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QUE PEDO, WHERE ARE THE LATINAS?: A MIXED METHOD ANALYSIS OF LATINA  
REPRESENTATION IN TWO AMERICAN FEMALE MAGAZINES AND CONCEPTIONS  
OF LATINA SELF-PERCEPTION

A Thesis

by

VICTORIA DE JESUS MANCHA

Submitted to Texas A&M International University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2017

Major Subject: Communication

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December 2017

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## ABSTRACT

Que Pasa, Where are the Latinas?: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Latina Representation in Two American Female Magazines and Conceptions of Latina Self-Perception (December 2017)

Victoria De Jesus Mancha, B.A., Texas A&M International University;

Chair of Committee: Dr. Ju Oak Kim

While feminist critics like Jean Kilbourne have noted the oppressive power patriarchal advertisements can have on a women's self-perception, the majority of these critiques stem from second and third wave feminist concerns that potentially overlook the role of race and ethnicity in the construction of gendered images. Moreover, popular feminist research tends to overlook the importance of analyzing the different intersects of female social identities. Intersectional feminism, however, has been painted as new theoretical concept that can help feminist researchers address these different intersect. Thus, the purpose of this research project is to contribute to current feminist media research by using intersectionality as a tool to explore how the Latina female image is portrayed in the gendered images of advertisements. A content analysis was conducted and used to explore how Latina female images are represented in two popular female magazines—*Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. Lastly, this project discusses the findings of a set of focus groups made up of 18 Latina women in the hopes it will highlight the importance of giving voice to Latina women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gendered images in advertising have been a major topic of media and cultural studies since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cultural critics have often explored how gender-specific images in advertising are closely related to the construction of beauty culture in everyday America and have expanded American beauty culture and sex roles on an international scale (Gilly, 1988; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005). Sociologists, as well, have not only analyzed how advertisers select and utilize gender ideals and stereotypes to promote products but have also advocated visual analysis as a catalyst for critical thinking and social change (Whipple & Courtney, 1985). According to Busby and Leichty (1993) social theorists explored the “embedded” messages in advertising as they may reveal the “values and motives of individuals” in present-day America (p. 247). Barthel (1988) echoed this sentiment and contended the images found in advertisements are not just “*about* gender” or “*about* appearances”, but, rather, they are “*about* society” (p. 12). In essence, advertisements create and perpetuate “narratives” depicting the different aspects of everyday life in American culture (Barthel, 1988, p. 13).

Among the many topics discussed in feminist media research, the discourse of gendered images of advertisements and the harmful gendered ideals these sexualized images may inflict upon women have always been a topic of great discussion. Feminist researchers, such as Jean Kilbourne (1999) and Sut Jhally (2015), have constantly deliberated that consumer culture propels and reinforces notions of hegemonic femininity in our minds via the use of advertisements. In essence, consumer culture and its “advertising image-system constantly propel us toward things as a means to satisfaction” (Jhally, 2015, p. 249). This satisfaction has historically been tied to the male gaze from the beginning of the Renaissance period in which

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The journal model of this thesis was taken from *Communication Theory*.

women's bodies first began to be looked upon for enjoyment. It then transcended into the advertisement culture we all contribute to on a daily basis.

The focus of this paper will rest in the representational power of advertisements present in two popular female magazines and its potential effect in the lives of Latina women. The feminist discourse found in advertisement research has been predominately about white women and black women (Cepeda, 2015). Latinas and other brown women of color have largely been left out of many theoretical discussions pertaining to female representation in advertisements. This creates a problem as the oppressive power of advertisements are only understood on a marginal level. Moreover, the lack of feminist academic research on Latina bodies in advertisement showcases a bigger fundamental problem—the discourse present in feminism is only representing a certain image of feminine rather than being an all-inclusive discourse of women's issues.

Thus, this thesis seeks to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies in an attempt to explore three research questions: **1)** Do advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.) contain intersectional feminism? **2)** How does *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan or Latinas* (U.S.) depict female and Latina images? **3)** How do Latinas interpret the images of Latina female images in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.)?

The quantitative aspect will be in the form of a content analysis of all advertisements found in two U.S. female magazines—*Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*—spanning the years of 2014 and 2015. The first two research questions will be explored via this content analysis. The unique aspect I wish to contribute to the feminist discourse of ethnic female representation in popular and consumer culture is explored in the form of four focus groups

made up of 18 Latinas. These focus groups delved into the third and final research question in an attempt to assess how young Latinas feel about the level of representation present in popular and consumer culture. Moreover, the use of these focus groups are meant to shed light on the intersectional importance of addressing and including the different perspectives of young Latina women in feminist media research.

With this study, I set off to explore the concept of intersectional feminism. Though this concept was birthed from political and social movements outside of academia, I wanted to explore if this concept could be used as a tool to analyze Latina representation in popular and consumer culture. Through the use of a content analysis, I quantified various social identification categories (age, gender, ethnicity, physical body type, etc.) intersectional feminism strives to address in their discussions of women's issues. This was done in order to explore what kind of female representation was found in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.). Through the use of focus groups, Latina women were given the opportunity to voice what influences the construction of their gender identity and were able to describe their interpretations of the gendered images of Latinas in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.). This study wishes to add an intersectional perspective of Latina women's issues pertaining to popular and consumer culture. In order to better understand the intersectional perspective under which I am writing this thesis, the literature review will focus on five areas of theoretical discussion: Mixed Methods in Feminist Media Studies; Feminism, a History, *Ni Santas, Ni Putas, Solo Mujeres: Latina Representation in Consumer Culture*, *Nosotras Tambien Contamos: Hegemonic Discourse in Feminist Advertising*, and "My Mother is My Advertisement.": Latinas as a Growing Niche Market.

In the section Mixed Methods in Feminist Media Studies, I will briefly address the two empirical readings this study is built upon while also addressing how I incorporated the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. In the section of Feminism, a History, I will address the history behind the different waves of feminism, painting a picture of how each feminist wave has contributed and faulted in the empowerment of women of color, specifically that of the Latina. In *Ni Santas, Ni Putas, Solo Mujeres* and *Nosotras Tambien Contamos*, I will address how Latina women have historically been depicted as sexualized visions of exotic beauty in the mainstream popular culture of advertisements and how mainstream feminist advertising seems to falter in representing a Latina feminist perspective in the message of their products. Lastly in “My Mother is My Advertisement.”, I will address how the Latina population has become one of the biggest niche markets in the economy of the United States and how Latina-oriented small businesses have been created to cater to the type of cultural-based products Latina women crave to get. Since the positionality of this paper is one of intersectional feminism, the discussion section addresses the quantitative and qualitative results found in the course of my research in the hopes it will address the importance of analyzing the level of ethnic representation and personal perspectives of Latinas living in contemporary America.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Mixed Methods in Feminist Media Studies

The first research question is based off of a 1993 multi-magazine study conducted by Busby and Leichty in which they compared popular traditional magazines (e.g., *McCall's* and *Redbook*) with popular feminist-inclined nontraditional magazines (e.g., *Ms.* and *Working Women*). In this content coded study, Busby and Leichty set out to see if second wave feminist ideology had presented itself in gendered advertisements in these magazines from the 1950s to the 1980s. Their three main findings revealed: 1) the gendered role portrayal of women did in fact vary during the time when second wave feminism was at its peak in 1960s; 2) the gendered role portrayal of women varied according to the type of magazine, meaning family roles were significantly more likely to appear in traditional magazines versus nontraditional magazines; and 3) gendered role portrayal also varied according to product category.

This study will be a multi-magazine content coded analysis of gendered images found in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.). However, while Busby and Leichty observed for second wave feminist ideology, this project seeks to observe if an intersectional feminist ideology has manifested itself in advertisements in these two magazines. Intersectional feminism fights for the equal representation of all social identities found in feminist discourses. By examining if intersectional feminism is present in current advertisements, this projects hopes to address what kind of female depictions are being used in today's popular culture. Put differently, this project examines how intersectional feminism has been reflected in mainstream popular culture.

The second research question is based off of 2005 study conducted by Baker in which she compared the level of female sexuality found in advertisements in White and Black oriented

women's and men's magazines (e.g., *Black Men*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Essence*, *GQ*, *Honey*, *King*, *Maxim*, and *Vogue*). In this content coded study, Baker (2005) set out to see if female sexuality varied according to the type of audience the magazine advertisement was targeting. Her main findings revealed: 1) images of White women dominated White women's magazines while Black women dominated Black women's magazines, however, White women were often depicted as being more submissive and dependent on men than their Black female counterparts; 2) women's magazines depicted achieving feminine beauty through certain products while men's magazines depicted obtaining feminine beauty through certain products, and 3) women in Black men's magazines were more likely to depict women as objects than women in Black women's magazines.

This study will differ slightly from Baker's (2005) original work. Instead of examining women's and men's magazines, this project will examine two female magazines—*Cosmopolitan* (U.S.), a mainstream magazine, and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.), a non-mainstream magazine targeted to a specific ethnic audience. This will be done to examine if there are any differences in the type of representational strategies used between the two magazines when depicting Latina women in their advertisements. Additionally, instead of analyzing the level of female sexuality, this content coded project aims to analyze the level of consumer representation used when depicting products to growing niche markets like that of the Latina community. This study hopes addressing issues of representational strategies may help to assess whether the Latina market is being accurately and effectively represented in advertisements.

The third and final research question is uniquely tied to this project as it aims to describe how Latinas in the social world construct their feminine identity and how they view themselves in comparison to the gendered images found in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*

(U.S.). The lack of Latina voices and perspectives found not only in feminist activism but in mainstream feminist research is of great concern to feminism as a social movement and as a field of media studies. Thus, this question contributes to highlighting the lack of ethno-racial minority voices present in feminist academic research. Answering the call to move beyond simply “filling in the gap” of mainstream feminist research with quick snippets of a Latina perspective, this study incorporates an intersectional feminist narrative to address the lack of Latina representation found in popular feminist media discourse (Capeda, 2015, p. 346).

Using a mixed methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative aspects together to achieve a broader perspective on this topic, I explored how the Latina image was used in advertisements and how that image relates to the construction of gender identity and beauty. This was done via a content analysis of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* and via four focus groups consisting of a total of 18 young Latinas. The content analysis of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* ranged from the year 2014 to 2015 and included every advertisement found in the magazines. There was a total of 9 categories used to observe if intersectional feminist ideology was present in the advertisements and to observe the representational strategies being used when incorporating Latina images into advertisements. The categories are: Language of Advert, Product Category, Women’s Role, Age, Location, Race of Model, Gender of Model, Physical Size of Model, and Latina Representation.

The final part of this project was analyzing the responses of four different focus groups made up entirely of Latina young women above the ages of 18. This study incorporated the use of focus groups as a way to observe how Latina women viewed the ethnic representation found in advertisements from *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. The majority of feminist media research only hypothesizes the negative impacts advertisements can have on women,

however, very little research has been conducted in which researchers ask women how they interpret gendered images (Zoonen, 2001). Through the use of these focus groups, this study attempted to highlight the voices of young Latina women. These young women were students at TAMIU during the 2017 spring semester and were selected from the existing pool of Communication students. It should be noted since all female students were from the Communication department, the majority of them had prior knowledge of advertising and the adverse effects they can have on a woman's self-perception.

### Feminism, a History

Rising out of the industrial smokes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, first wave feminism filled the streets of modern-day America with the cries of women who demanded political inclusion and right to be represented equally in society regardless of gender and race identity (Stanton, Anthony, Gage, & Harper, 1881; Truth, 1851). Most notably, female crusaders of first wave feminism fought for the right of women to vote in public elections and to participate in public office as was their civic right as citizens of a democracy (Stanton, et al., 1881). Their demand for inclusion allowed for the concepts of female domesticity and the notions of ladylike behavior to be broken down and questioned. Yet, critics of first wave feminism have often pointed to its faults as a Westernized ideology tailored to voice the issues of white women of certain social (e.g., heterosexual) and social economic (e.g., middle class) backgrounds (Rampton, 2015). However, first wave feminism garnered women the opportunity to occupy and claim the same public spaces their male counterparts were used to occupying. It was this birthright to claim and assert their place in public spaces and to question the concept of femininity that set the seed for second wave feminism to thrive.

These seeds that craved liberation and independence from the archaic patriarchal mentalities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was further cultivated during the hardships of World War II. With high volumes of men enlisting to fight in a global war, women were suddenly called upon to fill in the empty industrial roles left behind (Quigley, 2015). Dubbed “Rosies” for their work in defense and riveting industries, these women were more than mere housewives, mothers, daughters, and girlfriends. They were factory workers, official members of the United States Armed Forces, and, perhaps most importantly, the economic growth the nation needed to function. However, women’s contributions to the economy during this time were quickly forgotten once the war had been won and men began to return home (Quigley, 2015).

