

Selling Luxury to the Hispanic Market:  
Automotive Advertisements  
And the Achievement of the American Dream

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A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted to the  
Department of Communication  
of Boston College

May 2008

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	
<b>CHAPTER ONE – Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO – Literature Review</b> .....	<b>4</b>
The Other and the Ad: a White-Centric Model .....	5
Moving Towards a Multicultural Model? Studies on Hispanic ads in the 1980’s and 1990’s .....	8
Hispanics: A New Mass Market? .....	11
Methods to Reach the New Hispanic Market .....	12
Weaknesses in the Literature .....	14
<b>CHAPTER THREE- From Labor to Luxury: A History of Hispanics in the Untied States and Automaker’s Responses</b> .....	<b>16</b>
The Hispanic Consumer Market Today .....	16
History of General Motors .....	18
History of Toyota.....	23
History of Nissan .....	28
<b>CHAPTER 4- Methodology</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5- Artifact</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6- “Una Marca Que Dura” Chevy and the Progression of the American Dream</b> .....	<b>41</b>
Plot .....	41
Characters .....	47
Setting .....	49

<b>CHAPTER 7- “Toyota Camry Super Bowl Ad”: Emphasizing Family Ties to the American Dream .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Plot .....	51
Characters .....	53
Setting .....	55
<b>CHAPTER 8- Infiniti “Design and Performance” Taking the American Dream to the Peak of Achievement .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Plot .....	57
Characters .....	59
<b>CHAPTER 9- The Power in Numbers: Centrality of the American Dream to Each Narrative .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10- Implications and Conclusions .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Implications .....	62
Conclusions .....	64
<b>Works Cited .....</b>	<b>66</b>

## **Abstract**

While much has been written about advertising and its effects on the mass market, little focus has been paid to the ever growing Hispanic market in the United States.

Accordingly, this thesis will examine this often neglected, yet vital market segment by conducting a narrative analysis of automotive television commercials. Consistent with the findings of the analysis, this paper argues that advertisers now recognize Hispanics as a vital consumer market. Furthermore, it asserts that the content messages present in television commercials promote the integration of Hispanics into the American Dream by illustrating their integration to the general audience and reinforcing their self-concepts.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Advertising, whether or not it sells cars or chocolate, surrounds us and enters into us, so that when we speak we may speak in or with reference to the language of advertising and when we see we may see through schemata that advertising has made salient for us . . . . the power of advertising is considerable (Schudson, 1984, p.210).

Michael Schudson, wrote this observation of advertising in his 1984 work, *The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*. Since its inception, advertising has been an incredibly powerful social force affecting the mass market. Today, the impact of advertising has become even more pervasive due to the ever-increasing percentage of company's budgets devoted to advertising and the wide array of media platforms available. Beyond affecting the mass market, advertisements are also targeted pieces of communication that serve to influence and reflect the beliefs of particular social groups. Whether it be selling blemish cream to teenagers or cleaning products to mothers, all advertisements are embedded with stories that reveal truths to the intended viewers. Accordingly, from the perspective of a communication scholar, it is important to examine the rhetorical implications of advertisements on particular societal groups.

Hispanics are a sector of the United States population that merit specific focus. The first mass influx of Hispanics migrated to the America at the dawn of the twentieth century and largely led lives of labor and abject poverty. However, as time passed Hispanics gradually amassed wealth and advanced in society. Today, Hispanics represent the largest minority group in the United States and their purchasing power is increasing faster than any other societal sector. In view of this, it is important to study

how the advertising industry has responded to the changing economic status of Hispanics through the products they sell to them and the way the commercial messages are framed.

This thesis will examine how advertising reflects and influences social reality through the analysis of luxury automotive commercials targeted at the Hispanic market. Specifically, it will study three recent national commercial campaigns created by General Motors, Toyota, and Nissan. Since commercials have an implicit story structure, this study will utilize the narrative paradigm, first put forth by Walter Fisher to reveal what overarching message these commercials sent to the Hispanic market.

