



# Hispanic Cultural Themes & Marketing Insights from Popular Latin Music

Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication  
Florida State University

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*“One of the things we know about consumers, as an immigrant, you lose a lot of things from home, but the last things you lose are a love for food and music.”*

Goya's Director of Marketing, Esperanza Carrión



The US Hispanic consumer can be understood through observation and analysis of popular culture. Listening to music, observing rituals, and reading literature generated within the culture constitutes a rich source for the identification of cultural patterns.

# Music Study's Inspiration

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## ***Why study U.S. Hispanic music?***

- ▶ Music, like other linguistic forms of expression, is charged with thoughts and emotions that speak of the individual's sense of self.
- ▶ Language is a tool used to communicate and share common experiences. It carries meaning, ideologies and the particular outlook on life of a culture.
- ▶ Lyrics carry important insights about the collective view of a group on life.



# Music and Marketing

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- ▶ Marketers can gain access to the heart of a culture through one of the most sincere forms of expressions that we have, *music*.

*“Subjectivity is at the center of marketing, and cultural subjectivity is at the core of cross-cultural marketing”*

Korzenny & Korzenny, 170

# Methodology

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- ▶ In the 1970s, *Billboard Magazine* realized that Spanish-language songs were becoming increasingly popular and the Billboard Hot Latin Tracks was launched.
- ▶ We used the U.S. Hot Latin Tracks to identify the top Latin songs between 1997-2008 based on airplay on Latin music stations.
- ▶ Thirty four cultural categories were defined based on previous research and current literature.





# Methodology

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- ▶ Four independent coders each analyzed all of the songs ( $n = 166$ ) for thirty four cultural categories. Inter-coder reliability was achieved at 84%.
- ▶ Cultural categories were reduced to twenty-two at post-analysis.
- ▶ This quantitative study was enhanced with the use of qualitative analysis.



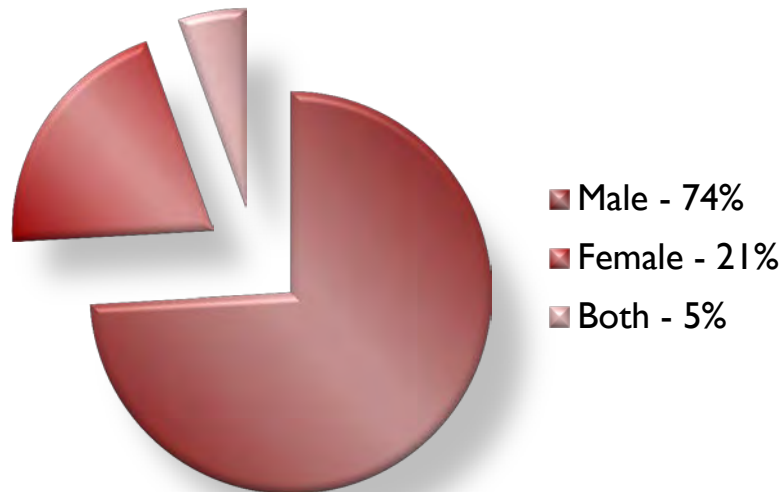


## Main Findings

# Male Presence

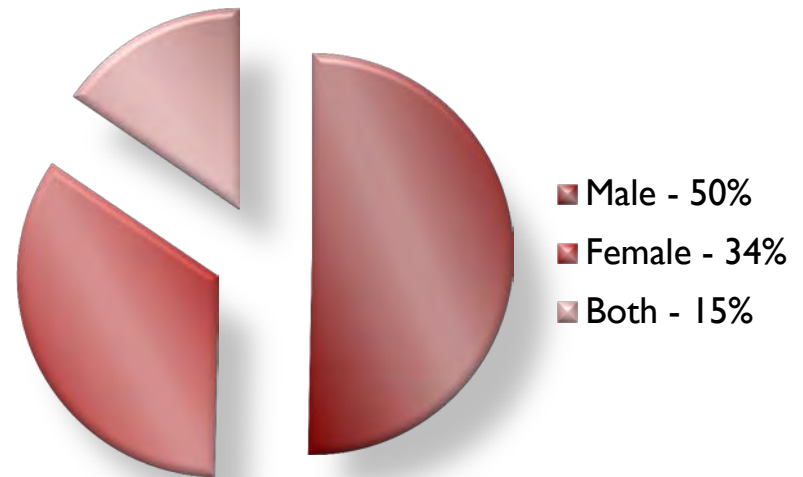
- ▶ **Of the 166 songs identified, 123 were by male artists, substantially more than the 34 songs by females that made the chart.**
  - ▶ The same artist may have had more than one song make the Billboard chart at any given time regardless of gender.

