's* producers experience Japan and conceive of community, as "performing textual analysis" can be seen as "an attempt to gather information about sense-making practices" (McKee 2003, 14). The form of textual analysis employed privileges language as a defining feature of this textual community. It is worthwhile to point out that since this is not a reception study it can make no claims about the ways in which community is read, or realized by *Latin-a's* audience. Nevertheless, this study, together with others like it, can broaden understanding of magazines as community spaces, as well as facilitate comparisons of Latinidad and community/ethnic minority media across localities and people.

This research project is fundamentally interested in studying *Latin-a* as a text which engages and is shaped by its context(s), and, thus, remains sensitive to the overlapping nature of communities and the particularities of articulating a Latino identity in Japan. Accordingly, this study does not presuppose that community media should be produced and consumed by the same community, or that there is anything natural or arbitrary in the manner in which media articulates and represents community, or Latinidad. Consequently, this study remains cautious of the danger of participating in the "mythification of a unified, though unique, national, if not global, Latino identity" (Mayer 2004, 116) and avoids making assumptions about the nature of community, or Latino identity in Japan. It, therefore, can't and doesn't affirm, or challenge the existence of a de-facto Latino community in Japan,

whatever that may mean. Something which is all the more important considering that the case of Latin Americans in Japan is unique in its duality, as potential expressions of both a global Latino/a diaspora and a Japanese return migration. Latin American migration to Japan came about in the 1990s, when Japan revised its immigration policy creating an opportunity for the descendants of Japanese abroad (*nikkeijin*), mostly from Brazil and Peru, to take up employment in Japan as unskilled workers, which also led to a minority of Latin Americans, not of Japanese descent, migrating to Japan with spouse visas, or, in some cases, falsified documents (Reyes-Ruiz 2005). While the overwhelming majority of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Japan are Peruvians of Japanese descent, the Latino and/or Spanish-speaking community/ies are hardly homogenous, though the scarcity of comprehensive demographic data makes it difficult to substantiate this quantitatively. The basic point, however, is that the visibility and concreteness of Latino/a and/or Spanish-speaking communities in Japan is changing and ambiguous.

III. Finding Community/ies in *Latin-a*

1. The Role of Purpose in Determining Content

Latin-a underwent some minor changes in format during its first year of publication, yet the eight issues published during this period have many recurring characteristics, for example, the use of a central theme. Central themes for issues from June 2010 to June 2011 include: changes to the

Japanese social welfare system and bilingual children with language difficulties (issue 25), the reality of elderly Latinos in Japan (issue 26), 'koko' or high school in Japan (issue 27), domestic violence (issue 28), 'hafu' identities and experiences (issue 29), "Japan needs our solidarity" (issue 30), 'nihongo' or Japanese language learning (issue 31), and stress (issue 32). The selection of these topics as central themes emphasizes the magazine's concentration on life in Japan. Each theme—with the exception of the first issue—is identified in the editorial and is often accompanied by an explanation as to why the topic was chosen, or its significance to the community. The selection of a central topic serves to highlight the nature of *Latin-a* as a magazine which seeks to (a) identify problems or issues present in the community, (b) explore these and their significance, and (c) provide guidance and support in overcoming these obstacles. The pattern of identifying problems and then offering solutions is key to understanding how the purpose of *Latin-a* is instrumental in shaping every aspect of the magazine. By seeking to fulfill the magazine's purpose, *Latin-a's* producers articulate their own understanding of the magazine's commitment to community in the text, thereby shaping the communities created in the same.