Thrust back into domesticity, women were expected to put away their newfound sense of economic independence and revert back into being nothing more than “ornaments of society” (Cobbe, 1895, p. 56). By the time the early 1950s, it was clear the type of “ornaments” American society wanted was the perfect housewife—a woman whose sole purpose was to stay at home and raise the perfect nuclear family (Cobbe, 1895, p. 56). During the 1950s, an estimated 18 million women made up roughly 34 percent of the workforce (Toosii, 2002, p. 15). Among these women were single working mothers, married mothers trying to find a balance between working and raising a family, and single working women trying to find a way to get ahead in life. Thus, there were entire branches of womanhood that were left out of the narrative popular culture was spewing out to mass audiences at the time. Douglas (1994) pointed out in her book “Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media” that working women, specifically white, middle-class working mothers, were underrepresented or portrayed as “bad mothers” in popular television shows (p. 44). Moreover, the gender and sexual oppression experienced and felt by

these white, middle-class women during this time period proved to be the added spark needed to propel and develop the feminist ideology of second wave feminism (Rampton, 2015).

Beginning in the late 1960s and carried over into the mid-1980s, second wave feminism was a radical social movement inspired by the theoretical concepts of neo-Marxism and psychoanalytical theory (Rampton, 2015, para. 7). It fought against the gendered notions of womanhood (e.g., the role of wife and mother), the rise of a capitalist nation making money off of the sexualized images of women, and against the concept of normative heterosexuality as the only narrative of sexual identity (Rampton, 2015, para. 7). More importantly, second wave feminism seemed to thrive where first wave feminism failed. It offered a space for the voices of women of color to be included in the political and social discourse of feminism. The National Organization for Women (NOW), for example, had many Black, Latina, and Asian women working with white women to raise awareness about the different social issues pertaining to women of color.

However, many women of color who identified as social activist felt NOW, founded in the midst of second wave feminism, was not addressing the specific types of oppression experienced within ethnic female communities (Thompson, 2002, p. 338). This led to the development of ethnic social activist groups such as the Hijas de Cuauhtem, a Latina *femenista* group, Asian Sisters, an Asian American women's group, Women of All Red Nations (WARN), a Native American women's group, and other feminist groups with ties to militant groups like the Black Liberation Army (Thompson, 2002, p. 339). These radical groups, often excluded from the narrative of Second Wave history, believed sexism was not the "primary, or most destructive, oppression" experienced by women of color (Thompson, 2002, p. 342). Rather, they believed addressing intersects of race, gender, and class would be a better avenue for feminism. However, this aspect was quickly overshadowed by second wave feminism's central argument—patriarchy.

Patriarchy is a notion theorized as the systematic oppression of women by male domination present at every institutional, cultural, and personal level of the social world (Crapanzano, 2012, para 3). Given that patriarchy is not believed to be “natural,” second wave feminism asserts it is then a “social construction” perpetuated by popular culture, “a space where gender inequalities [are] reflected and upheld” (Crapanzano, 2012, para 3). While this movement acknowledged and warned against the negative impacts these gender specific images found in mass media could have on women, it also recognized mass media “could be used to create positive portrayals of women while also making women aware of their oppressed state through media-based consciousness-raising” (Crapanzano, 2012, para. 7). This “consciousness-raising” can be seen in many of the women’s issues second wave feminism rallied for and in many of the topics discussed by second wave feminist academic research (Crapanzano, 2012, para 7).

Second wave feminist media researchers have done much to create and propel a feminist discourse toward women’s rights and have fought against the oppressive concepts of feminine identity in a patriarchal society. As a social movement, it has rallied, among many women’s issues, for equal pay in the workplace, access to reproductive rights, and has encouraged women to reject the patriarchal notion of feminine sexuality. While second wave feminism has made strides in the fight against gender inequalities experienced in both the public and private spheres of women’s lives, many modern-day feminists have been quick to condemn its faults as a movement for social change. Most notably, second wave feminism has often been criticized for its lack of response toward the many social identities and social issues of (e.g., race, sexuality, class, ethnicity, geographical background, etc.) of women of color (Crapanzano, 2012). Critics of second wave feminism believe the lack of diversity and the grouping of women’s issues result in

a social movement that appears to cater only to the concerns of “white, heterosexual middle-class women” (Crapanzano, 2012, para. 9).

From an academic standpoint, critics have argued second wave feminist media research tends to incorporate mass culture theories that propagate the notion of “singular, uniform effects” on media consuming audiences (Crapanzano, 2012, para. 9). This notion of a single effect on entire groups of people may account for the lack of qualitative research present in feminist media scholarship. Regardless of these critiques and its faults as a social movement, second wave feminism is often considered the beginning of the social implementation of feminist ideologies in public spaces (Crapanzano, 2012). By the mid-1990s, second wave feminism had given birth to an all new, all-out girl power movement—third wave feminism.

Loaded with post-colonial and post-modern concepts that defined and reclaimed feminine beauty for women and encouraged the celebration of female sexual empowerment, third wave feminism strived to be “global” and “multi-cultural” (Rampton, 2015, para. 12). Diverting from its predecessors’ traditional feminist ideology, third wave feminism strived to echo a message of social inclusivity that celebrated the many different social identities of women, particularly of women of color, and it encouraged the freedom of feminine choice (Rampton, 2015). Feminists of this movement believe female empowerment is achieved when women are given the freedom of choice (Griebing, 2012, para. 8). In other words, third wave feminism asserted women—regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, etc.—should have the freedom to define in their own terms what female self-empowerment means to be. The freedom to choose what empowers a woman’s own sense of womanhood has been a central topic of discussion in third wave feminism. This is particularly seen in the discussion of sex positivity.

Third wave feminism places great emphasis on the concept of sex positivity. Sex positivity is regarded as “an inclusive, pleasure-oriented perspective on the sexual activities of consenting adults” (Griehling, 2012, para. 6). Sexuality is not viewed as a source of great patriarchal oppression, rather, third wave feminists asserts sexuality to be a source of great female liberation and empowerment (Rampton, 2015, para. 6). Women have the choice to be sexually empowered females without contributing to the patriarchal oppression of sex in an intimate relationship. More than this, women have the “agency” and the “choice” to express their own concepts of feminine beauty without being labelled as anti-feminist by second wave feminists (Griehling, 2012, para. 6). It is this notion of choice that allows third wave feminism to appeal to a wider audience of women who felt left out of the second wave movement (Rampton, 2015).

However, some critics of third wave feminism believe its faults lie in the freedom of choice it promotes. Second wave feminist critics have argued the lack of ideological structure in third wave feminism can make it “difficult to adopt a single stance toward controversial issues” (Griehling, 2012, para. 7). This lack of ideological structure may create a jumbling of different voices rather than advocating for a set of goals that may help break down the sexism and patriarchy thriving in America. Other critics have pointed out that despite their call for inclusivity, third wave feminism is still a social movement whose main concerns are still aligned with white, heterosexual, middle-class females (Griehling, 2012, para. 8). Nonetheless, third wave feminism has contributed to the feminist perspective by developing a deeper understanding of issues important to modern-day women such as “intimacy, power, love, and the erotic” (Griehling, 2012, para. 9). More importantly, third wave feminism seems to have provided a platform for women of color to echo their concerns.

Intersectional feminism, on the other hand, brings to light a different strand of feminism that acts as a theoretical response to the mainstream ideals of second and third wave feminism. Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality is a new form of feminism that asserts “socially constructed dimensions of identity, including, but not limited to, gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality, are understood as interconnected components that make up individuals” (as cited in Schwartz-DuPre, 2012, para. 2). In other words, intersectional feminism is meant to address the different social intersections of a female identity in the hopes that it will expand and broaden the type of women’s issues feminism strives to address. Rejecting the notion of “one woman, one experience,” intersectionality is meant to critically analyze how the “social, political, and culturally constructed categories” of identity “interact” among women in contemporary America (Schwartz-DuPre, 2012, para. 2). While its origins are rooted in the racist and sexist plights of the African American female experience, intersectional ideals have also been expanded to include the experiences and perspectives of other ethnic female identities.

However, critics of intersectional feminism assert its main faults reside in its reconceptualization of female social identities and its nebulosity as a feminist concept while others have argued the fault lies within the interdisciplinary inadequacies found in the social sciences and feminist academic fields (Schwartz-DuPre, 2012; Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005). Since intersectionality favors the reexploration of the various social identities tied to women, Schwartz-DuPre (2012) argued that some critics have found the “privileging [of] difference rather than similarities” may cause a “splinter” and thus “weaken political and social groups” (Schwartz-DuPre, para. 5). This notion seems to be a common misconception of the possible cumbersome contributions intersectionality may present to feminist media research. True, intersectionality does seek out the vast social differences women of color experience in their

daily lives. However, these social differences are highlighted and brought to the forefront in an attempt to counter the Westernized voices of feminism discourses. It is meant to encourage the sharing of different social narratives experienced by women of color as a means to help facilitate a broader collective understanding of what it means to be a woman in contemporary American society.

Other critics claim such broad and vast categories of social identity may lead to identity politics. Rooted in the turmoil of the civil rights movements of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, identity politics has long been a concept used by minority groups as a way to form alliances among each other. The use of identifying categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliations and more are distinguishing markers that often highlight the different perspective and interests of different social groups. These distinguishing markers are intended to make the process of social identification easier in the world consisting of different social groups. Moreover, these markers were meant to isolate and pinpoint the social issues of certain groups.

However, Schwartz-DuPre (2012) noted some critics believe the problem with identity politics “rests on the presumption that there is a norm or center from which the disenfranchised identity group emerges as Other” (para. 5). Under this perspective, the identity politics found within intersectional feminism can lead to more complexities rather than conclusions. Davis (2008) has argued the vagueness behind the concept of intersectionality is the root of its complexity: “Ironically, however, while most feminist scholars today would agree that intersectionality is essential to feminist theory, judging by the discussions which have emerged around the concept, scholars seem to share the same confusion...It is not at all clear whether intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, to theorizing identity, or whether it should be taken as a property of social structures and cultural discourses” (p. 69).

The complexities of intersectionality are further thwarted as some critics believe some academic fields lack the academic structure needed to explore the depth of this concept. In her article entitled, “The Complexity of Intersectionality”, McCall (2005) noted the interdisciplinary inadequacies in the academic realms of positivism and empiricism. However, she also drew attention to the field of feminist epistemologies. McCall (2005) commented on the divide that occurs in the academic fields of feminist research when these fields try to navigate the integration of new concepts with old methodologies (p. 1792). McCall (2005) stressed this “disconnect” can often “limit knowledge in all relevant disciplines but is especially a problem for new fields such as women’s studies, which aspires to be interdisciplinary” (p. 1792). This disconnection appears to be one of the issues when it comes to incorporating intersectionality into feminist research. However, McCall (2005) posted the central issue is a methodological one— “[t]he pressing issue then is to overcome the disciplinary boundaries based on the use of different methods in order to embrace multiple approaches to the study of intersectionality” (p. 1795). In essence, there must be an acceptance to move outside of methodological comfort zones if various interdisciplinary fields want to explore and address the different social inequalities intersectionality may bring to the surface.

Davis (2008) agreed there is a need to develop “a definition, a set of clearly demarcated parameters, and a methodology which would eliminate any confusion among researchers concerning how, where, and when it should be applied” (p. 79). Yet, he also acknowledged intersectionality, despite its vagueness, is a necessary feminist concept: “Intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated. It compels us to grapple with this complexity in our scholarship. It does not provide written-in-stone guidelines for doing

feminist inquiry, a kind of feminist methodology to fit all kinds of feminist research. Rather, it stimulates our creativity in looking for new and often unorthodox ways of doing feminist analysis” (p. 80). Intersectional feminism has never claimed to be the solution to the plights of women of color. It is merely a theoretical tool used to acknowledge and address the different social issues facing women of color in contemporary America. I also feel the need to briefly discuss and define how intersectionality was used throughout the course of this study. In this paper, I agree with Crenshaw’s definition of intersectionality, however, the implementation of her concept is my unique contribution to this innovative concept. As already established, the debate over how intersectionality may be incorporated into the fields of social sciences and feminist media research have been wide and complex.

There is not one way to incorporate or implement this concept into academic research. Therefore, I used intersectionality as a guide to assess the level of representation present in advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.). I used many of the social categories—specifically age, ethnicity, physical body type, gender, skin tone, language—intersectionality addresses as a way to gauge how Latinas are represented in advertisements. I also used these social categories as a way of identifying whether intersectional feminism has garnered a spot in popular and consumer culture. Lastly, I used intersectionality as a way to explore whether the self-perceptions of Latinas are rooted in intersectional feminist ideology.

Ni Santas, Ni Putas, Solo Mujeres:

#### Latina Representation in Popular Culture

Media scholars studying the notions of feminine beauty and concepts of femininity have discovered the way a woman is perceived by society can be subsidized to many hegemonic factors. Although no source can claim causality, the power of images, particularly of gendered

images depicted in popular culture, is widely regarded as one of the main contributors used in the patriarchal perception of women. This patriarchal perception dates back to the nude paintings of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe when the female body was considered nothing more than a mere muse used to reflect society's epitome of feminine beauty (Berger, 1998). Berger (1998) asserts the societal treatment of women as sexual objects has been influenced by the notion of the "'ideal' spectator" (p. 105). Under this notion, the image of the female body is "designed" to be an object of flirtation meant to "flatter" the male gaze (p. 105). Over the centuries, these male-driven fantasies evolved from mere paintings in museums to actual thriving industries of cultural power that saturate our society in various shades of patriarchy (Berger, 1998).