This thesis argues that automotive advertisements selling luxury to Hispanics are embedded with the message telling this societal group that it has achieved full integration into the American Dream. Additionally, it is argued that the plot, character, and setting of each commercial, as well as the recurring appearance of the American Dream theme throughout the three spots cause both the Hispanic target audience and the general audience to accept the narrative commercial message as truth.

To achieve this aim, the argument will be developed through several chapters that establish its credibility. Chapter Two will review works that previous communication scholars have crafted on the Hispanic market. This will provide a historical grounding for research on the Hispanic market and more importantly will uncover areas where current scholarship is lacking and additional analysis is necessary. Chapter Three will then offer a summary of the current United States Hispanic market as well as a historical background of the three automakers whose campaigns were chosen for analysis. Chapter Four will give the reader a detailed understanding of the Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm and why it was deemed the most effective methodology to achieve the goals of

this critical analysis. Chapter Five will then proceed to explain why the three commercial were chosen and establish them as representative artifacts. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine will analyze the narrative elements of each campaign individually and collectively to expose the presence of an underlying American Dream narrative with which the target audience identifies. Finally, Chapter Ten will conclude this thesis by explaining the implications of these findings and suggesting areas of future study.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

The advertising industry is one of the fastest growing and most profitable industries in the United States. By definition, advertising is a paid form of persuasion, which is aimed at increasing the individual sales of a company by influencing the purchasing beliefs of a mass audience. Yet, advertising not only influences purchases but is a powerful social force. As Ronald Berman writes, "In the absence of traditional authority, advertising has become a kind of social guide. It depicts us in all the myriad situations possible to a life of free choice. It provides ideas about style, morality, behavior" (Berman, 1981 p. 13). The cultural anthropologist, William O'Barr similarly states, "the social order continually recreates by references to ideals in advertisements" (O'Barr, 1994 p. 4). In view of the societal power wielded by ads it is important to research what messages advertisements are conveying to their audience.

This review of literature will examine existing research on the societal views promoted by advertisements. Particularly, the investigation will focus on how American advertisements portray minority groups. The interests of communication scholars have long been aroused by the views of "the other" promoted throughout the history of ads. By "the other", what is meant is those who are thought to be outside the scope of the targeted mass audience. These often-neglected audiences have traditionally included immigrants and minorities. The Hispanic minority will be the primary focus of this study, as they currently comprise the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States. Due to their immense presence and increased purchasing power it is imperative to understand the composition of the Hispanic market, how advertisers have previously

addressed that market, and what facets of the Hispanic advertising were explored by existing research.

In order to gain advertising insights into the current Hispanic market, it is vital to understand its history and to expose areas where scholarly research is lacking. First, this analysis will examine how advertising has historically treated those viewed as “the other” This is important, because communication scholars studying Hispanic advertising often structure their examinations based on the claims made about the role of minorities in advertising. Second, existing literature about the Hispanic market will be analyzed. The aim of this discussion will be to expose commonalities among the studies as well as gaps within the literature that must be bridged in order to gain new insights on the role of advertising in the present Hispanic market.

#### *The “Other” and the Ad: a White-Centric Model*

Historically advertising efforts in the United States have targeted the white American population and have either minimized or completely ignored the presence of all other groups in ads. Two particular comprehensive scholarly works are the first to deal with this issue. First, in the book *Culture and The Ad: Exploring Otherness in Advertising*, communication scholar, William O’Barr examines how nonwhites are viewed as outside the scope of advertising for the majority of the twentieth century. As he explains, “advertising . . . has tended throughout the twentieth century to treat the American public as a white, English speaking mass audience of rather uniform tastes, preferences, and sensibilities” (O’Barr, 1994 p. ix). To prove his point O’Barr examines collections of print advertisements featuring people of foreign origins and African