2. Language and Community

Latin-a's text contains multiple uses of Japanese. These tend to fall into several categories, most of them related to providing useful information in an easy to understand manner. Most often, Japanese appears in the text in rōmaji—though its use is not necessarily standardized. This is most often

done to (a) refer to a social program or government assistance, in which case its followed by a description of the program in Spanish; (b) provide a Japanese term that may be useful in applying for such a program, this is usually done with the Japanese term being provided in parenthesis directly after the Spanish word; (c) provide the name of a center or location that may be a resource for readers; and (d) refer to an element of Japanese culture, such as *nihongo* instead of *japonés* when referring to Japanese language, or *koko* instead of *bachillerato* when discussing high school in Japan. Kana scarcely appears in the text, while kanji is used mainly on the front cover and in the recipes (these are provided entirely in Spanish and Japanese). Kanji may also be found in (a) instances in which an aspect of Japanese culture is being explained or highlighted, (b) as a subtitle for an article, and (c) adjacent to a practical term. A singular example of the first is the use of kanji in the title for the article: ‘Nihongo de los padres, 日本語 de los hijos,’ ‘Nihongo for parents and 日本語 for their children’ (issue no.31). Here Japanese fluency is associated with the ability to read kanji and the disparity between parents and their children, educated in Japan, is highlighted. The use of Japanese—with the exception of the cover and the recipe section—is almost always limited to one or two words, rather than phrases or sentences. This suggests that brief uses of Japanese are intended to provide information and understanding to readers who lack Japanese language proficiency, particularly in written Japanese, whereas longer uses of Japanese, as in the front cover and recipes, are directed at non-Spanish speakers. Through magazine covers “readers are invited to join communities with distinct cultural identities” (McLoughlin 2000, 6) and not only do they

serve as an entry point for the text but they also suggest an interpretation of the same. It is significant to note that every issue features the subheading: 日本に在住するラテン人のために, for Latinos residing in Japan, on the front cover. The inclusion of both Spanish and Japanese text in the front cover serves to identify both the magazine's intended audience (primarily Spanish-language readers) as well as its context (Japan). *Latin-a's* use of Japanese demonstrates its engagement with the context in which it is produced and consumed, while reflecting the bilingual and bicultural experience of the community it portrays and serves.

3. Membership in Overlapping Communities

The most obvious form of membership in *Latin-a's* community is Spanish language proficiency. Without the ability to read Spanish, *Latin-a's* text offers minimal opportunities for interaction and participation in community activities or ideals. That does not mean that *Latin-a* remains entirely closed off to non-Spanish speakers, however. This is apparent in the use of Japanese language, as previously mentioned. The uses of Japanese which promote Japanese language learning, together with *Latin-a's* stand on the need for immigrants in Japan to acquire Japanese language proficiency, indicate that, even though Spanish language proficiency is a key form of membership in *Latin-a's* community, *Latin-a* ultimately advocates (at the very least) a bilingual community. By aspiring to a bilingual community, language not only defines the present community but also envisions a future one. Describing *Latin-a's* community solely as Spanish-speaking, thus, falls short when taking into account views of language learning expressed

in the magazine and by the writers, as well as language use in the magazine text. In short, Spanish-language use in the magazine supports one form of membership, that of being a migrant or foreigner in a host country where Spanish is a minority language, while the use of Japanese-language supports another, that of being a resident in Japan. That is not to say that these are in contradiction, but rather that language use is simultaneously able to suggest different but, nevertheless, interrelated forms of membership.

As can be expected, membership on the basis of being a migrant, foreigner, and/or resident in Japan are in some ways inseparable, as the three are experientially linked. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to acknowledge these as separate sub-communities for the purposes of distinguishing the basis of membership and the meaning of the same. *Latin-a's* community members identify (in the case of writers) or are identified (in the case of readers) as immigrants. They do so under a perspective in which migratory experiences have general characteristics that are not necessarily specific to Japan. That is, the experience of being a migrant or foreigner can be understood in relation to both a global and a local context. Accordingly, members can hypothetically be constructed as part of a larger global community of immigrants or individuals who do not reside in their home country. The magazine's acknowledgement of mobility within the community suggests that some members may ultimately choose to leave Japan. Nevertheless, *Latin-a's* emphasis on the Japanese context serves to ground the migrant/foreigner experience in Japan. Since residing in Japan is highlighted as a defining characteristic of *Latin-a's* community from the onset, this can also be taken to mean that *Latin-a's* community can

be considered, in some respects, a national one. Since the magazine is designed and intended for readers throughout Japan and does not focus on a specific prefecture or region, despite its Kobe-based production. Accordingly, this community of people living in Japan is ultimately tied to the host country and its people. Thus, native Japanese people or non-Latino immigrants living in Japan are not entirely outside the community *Latin-a* serves.