Latinas had a bigger presence in supporting roles on television (Negron-Muntaner, F., Abbas, C., Figueroa, C. & Robson, S., 2015, p.11). The 2012-2013 television seasons revealed Latinas made up 11.8% of supporting female roles while their male counterparts only made up 4.9% of supporting male roles (Negron-Muntaner, et al., 2015, p. 11). Overall, Latinas made up 67% of all Latino supporting character roles in television (Negron-Muntaner, et al., 2015, p. 3). Though the increase of Latina roles in television may appear to be a step in the right direction, Negron-Muntaner, et al. (2015) are quick to point out that this disparity in gender representation may be attributed to "media decision-makers view[ing] Latinas as more culturally desirable than Latino men" (p. 11).

Ramirez-Berg (2002) made an important argument that Latinas have been mainly depicted as exotic, erotic, and comical in American western cinema where minority female characters were usually depicted as one if not all of the following archetypal stereotypes: the harlot, the female clown, and the dark lady (p. 70-77). The harlot archetype is typically depicted

as a “slave to her passions,” a “nymphomania” completely ruled over by desire to sleep with any white man she finds (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 73). The female clown archetype is typically paired with the harlot archetype. The guise of the female clown is used as a way to “neutralize” the sex appeal a Latina can have on the white male protagonist of a Hollywood narrative (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 73). This characterization is incorporated into Hollywood narratives as a way for the male character to “reject” her sexual advances so that the male protagonist may remain true to the caricature of his WASP archetype (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 73). The dark lady archetype is viewed as “virginal, inscrutable, aristocratic and erotically appealing” (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 76). She is the complete opposite of her Anglo female counterpart and the character usually progresses into a harlot during the course of the film. Negron-Muntaner, et al. (2015) posit there is a new type of Latina stereotype that must be added into this discussion—the maid caricature (p. 16).

Latinas have been depicted as maid characters 69% of the time in film and television since 1996 (Negron-Muntaner, et al. 2015, p. 3). Given that only 44.3% of the Latino population actually hold occupations as maids, this type of narrative creates a perplexing disparity between the different types of Latina representation found in the social world and the type of representation fed to mass audiences. It has been argued that the stereotypes Hollywood depicts are merely narrative tools used to create a fictional world and are not “representative of entire social groups” (Ramirez, 2002, p. 18). Yet cultivation theory dictates the more certain types of realities (that all Latinas are maids, in this case) are depicted in popular culture audiences are then more likely to believe that reality to be true. The dangers behind these character archetypes are that they are limited to the stereotypes they promote. These depictions may, in turn, promote ethnic prejudices which can misrepresent or limit the culture of a specific group. Moreover, the

sexualization of the three female stereotypes Ramirez Berg (2002) discusses hints at society's acceptance of these prejudices.

Beltran (2002) agreed that crossover representation for Latino and Latina actors, at least in realm of Hollywood cinema, is "limited" due to the "cardboard-cutout roles that do little to showcase their appeal or talent" (p. 78). However, this does not mean that crossover stardom is not possible for Latino communities. The sexual commodification of Latina bodies is a prime example that crossover stardom can be achieved through the use of aged stereotypes (Beltran, 2002). Historically, narratives of colonization have constantly depicted Latinas as being "enslaved", "raped", and regarded as "available and accessible sex objects" (Beltran, 2002, p. 81). These narratives have carried over into contemporary popular culture and continue to perpetuate the notion of the Latina as the "Sexualized Other" (Beltran, 2002, p. 81).

Moreover, it has painted the image of Latina bodies as "exotic, sexual, and available, and as more in touch with their bodies and motivated by physical and sexual pleasure than white women" (Beltran, 2002, p. 81-82). In other words, the social construction of Latina bodies are still stained with the oppression of colonization and continue to encourage the sexual objectification of nonwhite bodies. This is, perhaps, best reflected in the commodification of Latina iconicity present in U.S. popular mass media. Guzman & Valdivia (2004) argue that Latinidad, "the state and process of being, becoming, and/or appearing Latina/o", has become the epitome of beauty, style, and ethnicity (p. 206). The notion of Latinidad is complex as it carries different theoretical conceptions ranging from hybridity theory to social identity theory to theories of colonization. However, these theoretical complexities appear to be a gateway that may allow the concept of Latinidad to be explored. It may help address the vast complexities of

what it means to be a Latina living in the contemporary America. It may also help address the vast complexities of multiple ethnic identities.

### Nosotras Tambien Contamos: Hegemonic Discourse in Advertising

Hegemonic ideals toward beauty and attractiveness can be found in nearly every aspect of society, but it is perhaps best illustrated and most evident in the world of advertising. In the world of consumer production, advertisements are meant to combine stereotypes of gender, class, and race (and other social categories) together in an attempt to appeal to various consumers across the global. The depiction of these stereotypes in these advertisements often bring forth the discourse of the times. Some researchers have argued the patriarchal views of women in popular culture cause a toxic representation of femininity that encourage the adoption of a false sense of identity, (Kilbourne, 1999;). Other researchers have analyzed how the female image has become a commodity meant to invoke an emotional connection between consumers and consumer products (Crane, 1999; Jhally, 2015).

Jhally (2015) posited gendered images are a direct call to our “core of individual identity; our understanding of ourselves as either male or female” (p. 253). Some feminists have contended feminine beauty is nothing more than patriarchal oppression (Scott, 1993). Scott (1993) rebuttals this notion and explains how denouncing beauty—cosmetics, in this case—can be quite harmful as it disassociates feminists from whole groups of women. In essence, by saying that a women is not a feminist or that she represents oppressive male views for simply participating in acts of beauty (i.e., makeup, hair care, nail care, etc.) means discourses about who and what feminism truly stand for are diminished.

Presuming that participants of “beauty culture” are part of an oppressive community whose “sole purpose for aspiring to beauty is to attract men” is a “simplistic, insensitive response

to a complex human practice” (Scott, 1993, p. 153-54). Scott (1993) offered a much more empowering point of view toward women and their relationship with beauty: “[W]hat lurks not far beneath the surface is the reality of beauty as power. In a world in which women have had few legal rights, and even fewer economic ones, beauty has sometimes provided women with some relief and some control over their circumstances” (p. 154). It can be argued, then, that beauty is rooted in the individual woman as a consumer who then uses it as a symbol of liberation from our patriarchal culture. The gendered images found in advertising can then be regarded as a visual guideline of standard notions of feminine beauty. Meaning this pictured images help to perpetuate and to reinforce the social construction of beauty in many cultures. However, these constructions of beauty are usually derived from a Western-European narrative that deemed a fair and white complexion as desirable and as the only form of feminine beauty worthy of representation in popular culture (Darling-Wolf, 2004).

Through two separate studies that incorporated a series of interviews and participant observations, Darling-Wolf (2004) assessed how Japanese women constructed their views of female beauty and attractiveness in relation to the gendered Westernized images found in Japanese mass media. Darling-Wolf (2004) discovered the Westernized representations of beauty and attractiveness played a role in how these women negotiated their views of beauty and attractiveness (p. 340-41). Though these women had a clear preference for Japanese models and acknowledged the “dominating nature” of these popular images, many of these women were still influenced by Westernized ideals of feminine beauty (Darling-Wolf, 2004, p. 341). The adverse effects of this particular narrative may often lead to the increased perpetuation of a sole type of feminine beauty that is meant to be representative of every women. In reality, every women constructs her notions of feminine beauty in relation to the type of culture she notion were

cultivated in (Frith, et al., 2005, pg. 67). More importantly, taking into consideration the different axes of gender, race, and class may help feminist researchers better identify the different forms of social and cultural oppressions and discriminations that affect women of color (Miller, 2017). Failure to take these social axes into consideration may run the risk of overshadowing or completely excluding different kinds of beauty narratives pertaining to women of color to emerge (Baker, 2005). Latinas, in particular, have been found to have “a strong culture of beauty” tied to their community (Nielsen Company, 2015, para. 3). Since few studies have investigated how Latinas construct their ideals of gender identity and feminine beauty in relation to their culture and the gendered images in popular mass media, this study wanted to contribute in the discussion by giving voice to Latinas women. This was done in the hopes it would reveal how these women formed their feminine ideals and how these women viewed themselves as individuals and consumers in our post-modern society.

#### “My Mother is My Advertisement”: Latinas as a Growing Niche Market

Since there has been very little advertising research about the female image in terms of race, it is difficult to assess how gendered Latina images are representative of real-life, everyday Latina woman. It is further difficult to address how this image react with their identities as consumers. The few studies that have managed to look into the female image as it relates to racial group gloss over the Latino culture and focus more on the African American culture (Crane, 1999; Roberts & Koggan, 1979). This could be attributed to advertisers not showcasing an equal amount of racial profiles in their various forms of advertising. Wilson and Gutierrez (2003) explained this type of racial disparity dates back to the 1960s and 1970s where “advertising images, rather than showing people of color as they really were, portrayed them as filtered through Anglo eyes” (p. 284). This stands true for the Latino culture whose

advertisement representations consisted of controversial characters such as the Frito Bandito used to promote Fritos corn chips from 1967 to 1971 to Miss Chiquita used as a mascot by American-owned Chiquita Banana International since 1944.

These advertisements “reflected the place of non-Whites in the social fabric of the nation” (Wilson & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 283). Advertisements, then, were used as a way to remind people of color that their socioeconomic positions in society would never reach the stature of Whites. However, recent statistics show that not only are people of color raising up in the national economy but that the Latino community, particularly Latinas, are thriving as consumers in the competing marketplace. With a national population of 55 million, the Latino community has become the largest minority group with an economic buying power of \$1.5 trillion as of 2010 (Krogstad & Lopez, 2015; Nielsen Company, 2012). Latinas are at the helm of this buying power as 86 percent of them are in charge of household purchases (Nielsen Company, 2013).

Furthermore, Latinas have surpassed their non-Latino female counterparts as 73 percent are enrollment in college programs (Nielsen Company, 2013). There are also various subcultures within the Latino community “based largely on approximately twenty-two different countries as places or origin” (Gobe, 2001, p. 35). Thus, the Latino community is proving to be a niche market that advertisers should pay attention to. Research shows there is a particular area in which Latinos, in general, spend more money in than their non-Latino counterparts—personal care products (i.e. cosmetics, hair care, etc.) (Gobe, 2001; Nielsen Company, 2015). Nielsen Company (2015) observed that while sales dropped across the board in numerous beauty categories they actually “grew within Hispanic households” (para. 2).

Nielsen Company (2015) further linked this rise in product consumption to language and Latin roots, noting that “U.S.-born Latinos outspend both foreign-born and non-Hispanic in the

[beauty] category” and that “Spanish-speaking dominant Hispanics typically spend more on beauty care products than English-speaking dominant Latinos” (para. 7; para. 9). All these factors combined create a multigenerational roadmap of sorts that can help advertisers market to the Latino culture. Gobe (2001) suggests that advertisers should pay attention to how they brand products to Latinos since “brands play a role in how consumers construct their identity,...[thus] understand[ing] what aspects of identity are most salient and influential” to the multigenerational Latino culture can help to secure their market (p. 37). Beauty advertisers should then look into the promotion of a diverse and reflective female image that can attract and influence the everyday Latina consumer. Nielsen Company (2015) echoes that the Latino culture is not a “monolithic demographic”, meaning that “differences exist between Hispanic consumers of varying ages, genders, incomes and preferred languages spoken at home” (para. 13).

Thus, advertisers need to tread carefully in their creation of an image, of a branding that may be racial offensive to Latino consumers. Gobe (2001) contends the only way to ensure this does not occur is to “constantly monitor lifestyles and inspirational cues from these groups and make diversity a priority in selecting men and women to shape a brand” (p. 38). Moreover, major advertising campaigns appear to be aware that female consumers crave products that are socially conscious of the times they are living in. In 2015, “Always,” one of the major manufactures of feminine hygiene products, released a 60-second commercial to debut their new #LikeAGirl campaign to millions of viewers. In this commercial, young participates were asked to run, walk, fight, and throw a ball “like a girl” (Ledbetter, 2014). The main objective of the campaign was to highlight the different perceptions of the phrase “like a girl” had to young women, girls, and boys, and what resulted was an emotional revelation of what it means to be and do things as a girl.

In the beginning most of the participants, except for two little girls, depicted over-the-top movements of stereotypical girly behavior—fragility and clumsiness. However, when asked to run, jump, fight, walk, and throw a ball “like a girl” the two little girls were wholly, utterly, and beautifully strong, confident, and unafraid to be themselves. Overnight, the #LikeAGirl campaign quickly became regarded as “a banner in the battleground of the feminist movement” that sought to reclaim phrase such as “like a girl” to mean empowerment, beauty, and independence (Ledbetter, 2014, para. 2). More importantly, it brought to the forefront the concept of incorporating elements of intersectional feminism into advertising. This commercial did not appear to solely target white young females as it featured young people of color and gave them a platform to voice to their perception of what “like a girl” meant to them.

The #LikeAGirl campaign appears to be an empowering step in the right direction of intersectional feminism. However, this campaign appears to be one of the few mainstream advertisements that are attempting to reach out to a bigger consumer market. There have been other campaigns with hints of intersectionality such as the L’Oreal True Match Foundation campaign that had depicted a range of different skin tones and age ranges. This campaign is of particular importance as it speaks to the collective struggle some women of color go through in order to find a foundation that matches their natural skin tone. However, these type of campaigns do little to speak to the ethno-cultural experiences of Latina women.

