Introduction:

Hispanics often are an underserved audience in the marketing and advertising world, which became very evident while working at Puente Marketing & Advertising. While some companies have taken great strides in reaching Latinos in the United States, others often fall short. Honey Bunches of Oats, Nissan and the NFL are just a few examples of brands that have excelled in reaching the Hispanic market. However, a lack of knowledge both by businesses and advertisers often results in stereotypical, cliché, offensive or simply irrelevant messages that do not resonate with the audience. The subjects chosen for an advertisement to be created in Spanish can play a large role in speaking to the target audience. Additionally, the strategic message and role in which the subject is placed both have a great affect on the advertisement’s effectiveness. Based on these observations, the researcher will answer the following questions:

RQ1: How are women physically represented in US print magazine advertisements published in minority-driven magazines published in 2013?

RQ2: In what roles are women portrayed in US print magazine advertisements for Latinas published in 2013?

In other words, how are Latinas represented in magazines that are designed for them? What do these women look like, and what roles do they play? What types of social implications does it have for Latinas in the United States? The researcher seeks to answer these questions using a grounded theory approach as outlined by Corbin and Strauss (1990). Corbin and Strauss note that each concept reveals itself by repeatedly evident in the evaluated text—each of which are outlined below. Looking at the female subject in conjunction with her pose, the text and the surrounding scene will all contribute to the
construction of broader categories and the concepts that fall beneath each of these overarching categories.

**Methodology:**

The sample was chosen from three different magazines created for Spanish speaking women between the ages of 18 and 45 in the United States: *Cosmopolitan en Español, Latina* and *People en Español*. In order for an ad to qualify for the sample, it had to show at least one woman as a subject, be a single full-page and include text fully in Spanish—aside from the product name, which in many cases remains in English.

*Latina’s* parent company Latina Media Ventures calls itself “100 percent Latina. 100 percent American. All pride. All passion.” It has been ranked number one in total advertising pages among Hispanic populations for the past eight years (About Latina Media Ventures).

Established in 1996, the magazine’s purpose is: to entertain and inspire women with award-winning content that covers Latin culture, style, beauty, food, music and celebrities, and to create products and services that always have, at their core, the real Latina woman—her unique needs, her unique lifestyle.

Similarly, *Cosmopolitan in Español* “presents a friendly voice when addressing the issues that young Hispanic women are concerned with” and “inspires young women to be the best they can be in all realms of their life” (Televisa 2014).

A textual analysis using grounded theory was conducted as the qualitative research method in order to analyze the underlying societal and cultural messages that the advertisements convey. Barbara B. Stern (1996) defines a text, in the context of
advertising, as “any media artifact designed to persuade consumers, and generate, composed, recorded and analyzed by sponsorial agents and/or researchers” (p. 62).

A textual analysis, as defined by McKee (2003), is “a methodology – a data gathering process – for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (p. 1). Stern (1996) suggests a three-step process for conducting textual analyses. The first step is the identification of elements within the text, such as language, copy, metaphors, characters and plot. The second step constructing meaning based on the text’s elements by defining categories, which indicate wider assumptions and implications about culture and society.

Finally, the researcher is to look for thematic patterns throughout the samples suggesting underlying social cues such as dominance/submission, sociability/aloneness or femininity/masculinity (Stern 2006). Deconstruction of meaning is one of the most important steps of a textual analysis, providing the researcher with an opportunity to become more aware of the political, social and cultural messages that may be hidden beneath the messages of persuasion (p. 71).

**Analysis:**

The first proposed research question delves into how women recently have been physically represented in US magazine advertisements for Latinas. It became evident that advertisers do not necessarily choose subjects they believe will likely resonate with a Latina audience. Many of these advertisements were simply translated from English to Spanish, and the context and message is the same in both versions of the ad. Furthermore, not a single ad that was analyzed portrayed a woman that could be viewed as a plus-size
model. Most models chosen for these ads have fair skin and don long, dark hair. Some have fair skin and blonde hair, while very few black models were included in the sampled advertisements. Use of celebrities, whether Latina or not, also is a commonly used tactic. Jennifer Aniston, Karla Martinez, Evan Mendez and Sofia Vergara and Salma Hayek were chosen as models for a variety of advertisements.

Based on the samples taken from these three Spanish-language magazines, a few patterns in the physical appearance of the female subjects were evident. The researcher concludes that the women in these magazine advertisements are nearly always represented as thin with traditional indications of beauty such as long hair, straight and white teeth, flawless skin and rosy lips. Recognizable celebrities often are used.