Americans, dating from the onset of the twentieth century to the present. In his examination of African Americans, O'Barr discovers that "for much of the century, this group of Americans was defined as outside the intended audience for advertisements" (p.107). Specifically, prior to the Civil Rights Movement, there were seldom any ads targeted at African Americans. Furthermore, if an African American did appear in advertisements in this period, they were portrayed in inferior service positions such as butlers, cotton pickers, and bellhops. After the Civil Rights Movement, however, blacks gained greater purchasing power and "business quick too realize the potential for this emergent market, redefined the intended audience for advertisements to include them" (p.107). In fact, some African Americans were even depicted in more current ads as holding corporate positions, but the majority of ads depicted them as athletes. In light of these discoveries O'Barr concludes that progress has been made in the depiction of minorities in ads, mainly because of economic reasons. Furthermore, in many ways these new portrayals represent one stereotype replacing another (i.e.: server to athlete).

A second work that examines the role of minorities in the advertising world is, marketing scholar, Anthony Cortese's book, *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising*. In his analysis, Cortese like O'Barr finds that during the latter part of the twentieth century minorities were absent from advertising and if they appeared in ads, their image was either negative or demeaning. As he states, "prior to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, the mass media world was nearly all white" (Cortese, 1999, p.77). Even when the study of consumer behavior became an official science in the 1940's, ethnic consumers were still ignored. Cortese also, expands on O'Barr's findings in two ways. First, he looks not only at the content of ads featuring minorities, but also at

its frequency. In taking this approach he finds that although the image of blacks changed in the 1960's they were still drastically unrepresented in ads for many more decades. For example he found that, "as late as 1990 only 3% of all people featured in national advertising were black" (p.78). Second, Cortese also expands his research in *Provocateur* to also investigate the role of Latinos in advertising. He finds that:

Latinos are even more underrepresented than blacks in advertising. They were virtually nonexistent in ads prior to 1980. Even in the late 1980's, Latinos were featured in only 5.8 percent of all television commercials (94).

Also, Cortese discovers that like the pre-Civil Rights images of African Americans, the representations of Hispanics appearing in ads were dominated by negative stereotypes. Particularly, the most pervasive symbol of Hispanics in ads was that which Cortese terms, the "luscious Latina" (p.96). This prevalent image depicted the Hispanic woman as a sexy but trashy temptress and was largely derogatory. Finally, Cortese in agreement with O'Barr believes that minorities gained a more widespread and significant presence in advertisements as they amassed higher purchasing power. This is observed when he states, "the portrayal of unique sub-cultural groups in the media indicates that the groups have a type of economic power, and thus, a secure place in society and a noted identity" (p.13). Hence, these foundational works draw several significant conclusions about the role minorities in advertising during the majority of the twentieth century. In this period minorities and especially Hispanics were vastly underrepresented and negatively stereotyped. Yet, concurrently, minorities began increasing both their presence and wealth, causing advertisers guided by the basic principals of economics to begin targeting minorities and placing them in ads.

*Moving Towards a Multicultural Model? Studies on Hispanic Ads in the 1980's and 1990's*

Influenced by the under representation of Hispanics witnessed throughout the later part of the twentieth century, communication researchers of the 1980's, 1990's, and twenty-first century sought to examine whether the growth of the Hispanics market did translate into a higher frequency of Hispanics in advertisements. Academics began to study large samples of television commercials taken over a significant period of time to analyze the rate of appearance of Latinos in television commercials. For example, Robert Wilkes and Humberto Valencia's 1987 research study on Hispanics and Blacks in Television Commercials examined three hours of primetime programming for a one week period on the major networks of ABC, NBC, and CBS to determine how often commercials contained Hispanics. The study found that Hispanics were present in only 53 of the 904 commercials in the sample, fewer than 6% of the time (Wilkes & Valencia, 199, p.22). Also, they appeared four times less frequently than blacks. Thus, Wilkes and Valencia conclude that, "Hispanics are underrepresented- with respect to their proportion of the population in general network television advertising" (p.25). In a second study, Thomas Stevenson and Patricia McIntyer's conducted a 1995 investigation on frequency of Hispanics versus whites in television advertising. This study also examined television commercials on the big three networks and found that Hispanics were underrepresented. Specifically, the researchers discovered that despite the fact that Hispanics represented 22 million people in the total United States population, they were only found in 4.5% of commercials in the sample (Stevenson & McIntyre, 1995, p.71). Furthermore, the Stevenson and McIntyre study takes the investigation one step further than previous