There are little to no ads or products specifically made to cater to the ethno-cultural experience of Latina women. As previously discussed above, beauty and cosmetic products *do* appear to be targeted toward a Latina market. However, these mainstream products usually only address the immediate needs of the Latina market as they are reflected in advertising databases. They do not address the different cultural aspects of the Latina experience. There are no

mainstream products such as clothing or jewelry that showcase the different aspects of the Latina experience, that promote Latina feminist empowerment, or that promote cultural pride for their heritage.

Seeming to take matters into their own hands, Latina owned small businesses in East Los Angeles and in South Texas have taken to Instagram and Etsy to create products that address this lack of ethnic-based products. Based off of the type of products they have on their website and their description in Instagram, these businesses seem to promote ideals of intersectional feminism and Latina empowerment. Their products declare messages of body positivity and brown girl self-love and independence while also marketing the shared cultural experiences of what it means to be a Latina in modern-day America. Online shops such as Very That, Salsa for President, Espacio 1839, and Nalgona Positivity Pride have used social media to promote their ethnic-based products.

For example, Very That, an online shop based off of San Antonio, Texas, sells stickers, decals, and t-shirts that depict various Mexican idioms meant to encourage Mexicana empowerment—Ponte Las Pilas; Echale Ganas, Mija; Chingona Como Mi Abuelita; and Chingona Como Mi Madre. Salsa for President sells bilingual t-shirts and halter tops with phrases that are meant to remind Latina women of their strength, independence, and culture—Pinche Haters; Puro Pinche Hustle; Barbacoa; and Make Salsa Spicy Again. The products of these two shops seem to want to nurture and encourage Latina self-love while also reminding them their strength as Latina women. The last two online stores—Espacio 1893 and Nalgona Positivity Pride—release products that not only promote Latina empowerment but that also seem to align themselves with the concepts of intersectional feminism.

Based in Los Angeles, California, Espacio 1893 sells t-shirts that encourage the deconstruction of colonial mentality and that reinforce the strength of Latina protesting—Sin Mujeres No Habra Revolucion; Decolonize (this shirt replaces the face of Mickey Mouse with that of an Aztec god); Barrio By Nature; Las Mujeres Son Peligrosas Y Poderosas; Power To La Gente; and The Indigenous Strikes Back. These t-shirts appear to be a play on pop cultural references and encourage notions of Latina self-love and empowerment. Based off of Etsy and with a following of 52.2k followers on Instagram, Nalgona Positivity Pride has been making headlines for its message of “xicana/brown\*/indigenous body-positive project” (NalgonaPositivityPride, 2017). This shop sells t-shirts that encourage the deconstruction of colonized beauty and that encourage body positivity and self-love among Latinas—Brown is Beautiful; Our Brown Bodies Are Sacred; Listen, Decolonize, and Heal; Decolonize Body Love; I Am An Eating Disorder Survivor; My Body Is A Decolonial Act Of Resistance Against Patriarchy; and Support the Dreams of Young Girls of Color. More than this, this shop has also reached out to Latina communities and have created workshops and conventions that encourage dialogues against mainstream beauty.

Discussions pertaining to how the female image has been portrayed to female audiences via advertisements in magazines has been plentiful. One hardly has to look far to garner results that touch upon the rebranding of feminine beauty as a social movement motivated by the various feminist waves or that touch upon the image-based cultural discourse present in advertisements that are used as marketing strategies to encourage greater consumption from a mass female audience (Jhally, 2015). However, a common theme appears to be present in the majority of media and feminist media research in regards to the female image in advertising—white and black female bodies seem to receive the bulk of academic focus in advertising research

(Cepeda, 2015, p. 353-54). Little to no focus is placed on brown bodies, particularly that of Latinas. The Latina body is usually regarded as “a liminal ‘add-on’ category designed to ‘fill in’ the (newest) gap alongside African-American women in peripheral discussions pertaining to women of color feminism and the media” (Valdiva as cited in Cepeda, 2015, p. 354).

This gapping neglect on behalf of feminist media research may aid in ensuring only dominant visible voices (the voices of white feminists) to be heard above the intersectional voices of Latinas and other brown bodied females. Furthermore, in terms of consumer representation, the academic disregard for surveying how magazine advertising market to growing niche markets, like that of the Latina community, may lead to a faulty understanding of how ethno-racial identity is used as a selling strategy to encourage the consumption of more feminine products. As Davila’s (2001) pointed out, the Latino community is often perceived as “brand-loyal, traditional, minority consumers...[whom] can always be swayed by the “right” ethnically loaded campaign that touches their hearts” (p. 238).

## METHODOLOGY

Given that the majority of research is conducted solely on popular magazines that feature depictions of predominately White female bodies, it is vital to include advertisements from magazines outside of this pool (Baker, 2005). Introducing an ethnic magazine that is targeted to a specific group of females, Latinas for the purpose of this study, allows for a break in the symbolic colonization created by beauty and fashion industries that proclaims tired ideals of white femininity. Mimicking Baker's (2005) study which assessed the sexual images of women in advertisements in Black- and White-oriented magazines, this study evaluated the gendered images of female bodies, particularly Latina bodies, found in Hispanic- and White-oriented magazines. I decided to look for magazines that targeted a mainstream audience of women and that targeted an ethnic audience of women. The parameters for both of the selected magazines would have to reflect a target audience of 18-years or older and would have to offer a mainstream and non-mainstream option for audience members. For this study, mainstream magazines were any magazines that appealed to general audiences and non-mainstreams were any magazines that appealed to ethnic audiences. Thus, I selected the U.S. versions of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* since these magazines fit the parameters of the aforementioned parameters. *Cosmopolitan* served as the mainstream magazine while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* served as the non-mainstream ethnic magazine.

*Cosmopolitan* was ranked second place for Best Women's Magazine on Ranker, an online polling site where audiences can vote on the popularity of popular mass media (Ranker.com). Apart from its online ranking of mass popularity, I also selected *Cosmopolitan* for its significant impact on the world of women's magazines. Often referred to as "a bible for fun, fearless females", *Cosmopolitan* magazine has reached over 17 million subscribers a month with

a social media following of over 15 million followers (Hearst.com, 2017). Moreover, since 1962, *Cosmopolitan* has been marketed as the go-to magazine for the everyday-modern woman with articles and tips that touch upon “the latest news on men and love, work and money, fashion and beauty, health, self-improvement and entertainment” (Hearst.com, 2017). *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* was selected as its publication was created to directly appeal to young “English-speaking” Latinas living in the United States (Hearst.com, 2012, para. 1). Since this study seeks to explore intersectional feminism and Latina representation in magazine advertisements, *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* was an ideal choice to analyze since it has been branded as the magazine that “answers the call of a new generation of Latinas who celebrate both of their cultures, and are seeking content that reflects their unique lifestyles” (Hearst.com., 2012, para. 1).

These two magazines were used as a way to answer the first and second research questions. Since this study sought to explore a quantitative aspect, these magazines were analyzed via a content analysis to see if any intersectional feminist ideology was present in advertisements found in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.). This study was inspired by the content coded analysis of Busby and Leichty (1993) who set out to see if second wave feminist ideology had presented itself in gendered advertisements found in these magazines from the 1950s to the 1980s. My study was a multi-magazine content coded analysis of gendered images found in the United States version of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* from the years of 2014 to 2015. I decided to look at these two magazines beginning from the year of 2014 since that was the year “Always” released their #LikeAGirl campaign which seemed to spark other campaigns that promoted female empowerment (Ledbetter, 2004).

The final part of this study was analyzing the responses of four different focus groups made up entirely of 18 young Latina women. By incorporating the voices of these Latinas into a content analysis study, I addressed the importance and benefits of including Latina voices into feminist media research instead of assuming women of color are mere “passive individuals completely immersed in, incapable of and prevented from recognizing the ideological workings of patriarchal and capitalist hegemony” (Zoonen, 2001, p. 106). More importantly, this analysis hopes to add to the global discussion of how ethnic women interpret the gendered, often stereotyped, images of the female body.

### Content Analysis

In order to address the first two research questions, I conducted a content analysis of all advertisements present in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* between the years of 2014-2015. A single coder coded every advertisement that had a female body in it, regardless if the body depicted did not appear to be Latina. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of how Latina images appeared in the *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. A grand total of 2,124 advertisements were coded; specifically, 1,807 images were coded for *Cosmopolitan* and 317 images were coded for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. The disparity in the total amount of images for each magazines is a result of a difference in volume size. *Cosmopolitan* releases 12 issues per year whereas *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* only releases 5 issues per year. The five issues that *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* publishes is representative of each season. Meaning there is a corresponding magazine for each turn of the season. (i.e., one for winter, fall, spring, and summer), however, the fifth magazine is a special holiday issue which was included into the total count of advertisements. This was done in order to render a better analysis of the advertisements in both magazines. *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*

were selected to mirror two separate contented coded analyses—Busby and Leichty’s (2003) analysis of second wave feminism and Baker’s (2015) Black- and White-oriented magazines (2015). The variables used to code both magazines were modeled off of Busby & Leichty’s (1993) content analysis which observed Women’s Role, Locations, Age, and Products. The variables I added to this study were based off of certain social identities that intersectional feminism strives to address in their activism. Gender of Model, Language, Physical Size of Model, Latina Representation, and Race of Model were the social identity categories I created as inspired by intersectional feminism. The categories observed for this study were as follows.

- 1) *Product Category*: In order to understand what type of products are being marketed specifically with Latinas bodies, it is necessary to create a list of the different product categories that are present in both magazines. There were 10 product categories within this variable—Cleaning Products (dish soap, laundry soap, air fresheners, etc.), Foods (weight loss foods were included), Cosmetic Products (make-up, perfume, nail polish, etc.), Fashion (clothes, bags, sunglasses, etc.), Personal Care Products (toothbrushes, deodorant, hair care, menstrual care, etc.), Entertainment (book and movies), Alcohol/Tobacco, Big Ticket Items (automobiles, automobile insurance, vacation trips, and life insurance), Pet Care, and Other (all advertisements such as non-profit advertisements that did not fit into the parameters of the previously mentioned categories).
- 2) *Woman’s Role*: This category was added to help assess whether the intersectional feminist ideology had in any way affected the type of roles women were given. There were 10 variable within this category—Decorative, Employment, Family, Social, No Woman Present, Decorative/Employment, Decorative/Family,

Decorative/Endorsement, Decorative/Social, and Family/No Woman Present.

Decorative, Employment, Family were categories taken from the study Busby and Leichty (1993) conducted. The other seven categories were created in order to address the various roles that were observed during the content analysis. The category for Decorative/Endorsement, for example, was used to showcase advertisements that had women in decorative role but also qualified as endorsement since a female celebrity was used to promote the product.

- 3) *Age*: This category was added to assess if different age ranges were being represented. The 5 age ranges were: Young (18-34 years old), Middle-Aged (35-54 years old), Senior (55 and above), Unknown, and Multiple Ages. Unknown was used to categorize any models whose ages were unable to be determined or for when there was no model in the advertisement. Multiple Ages was created due to some advertisements, predominately makeup advertisements, depicting several women of different ages present in the same image.
- 4) *Race of Model*: This variable was created since this study wanted to observe the how Latinas are represented in gendered images. Race of Model would allow me to quantify the level of representation Latinas have in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. However, this category proved to be quite difficult to assess as many advertisement seemed to use photoshopped to achieve an artistic aesthetic. There were 7 categories in this variable: Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latina, Asian American, Other, and Multiple Races. Models of whom I had previous knowledge of as having identified as Latina were coded as Latinas. If no identifying characteristic such as name or skin tone were distinguishable then they were marked

as Other. Multiple Races was created to cater to cosmetic advertisements that appeared to show model of more than one race in it.

- 5) *Latina Representation*: This variable was created in order to establish what the representational image of Latinas in these magazines were. Since gendered images can perpetuate a society's notion of beauty, I felt it was vital to code what kind of female figures were used to form the notion of beauty for Latinas. The majority of Latina images were of celebrity figures such as Sophia Vergara, Jennifer Lopez, and Selena Gomez. A category coded Everyday Latinas was created for those advertisements that depicted Latina models who were not celebrities.
- 6) *Location*: This variable was created to assess what type of locations women were depicted occupying in these advertisements. The 5 categories within this variable were Home, Outside of Home, Work, Romantic Fantasy, and Other. Women depicted at home relaxing, cooking, or cleaning were categorized under Home. Women depicted in a social and entertaining environment such as a bar, club, park, or at a restaurant were categorized as Outside of Home. Women depicted in a workplace environment such as an office were categorized under Work. Romantic Fantasy was created to categorize "highly stylized fantasy location[s]" in advertisements (Busby & Leichty, 1993, p. 254). For example, an air freshener advertisement depicting a women resting comfortable among lavender scented clouds would be categorized under romantic fantasy.
- 7) *Physical Size of Model*: This variable was created as a way to assess what kind of body type was depicted in the gendered images of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan*

for *Latinas*. The categories in this variable are—Petit (0-7), Average (8-16), Plus Size (18-24).