The second research question seeks to answer how women were portrayed in 2013 in print magazine advertisements created for Latinas. Few qualitative studies, if any, have been conducted to understand how advertisers attempt to relate to Hispanics, let alone how models are portrayed in magazines for Latinas. *Cosmopolitan en Español, People en Español* and *Latina* were the three magazines chosen in this sample. In an attempt to narrow the scope of the project, three months were selected from each magazine published in the year 2013. June, July and August were available for both *People en Español* and *Cosmopolitan en Español*, while the April, June and May issues were available in *Latina*. The following categories and concepts have evolved in order to answer the second research question in regards to the roles women are shown in ads within magazines created for Latinas.

Fiske and Taylor (1991) describe Social Categorization as an individual’s need to organize information efficiently and comprehensively while subsequently applying our
beliefs to a larger population. According to La Ferle and Lee (2012), Social Categorization can be used as an explanation as to why advertisers use stereotyping in their advertisements. One of the most common patterns that was evident throughout each of these magazines was the women being shown as a caretaker, whether looking after her family, herself or her home—each of which are concepts constructed under this category. The most frequent concept found within this overarching caretaker category is the care a woman has for her family, a very traditional concept found in advertisements for all women. A Latina ad for Kellog’s Nutri Grain bar shows a smiling woman holding her child. It states, “Antes de empezar el día cuidando a tu familia, cuida a ti. Te ayuda a cuidarte para que luego puedas cuidar de todo lo demás.” This translates to, “Before beginning the day caring for your family, care for yourself. It helps you care for yourself so later you’ll be able to care for everything else.” While the emphasis appears to be on self-care, the true message is that the woman’s main role is to care for her family and “everything else.” Other brands that chose to emphasize this message of care for family are Similac Sensitive, S.C. Johnson, Exelon Patch, Dish Latino, Zyrtec and Got Milk? Placing women in traditional roles is a very popular approach taken in Spanish-language advertisements. In Hispanic advertising, an emphasis is frequently placed on the importance of family and taking care of the home, thus supporting the theory of social categorization.

While caring for family is a very popular concept, care for self is also evident in Latina magazine advertisements. Colgate Total Advanced + Whitening placed an ad in the June 2013 issue of Latina of a light-skinned woman with dark hair and a straight, white smile sitting on the beach in workout gear. “¿Sonrisa más saludable?” or, “A
healthier smile?” it asks. “Sí, se puede. Ayuda a mejorar tu salud bucal,” or “Yes, it’s possible. Improve your oral health.” The combination of the exercise clothing with the text implies that the woman is doing everything she can to care for her overall health. Other brands’ ads that work into this concept are Garnier Frutis Pure Clean, Aleve, and L’Oreal.

Finally, two ads, both in Latina, convey a message about the importance of a woman caring for her home. An ad found in the April 2013 issue for The Home Depot shows a brunette woman admiring her new, clean bathroom. She appears pleased with her the new bathroom, especially since she has just saved money, as the headline indicates. Another ad for Gain products states, “Gain will leave your home with an irresistible aroma that everyone will love,” and shows a woman cleaning her refrigerator door with Gain in hand, leaving a trail of flowers everywhere she cleans. Both indicate that she takes great pride in the way her house looks to others.

A 2005 study by Mastro and Behm-Morawitz found that depictions of Latinas on television are stereotypical. Latin women are most often depicted as young, thin and scantily clad with thick accents. This pattern of portraying women as being “sexy” was evident in each of these magazines. This category is broken down into three different concepts. In a 1998 study, Schroeder and Borgerson found this underlying theme in advertisements within fashion magazines and catalogs. Much like this study, the researchers looked at genre, subject and colors as well as context and connotation to understand how the subjects of the ads were intended to be portrayed. They found patterns of sexual objectification of the women and concluded that sexual stereotypes are still prevalent in advertising (p. 191). Similarly, the first concept constructed under the
**sexy** category is women as rebels, or in dominant positions, such as the advertisement in *People en Español* for a television show called *Devious Maids*. All five women shown are wearing little black dresses, high heels and red lipstick with mops and dustpans. One is smearing blood across the floor, and the women are posed in a seductive manner. By combining the stereotype as women as housewives while simultaneously portraying them as “devious,” the reader concludes that the women are clearly rebelling against social norms and expectations. The “Devious Maids” advertisement could easily fall under a second category as well, which refers to the advertisements that show women as objects.

For example, a *People* ad for a brand called Mía de Andrea shows a thin brunette woman wearing a bra, underwear, earrings and makeup. She is shot from the front and back, and there is no text on the ad, indicating that she is simply there for the audience’s viewing pleasure. While this as initially was not considered in the analysis due to the lack of headline and text, the absence of words clearly brings focus to the woman. Mía de Andrea uses her body to sell the product, thus presenting her as a sexual object.

