Abstract
This article discusses certain relationships between gender and nation in Latin America by both describing and analyzing some features of the Concurso Nacional de Belleza (National Beauty Contest) in Colombia in the first half of 20th century. The text raises three issues. First, the conflicting forms that identity takes in the process of constructing nations. Second, that the beauty contest is a way of life for women that is both public and civilized. Third, the dispute over social leadership implicit in the contest itself. Finally, the article explains that the reigns of the winners are themselves interesting ways to understand how Latin American societies are both experiencing and facing transformations in the criteria marking social distinctions.

Keywords
Beauty contest, nation, identity, nationalizing societies, Colombia