- 8) *Language*: This variable was created as a way to explore whether language played a role in how advertisements targeted certain consumers. This section briefly observed if vocabulary was used to appeal to Spanish-speaking Latinas. The categories for this variable are English and Spanish.
- 9) *Gender of Model*: This was used to assess what gender was used in the gendered images of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*.

In order to have all cases equate an equal amount of weight when compared to each other when running crosstabulations, the total number of yearly issues for each magazines was divided by 100. Meaning, *Cosmopolitan*'s 12 issues per year were divided by 100 while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*' 5 issues per year were divided by 100:  $100 / 12 = 8.3$  and  $100 / 5 = 20$ . This was done in order to break down the value of each magazine into equal parts that could be better weighed against each other. Then these new calculations (8.3 for *Cosmopolitan* and 20 for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*) were multiplied by the raw crosstab data for each corresponding variable that belonged to each corresponding unit of analysis.

For example, a crosstab tabulation for Language of Advert with Name of Magazine revealed *Cosmopolitan* had a total of 1807 advertisements in English while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had a total of 236 advertisements in English and 81 advertisements in Spanish. The total number of advertisements found in *Cosmopolitan* was then multiplied by 8.3, resulting in a new total of 14,998 advertisements:  $1807 \times 8.3 = 14,998$ . The same was done for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*' English and Spanish results:  $236 \times 20 = 4720$  and  $81 \times 20 = 1620$ . This was done to

calculate for compatible comparison when running cross tabulations between the two magazines. The discussion section, however, will incorporate the original raw data.

### Focus Groups

In order to understand what influences the construction of gender identity among Latina women and how they interpret the gendered images of Latinas found in *Cosmopolitan* (U.S.) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (U.S.), a total of 18 female participants were interviewed in different focus groups over the course of four days. The three requirements needed to qualify as a participant for these focus groups were as follows—the woman was of Hispanic and/or Latino descent, they identified as female, and they were all 18-years of age or older. All male students were excluded from this study as the central focus of this study was to bring to the forefront the voices of Latina women. The women who participated in these focus groups were all undergraduate students at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) and were taking Communication courses during the spring of 2017.

It should be mentioned, though, the views and sentiments of these women are not meant to be representative of the entire Latina community. The Latina community is a vast and diverse community filled with women from many different Latin American countries, Mexican and American cities and regions. Thus, I will provide a quick demographic portrayal of the type of Latinas that were a part of these focus groups. All women in the focus groups identified as female. The majority of women were born in Laredo, Texas, however, two of these women were born and raised in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. At the time the focus groups occurred, the women's student classifications were as follows: six women were seniors, seven women were juniors, two women were sophomores, and three women were freshman. All of these women were students attending TAMIU in the spring of 2017. The ages of these women at the

time of the focus group were as follows: four women were 21-years-old, four women were 19 years-old, one woman was 30 years-old, one woman was 25 years-old, three women were 22 years-old, three women were 20 years-old, and two women were 24 years-old. Lastly, seventeen of women identified as Mexican American with only one woman identifying as Hispanic.

Given that the women in this study were predominantly of Mexican or Mexican-American descent and were from the South of Texas or from the Northern parts of Tamaulipas, Mexico, their definitions of gender identity, femininity, and their interpretation of the gendered images in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* has been filtered through these social lens. Thus, their perspectives can only speak for themselves, however, if a broader understanding of what it means to be Latina in contemporary American culture is ever meant to be understood then these different perspectives must be collected and documented. Since these women were promised confidential, their names and any identifying features were removed from the description of the analysis. Their perspectives will be discussed under the coded names I created during the course of the focus groups.

Four different focus groups were conducted in the evening hours over a four-day period. Three of the four focus group lasted around 54-minutes to an hour-and-twenty-five minutes. The third focus groups lasted around 36 minutes and was cut short due to the majority of participants having other commitments to attend to. Participants would arrive in a small classroom and then were asked basic demographic questions to establish the type of background every women came from. This demographic questioned included: what their college classification was; what age they were during the time of the study, if they identified as female, and lastly where they were born and raised.

After these demographic questions were asked, I asked a set of 10 semi-structured questions and recorded it all in a small tape recorder. Questions 1-5 were meant to establish what these women thought of advertisements from a general perspective. For example, a few of the question asked was “How often do you read a magazine?” and “Has an advertisement ever influenced your identity as Latina women?” I wanted to see these women’s thoughts before I introduced them to gendered images that depicted Westernized notions of female beauty. The first question, however, was a bit more personal question: How do you define your identity as a women? This question was asked as a starting point so the women could break down what type of influences were specific to their gender identity as women and as Latinas. While I do feel this question was effective as it garnered powerful responses from almost every woman in the focus groups, I do believe its placement should have been moved further down the line of questioning.

Discussions of self-perceptions and advertisements didn’t occurring until half-way through the focus groups when the second half of questions were asked. The second part of the focus groups focused on discussing their perspectives toward advertisements ranging from the 1950s to the early 2000s and those currently found in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. These advertisements were specifically selected in the hopes that they would acquire some response from each group. The first set of advertisements (5 in total) were popular advertisements taken from the 1950s to the early 2000s. These advertisements were selected as they showcased gendered images of patriarchy and sexual objectification. Every decade had one advertisement and were shown to the women in chronological order to establish a sense of how the female image was used in various advertisements over period of 5 decades. After this, they were shown 6 advertisements taken directly from *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* that were meant to highlight current depictions of female and Latina images. These

advertisements were selected since they reflected the kinds of advertisements that were found in with the selected units of analysis. Four of these advertisements were selected as they showcased the type of Latina representation found in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*.

Once every member of group had seen all the advertisements, I asked them questions that encouraged the interpretation of the message behind these gendered images. For example, some questions that good garnered good responses were “Which advertisement do you prefer, and why do you prefer it?” and “Would you consider the Latinas in the advertisements to be a fair representation of the Latinas in America?” Questions 6-10 were meant to dissect how these Latina women formed their notions of Latina beauty and empowerment in relation to the gendered images set before them. Furthermore, these questions were meant to felicitate a conversation among young Latina women that would allow them to share their personal experiences and sentiments on gender, race, and Latina identity.

After the duration of each focus groups was over, I would transcribe the recording with the aid of notes taken during the course of the event. Months later, I analyzed the focus groups and coded them into three categories that stood out the most: maternal notions of femininity and womanhood, self-perceptions of the Latina body, and snapchat is life. These categories explore the various influences that construction the gender identity of these Latinas women and how they interpret the gendered images found inside of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. I will discuss these sections in further detail down below in the focus group section.

## RESULTS

*RQ 1: Do advertisements in Cosmopolitan (U.S.) and Cosmopolitan for Latinas (U.S.) contain intersectional feminism?*

This first research question is based off of a 1993 multi-magazine study conducted by Busby and Leichy in which they compared popular traditional magazines (e.g., *McCall's* and *Redbook*) with popular feminist-inclined nontraditional magazines (e.g., *Ms.* and *Working Women*). While Busby and Leichy (1993) observed for second wave feminist ideology, this project sought to observe if an intersectional feminist ideology had manifested itself in advertisements found in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This was done in order to explore if any representational female identities inspired by intersectional feminism were incorporated into the gendered images of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. By examining if intersectional feminism is present in current advertisements, this study explored how different social identities are depicted in the gendered images of *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This first part of the content analysis will focus on the categories of Location, Race of Model, Physical Size of Model, Age, Language of Advertisements and Gender of Model.

### Content Analysis

Table 1 highlights the most striking finding was that women were depicted in locations marked as Other. Advertisements were classified under Other if no identifiable location was disguisable or if advertisements only showcased a product or only showcased a product accompanied by the presence of a female model. *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 237 cases (74%) of Other while *Cosmopolitan* had 1031 cases (72%) of Other. This indicates the majority of advertisements found in these magazines have no real location. Rather, the majority of

**Table 1** Representational Portrayals  
(% rounded to nearest whole)

|                                  | Cosmopolitan      | Cosmopolitan for Latinas | Total |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>Location</b>                  |                   |                          |       |
| Home                             | 84 cases (5%)     | 19 cases (6%)            | 103   |
| Outside of Home                  | 252 cases (14%)   | 30 cases (9%)            | 282   |
| Work                             | 14 cases (0.8%)   | 5 cases (2%)             | 19    |
| Romantic Fantasy                 | 156 cases (9%)    | 26 cases (8%)            | 182   |
| Other                            | 1301 cases (72%)  | 237 cases (74%)          | 1538  |
| <b>Race of Model</b>             |                   |                          |       |
| Caucasian                        | 958 cases (53%)   | 125 cases (39%)          | 1083  |
| African American                 | 115 cases (6%)    | 20 cases (6.3%)          | 135   |
| Hispanic/Latina                  | 133 cases (7%)    | 87 cases (27%)           | 220   |
| Asian American                   | 22 cases (1%)     | 1 case (0.3%)            | 23    |
| Other                            | 509 cases (28%)   | 76 cases (24%)           | 585   |
| Multiple Races                   | 70 cases (4%)     | 8 cases (3%)             | 78    |
| <b>Physical Size of Model</b>    |                   |                          |       |
| Petit                            | 1353 cases (75%)  | 247 cases (78%)          | 1600  |
| Average                          | 25 cases (1%)     | 4 cases (1%)             | 29    |
| Plus Size                        | 0 cases (0%)      | 0 cases (0%)             | 0     |
| Other                            | 429 cases (24%)   | 66 cases (21%)           | 495   |
| <b>Age</b>                       |                   |                          |       |
| Young                            | 1053 cases (58%)  | 179 cases (57%)          | 1232  |
| Middle Age                       | 282 cases (16%)   | 66 cases (21%)           | 348   |
| Senior                           | 2 cases (0.1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 2     |
| Other                            | 446 cases (25%)   | 71 cases (22%)           | 517   |
| Multiple Ages                    | 24 cases (1.3%)   | 1 case (0.3%)            | 25    |
| <b>Language of Advertisement</b> |                   |                          |       |
| English                          | 1807 cases (100%) | 236 cases (74%)          | 2043  |
| Spanish                          | 0 cases (0%)      | 81 cases (26%)           | 81    |

advertisements seemed to only depict products to women rather than showcasing women as being active with the product in actual location.

However, the second highest finding in this category revealed both magazines had advertisements that depicted women in locations Outside of the Home. *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 30 cases (9%) of advertisements depicting women as being outside of the home while

*Cosmopolitan* had 252 cases (14%) of advertisements depicting women as being outside of the home. While this alone cannot be enough to confirm if an intersectional feminist ideology was present in these advertisements, it is enough to speculate that there may be hints of second wave feminism present in today's advertisements. Busby and Leitchy (1993) discovered women being depicted outside of home had actually increased when second wave feminism seemed to thrive in the late 60s (pg. 253). Since second wave feminism pushed for positive female representation to be depicted outside of the home, it may be concluded that hues of second wave feminism seem to be present in these advertisements. The third highest location for both magazines were Romantic Fantasies. Romantic fantasies made up 156 cases (9%) in *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* and 26 cases (8%) in *Cosmopolitan*. Romantic fantasy locations were most often used to promote cleaning or beauty products in both magazines.

The two lowest locations for both magazines were Work and Home. For the Home category *Cosmopolitan* had 84 cases (5%) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 19 cases (6%). For Work, *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 5 cases (2%) and *Cosmopolitan* had 14 cases (0.8%). What is interesting about this finding is though *Cosmopolitan* had more cases of Work locations, *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had a greater percentage of Work location within the magazine. However, this could be attributed to the small volume size of *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*.

In the category of Race of Model, it was not surprising to find that Caucasians were the highest category for both magazines. Table 1 showcases *Cosmopolitan* had 958 cases (53%) of model categorized as Caucasian and *Cosmopolitan of Latinas* had 125 cases (39%) of model categorized as Caucasian. These numbers reflect the notion asserted by Darling-Wolf (2004)—construction of beauty are usually derived from a Western-European narrative that deemed a fair and white complexion as desirable and as the only form of feminine beauty worthy of

representation in popular culture (p. 340). The second-highest group for this section was Other—*Cosmopolitan* had 509 cases (28%) coded as Other and *Cosmopolitan and Latinas* had 76 cases (24%) coded as Other. Other was used when the ethnicity of a model was not discernable due to an extreme close-up of a body part (e.g., usually these were close-ups of lips, eyes, and buttocks where no other facial or body traits were observable) or there was not a model present in the advertisement. This result hints that advertisements in these magazine appear to highlight product placement over female representation.

The third highest ethnic group for both magazines appeared to be Hispanic/Latina. *Cosmopolitan* had 113 cases (7%) of models marked as Hispanic/Latina and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 87 cases (27%). Despite *Cosmopolitan* have higher number of cases, the percentage found within each magazine proved *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had a higher count of variables coded as Home. The fourth highest ethnicity found in these magazines was African Americans—115 cases (6%) for *Cosmopolitan* and 20 cases (6%) for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. The racial groups with the lowest numbers were Multiple Races and Asians Americans.