A concept falling under the **sexy** category and found throughout these issues is “flirty.” This concept was typically found in cosmetics advertisements across each of the three magazines, where the female model is eyeing the camera, often with long eyelashes and hair falling over her shoulders. Sofia Vergara, a famous actress from Colombia, is shown in a Covergirl ad in *Latina* magazine covering her chest with her mouth slightly open and purple nails sparkling in the light. The headline across the page says, “Go Topless!”

Finally, “passion” was evident in a couple ads that were analyzed within this **sexy** category. A *People* ad from July of 2013 for Maybelline Color Show has a woman
peering through her fingers, as if flirting with the camera. Another ad for Herbal Essences says, “Warning: Inhale at the risk of falling in love. 10 hours of lovable fragrance and softness that you won’t be able to resist.” The text on the page clarified under which concept the ad would fall.

The construction of these categories supports the results found in Schroeder and Borgerson’s study (1998), that objectification of women through sexuality is a sexual stereotype found in the use of advertising (p. 180). It also supports the idea that objectification of women through violence is evident in these advertisements, such as the Devious Maids ad. This sample, however, did not provide evidence of male dominance.

Toyota’s RAV4 advertisement in People en Español is one example of the female achiever, which is the first concept in the empowerment category. The ad shows one woman wearing pieces of many different outfits. She is wearing a casual shirt, a blazer, a ski boot and roller skates all while carrying shopping bags and office supplies. The sign above the car reads, “Lista para lo que sea,” or “Ready for anything.” This vehicle is ready for whatever comes its way, just like the woman is. It portrays her as the woman who can do it all. A “Got Milk?” ad in the same magazine shows Karla Martínez, a Mexican TV show host explaining how she drinks a glass of milk for extra energy before waking up an entire country and being a mother at the same time. Other ads included in this category are for Tampax Radiant and Orgullosa.com, which is a website for the Latina community.

The two ads falling under the “dreamer” concept encourages women to follow their dreams, whether it be in starting a new business with Intima Hogar or keeping in touch with cultural roots, as in an American Family Insurance ad. The headline says, “My
dreams go wherever I go. Phoenix and Puerto Rico.” The text follows, “We don’t all come from the same place, and neither do our dreams. American Family Insurance has everything your family needs to be protected, no matter where you come from.” This is another ad that could easily fall into another category and concept, such as the family caretaker.

“Bold and Confident” is the third concept in the empowerment category, which includes three different ads—two from Latina and one from Cosmo. These women are portrayed as fierce and powerful. An ad for T.J. Maxx in Latina states, “Don’t be fooled by the lace. I’m all intensity. Save like a Maxxinista.” She is walking forward feeling confident with herself. A People en Español ad for American Family Insurance shows actress Eva Mendes looking over her shoulder with hair falling down her back. The text says, “Dare to have the hair of your dreams. Give your mane a restful sleep with the new Tratamiento Nocturno (Nightly Treatment) Overnight Miracle. Its formula gives you 8 hours of repair while you sleep.” It dares women to boldly try something different, which leads to the next category, which is attainment.

Attainment is the most common category found throughout these three magazines. Attainment is broken down into the following concepts: “Need for Physical Perfection” and “Living Life to the Fullest.”

The need to physically change or be physically “perfect” in some way was the most common theme throughout the advertisements in Cosmo, People, and Latina. The most common products were for makeup, hair or skincare products such as L’Oreal or Maybelline, while another was for Colgate Optic White, a whitening toothpaste. Unlike the ads for Orgullosa.com—an online forum where women can interact with other
Latinas and offer support or advice, these ads encourage women to change something about their appearance. A Slim Fast ad outlines the shadow of a woman thinking two different thoughts. The first being, “I want to look thin and sexy in my dress.” The next says, “I want to look thin and sexy without my dress.” The tagline then reads, “Consigue lo que realmente quieres,” or, “Go get what you really want.” Another from People en Español claims “Perfection in an instant,” which advertises BB Cream by Maybelline, while the same product’s ad in Latina calls it a “miracle product that is applied in one swipe for perfect skin.” Frizz-Ease, a hair styling product, outlines “3 steps to beautiful curls.”

However, not all ads in this category are related to physical perfection. “Living life to the fullest” was a theme found in both Latina and People. An ad for Nescafé encourages women to enjoy life and celebrate each day with a cup of nice, hot Nescafé Clásico. An AARP ad in the People en Español June 2013 issue states, “Someone said that what’s important isn’t your years of life but the life in your years. At AARP, we couldn’t agree more.” It shows a couple gazing upward and hugging each other, seemingly enjoying the moment. Another ad for the same company in the same magazine shows a woman and her young daughter touching noses, smiling at each other. The mother has her arms around the girl’s waist, and they are clearly happy.