**Latin Performer's Gender  
per #1 song**



US Hot Latin Tracks 1997-2008

**General Performer's Gender  
per #1 song**



US Hot Tracks 1997-2008



# Male Presence

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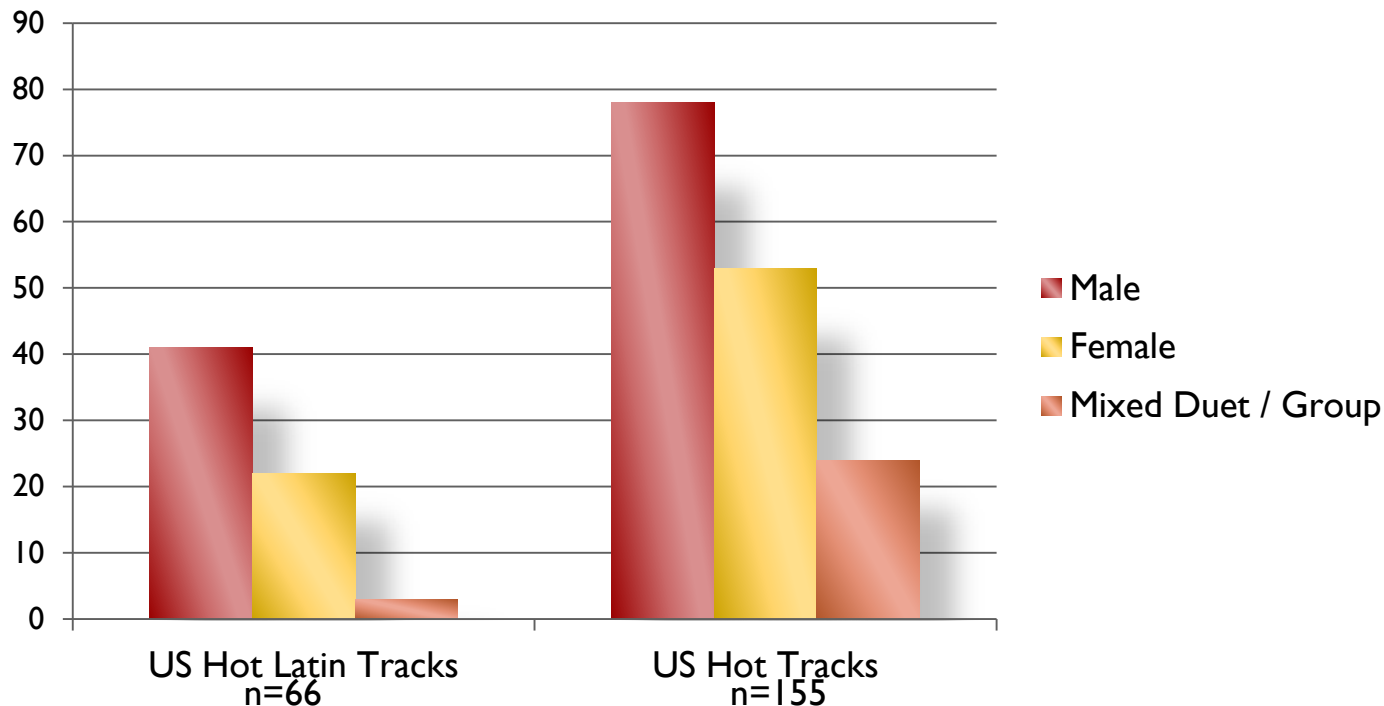
- ▶ The songs that are most played in Latin music stations are performed by males.
- ▶ Male artists songs tend to stay in the charts longer number of weeks.
- ▶ Male singers are also more present throughout the years.