The most visible community articulated by *Latin-a* is one based on Latinidad. From the magazine's name, to its numerous uses of the term as an identity marker for its writers and readers, to its use as a description for community, Latino/a is present throughout the text. Within *Latin-a's* community, Latinidad is constructed as encompassing people of different nationalities, ethnicities, and heritages. *Latin-a's* version of Latinidad, not unlike that in other contexts, is tied to multiple political, ethnic, and cultural communities which are identified as Latina/o. Perhaps in contrast to other contexts, however, Japanese and Peruvian ethnicity, heritage, culture, and nationality play much more prominent roles in *Latin-a's* representation of Latinidad. This is in some respects unavoidable as the Latin American immigrant community in Japan is comprised mostly of Brazilian and Peruvian nikkeijin. The predominant use of Spanish-language in articulating Latinidad, however, diminishes and perhaps in effect excludes most Brazilians from *Latin-a's* imagination of Latinidad.

The Peruvian community is the most prevalent national community identified and addressed in *Latin-a*, a characteristic which is not surprising considering Peruvians are the largest Spanish-speaking group in Japan. The

boundary between nationality and other forms of shared membership are not always clearly delineated in the magazine. Because *Latin-a's* writers address an audience comprised of individuals from different nationalities, they sometimes refer to their homeland as an aggregate of "our countries," signaling a similarity between the writer's home country and other Latin American countries from which their readers may originate. *Latin-a*, however, does not challenge the boundaries of nationality. Instead, *Latin-a* appeals to belonging in a Latin American or Latino community which encompasses several nationalities; alluding to the layers of identification that *Latinidad* contains. Thus, nationality and *Latinidad* remain compatible through an articulation of the latter that embraces nationality as a component of the same. In advocating for a Latino/a community, *Latin-a* does not seek to erase the particularities inherent in the community but rather to incorporate them. It is worthwhile to point out that antagonisms among different Latino groups are not expressed in the magazine.

The difference between 'Latino' and 'nikkeijin' is not specified in *Latin-a* and the overlap between the two terms is ambiguous. Due to the overlap between Latino/a and nikkei categories, it is also necessary to clarify that in this study Latin American nikkeijin or nikkei is used to refer to:

...all Japanese emigrants and their descendants who, while acknowledging their Japanese ancestry, have created unique communities within various national contexts throughout the Americas. The term also includes persons of mixed racial descent who identify themselves as Nikkei, as well as those who have returned to Japan but retain identities separate from the native Japanese. (Kikumura-Yano 2002, 3)

The degree to which nikkei is constructed as central to Latinidad in the magazine text depends to some extent on how individual writers treat the topic in their writing. Not unlike the prominence of the Peruvian community in *Latin-a*, Peruvians and nikkeijin constitute majorities within the Latino population in Japan and this is reflected in the magazine. Through, for example, the front covers which feature images of nikkei families, the use of the term 'nikkei' in conjunction with Latino to describe community members, and the attention given to double, 'hafu,' and mixed culture identities. Due to the diversity of *Latin-a's* writers, however, perspectives other than those of nikkeijin and Peruvians are also presented. Most importantly, the editorial does not privilege any of these communities over that of a unified Latino community, effectively giving greater prominence to Latino as a marker for community. Thus, Latinidad, rather than nationality, ethnicity, or heritage, functions as the primary form of membership and identification for the community.

