

# A smile like mine

Glam Belleza Latina's editor never considered her tooth gap a flaw—until a TV appearance made her wonder.

BY PATRICIA REYNOSO

**M**y teeth have provoked a lot of discussion recently. I've had this gap my entire life, just as I've had curly hair, brown eyes, and a round face my entire life, and just like with those other features, I'd never questioned its existence. That's simply who I am: Patricia with the Gap.

As it happens, the dental quirk that supermodel Lauren Hutton made sexy back in the seventies is having a big moment now. Just google models Georgia May Jagger and Lindsey Wixson for two of the most personality-filled, designer-beloved smiles around. (In fact, that's Wixson's grin in the picture above, and Jagger—daughter of Mick and Jerry Hall—is a spokesmodel for Rimmel London.) In the music scene, up-and-coming rapper Becky G. (a CoverGirl face) is giving the gap a

spotlight. There are even several Tumblr pages dedicated to it. (My favorite: sexygapteeth.tumblr.com.)

In other words, gaps are big these days. And perhaps because I knew that my world, the fashion and beauty world, considers the look charismatic—and more important, because my teeth are in great shape otherwise—I never thought to change mine.

Until recently, when I appeared on the *Today* show as editor of this magazine, that is. I was feeling pretty satisfied with the segment; then I watched myself on the DVR that night. Turns out that seeing myself in motion was quite different from peering into the mirror or flipping through photos. *¿Así es como me veo?* I thought. Too much smiling, too much space between my teeth, especially next to Hoda Kotb's perfect and blindingly white set.

Had I deluded myself all these years, thinking my gap was “charming” or gave me “personality”? Maybe I should've followed my pushy dentist's (unsolicited) advice years ago that I get it fixed. Had I been too blasé about the state of my smile all along?

Suddenly I had to learn more. *Diastema* is the medical term for a gap, and while some might disagree, there's nothing technically wrong with having one. As is true of most cosmetic issues, I have my genes to thank. My mother has a gap; so did her mom. (I didn't grow up with

my grandma, and my memories of her have faded, so this connection was sweet news.) As Peter Auster, D.M.D., a New York City–based cosmetic dentist I rang up after seeing myself on TV, explained, my front teeth probably never came together because of an especially strong muscle on my upper gums. Bringing them together now would likely require that this muscle be thinned out via laser, he said, followed by braces or bonding. Sounds uncomfortable. And time consuming.

OK, so I can “improve” my smile. The bigger question: Is it worth the time and effort? I pressed Dr. Auster for his professional opinion. He shrugged and said that it's a matter of personal and sometimes, cultural, preference. “In Jamaica, where I volunteer, a gap is considered a badge of honor,” he said. “But according to a poll we conducted, most people in the U.S. don't like their gaps.”

I went home that night and thought about my imperfect smile. I thought back to the day I'd met Hutton, the goddess of the gap. (“That's good luck, you know,” the supermodel squealed, then demanded that we take a photo together to commemorate the moment.) I also looked affectionately at my elementary school photos, and I considered that the space between my teeth made up the only motherly smile my kids had ever known. As for my husband, he didn't think the topic was even worth discussing. “It's who you are, sweetie,” he said, adding that he

likes Patricia with the Gap. Always has, always will.

My last call was to my famously vain mother. No, she said, don't bother with that “fixing” nonsense. She explained that in the Dominican Republic, where she was born, gaps “*son de mujeres sexys*.” The no-nonsense way that she said it made me giggle, while surprising me with its underlying affection. Before hanging up, though, she insisted that I whiten my smile since I'll probably be on TV again. Easy enough. So in this case, we'll say that Mother knows best.

And I would hate to mess with personality. ■

“Had I deluded myself all these years, thinking my gap was ‘charming’ or gave me ‘personality’?”

—PATRICIA REYNOSO, GBL's editor, pondering—and ultimately loving!—the state of her gap



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