The fifth and final category and concept is called preoccupied, which depicts the woman in the advertisement as being frazzled or too busy to know or understand what is going on around her. The brand Secret centers its whole #StressStinks campaign around the woman being stressed. One ad in People shows a woman in a taxi on her way to the airport with her purse still sitting on top of the taxi before it takes off. She is on her
phone, and the taxi driver is unhappy. Another ad from the same campaign has an image of a woman accidentally dropping her laptop on the concrete. Her arms are flailing in the air, and her jaw is dropping. The hashtag #SressStinks is plastered in the middle. The third ad in this category is for Gain dishwashing soap. The woman is so enthralled and excited about washing dishes, that she doesn’t realize one child is spilling a bowl on his high chair, her daughter is roller skating in the kitchen, and the husband is about to throw a plate across the room. Washing dishes appears to be an escape for her. Each of these images portrays a woman who is stressed and overwhelmed, and the product offers a solution to her busy life.

**Discussion:**

There is a general consensus among researchers that minorities, especially Latinos, are underrepresented in advertisements and across all media platforms. It is estimated that nearly half of the selected advertisements were originally created for a General Marketing audience in English and translated for the Spanish-language magazines. With others, however, it was clear that the message and models were selected solely for the Hispanic magazines. In regards to the advertisements created solely for these Hispanic magazines (rather than those translated from English), the two most common roles chosen for the women in the ads are caretakers and achievers.

The intent of this study was not to suggest that one type message is better than the other or that one role is more important than another. These are simply findings based on the sample. That being said, it is evident that women in Spanish-language magazines are most often portrayed as a caretaker, whether for family, the home or herself. The chosen messages and graphic elements combined indicate that this is the main role of a Latina. In
fact, a message commonly used is that the woman must take care of herself so that she can care for everyone else. In return, her family will then feel all the love she has to give. This evidence supports Martínez’s study (2004) that analyzed entertainment and romance articles *Latina*, one of the magazines analyzed in this study. She found that that *Latina* heavily criticizes sexism while placing responsibility on women to combat male chauvinism. Nonetheless, the researcher states, “The magazine sometimes falls into the heterosexist trap of promoting normative ideas of family and gender roles that were the cornerstone of early patriarchal Latino social movements” (p. 168). The evidence found supports this finding, as the woman as a housewife and mother was a very common theme found in the ads created for Latinas.

As previously mentioned, many of these advertisements took a different approach with the intent of empowering Latinas and highlighting their great contributions to society. Whether it be through starting her own business, being a “wonder woman” and taking on many roles both in and outside of the home or simply supporting herself and other women in her community, these ads focused on accomplishment in a way that is different from caring for other people. While other studies must be conducted to support the research findings, this indicates there may be a push for less-frequent use of stereotypes such as the “sexy Latina” or the “caretaker” and more demand for showing Latinas as achievers who can and do excel in roles outside of the home.

Much like a study by Schroeder and Borgerson (1998), sexual stereotypes were evident in this sample. However, I expected this to me a more common stereotypical theme in advertisements, as the results of a study by Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) indicated.
Limitations of this study include sample size and magazine genre. It would be advantageous to look at other types of Spanish-language magazines, such as *Poder Hispanic*, described as “intelligence for the business elite,” *Alma Magazine*, which focuses on culture, fashion and politics or even those created specifically for a male audience, such as the *GQ* Spanish edition. With more time and access to other magazines, the researcher also could expand the sample size to include other magazines for Latinas such as *TV y Novelas*, *Vanidades* and *Latina Style*.

Based on the results for each of these research questions, the next step the researcher would like to take is investigating would be to compare the roles in which Latinas are shown in 2013 magazine advertisements to those in previous years. It would be beneficial to see how both subjects and strategies used have evolved, if at all, over the past 10, 20 or 50 years.

Additionally, the researcher could compare these magazine advertisements from the year 2013 to Spanish television advertisements from the same year. The study by Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) concluded that stereotypes were often used when portraying Latinos on television, and this ethnic group is also underrepresented on TV. It would be interesting to compare the differing characteristics of magazine advertisements to television commercials, which provide more context in terms of setting, voice, tone and message.

Finally, it would be extremely beneficial to advertising professionals to conduct focus groups with Latinas themselves to understand how they react to the messages presented. Message perception and interpretation is not often studied, yet successful
campaigns rely heavily on how whether its messages are accepted or rejected by the target audience.
References:


