Les...tina? Santana Lopez and the Negotiation of Dual Latina/Lesbian Minority Identity on Glee

Abstract

Latinas and lesbians are typically represented stereotypically in the media. Latinas are portrayed as hot, promiscuous manipulators of men. Lesbians are portrayed as overly-emotional, sexually entertaining for men, and potentially bisexual. This study examines Santana Lopez, a character on the hit television show Glee, and her transformation from a stereotypical Latina to a stereotypical lesbian. In order to successfully negotiate her new lesbian identity, Santana must abandon some of her stereotypical Latina traits, as they conflict with mainstream media’s favored lesbian stereotypes. Our findings indicate that content makers are unable to simultaneously represent both aspects of Santana's identity and instead cling to traits that would seem most palatable to a white heterosexual male audience (despite that the show’s core audience is women). These findings point to hegemonic enforcement of race and sexuality norms that is especially problematic considering Glee’s reputation as a liberal series that champions equality.