studies, by also looking at regionalized samples of the ads in Charlotte and San Antonio, cities with vastly different compositions of Latinos. Startlingly the researchers found, that even in San Antonio where Hispanics comprised the majority of the population, only 7.1% of the commercials featured Hispanics (p.71). Thus, these studies suggest that despite the increases in the Hispanic population and their economic power, advertisers had still yet to view the Hispanic market as significant enough to advertise to them in equal proportion to their market power. It is noteworthy that no studies addressing this subject were found subsequent to 1996, because since then the Hispanic population has grown exponentially and replaced African Americans as the largest minority in the United States.

A second and related theme explored by several studies is how Hispanics are depicted by advertisements. Communication scholars are not only concerned with discovering how often messages included Hispanics, but also in understanding what message these advertisements were sending to Hispanics. Three studies in particular explored this topic: Wilkes and Valencia (1987); Stevenson and McIntyre (1996); and Ghanem and Saavedra (1998). In the first study, Wilkes and Valencia examined primetime television advertisements. These researchers sought to observe how network television advertising portrayed Hispanics. Finding showed that Hispanics appeared mainly in large racially integrated group situations in commercials. In fact, it was discovered that only .5% of all the advertisements contained Hispanics only (Wilkes & Valencia, 1987, p.22). This finding led to the proclamation by the researchers that Hispanics were “unimportant to the commercials” (p.22). Therefore, advertisements were judged to negatively portray Hispanics as they depicted them as insignificant.

In Stevenson and McIntyre's investigation on the same subject they determined that Hispanics are also being negatively stereotyped. For example, it was observed that Hispanics were prevailingly typecasted as blue collar workers. However, the researchers also found that these negative stereotypes were gradually fading away. Specifically, in the two cities examined, Charlotte, the city with a much smaller Hispanic population, had a much higher rate of advertisements with Hispanic blue collar workers. While in San Antonio, a city with a majority Hispanic population, occupational portrayals were more varied and had a lower percentage of blue collar workers. Thus, as Hispanics continue to increase their presence in the marketplace it can be conjectured that they will be represented more positively and diversely.

Finally, in 1998, Ghanem and Saavedra examined a collection of radio and television political advertisements targeted at Hispanics. The sample included advertisements from the 1960-1996 presidential elections. The content analysis of the advertisements found that Hispanics were mainly depicted as lower class laborers. For example, "Hispanics were shown as blue collar workers in over a third of the ads and as farmer/laborers in over 16%" (Ghanem & Saavedra 1998, p.34). Yet, although the Hispanic population was portrayed as being of a lower socioeconomic status, they were still viewed as having positive values. As Ghanem and Saavedra explain, "Hispanics were portrayed as hardworking, patriotic, and family oriented people" (p.36). Thus, political advertising towards Hispanics had an overall positive tone.

The body of research concerning stereotypes inherit within advertisements targeted at Hispanics has several implications. First, the studies suggest that despite the growth of the wealth and status of Hispanic minority in the United States, many

advertisers have been slow to adapt to these changes and whether they still hold negative stereotypes of Hispanics. Additionally, although the changes have not been as rapid as Anthony Cortese's, *Provocateur* predicted, gradual positive changes have been revealed as is evidenced by the positive portrayals found in Stevenson and McIntyre's San Antonio sample and in Ghanem and Saavedra research on Hispanic political advertisements. Overall, progress was made. However, it is significant that there were again no studies found on this subject during the twenty first century. This indicates that future research is needed.