Overall, Multiple Races had 70 cases (4%) for *Cosmopolitan* and 8 cases (3%) for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This category was created as some of the advertisements had multiple races present. The majority of these advertisements were makeup and feminine hygiene products, specifically L’Oreal True Match foundation and Always Sports menstrual pads. These advertisements seem to show an attempt was made by advertising corporations to acknowledge and represent women of various ethnicities and skin tones in popular culture. Asians American had the lowest level of racial portrayal. *Cosmopolitan* had 22 cases (28%) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 1 case (0.3%) of Asian American female representation. Asian Americans appear to be underrepresented in both a mainstream magazine and a non-mainstream magazine.

Table 1 also showcases the physical size of the model used in advertisements found in both of these magazines. The most frequently depicted physical size for both magazines were models that appeared to be between relatively petite sizes—1353 cases (75%) for *Cosmopolitan* and 247 cases (78%) for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This is of not surprising giving the Westernized notions of female beauty have often dictated the attractiveness of a petite women. Furthermore, the advertising world is renowned for using photoshop to alter to the images of women to make them appear smaller (Kilbourne, 1999). The second most frequently depicted physical size for both magazines was Other. *Cosmopolitan* had 429 cases (24%), fall under Other while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 66 cases (21%) fall under Indeterminate.

Other was used when the physical size of a model was not discernable due to an extreme close-up of a body part (e.g., usually lips or eyes where no other facial or body traits were observable) or there was not a model present in the advertisement. The third and final physical size depiction of models were models that appeared to be of Average size—*Cosmopolitan* had 207 cases (1%), and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 4 cases (1%). These results reveal that despite *Cosmopolitan* having a greater number of cases than *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* in this area, Average size only made up 1% of the physical size representation within each magazine. The only category that has no representation present was Plus Size models. This is of particular concern sine the average size for the average American women has been found to be between the sizes of 16 to 18 (Christel & Dunn, 2016). This indicates there is an entire group of everyday women who seem to be underrepresented and ignored when it comes to the type of body representation used in advertisements in these magazines.

Table 1 also indicates that the majority of ages represented in these magazine were between Young, Other, and Middle Age, respectively. *Cosmopolitan* had 1053 cases (58%) for

Young while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 179 cases (57%). Results such as these were expected for the Young category given the average ages of *Cosmopolitan* subscribers range from 18-years-old to 34-years-old. For Other, *Cosmopolitan* had 446 cases (25%) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 71 cases (22%). Other was used when the age of a model was not discernable due to an extreme close-up of a body part (e.g., usually lips or eyes where no other facial or body traits were observable) or when there was not a model present in the advertisement. For the Middle Age variable, *Cosmopolitan* had 282 cases (16%) and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 66 cases (21%). The least mentioned age range was Senior—*Cosmopolitan* only had 2 cases (0.1%) while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* has no advertisements depicting this age range. Much like the exclusion of plus size models, there seems to be a lack of representation for older women in these magazines.

The second lowest category was Multiple Ages. *Cosmopolitan* had 24 cases (1%) of multiple ages and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 1 case (0.3%) of multiple ages. There appears to be hints of intersectional feminism in this category since Multiple Ages was created in order to reflect some advertisements (mainly cosmetic advertisements) depicting women of multiple ages using their product. For example, a L’Oreal True Match foundation advert depicted nine women appearing to range from their late twenties to their early fifties standing tall together as they have finally found a true match between their foundation and their natural skin tone. The subtle yet impactful image shouts that women of all ages deserve to find a makeup foundation that matches their natural skin tone regardless of age. This advert narrative seems to encourage older women to embrace their natural beauty with the help of a L’Oreal product. It also seems to encourage older women to see themselves as sexy, beautiful, and empowered since they have found a beauty product made to look as if it was made solely for them. While this category was

the second lowest area for both magazines, it seems the message behind these advertisements were made to encourage a wider range of female representation for cosmetic products.

Lastly, Table 1 showcases the type of language found in the advertisements of each magazine. Since *Cosmopolitan* is a magazine made to cater to a mass audiences, it not surprising to report 100% of the advertisements were entirely in English. Since *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* is a magazine made to cater to a specific group of ethnic women, it is also not surprising to report advertisements were in both English and Spanish—236 cases (74%) in English and 81 cases (26%) in Spanish. This is attributed to the fact that *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* was specifically created to target a bilingual audience of American Latinas. The majority of advertisements found in *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* that reflected both English and Spanish were cosmetic and personal care products. For example, a Covergirl mascara advert featuring Sophia Vergara had the product name in English (*Covergirl Bombshell Volume*), however, the adjectives and description of the product were all in Spanish (*¡Hay Impacto y hay impacto Bombshell!* and *Pestanas 10x más impactantes*).

Table 2 reveals what was expected to be revealed when looking at gender in a woman's magazine. The highest category was Female for both magazines—1387 cases (77%) for *Cosmopolitan* and 251 cases (79%) for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. The second highest category was No Model—389 cases for *Cosmopolitan* and 63 cases for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. No Model was used when advertisements only depicted a product with a model present in their advertisement. Males were only found in 23 cases in *Cosmopolitan*. These male model were usually used as props for the female models to play with and were mostly seen in perfume and cosmetic advertisements. The lowest category was Other—*Cosmopolitan* had only 8 cases

(0.4%) while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* has only 3 cases (0.9%). Other was used when the gender identity of the model was not distinguishable.

**Table 2** Gender of Model  
(% rounded to nearest whole)

|                        | Cosmopolitan     | Cosmopolitan for Latinas | Total |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>Gender of Model</b> |                  |                          |       |
| Female                 | 1387 cases (77%) | 251 cases (79%)          | 1638  |
| Male                   | 23 cases (1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 23    |
| Other                  | 8 cases (0.4%)   | 3 cases (0.9%)           | 11    |
| No Model Present       | 389 cases (22%)  | 63 cases (19.9%)         | 452   |

While it is difficult to make a direct correlation between intersectional feminism and the type of advertisements found in these magazines, I can infer an attempt is being made on behalf of the advertisements present in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* and the magazines themselves to include a more diverse and inclusive representation of the female body. Though some areas still fail and succumb to the hegemonic power of the modelling agencies and exclude the physical representation of the everyday woman, intersectional feminism seems to slowly be making headway in the realm of popular culture advertisement.

*RQ2: How does Cosmopolitan (U.S.) and Cosmopolitan or Latinas (U.S.) depict female and Latina images?*

This second research question is based off of a 2005 study conducted by Baker in which she compared the level of female sexuality found in advertisements in White and Black oriented women's and men's magazines (e.g., *Black Men*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Essence*, *GQ*, *Honey*, *King*, *Maxim*, and *Vogue*). In this content coded study, Baker set out to see if female sexuality varied according to the type of audience the magazine advertisement was targeting. This study will differ slight from Baker's original work. Instead of examining women's and men's magazines, this project will examine *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* to explore if there are any

differences in the type of representational strategies use between the two magazines when depicting Latina women in their advertisements. Additionally, instead of analyzing the level of female sexuality, this content coded project aims to analyze the level of consumer representation used when depicting products to growing niche markets like that of the Latina community. This study hopes addressing issues of representational strategies may help to assess whether the Latina market is being actively and effectively represented in advertisements.

The representational differences sought in this content analysis focuses on how the Latina image is used and to what degree that image is being used. This means analyzing several points: what type of product advertisement were found in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*; what role did the Latina female image depict in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*; and, finally, what was the representational image of Latina in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*? Given the Hispanic market's spending power has growing from \$1 trillion in 2010 to \$1.5 trillion in 2015, Latinos not just “a sub-segment of the economy, but a prominent player in all aspects of American life” (Nielsen Company, 2015, p. 2). Thus, addressing issues of representational strategies may help to assess whether the Latina market is being accurately and effectively addressed in advertisements.

Table 3 revealed the two most significant categories for both *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* were Cosmetic Products and Personal Care Products, respectively. For Cosmetic Products, *Cosmopolitan* had 726 cases (40%) while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 142 cases (45%) and for Personal Care Products, *Cosmopolitan* had 622 cases (34%) while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 130 cases (41%). These findings are of particular importance for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* as they seem to reflect the consumer habits of Latinas. A 2015 Nielsen Company report revealed Latinas often grew up in social environments that produce a “strong

**Table 3** Representational Portrayals  
(% rounded to nearest whole)

|                         | Cosmopolitan    | Cosmopolitan for Latinas | Total |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>Product Category</b> |                 |                          |       |
| Cleaning Products       | 17 cases (0.9%) | 17 cases (5%)            | 34    |
| Foods                   | 86 cases (5%)   | 2 cases (0.6%)           | 88    |
| Cosmetic Products       | 726 cases (40%) | 142 cases (45%)          | 868   |
| Fashion                 | 210 cases (12%) | 10 cases (3%)            | 220   |
| Personal Care Products  | 622 cases (34%) | 130 cases (41%)          | 752   |
| Entertainment           | 33 cases (2%)   | 3 cases (0.9%)           | 36    |
| Alcohol/Tobacco         | 50 cases (3%)   | 24 cases (0.6%)          | 52    |
| Big Ticket Items        | 39 cases (2%)   | 11 cases (4%)            | 50    |
| Pet Care                | 11 cases (0.6%) | 0 cases (0%)             | 11    |
| Other                   | 13 cases (0.7%) | 0 cases (0%)             | 13    |
| <b>Women's Roles</b>    |                 |                          |       |
| Decorative              | 873 cases (48%) | 155 cases (49%)          | 1028  |
| Employment              | 2 cases (0.1%)  | 0 cases (0%)             | 2     |
| Family                  | 3 cases (0.2%)  | 0 cases (0%)             | 3     |
| Social                  | 10 cases (0.6%) | 0 cases (0%)             | 10    |
| No Woman Present        | 399 cases (22%) | 58 cases (18%)           | 457   |
| Decorative/Employment   | 15 cases (0.8%) | 1 case (0.3%)            | 16    |
| Decorative/Family       | 7 cases (0.4%)  | 8 cases (3%)             | 15    |
| Decorative/Endorsement  | 320 cases (18%) | 79 cases (25%)           | 399   |
| Decorative/Social       | 171 cases (10%) | 14 cases (4%)            | 185   |
| Family/No Women Present | 7 cases (0.4%)  | 2 cases (0.6%)           | 9     |

culture of beauty” among them (para. 3). This culture has led Latinas to be regarded as one of the biggest consumers of cosmetic and personal care products. *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* appear aware of this notion and appear to want to cater to it.

Big Ticket Items are also worth mentioning in this section as they also seem to reflect what type of consumers Latinas are being. Although *Cosmopolitan* had more cases of Big Ticket Items compared to *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* (39 cases to 11 cases, respectively), the type of product pushed in this category is a great importance as it seems to reflect the notion that Latinas are thriving in the job market and can afford to buy big ticket items such as new cars, automobile insurance and other items (Nielsen Company, 2015). Pet Care and Other were the two lowest

categories in this section. Other was used to categorize advertisements that promoted items that could not fit into the already established variables. For example, advertisements that promoted non-profit organizations were filed under here.

Table 3 revealed that for both magazines, the top three women's role depictions were Decorative, No Women Present, and Decorative/Endorsement. The variable Decorative/Endorsement was added to account for the advertisements that depicted a women in a decorative state who was also celebrity promoting the product. *Cosmopolitan* accounted for the highest number of Decorative roles with 873 cases (48%) while *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* accounted for 155 cases (48%). The second highest for *Cosmopolitan* was No Women Present with 399 cases (22%) and its third highest was Decorative/Endorsement with 320 cases (18%). On the other hand, *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 58 cases (18%) of No Women Present and 79 cases (25%) *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* appears to have more cases of Decorative/Endorsement with the magazine when *Cosmopolitan* does.

The most striking finding of the content analysis was attributed to the role of women portrayed in these advertisements. Decorative roles were the highest of all roles in both magazines. As Table 3 shows, 48% of women's roles in *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* were Decorative and 48% of women's roles *Cosmopolitan* were Decorative. Despite there being a vast disparity between volume size and the number of advertisements found in each issues, decorative will appeared to be the highest category under which women were depicted. This hints that patriarchal notions may still be a heavy influence in the way a female's body is used in advertisements. However, it is also vital to mention that the majority of advertisements catered to the female eye. For example, the majority of these decorative roles come from cosmetic advertisements that solely depicted lips, eyes, cheek, or the entire body of a women to promote

**Table 4** Latina Representation  
(% rounded to nearest whole)

|                              | Cosmopolitan     | Cosmopolitan for Latinas | Total |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>Latina Representation</b> | 1634 cases (90%) | 227 cases (72%)          | 1816  |
| No Latina Representation     | 90 cases (5%)    | 58 cases (18%)           | 148   |
| Everyday Latina              | 19 cases (1.1%)  | 7 cases (2%)             | 26    |
| Sofia Vergara                | 11 cases (0.6%)  | 8 cases (3%)             | 19    |
| Jennifer Lopez               | 3 cases (0.2%)   | 1 cases (0.3%)           | 4     |
| Selena Gomez                 | 6 cases (0.3%)   | 5 cases (2%)             | 11    |
| Penelope Cruz                | 5 cases (0.3%)   | 3 cases (0.9%)           | 8     |
| Eva Longoria                 | 4 cases (0.2%)   | 0 cases (0%)             | 4     |
| Vanessa Hudgens              | 4 cases (0.2%)   | 0 cases (0%)             | 4     |
| Bella Thorne                 | 3 cases (0.2%)   | 1 case (0.3%)            | 4     |
| Eva Mendez                   | 6 cases (0.3%)   | 2 cases (0.6%)           | 8     |
| Zoe Saldana                  | 4 cases (0.2%)   | 3 cases (0.9%)           | 7     |
| Shakira                      | 1 case (0.1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 1     |
| Blanca Soto                  | 11 cases (0.6%)  | 2 cases (0.6%)           | 13    |
| Lupita Nyong’U               | 1 case (0.1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 1     |
| Morena Baccarin              | 1 case (0.1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 1     |
| Dascha Polanco               | 1 case (0.1%)    | 0 cases (0%)             | 1     |
| Demi Lovato                  | 3 cases (0.2%)   | 0 cases (0%)             | 3     |
| Multiple Latina Celebrities  |                  |                          |       |

their product. The specific angles of the advertisements can be influenced by sexual innuendos or can be made to draw the eye of the male gaze if he happens to look upon the magazine, these advertisements were created to showcase lips, eyeshadows, blushes, and clothing.

Table Four showcases the representational image of Latinas in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* appears to be No Latina Representation and Everyday Latina. No Latina Representation was used when advertisements did not appear to have a Latina model in them. Everyday Latina was used to code Latina model who were not identified as celebrities. *Cosmopolitan* had 1634 cases (90%) of No Latina Representation which is to be expected as it is a magazine made to cater to a mass audience. *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* had 277 cases (72%) of No Latina Representation. However, this does not mean that advertisements were not targeted

at a Latina audience. All this is an indicator of is no model was present in the advertisement. What is interesting, though, is the second highest category for *Cosmopolitan* and for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* was the image of the Everyday Latina—90 cases (5%) for *Cosmopolitan* and 58 cases (18%) for *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This seems to indicate that the Latina representation found in this ethnic themed magazine is meant to reflect non-celebrity depiction of Latinas.

Though Sophia Vergara fell in as the third highest Latina representation, it should be noted she was the top Latina celebrity featured in advertisements. Vergara appeared 19 times in *Cosmopolitan* and 7 times in *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. After Sophia Vergara, Jennifer Lopez was the second top Latina celebrity feature in advertisements. She appeared 11 times in *Cosmopolitan* and 8 times in *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. An interesting finding is that the majority of Latina celebrities were found under *Cosmopolitan*, a mainstream magazine. However, it should be noted that *Cosmopolitan for Latinas* seems to focus more on articles and advice columns meant to encourage Latinas empowerment rather than dedicating their pages to advertisements.

### Focus Groups

*RQ3: How do Latinas interpret the images of Latina female images in Cosmopolitan (U.S.) and Cosmopolitan for Latinas (U.S.)?*

My unique contribution to this study was the use the qualitative use of focus groups. As stated before, this qualitative aspect was used to explore the third and final research question. I want to observe how Latinas constructed their gender identity and how they interpreted the gendered images in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. The lack of Latina voices and perspectives found not only in feminist activism but in mainstream feminist research is of great

concern to feminism as a social movement and as a field of media studies. Thus, this question aims to contribute to the lack of ethno-racial minority voices present in feminist academic research. Answering the call to move beyond simply “filling in the gap” of mainstream feminist research with quick snippets of a Latina perspective, this study gave voice to young Latinas in the hopes it would address the lack of Latina representation found in popular feminist discourse (Capeda, 2015, p. 346).

*Madres y Abuelitas: Maternal Notions of Femininity and Womanhood*

When asked to define their notions of femininity and womanhood, many of the young women in all of the focus groups were at first perplexed by the question. Informant 1, a 21-year-old junior, even jokingly uttered “That’s heavy” when her group reminded quiet to the question. Every focus group requested a clarification of what we meant by femininity and womanhood. We rephrased the question and simply asked them to define who they were as women. We explained this definition could be tied to different aspects they considered to be a part of their femininity and womanhood or even tied to the people or places where they learned to embrace their femininity and womanhood. This seemed to clarify some of the doubt in many of the women’s minds. Though it took a few minutes for everybody to get comfortable enough to share and reveal the answer to such a personal question, many of the women revealed their self-definition of femininity and womanhood seemed to divert from one familial point—maternal figures.

These women’s self-definition of womanhood and femininity rested in the generational teaching the eldest female figures of their family, usually their mothers and grandmother, provided them as they grew into adulthood. These teaching ranged from the traditional notions of how a woman should behave and dress in public to empowering notions of female independence

through hard work and academic success. Informant 2, a 21-year-old junior, viewed her mother as her “role model”: “I look up to my mom a lot...she’s always telling me how a woman should be or how to dress, how you should speak in certain situations. So I always hear from her and learn from her so I feel like a lot of my female identity has to come from looking up to my mom and how she’s raised me.”

For Informant 2, it seemed her mother was an essential part to the type of woman she grew up to become. Her mother helped form not only how she was meant to project herself in different social settings but it also formed the filter under which Informant 2 viewed her femininity. For Informant 3, a 19-year-old freshman, also echoed this sentiment and revealed it was her grandmother who was the root of her “manners”. In talking about her grandmother, Informant 3 disclosed her grandmother to be the implementer of gender roles in her life: “For me, my grandmother...she did teach me a lot of, like, manners and stuff. You know how to sit, how to speak. You know how to stay in line...as a female because there’s things that men do like spitting. You know, like, women can’t do things like that.”

While Informant 3 never fully stated that she was influenced by her grandmother’s views on gender roles, her statement solidifies the idea that gender roles are passed down generational much like manners and values can be passed down from one generation to another. Following along these lines, Informant 4, a 30-year-old senior, reiterated that her mother taught her the types of “social norms” she was meant to follow. Though Informant 4 comments seemed to align themselves with the majority of what all the women in these focus groups stated, her comment stood out in particular as she was the first member of any focus group to mention how her own thoughts and feelings played a factor in how she processed how she defined or identified as a woman. She acknowledged her mother was a “big influence” in her femininity, yet she also

mentioned how at a “certain age” she began to make her “own decisions and choices” and “veered off on [her] own identity”.

Throughout the course of the focus groups, other women also addressed how their own set of convictions went against the gender ideals of womanhood and femininity their mothers and grandmothers tried to reinforce in them. An interchange between three women—Informant 5, a 25-year-old senior, Informant 6, a 21-year-old junior, and Informant 7, a 22-year-old senior—showcased each woman agreed their values stemmed from their mothers yet they also stressed their independence from the gender norms behind these values:

Informant 5: I guess independent, um, like my mom did teach some values and stuff. I do follow some of them to a certain extent. I’m strong by myself and I believe in my own things.

Informant 6: I believe womanhood covers from, like, whatever makes you feel beautiful. I guess I got that from my mom, I guess. Feeling beautiful in my own kin and always making myself, like, presentable in somewhat. So, yeah, I got my beliefs from my mom. And how she said, I mean, like, I follow my mom but on certain things I don’t agree with I won’t.

Informant 7: It also has to do with, like, our generation and our time. If you think, like, before women wouldn’t have that much of a say, you know. Like if their parents told them to do something, they would it. Now, us, well I guess depending in what household you live in, I feel like we do respect our parents in some way but in other ways we don’t. We are very independent. We tend to follow our own identities.

Informant 8, a 19-year-old junior, revealed to the group her parents had divorced each other when she was 11-years-old. Not being able to decide who she wanted to live with, she was given the option of living with their grandparents. It was there that she was able to experience, through her grandparents and mother, notions of femininity and gender norms that eventually differed from her own notions of womanhood and femininity. Informant 9, a 20-year-old senior, also agreed with Informant 8 that the more she experienced life in her own terms the more she began

to see that her thoughts and ideal of womanhood and femininity differed from those of the older generations:

Informant 8: My grandmother and my mom, kind of like most the females in my family, have the mindset that a women should know how to cook, how to clean, and all that stuff...When my mom and my grandma always said, "You have to learn because you're a women and every women should know how to do that." And I was like, "Well, I don't think so." Because like I said, I like to have my own opinions on things, you know.

Informant 9: I totally agree with you. I feel like as I'm growing up I start to get away from what I learned being a women is like. Being, like, following your own instincts and path and being powerful in it. To feel empowered of being a girl, of being a woman.

Echoing sentiments of third wave feminism, each of these women seem to attribute their understanding of womanhood and femininity as being tied to their freedom of choice, their independence, and their ability to learn from their years of lived experiences. Though these women grew up with women who encouraged gender roles and norms, they were able to grow outside of this thinking and become their own type of woman. The values and manners nurtured by older maternal generations appear to be the backdrop under which these women gauge their level of interaction with the social world. However, their construct of womanhood and femininity appear to be filtered through their own lived experiences rather than solely relying on the lived experiences of their mothers and grandmothers.

While the majority of women noted their femininity came from the maternal figures in their lives, a few women also mentioned how the media was a big influence in their understanding of what feminine meant. Informant 10, a 24-year-old junior, mentioned YouTube as the source she got makeup advice from. Informant 8 also mentioned how a lot of her "inspiration, [her] identity as a woman" was drawn from media sources such as television shows that depicted "what was ladylike and what was proper for us to do as girls". This was an

interesting comment given that Informant 8 also mentioned her independence from the gender norms her mother and grandmother tried to instill in her.

Through the discussions gained from these focus groups, gender roles can be viewed as a generational concept that are reinforced, usually, by the older maternal members of a family. However, I do feel it necessary to mention that this older generation of mothers and grandmothers are not being compliant in the oppression of their daughters and granddaughters. Granted this commentary is hard to validate without the thoughts and sentiments of their actual mothers and grandmothers, yet, speaking as a Latina, the notions of femininity and womanhood passed down by these women are meant to be a source of strength and empowerment. Kayumova, Karsli, Alleksaht-Snider, & Buxton (2015) regard these stories of hardships as pedagogical narratives meant to help and teach their daughter and granddaughters “how to navigate complex spaces of emerging womanhood” (p. 272). Their advice is meant to be taken as a source of guidance for when the social world becomes too tough too quickly.

#### *Latina, to Be or Not to Be: Self-Perceptions of the Latina Body*

In order to understand how these women negotiated the views of their bodies in relation to the type of gendered images depicted in the sample array of advertisements I used for the focus groups, I first need to develop an understanding of how they viewed the female image in these advertisements in a general sense. I decided the best way to explore this avenue would be to ask them a basic question about women and advertisements—can advertisements be considered a reliable source of information for what women really want in their lives? The various answers to this question, though different in expression, seemed to echo the same response: most ads were considered to promote conventional products made to fit the

conventional representations of women and often limited the ideas of who a woman could be in society.

Informant 11, a 20-year-old junior, felt the majority of ads depicted “stereotypical” products for “stereotypical” representations of women: “Like you never see an ad for like a drill...And that always bothers me. I’m pretty sure there’s women that like do hardware stuff and there like no commercials for them”. Informant 12, a 22-year-old senior, also added advertisements are not only meant for depicting certain types of product to a specific type of consumer. They also service to promote a certain type of “lifestyle” which is meant to strengthen consumer belief that the product will work successfully for them. Informant 13, a 19-year-old freshman, brought up a more personal perspective to this question. Though she never dove into specifics, her comments revealed certain types of advertisements reinforced negative images of her body and self-worth: “I’m really self-conscious so when I see pictures of other people that like have a good body, or when people think it’s a good body. Like, I do wish that I had that body. Um, so, um, yeah, I don’t like my body”.

It seems she felt the type of information present in certain advertisement only served to create an illusion meant to “look amazing” in order to promote the product they selling. The type advertisements that seemed to have a strong connection with her appeared to be one that strengthen stereotypical ideal of beauty norms. Once ethnicity was brought to the table, however, their answer began to change and different perspectives on the representation of Latinas and their bodies were brought to light. Some women tied Latina representation in advertisement to beauty and sex appeal, to skin tone, and to language.

Informant 2 viewed the depiction of Latinas in magazine advertisements as nothing more than “a lot of sex appeal”. She further went on to state that in popular media, particularly in

acting, Latina women are usually portrayed as “the one whose cheating or like, um, one whose ruining the marriage”. Informant 2’s views seems to align with how Ramirez Berg (2002) argues Latinas are usually stereotypically depicted in television and cinema—as either the harlot, the female clown, or the dark lady (p. 70-77). Many of the women mentioned Sophia Vergara’s character from *Modern Family* as one of the main reasons for this stereotypical perpetuation in popular media.

An exchange between Informant 14, a 20-year-old sophomore, and two other women highlighted how conflicted they felt about wanting to admire these type of characters for their level of confidence while also trying to balance out their own identity outside of those stereotype:

Informant 14: I mean I admire them for their confidence...

Informant 11: Yeah!

Informant 14: But I know I’m never gonna be like them...I have to find my own confidence in myself and be the person that I want to be.

Informant 2: It kinda makes you feel left out a little.

Informant 14: Yeah, because we’re not all like that...it’s how we’re portrayed in the media. Like, we’re not all like that. We all are different...[but] we’re all stuck with Sophia [Vergara].

Other women felt Latina representation was tied to language, specifically the attraction of celebrity Latinas not being afraid to show their accent or their lack of accent when speaking English and/or Spanish. Two particular celebrities that stood out in this case were Gina Rodriguez from the CW show *Jane the Virgin* and Selena Gomez, former Disney Channel star and current pop star sensation. One young woman Informant 15, a 24-year-old junior, adamantly expressed her admiration for Gina for speaking in Spanish despite her heavy accent: “Oh my god, yes! I love her. Like even in the show, I like how they speak English and Spanish. She has

an accent hardcore, but she tries. At least you're trying". Though Informant 15 never placed an emphasis on her being bilingual nor expressed what language she spoke more frequently at home, it was still clear that language, specifically the ability to speak both English and Spanish, was an aspect of Latina-ness that she identified with strongly.

This observation was further reinforced in an exchange with Informant 16, a 21-year-old junior where they both echoed their displeasure at the fact that Selena Gomez won't speak Spanish:

Informant 15: Um, I'm not hating, but like Selena Gomez. She won't speak in Spanish.

Informant 16: She says she can't, but she understands it. I've seen her and she's like, no. And it's like you can say some words, like, come on. *Tienes el nopal en el frente*, you know, like, don't act.

In order to understand the extent of Informant 16's comment, I must explain the Mexican idiom she mentions. Anybody who has grown up in a Latino household has at some point heard "*Tiene el nopal en el frente*" about a distant family member or some person the family is fighting. In essence, this phrase refers to any Mexican who refuses to speak Spanish and has been assimilated into a western way of life. Often considered a racist saying, this idiom is meant as an insult to the person as it means they have turned their back on their culture, their heritage, and their ancestors.

Informant 16's comments, at best, are a glimpse at the strong ties Latinos have to the Spanish language. For many Latinos, Spanish is so much more than one of the biggest Romance languages. It is the connecting bridge that crosses generational and geographical barriers. It is the stories your grandmothers told you as a child. It is the words that you utter when you long for home. However, at worst, Informant 16's comments are proof of the embedded racism the Latino

community has toward each other. It brings up the often uncomfortable and perplexing questions of: What is Latino enough? What is Mexican enough? More importantly, who gets to decide what the ideal answer to these questions will be?

This notion of an ideal representation of what if Latina stands for was a topic of discussion during the focus groups. We asked if there was a fair representation of Latina women in advertisements. We kept this question as vague as possible as we wanted to see where this question would take us with the women of each group. Many women has different notions of what a fair representation of Latina women meant. One women, Informant 17, a 22-year-old senior, commented that is not one way to be Latina: “I think that in every race we’re all different shapes and sizes. It’s not really like, “Oh, this is the ideal”. Informant 6 mentioned a popular meme meant to depict the two type of Latinas out in the world. It showcases a photo of Sofia Vergara looking beautiful and alluring while the other photos is of Angelica Vale dressed up as her character Letty from the popular TV Aztec telenovela “La Fea Mas Bella”. Though this meme is an attempt at humor, it is still telling of how Latinas are viewed in Mexican popular culture. One is either the attractive, airheaded female or the smart, lovable, but ugly female. There is no middle ground in Mexican telenovelas. Informant 6 mentioned her annoyance at feeling like she must “fall into one or the other.”

Other women pointed out the lack of different skin tones made it difficult to say there was a fair representation of Latinas in advertisement let alone in popular media. Informant 6 observed it was usually “white complexed Latinas” that were depicted in advertisements. She led her to view the lack of skin tones as a “very white washed” depiction of Latinas. However, Amanda also pointed out that Latinas can and should be depicted with fair skin and blue eyes just as Latinas can and should be depicted with tan skin and brown eyes. Perhaps the most

impacting comment about the role that skin tones play in the construction of what makes a Latina is a personal story shared by Informant 8.

Informant 8 told a tale of her time in high school as a tennis player. She described her younger self as being naturally “really pale” and sporting a head of highlights. Her appearance as a white person made her group of peers believe she did not know any Spanish despite the fact that Spanish was and continues to be her first language. She attributed this misconception to the media since people use that as a source to “see Hispanics in the media, or Latinos in the media and they’re not like this.” Informant 8 was referring to the media hardly depicted Latinos as being fair skinned. What is interesting about her story, though, is that once she began to tan from her outdoor tennis practices and she reverted back to her natural dark hair, it was then that it was suddenly okay for her to speak Spanish: “But once I started tanning...then people were okay with me speaking with me speaking Spanish because my skin tone changed, and hair color changed”.

Perhaps the saddest part of these section was that some women could not even remember seeing any advertisements with Latinas in them. Informant 17 confessed: “When I think of ads I imagine a thin white girl with like a handsome white boy. That’s all I think about. I don’t picture some who looks like us”. Informant 13 pointed out that she could not “think of any advertisements that picture Latinas in the ads”. Informant 9 also mentioned how she “never [saw] an ad that represents or stands out as a Latina living in America. Or something like this, this is what represents Latinas. I think we’re open to be whatever we want to be.”

Informant 9’s comment are interesting as she seems to not be bothered by her Latina-ness, what may be to her, being excluded from mainstream representation in advertisements. A self-declared feminist, she appears to have embraced her freedom to choose how and when she will

bring up her Latina background. While this mentality appears to align itself with conceptions of third wave feminism, intersectional feminism would cry foul. Given that she cannot separate her intersections of class, race, and gender from how the world views her and how she views the world, it would be hard to choose when to be Latina and when not to since this aspect of your social identity is not one that can be shredded off like a second skin overnight.

Given that the majority of these women were active students that were taking or had taken communication courses dealing with this subject matter, many of them seemed to have prior knowledge of the history between women and the depiction of their bodies in popular culture.

*“Social media pretty much murdered the magazine for me”: Snapchat is Life*

Not wanting to assume that the gendered images in magazine advertisements were a main contribution to the type of self-perception or definition these women had of what it means to be Latinas to them, I first set out to find out if they were subscribers of magazines. What I found out was that the majority of them were not currently subscribed to a magazine. In fact, the majority of these women admitted to subscribing and frequently purchasing magazines when they were young girls, but very rarely picked up a magazine in their current lives due to the easy accessibility of information via the Internet or the social media applications.

Informant 2 stated that she bought magazines when she “started noticing girls” at her high school by buying magazines to read during their free time. She remembered specifically buying the magazine *Seventeen* since its content appealed to the type of things she was interested in at the time—how-to hairstyles, how-to makeup, and prom dresses. However, once she began to notice that the majority of the magazines she liked began to promote a lot more “sex stuff” like articles that showed you how to cater to men, Informant 2 opted for following magazines through social media. Informant 8 mentioned she was once subscribed to a few magazines (one

was even from Mexico) that she would receive in the mail when she was a young girl. However, she stopped reading magazines at around the age of 14 “because of the Internet mostly [since] anything that you wanted to read you can just find it online”.

Informant 16 also echoed these sentiments and remembered being subscribed to magazines as a teenager, however the introduction to social media apps completely changed the way she consumed magazines and the type of ads they show to her: “I used to like to subscribe to magazines. I can’t remember which ones, but I used to read them a lot and now it’s like you get the articles online so you don’t really need to read it. It’s even on Snapchat. Yeah, they have like the Cosmo and everything’s on there. And they, you know, have some good article sometimes. Um, but, yeah, definitely I don’t read magazines anymore”.

While the study’s main focus is meant to be advertisements, it is necessary to mention the social media apps that these women follow. Informant 9 referred to herself as “basic” for looking at *Cosmopolitan* through Snapchat: “I’m very basic so I look at it on Snapchat. When I have time, I actually swipe right and look at Cosmo. I know they do, um, they do include a lot of Latino, um, ads and like stories and things like that. And also, Mitu, I follow it. I find it really funny”. However, what is significant about her comments after calling herself basic was that she referred to a social media site specifically created to cater to a Latino audience. Mitu has been an enormous present on YouTube since it was founded in May of 2012. As of 2014, their YouTube channel reached over 6 million views (Kozlowski, 2014, para. 6). Much like the small businesses that created items that cater to Latinas and their notions of Latina womanhood, social media sites like Mitu address the craving Latinas have for representation that reflects their reality. The beauty of Mitu is that it reinforces the notion that there is no one way of being Latina/o, rather, it is cultural exploration determined by each individual and their environment. The promotion of

shared cultural experiences within sites such as these help to encourage unity and empower among the marginalized and under-represented communities of Latinas/os.

## CONCLUSION

Feminist media research is filtered through different waves of feminism, through every researcher's own positionality as a feminist scholar, and through the different pedagogical methods taught to them by various mentors and advisors. Take for instance, my positionality—I am a Latina feminist scholar who wanted to explore the notion of intersectionality via a content analysis and through the use of focus groups. I discovered meaningful findings about the concept of intersectionality by using these two methodologies.

Firstly, since intersectionality is such a vague concept in the field of feminist media research, it can be hard to pinpoint and say, “Yes! This is intersectionality!” It depends upon the definition the researcher has decided to use during the course of their study. My understanding of intersectionality as I incorporated it into this study, infers there are hints of intersectional feminism present in some of the advertisements found in *Cosmopolitan* and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. This was most evident in the age of model category since I had to create a new variable entitled Multiple Ages to depict advertisements that had more than three types of age ranges depicted within them. In terms of Latina representation, the lack of inclusivity for different physical body types, races, women's role, and locations illustrate that there is much left to be desired in this area in advertisements.

Secondly, the focus groups revealed that notions of Latina femininity and Latina womanhood, along with values and morals, are passed down generational from maternal figures. We revealed Latino mothers and grandmothers to be the root of femininity. Moreover, the focus groups revealed that being a female was usually tied to having respect and knowing your place as a women. Yet, despite the gender roles perpetuated by mothers and grandmothers, their stories are what shaped up into the women we are today. The most striking finding about this section

was that language and skin tone seemed play a huge role in how this women regarded their notions of Latina self-perceptions. Furthermore, it also provided a glimpse at the way Latinas view other members of the Latino/a community and how their preconceived notion of what Latina enough means comes into play whether they realized it or not.

While there does not seem to be a solitary definition for what constitutes as a fair and equal depiction of Latina representation, the focus groups revealed these young women are aware that there are stereotypes under which their culture and their femininity are viewed under. It is also seemed these young women understood that advertisements are made to create, perpetuate, and reframe certain stereotypes in order to fit the nature of modern-day consumer culture. They are also acutely aware of what type of images they want and wish they could see in advertisements. Furthermore, their thoughts and perspectives on their level of representation in advertisements showed woman are not passive consumers of media. Rather, they are active consumers of media who choose how and when they will look at advertisements. They also showed they have the capability of deconstructing stereotypical images of Latin-ness and understand that there is no single image that can be painted as representative of Latina-ness. These women understood that they were all different and they wished to see this difference depicted in advertisements and popular media.

The limitations of this study are rooted in the content analysis. The use of multi-category variables mark some variables as not mutually exclusive and not exhaustive. Some of the categories within the content analysis are not mutually exclusive nor are they exhaustive, meaning there are certain variables that fall into multiple categories. For example, in Table 3 the categories of Decorative/Family, Decorative/Endorsement, and Decorative/Social are not mutually exclusive since they fall into two variables. They cannot all be decorative and be part of

another variable. These categories were operationalized this way since many of the advertisements filed under Decorative/Endorsement, for example, depicted women as mere props for a product while they also played an endorsement role in promoting the product with their celebrity status. However, when interpreting the data from the content analysis for this particular section, initial findings revealed no significant impact was discovered by creating the category of Decorative/Endorsement.

In the future, Decorative and Endorsement should be kept as individual variable in order to achieve mutual exclusive and exhaustiveness. Race of Model was also a limitation as it was difficult to the race of model without solely through pictured form. Since race can be an ambiguous concept to quantify in a content analysis, this variable would perhaps serve better if altered to Skin Tone of Model in future studies. Skin tone of model would be easier to quantify as variables and could be used to further the discussion of Westernized versions of female beauty in advertisements.

One last limitation was the vagueness of intersectionality. Since this term is rooted in the political on-goings of social activists wanting to address the social intersects of race, class, and gender, it is difficult to be able to quantify and qualify its ideology into an academic framework. This paper set out to explore if intersectionality could be used as guide in feminist academic research. While this thesis only managed to scratch the surface of exploring how intersectionality could be used in feminist academic research, I do feel there are benefits that can arise from its integration into academic fieldwork. Through there are many complexities to address when dealing with intersectional feminism, I do see its potential in becoming a feminist framework that can be used to bridge the gap between theoretical discussion and lived experiences.

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## VITA

### Personal Details:

Name: Victoria De Jesus Mancha

Permanent Address: 3415 Yorkshire Street

### Education:

Bachelor of Arts, English      Graduated: May 2015

Minor: Communications

Texas A&M International University, Laredo, TX

GPA: 3.0

Academic Honors: Spring 2015: Dean's List

Spring/Fall 2014 Honor Roll.

Associate in Arts, English      Graduated: Fall 2011

Laredo Community College

GPA: 3.3

Academic Honors: Fall 2010: Dean's List

### Professional Experience:

Director/Editor                      2016

Produced, wrote, and directed a documentary film entitled "Bueno, Bonito Y Barato" which showcased local flea markets in Laredo, Texas. This documentary premiered at the Alamo Drafthouse in Laredo, TX in 2016.

Graduate Assistant Research      2016

I worked closely with professors in the Communications department on academic projects pertaining to Latin American journal media.

**Honors:**      Dean's List  
                 Honor Roll

**Community Activities:**      Laredo Cancer Society