# Artist Permanence over Time

- ▶ US Hot Latin Tracks' artists have a longer lifespan than those in the US Hot Tracks.
- ▶ Hispanics tend to remain loyal to their favorite artists.

**Number of Artists to make the Billboard Chart (1997-2008)**



# Marketing Implications

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- ▶ The gender of a musician could affect how much the artist appeals to certain audiences.
- ▶ Marketers planning to include music or a musician for grassroots events, music for an ad or using an artist as a spokesperson should look into their target audience before making a selection.
- ▶ Since Hispanic artists tend to stay current throughout the years they can reach across generations.
  - ▶ Juan Luis Guerra is equally liked by grandmothers, mothers, and daughters.
- ▶ Marketers may want to favor artists that consumers have known longer.



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The findings on the following slides are based on correlations and analysis of the content in the lyrics.

Appearance & Celebration

Sexuality, Religion & Special Uses of Language

Dependency

Religion & Gender

Androgyny, Pain & Guilt



# Look Good, Feel Good Appearance & Celebration

- ▶ Over 40% of the songs with references to Celebration & Partying also included Appearance & Impressions.
- ▶ When we analyzed the presence of both cultural categories we realized there is a strong connection for Hispanics between looking good and feeling good.
- ▶ The lyrics showed that Hispanics pay particular attention to their appearance when attending celebrations.

		Appearance & Impressions		Total
		NO	YES	
Celebration & Partying	NO		18 12.1%	
	YES	10 58.8%	7 41.2%	17 100%
Total			25 15.1%	166 100%

*“La que se pone la mas linda  
cuando la llevo a una fiesta”  
Carlos Vives – Fruta Fresca*



# Look Good, Feel Good Appearance & Celebration

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- ▶ For Hispanics, celebrating is a way to forget about reality and enjoy the present. Times of celebration merit paying special attention to the way they present themselves.
- ▶ Hispanics use their appearance as a way to give importance to the events that affect their lives. This shows their sense of respect, dignity and pride.
- ▶ Appearances are especially important to Hispanics for making a positive impression.
  - ▶ To fully celebrate life, one must dress accordingly.
  - ▶ Hispanics' confidence has a positive relationship with the way they look.

*“Si vas a entregar el alma,  
hazlo libre de temores  
La vida pa’ gozarla na’ mas”  
Gloria Estefan – No llores*

*“Viene Diego rumbeando con  
la luna en las pupilas y su  
traje agua marina”  
Las Kétchup – Asejere*



# Implications *Look Good, Feel Good*

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- ▶ Marketers should understand that there is a strong connection between looking and feeling good for Hispanics.
  - ▶ Retail and cosmetics marketers can portray the importance that looking good plays in the lives of Hispanics, especially in celebratory occasions.
- ▶ Hispanics' value of appearance during important occasions can drive them towards upgrading to higher-cost items.
- ▶ Marketers can remind Hispanics that the way they present themselves reflects on the importance they give to a celebration.
  - ▶ Better presentation will make for a more memorable event and remind Hispanics of how important these celebrations in life are for them.
  - ▶ Weddings, birthday parties (quinceañeras), and graduations are all occasions where Hispanics would want to show the significance of the event by paying special attention to its presentation.

# Sex: the Holy Sin

## Sexuality, Religion, & Special Uses of Language

- ▶ Hispanics are still growing up with more conservative principles and see sex as a magical act that has a certain spiritual significance.
- ▶ Out of the 73 songs that contained Sensuality & Sexuality over 20% mentioned religion or spirituality as well.
  - ▶ Many times spirituality was expressed in the form of nature.