#### *Hispanics: A New Mass Market?*

Although it appears that in some instances advertisers were slow to pick up on power and potential of the Hispanic market, academic scholars certainly were not. A third major theme found across the research was studies focused on articulating the significance of the Hispanic market. For example, Joseph Albonetti and Louis Dominguez 1989 study conducted the first national survey of packaged goods manufacturer's views on the Hispanic market. The survey indicated that among the manufacturers there is "a widespread belief that the Hispanic market will grow in importance and that it merits a larger allocation of resources" (Albonetti & Dominguez, 1989, p. 14). The survey also revealed that one third of those manufacturers only began to take notice and actively target Hispanic markets three years prior to the study. In view of these factors, Albonetti and Dominguez advocate the vast potential of the Hispanic market and the need for more academic research to advance advertising efforts to this market segment. As they state, "the Hispanic market is at a point of inevitable evolution... and will continue to be a fertile ground for scholarly research" (p.20). In a second and

more recent article, Nuiry Octavio Emilio's 1997 study promotes the idea that the Hispanic population has become a unique and lucrative mass market. As he states, "America's 30 million Latin shoppers spend \$356 billion annually on everything from cars to computers" (Emilio, 1997, p. 1). Furthermore, he explains that the circulation of Hispanic newspaper has increased 1,225% since 1970, and in several regional markets Hispanic television and radio stations consistently beat English stations in prime time ratings (p.1). Emilio argues that these statistics serve as evidence that advertisers can no longer afford to overlook Hispanics. He best captures this point when he proclaims, "the demographic fiber of America has changed. To stay competitive, they [advertisers] need to communicate in the language of Cervantes" (p.1). This research propels the view that the Hispanic market has grown tremendously in size and wealth. Consequently, communication scholars highlight the need for more academic research on the Hispanic market and implore advertisers to begin to actively target Latinos.

#### *Methods to Reach This New Hispanic Mass Market*

Having already established the importance of advertising to the Hispanic market, the fourth and final theme that emerged in more recent existing research is how to effectively reach this segment. As Peter Roslow and J.A.F Nicholls state in their 1996 study, "hardly anyone questions the size and viability of the Hispanic market. Now the issue is much more focused on reaching this market effectively" (Roslow & Niholas, 1996, p. 68). Several specific issues within this larger question were addressed in existing research. The first major topic explored is language choice used in advertisements targeted at Hispanics. Many researchers set out to discover whether

English language ads or Spanish language ads are more effective at persuading Latinos to make purchases. For example, Roslow and Nicholls did a study examining the comparative persuasion of television commercials in Spanish and English. “The results indicated that Hispanic viewers were more persuaded when they were exposed to commercials in Spanish, embedded in Spanish language programming, than similar commercials in English, embedded in English programs” (p.67). It was also, noted, however, that both English and Spanish language ads still needed to be employed to a degree because “Hispanics see themselves as having multiple identities” (p.69). A second work that examines this issue is communication scholar, Louis Nevaer’s book *The Rise of the Hispanic in the United States*. Particularly, Nevaer studies how Hispanics in the United States define their identity and how language ties in to that definition. Hispanics in America have a strong identification with their Latin cultural roots. As he explains:

the term Hispanic was first used in the 1970 Census, at the direction of the Nixon Administration to understand the phenomenon of the a permanent Spanish speaking population that refused to assimilate and become Americanized (Nevaer, 2004, p. 6).

Accordingly, it was also found that Hispanics preferred advertisements in Spanish. Both these studies demonstrate that advertisers seeking to penetrate the Hispanic market must use bilingual advertising.

In addition to language use many other issues about how to reach Hispanics were investigated. For instance, Kim and Kang’s 2001 study on “The Effects of Ethnicity and Product Purchase Decision Making” found that advertisements promoting products as upscale or status enhancing were most influential in persuading Hispanics to make purchases. (Kim & Kang, 47). Another study also conducted by Korgaonkar, Karson,

and Lund in 2001 found that Hispanics were more trustful of direct marketing efforts than whites, and were more likely to use it to assist them in defining their social role as consumers. For example the study results found that 67.9% of agreed with the statement that, “direct marketing and advertising is essential” and nearly 30 % agreed that direct marketing helps them know “which products will reflect the sort of person they are” (Korgaonkar, Karson, & Lund, 2001, p.32). All of this literature purports the view that Hispanics are a distinct market segment with unique tastes that require different advertising strategies to reach them.

#### *Weaknesses in the Literature*

Existing literature has started to address the various complex issues surrounding advertising to the Hispanic market. Yet, because of the relative infancy of Hispanic advertising, (only became a distinct advertising target in the 1980's) further investigation is still necessary to fully understand the various tenants of this topic. Particularly some significant gaps within the current literature must be addressed to advance scholarship. First, there is little current existing scholarly research on the various aspects of Hispanic advertising. Only three research studies were found within the twentieth century that explored any facet of Hispanic advertising. This is problematic because through the passage of time portrayals change. Hence, the outdated material may be presenting a view that is inaccurate to advertiser's views towards Hispanics in the present market. Especially troubling is the time elapsed since a study was conducted examining what messages advertisements featuring Hispanics are sending to the Latino population. The last study exploring this topic was performed in 1998, a decade ago. Hispanics have since

increased their economic power tremendously. Accordingly it is hypothesized that advertisers should have altered their messaging strategy. Second, although many studies have examined the general message portrayed in advertisements about Hispanics, such as samples of prime time television commercials or radio spots, none have explored the messages sent out by a specific brand or industry. Third, while more recent studies have focused on how best to target Hispanics, there have been no subsequent studies to test if these targeting tactics have been successfully employed.

In view of these weaknesses within the current scholarship on Hispanic advertising, it is apparent that further research is still necessary to understand the societal messages about Hispanics put forth by current Hispanic advertising efforts. Particularly, research should emulate previous content analysis studies such as Wilkes and Valencia (1987); Stevenson and McIntyre (1996); and Ghanem and Saavedra (1998) to uncover the messaging strategy. However, studies should depart from generalist frame of studying the advertisements in a specific medium and should instead devote efforts to uncovering messages employed by particular companies or industries. For example, an argument advocating the current view of Hispanics as an affluent sector of American society could be better expressed by examining how the luxury automotive industry targets Hispanics. Finally, studies should pay special attention to whether already established effective strategies to persuade Hispanic consumers are successfully employed by these new advertising efforts. This knowledge will lead to even more advanced scholarship on Hispanic targeting.

### Chapter III

#### **From Labor to Luxury: A History of Hispanics in the United States and Automaker's Responses**

##### *The Hispanic Consumer Market Today*

Hispanics represent a booming sector of the United States population. They are now the largest minority in the United States, overtaking African Americans some years ago. In fact, Hispanics currently comprise 14.4% (41.3 million people) of the total United States population, and are expected to grow to 15.7 % of the population by 2011. (“Hispanic Shopping and Spending Patterns”, 2006). The Latino market is not only growing at a rate surpassing other minority audiences, but is also increasing exponentially, faster than the total United States population. For example, “Hispanics represented half of all the growth of the U.S. population between July 1, 2003 and July 1, 2004. As the overall population rose by about 1%, the Hispanic market rose at a rate of 6%” (Hispanic Fact Pact, 2005, p. 3). Thus, by sheer size alone, the Hispanic market in the United States is a lucrative target that companies seeking to maximize their profits cannot afford to overlook.