Following Latinidad, readership is perhaps the most obvious form of membership in *Latin-a's* community. Readership plays a central role in *Latin-a's* textual community, as the latter is inherently comprised of readers and writers. Due to *Latin-a's* aim to provide information and guidance—to be a resource for its readers—membership can be associated with necessity and usage. Furthermore, as writers attempt to build relationships with and between readers, these connections become the basis for affiliation and belonging in *Latin-a's* community. That doesn't mean, however, that *Latin-a's* community does not extend beyond its readers. For example, the magazine's intended audience are adults (particularly parents) but it should

not be inferred that children are not considered part of *Latin-a's* community, especially when the welfare of children is a vital concern in many articles. Similarly, Japanese spouses of Latin American readers, who may not read the magazine nor have Spanish-language proficiency, are not necessarily outsiders to the community envisioned in *Latin-a*. Therefore, while readership is crucial to the magazine's mission of community building, self-actualization and unity for Latinos, it is not required for membership in *Latin-a's* community. Instead, concern for improving one's quality of life (or shared purpose) is more integral to the community, since the existence of the magazine itself is dependent on this aspiration. Accordingly, *Latin-a* can also be said to advocate the creation of a unified community on the basis of ambition. That is, *Latin-a's* community is ultimately one which aspires to succeed and grow, at both the collective and individual level.

The nature of *Latin-a's* community as one based on ambition is central to understanding why community is integral to *Latin-a*, its writers, and readers. Here it's possible to address the significance of community for readers, writers and the magazine separately, though they remain interrelated. Regarding readers, for example, the intended uses or benefits of community consist of two types: practical and abstract. In the practical sense, community is a manner in which to address problems. Within *Latin-a's* magazine text, numerous issues are presented as community-level issues, making them relevant for all members - who can as a result be considered stakeholders. Accordingly, community is meant to lead to the betterment of its members' livelihoods, by making use of the collective resources (material and otherwise) at its disposal, in order to tackle problems that might

otherwise overwhelm individual members. Another practical implication is social benefits, such as networking, which might result from community structures or consciousness. In the abstract sense, *Latin-a* seeks the self-realization of its members in a manner that has not only economic, social, and political implications but psychological and emotional ones as well. In this regard, benefits for readers are also relevant for writers, as both are members of *Latin-a's* community. Though, there are additional benefits for writers which arise from their participation in *Latin-a's* production. Through writing, *Latin-a* is able to provide a means of connecting the individual and the collective. As such, *Latin-a* is imbued with the writers' desires for community, their comprehension of it, and their strategy for realizing it.

Based on the findings of this analysis, *Latin-a* creates or advocates the existence of communities based on: (a) language, (b) migrant/foreigner experience, (c) residency in Japan, (d) Latinidad, (e) readership, and (f) ambition. The aforementioned categories can be considered sources of membership as well as defining attributes of the communities created and/or represented. These forms of membership are not constructed as autonomous, and their continuous overlap reinforces the idea that they are all interrelated and co-dependent within *Latin-a's* community. It's upon and through these communities that *Latin-a's* unique textual community is constructed. Accordingly, while the unified community imagined by *Latin-a* could be described, simply, as one consisting of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants living in Japan who read *Latin-a* in order to improve their quality of life, this simplification falls short of capturing the changing

and complex nature of the same. The aforementioned bases for membership support the imagination of one community—the unified community envisioned in *Latin-a*—but they also allude to the overlapping and fluid quality of communities. In view of that, Spanish-speaking, immigrant, resident in Japan, Latino/a, and reader may be seen as sources of membership in the unified community imagined in *Latin-a*. Additionally, numerous other communities may be present in the text, such as those based on ethnicity, or nationality. These play a lesser role in the conception of commonalities among members and are treated as differences which are valued, but overshadowed by *Latin-a*'s community. Ultimately, it's the imagined commonalities, shared experiences, needs, values, and affiliations, which are the foundation for unity through pursuit of the same dream: a better quality of life.

IV. The (Con)textualization of Latinidad

Latin-a magazine possesses many qualities and characteristics which make it a unique and valuable object of study. From its role in the development of an immigrant community in Japan, to its contributions to diversity and cultural awareness in Japanese society; there are many ways in which it can be approached and understood as a means by which to analyze issues of migration, media production, identity, belonging, and multiculturalism. Whether relating to the Japanese context or global trends, *Latin-a* reflects and helps to define what it means to be a migrant, a Latino, and a parent in today's hybrid and mobile world. While this study is limited in its ability

to explore and analyze the many ways in which this may be accomplished –due to scope and research limitations–it, nevertheless, seeks to examine one manner in which *Latin-a* is able to reflect and define present life and future promise for Latinos (and possibly other immigrants and even non-immigrants) in Japan. By declaring the former, I don't intend to overstate the significance of *Latin-a* in Japan nor the impact it may have on its readers. Instead, I wish to emphasize *Latin-a's* ability to provide a space for expression and collaboration. To present 'definitions' or perspectives that offer members of its textual community tools for making sense of their identity, their place in Japan, and their opportunities for a better life. The most central of these definitions, and perhaps the one taken most for granted in *Latin-a's* text and by *Latin-a's* writers, is the meaning of Latino itself. The 'natural' condition attributed to this identity marker, as well as the diversity of associations it is given in the text, suggests the heterogeneous and fluid quality of Latinidad.

In identifying *Latin-a's* textual community, unity across the different categories of membership previously mentioned (i.e. language, migrant/foreigner experience, residency in Japan, cultural/geographic affiliation, readership, and ambition) becomes crucial. The overlap of several communities and the lack of rigid distinctions among them serves to highlight a key defining feature of *Latin-a's* community, as one which privileges open and fluid interpretations of belonging, over concrete and limiting ones. Juan Flores explores the place of community in the Latino imaginary and argues that the Spanish language is able to provide a unique basis for understanding the concept of Latino community because

“Comunidad,” “común”-“unidad”: the Spanish word, even more clearly than the English, calls to mind two of the key terms in the conceptualization of this notoriously elusive idea. What do we have in “common,” and what “unites” us, what are our commonalities and what makes for our unity? (Flores 1997, 184)

Most importantly, he makes the distinction that “...the Latino ‘experience,’ the group’s demonstrable reality and existence, includes but is not co-terminous with its self-consciousness: ‘común’ stands for the community *in* itself, while ‘unidad’ refers to the community *for* itself, the way that it thinks, conceives of, imagines itself” (Flores 1007, 185). In the case of *Latin-a*’s imagination of community, the present shared reality and common history can be understood as what community members have in common, whereas the community aspired to, or the future envisioned in *Latin-a* can represent a vision for what can unite Latino/as in Japan.

Of the communities represented and furthered in *Latin-a*’s text, the unified community aspired to in the text—which could in some respects be equated with the textual community it realizes—is the one which above any other is considered central to the lives of *Latin-a*’s readers and writers. It is this unified community which is essential to *Latin-a* as a media text, and to the textual community which results from its production and consumption. Because of this, Community²⁾ can be considered the predominant ideology of *Latin-a*. It is what gives the magazine purpose and identity, and what serves as a frame of reference for all other ideals and values. Community is what gives meaning to and holds together notions of multiculturalism,

2) In order to differentiate, upper case ‘C’ is used to indicate the ideal or concept, whereas lower case ‘c’ is reserved for all other uses.

solidarity, responsibility, and self-fulfillment among many others. Like the concept of Community proposed by scholars, this ideology is emergent; continuously inspired by the experiences of its members and influenced by the context in which it is expressed. Sara Ahmed and Anne-Marie Fortier argue, “we might think of communities as never fully achieved, never fully arrived at, even when ‘we’ already inhabit them” (Ahmed & Fortier 2003, 257). But there is, aside from the aspirational facet of Community, the social reality which is a product of ‘inhabiting’ a given community. Even though, this too is emergent and has repercussions which extend beyond the moment of its conception, it can be distinguished from the imminent quality of Community for the purposes of making visible the lived qualities of community. In attempting to understand how members of *Latin-a’s* textual community might experience this community, it is necessary to distinguish between those uses and ends for which community is intended or imagined in the magazine text and by its writers. By this I mean that, while Community serves as an ideology for *Latin-a* and that ideology is useful in giving form and content to a textual community; community is intended to be useful or, in other words, imagined to be beneficial in the lives of its members. Although, this has implications which go beyond the magazine text and which are outside the scope of this research project.

Like Community, Latinidad gives structure to *Latin-a’s* text and coherence to the collective entity it addresses. While Community provides purpose and significance to the resulting community, Latinidad gives it a name and an identity. By making use of the “social imaginary” (Taylor 2004) of Latinidad and of the cultural literacy which accompanies it, *Latin-a* ultimately

(con)textualizes Latina/o. A process which consists of imagining Latinidad in the magazine text and, simultaneously, contextualizing it within the space and moment in which the text is produced and intended to be consumed (written and read). So as to avoid the normative assumption that the original or authentic context of Latinidad is Latin America, it is necessary to highlight that while members of *Latin-a*'s textual community were acquainted with elements of Latinidad prior to their involvement in *Latin-a*, or their migration to Japan, the imagining of Latina/o in Japan and in *Latin-a* is a process of (con)textualization not *re*(con)textualization. For like Community, Latinidad is an emergent concept and the production of texts implies the creation of interpretative not fixed realities.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored how *Latin-a* functions as a textual community by creating a common textual space, in which Latinidad is (con)textualized, and where writers and readers can imagine their place and possibilities. Through textual analysis of the magazine's first eight issues, this study has explored the layers of this common space, as well as the characteristics which give it substance and meaning. Most importantly, it has proposed that *Latin-a* is able to facilitate its project of a unified community by (con)textualizing Latinidad. Nevertheless, there are potentially countless ways in which to interpret *Latin-a* as a community and this study has provided but one, while intentionally focusing solely on the magazine text. Accordingly, this study is limited in its ability to show how production and

consumption perspectives might be brought to bear on the making of textual communities, since producers' and readers' experiences are outside the scope of this project. Interestingly, Kathryn Burnett and Tony Grace point out that, "the nuanced nature of community - both felt and ephemeral... may also explain why when community is researched it often invites more questions as to 'what community may be' than it provides answers to what it is" (Burnett & Grace 2008, 83-84). Thus, the goal of this study has not been to provide a definitive answer but rather to offer one perspective and interpretation, while expanding the boundaries of concepts like textual community and Latinidad. By doing so, this study has endeavored to reflect the possibilities that magazines may represent in the lives of their writers and readers (migrants, parents, and so forth) and of the need to continue to study them as a distinctive element of and for community.

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<Abstract>

Little of the existing research on Latin American immigrants in Japan has concentrated on media produced by Latinos/as in Japan, or the implications of the same for community formation. This study addresses the gap in the literature by focusing on the making of a Latina/o community in *Revista Latin-a*, a free Spanish-language community magazine published by a Latin American immigrant self-help group in Kobe, Japan. In order to understand how community is constructed in and through the magazine, this study makes use of the concept of 'textual community' (Eichhorn 2001). The resulting interpretation of the magazine text suggests that *Latin-a* functions as a textual space in which Latinidad is (con)textualized and community is both realized and pursued.

Key Works: Community, Magazines, Media, Japan, Migration

■ Submission of Manuscript: 25th of April, 2016

■ Manuscript Accepted: 12th of June, 2016

■ Final Manuscript: 20th of June, 2016