		Sensuality & Sexuality		Total
		NO	YES	
Religion & Spirituality	NO		58 79.5%	
	YES	19 20.4%	15 20.5%	34 20.5%
Total			73 100%	166 100%

*“Que un beso nos lleve al cielo  
volando en tus sentimientos  
que tus manos y tus besos me  
lleven a lo que siento”.*  
Carlos Vives – Luna Nueva





# Sex: the Holy Sin

## Sexuality, Religion, & Special Uses of Language

- ▶ Simultaneously, sex represents a taboo that Hispanics do not openly discuss.
  - ▶ Over 90% of the songs with sexual references included special uses of language, such as metaphors.

		Sensuality & Sexuality		Total
		NO	YES	
Special Uses of Language	NO		6 8.2%	
	YES	79 84.9%	67 91.8%	146 88%
Total			73 100%	166 100%

*“Voy a desnudar tu alma beso a beso  
hasta sentir que tu cuerpo se derrama  
como lluvia sobre mi.  
Por el borde de tu espalda voy a dibujar  
mi amor sin ocultar esta pasión.”  
Son by Four – Cuando seas mía*



# Sex: the Holy Sin

## Sexuality, Religion, & Special Uses of Language

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- ▶ Even when the message is a very sexually charged one, the language used to describe it elevates it to something of poetic, romantic and beautiful characteristics.
- ▶ Researchers found that 65% (n=279) of the references to sexual activity were mentions of degrading sex among the top popular songs in 2005 Billboard.

*“Voy a desnudar tu alma beso a beso  
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# Implications *Sex: the Holy Sin*

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- ▶ Marketers planning to include sexual messages, references or innuendos should be cautious.
- ▶ Explicit western approaches of sex as fun or a tool could backfire by causing embarrassment or by offending Hispanics.
- ▶ Marketers should be aware that Hispanics might not be at ease with certain topics. They need to use a sensitive approach when dealing with issues like sex education, sexually transmitted diseases or medical advice.

# Implications *Sex: the Holy Sin*

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- ▶ Marketers may have to educate parents who do not know how to speak to their children about important issues, such as the dangers of unprotected sex.
- ▶ Even with acculturation, this seems to be a tendency that remains strong in the Hispanic culture. This could be an important insight for marketers who want to reach Hispanics across age, gender and acculturation levels.
- ▶ Marketers selling products of sexual nature must be conscious of this particular outlook on sex. Product like condoms may want to focus on the significance of sex rather than the act itself.

# Nadie sabe lo que tiene... Dependency

- ▶ References to dependency was present in almost 40% of the songs and was used by both males and females.
- ▶ In 38.2 % of these songs, Hispanics described their loved one as what brings significance to their lives.
- ▶ Of these quotes, 32% referred to Hispanics believing that their life or personal value will be reduced to nothing without their significant other.

*“Siendo medio loco, dando vueltas,  
y te busco y no te puedo ver. Para  
que la vida?”.*

Enrique Iglesias – Para que la vida

*“Sin ti mi vida ha sido gris  
y no hay nada que me haga mas feliz  
Que escuchar tu voz, oh junto a mi  
Hoy contigo sé lo que es vivir”.*

Marc Anthony – Muy dentro de mi

*“Si tu te vas todos mis sueños  
también se irán”.*

Los Temerarios – Si tu te vas

# Nadie sabe lo que tiene... Dependency

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- ▶ In almost 40% of the lyrics dealing with dependency, the presence of that loved one in their lives fills them with energy and happiness that evaporates when they are gone leaving them helpless.

*“Si no fuera por ti yo no sabría vivir”.*  
*Juanes – Volverte a ver*

*“Que sin ti no se vivir y ahora que no estas aquí me doy cuenta la falta que me haces.”*  
*“Si, porque ya no estás aquí que sincero se hace el frio  
como hiel mi sufrimiento ya no sé lo que es vivir”.*  
*Paulina Rubio – Como me duele perderte*

# Implications *Nadie sabe lo que tiene...*

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- ▶ Marketers can find value in the fact that the things in the lives of Hispanics do not have the same meaning when they no longer have someone to share it with.
- ▶ The insight that Hispanics consider their loved one their reason to live can be a powerful motivator for industries such as insurance and products relating to fulfilling consumer's need to visit or stay in touch with loved ones.
  - ▶ Airlines
  - ▶ Long distance calling companies

# Implications *Nadie sabe lo que tiene...*

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- ▶ Marketers may capitalize on the fact that many Hispanics appreciate the value that their loved one brings to their life once they are gone.
- ▶ Marketers can remind Hispanics of the importance their significant other has, and show that they appreciate him or her.
  - ▶ This could be useful for romantic gifts such as jewelry or anything that could show appreciation and happiness that they are in their lives.
- ▶ Holidays (such as Christmas and Valentine's Day) can become alive with meaning and feelings of gratitude for their significant other.
  - ▶ Emphasize the pleasure of sharing with significant others



# Women as Angels Religion & Gender

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- ▶ References to religion were present in 20% of the songs with similar proportions among men and women.
- ▶ Within these quotes we observed a recurring theme of men describing females as spiritual beings.
- ▶ The idea of women as spiritual beings models after the purity of the Virgin, that comes from “the cult of the feminine spiritual superiority, which teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior to and spiritually stronger than men”.

“... tu mirada angelical...”  
Luis Miguel – Por Debajo de la Mesa

“Te ves como un ángel con tu linda sonrisa”  
Elvis Crespo – Tu Sonrisa

“Serás por siempre el ángel de mis sueños”  
Enrique Iglesias – Esperanza

# Women as Divine Religion & Gender

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- ▶ Lyrics evoked the belief that women have a direct connection to the divine.
- ▶ Therefore, men see women as the source of their well being. They are better because of women and because women connect them with a 'higher power'.

*“... esa que te admira tanto,  
Que te obliga a ser un santo.”*  
Luis Miguel – O tu o ninguna

*“Te quiero cariño santo,  
Te adoro mujer divina”*  
Carlos Vives – Luna Nueva

*“Ay, no lo puedo soportar  
No me quiero derrumbar  
Mándame un mensaje, una señal  
Manda una señal amor”*  
MANÁ – Manda una Señal

# Implications *Women as Angels & Divine*

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- ▶ Lyrics show an innate belief by males that women are strong and spiritual beings proud of providing care for their loved ones.
- ▶ This must be taken into account to prevent marketers from portraying gender perceptions that seem trendier but in many cases do not really show the reality of the consumer.
- ▶ Hispanic men elevate certain women in their life to a special category (pedestal). Marketers might be more successful in evoking an emotional response if they make use of this spiritual component in their marketing campaigns.

# Gender Roles

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- ▶ Gender is central to cultural life. Each society assigns certain gender roles and expectations to its members which are manifested and encouraged by a range of social structures and behaviors.

- ▶ Men:

- ▶ Strong
- ▶ Provider
- ▶ Confident
- ▶ Not showing emotions

*“Y procuro saber que te esperas de mi  
Lo que pidas te doy para verte feliz”  
Luis Miguel – Te Necesito*

- ▶ Women:

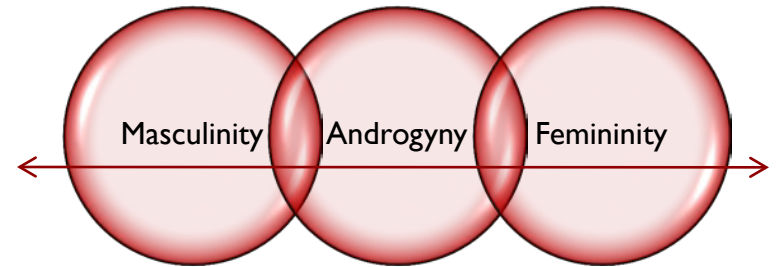
- ▶ Nurturing
- ▶ Compliant
- ▶ Morally superior to Men
- ▶ Spiritually stronger than men

*“Si pudiera ser tu héroe”  
Enrique Iglesias – Héroe*

*“Aquellos brazos de hombre  
que la aprietan fuerte (fuerte)”  
Don Omar – Angelito*

# Androgyny

- ▶ Of the 166 songs, 20% portray androgynous characteristics. All are performed by male artists.
- ▶ Music as a highly emotional outlet may explain why males use music to express emotions that fall more closely on the feminine end of the gender continuum.
- ▶ Androgyny in lyrics came across in combination with other cultural categories shedding light on Hispanic consumers.

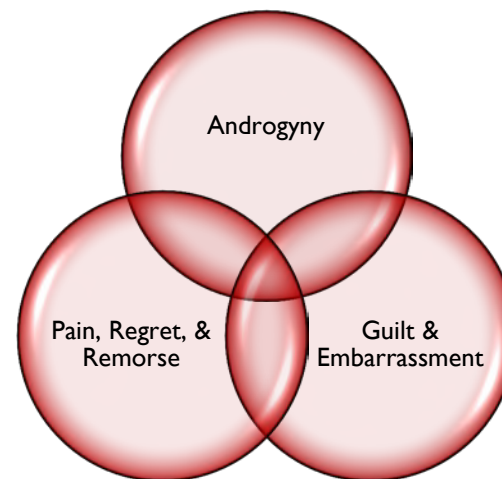


*“Pido por tu amor,  
muero por tocar tu piel  
Ruego de rodillas...”  
Carlos Ponce – Rezo*

# Sangre, Sudor y Lagrimas

## Androgyny, Pain & Guilt

- ▶ Lyrics dealing with androgyny also presented pain and/or guilt simultaneously.
- ▶ Pain is present in almost 80% of the songs that have guilt or androgyny.
  - ▶ Further analysis showed that in most cases pain generates guilt and emotional distress for males.



		Guilt		Androgyny	
		NO	YES	NO	YES
Pain	NO		4 21.1%		6 22.2%
	YES	44 42.3%	15 78.9%	38 39.6%	21 77.8%
Total			19 100%		27 100%

*“Después de todo fui yo a decirte que no  
Sabes bien que no es cierto  
Estoy muriendo por dentro*

...

*Tantas noches en vela  
Aferrado a mi almohada  
Si pudiera tan solo regresar un momento  
Ahora es que te comprendo  
Ahora es cuando te pierdo”  
Ricky Martin – Vuelve*

# Sangre, Sudor y Lagrimas

Androgyny, Pain & Guilt

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- ▶ Some lyrics showed guilt and despair used by males as a manipulative tool to get their significant other back.
- ▶ This strategy is useful because it is in Hispanic women's nature to nurture those who are in need/pain.

*“Si escucharas mi lamento  
Si me vieras volverías,  
Ya he pagado un alto precio  
Por el mal que yo te hacia”  
Luis Fonsi – Imagínate Sin Ti*

*“... y por mis errores ahora estoy sufriendo  
quisiera regresar  
...  
Quisiera llorar y sacarme de adentro tus besos  
tu cuerpo”  
Obie Bermudez – Antes*

# Implications *Sangre, Sudor y Lagrimas*

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- ▶ Men need to be nurtured and relegate that responsibility to females. Marketers can use this insight when dealing with health and safety products. For the same reason, they might benefit from highlighting safety features of products when targeting females.
  - ▶ **Product Examples:**
    - ▶ Vitamins
    - ▶ Healthy choices in foods
    - ▶ Safety features in cars
- ▶ Organizations or companies seeking support can appeal to this 'helping' nature of females.





# Limitations

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- ▶ Limited number of songs analyzed (n=166)
- ▶ Billboard selection process
- ▶ Songwriters vs. Performers

# Future Research

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- ▶ Reproduce this study
  - ▶ Look at trends and changes over time in the U.S. Billboard Hot Latin Tracks by going further back in time
  
- ▶ Comparative Studies
  - ▶ Compare cultural categories among other Billboard charts
  
- ▶ Same Data, more Studies
  - ▶ Nation-specific
  - ▶ Time break-down



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Some of these findings are corroborations of previous knowledge while others shed light onto new understandings of the Hispanic market and their implications.

The lyrics of these artists not only are a reflection of themselves but when observed together they represent the insights from within their culture.

For more information about this study, contact The Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication at  
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