Beyond size, the composition of the Hispanic market has greatly changed since the initial influx of Hispanic immigrants to the United States back in the 1960's. Historically, Hispanics were perceived as lower class uneducated farm laborers or blue collar workers, who had low incomes. While that characterization may hold true for a small number of Hispanics today, it is largely inaccurate. The number of Hispanic households earning over \$100,000 per year has increased nearly 140 percent over the past decade ([www.hispaniconline.com](http://www.hispaniconline.com)). Additionally, 48% of the Hispanic population, are

homeowners and they spend a larger portion of their incomes on transportation than non-Hispanics (“Hispanic Shopping and Spending Patterns”, 2006). Since, many Hispanics are now earning more money it naturally correlates that they are making more purchases. A report done by Santiago Solutions group in 2007 found that Hispanic purchasing power is currently at \$928 billion and is estimated to reach \$1.2 trillion by 2010 (<http://www.ahaa.org/media/Finalfacts04.htm>). Furthermore, the Hispanic buying power growth rate has also been outpacing the non-Hispanic annual growth rate for the past 17 years, with Hispanics experiencing 8.7 percent annual growth versus non-Hispanics only showing 4.8 percent annual growth (<http://www.ahaa.org/media/Finalfacts04.htm>). Hence, present day Hispanics are an upwardly mobile group whose spending potential and exponential growth makes them an ideal advertising target.

Although, companies were initially hesitant to allocate significant portions of their advertising budgets to directly target Hispanics, as was exposed by previous research discussed in the literature review, this trend is now changing. In 2006, \$3.768 billion was spent on advertising to Hispanics in the media, and \$2.42 billion of that total was spent on television advertising alone (Hispanic Fact Pack, 2007, p.2). These investments are paying off as Hispanic agencies drove up the revenue of their clients 27.6% in 2004 (Hispanic Fact Pack, 2005, p.19). The automotive industry is leading the push towards Hispanic advertising, as it is the highest spender in advertising targeted at this market. In 2004, “automakers spent \$250 million to advertise to Hispanic media” (Guyer, 2005, p. 28). In view of the fact, that automakers are the leading Hispanic advertisers it is important to examine the histories of individual automotive companies and their relationship with the Hispanic market. Specifically, General Motors, Toyota

Motor Company, and Nissan Motors were chosen for this study. These three are all within top 50 companies in the United States advertising to Hispanics. They represent the fourth, twelfth, and thirty-second largest advertisers respectively. An in depth history of these companies and their historical progression into targeting the Hispanic market will be examined in the subsequent sections.

### *History of General Motors*

William Durant founded General Motors in 1908 in Flint Michigan as a holding company for his Buick car company. Soon after Durant acquired Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Pontiac, and came to control over twenty brands within the General motors family. Durant lost control of GM in 1910 to a bankers' trust, because of the large amount of debt taken on in its acquisition coupled with a collapse in new vehicle sales. However, he still continued his pursuits of forming an automotive empire, and in 1911 founded the Chevrolet Motor Company in conjunction with Gaston and Louis Chevrolet. As Durant kept propelling forth the success of Chevrolet, he also began secretly buying stock in General Motors. After amassing significant stock Durant was restored to the presidency of General Motors in 1916, and brought the popular Chevrolet carline into the General Motors family. He also began building the General Motors headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, which is still in existence today. Unfortunately for Durant his second term as president of the up and coming automotive giant was short lived, and he was again removed from power in 1920 by Pierre S. Du Pont. With Chevrolet in its fold, General Motors forged even greater successes in subsequent decades.

The 1920's proved to be monumental for General Motors, as under the leadership of Alfred P. Solan the company surpassed Ford Motor Company to become the number one automotive company in the United States. This was largely accomplished by Solan's foresight to recognize that consumers no longer wanted the cheapest cars but those that were the most stylish. Accordingly, he developed the "a car for every purse and purpose product strategy" (<http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/history/>), which bolstered General Motor's image above Ford's. Technologically, General Motors also advanced, developing ethanol gasoline in 1923. Finally, the 1920's brought international success for General Motors, as the automaker established operations bases in France, Latin America, and Germany in 1925.

The Great Depression in America and political turmoil in Europe as a result of World War II slowed General Motor's success and brought about nearly two decades of hard times. However, General Motors survived and resurfaced with even greater strength in the 1950's. During this time General motors developed a series of innovative cars with daring design, such as the Chevrolet Corvette and Buick Roadster. The 1960's and 1970's were also periods of sweeping change for General Motors. "Environmental concerns, increased gas prices, and foreign competition lead to an unprecedented downsizing across all GM vehicle lines. It was the largest engineering program ever undertaken across the industry" (<http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/history/>). Beyond changing the size of its vehicles, General Motors also created cleaner and more fuel-efficient automobiles by engineering a car that could run on unleaded gasoline and invented the catalytic converter. Thus, the three decades following the Second World War created a re-engineered General Motors, that was marked by increased sales and redesigned vehicles.

The 1980's and 1990's were a more precarious period for General Motors. The influx of Japanese vehicles into the United States such as Toyota and Nissan decreased the automaker's market share and caused layoffs and plant closings. However, General Motors slowly rebounded and even added the Saab and Hummer car companies to its vast empire. Additionally, General Motors pursued joint ventures in new global markets such as China and India. For Example, "1995 was a big year for GM. Annual vehicle sales outside North America exceeded three million units for the first time ever" (<http://www.gm.com/corporate/about/history/>). By the end of the 1990's a General Motors' sales situation in North America stabilized and the company entered a new phase of growth in the global market. The new millennium brought increasing concerns for the environment and a renewed quest for fuel-efficient cars that use alternative fuels. Currently, General Motors is investing in initiatives to create alternate fuel sources ranging from hybrids to hydrogen cells.

As evident General Motors has had a complex history in its transformation from humble beginnings in 1908 to its status as an automotive giant. This history has been marked by hardship, innovation, expansion, and continued quests to reinvent General Motor's vehicles. Today, General Motors holds the title as the world's largest automaker, employing about 284,000 people around the world. Its impact globally and especially in the United States has been immense. This is especially captured in General Motors' relationship with its various consumer markets. Since, the aim of this research is to uncover the message sent by automotive industry to the Hispanic market, the following section will explain the history of General Motor's relationship with Hispanic consumers.

Internally, General Motors displays a positive relationship with minorities in general and especially Hispanics. General Motors lists diversity as one of its key corporate values. It seems that this value is being upheld on many fronts. First, “the company boasts more than 7,000 Latino employees” ([www.hispaniconline.com](http://www.hispaniconline.com)). In fact, General Motors doubled its total Hispanic workforce from 2002 to 2003 alone. In 2008, “for the 10th consecutive year, General Motors (GM) has been recognized by LATINA Style Magazine as one of the 50 best corporations in the United States for Latinas to work for” ([www.gm.com](http://www.gm.com)). Second, General Motors created a supplier diversity program back in 1968 to foster its external business relationships with Hispanics and other minorities. Third,

since 1972, GM has provided industry leading training opportunities to qualified minorities to help prepare them to become future dealers and to help them succeed once they become dealers. GM was the first US automaker to institute a structured minority dealer initiative in the industry (<http://www.gm.com/corporate/dealers/gmdealerdevelopment/mdd/index.html>).

Finally, in 1993, General Motors launched a Diversity Initiative Team, another industry first, which was created as a consultancy division to develop and propel diversity strategies both internally and externally. The general team has an entire subdivision, which is concerned specifically with Hispanic initiatives. Thus, General Motors’ corporate values coupled with its diversity initiatives suggest that it is a company that values Hispanics as employees and business partners.

General Motors began its relationship with the Hispanic market as part of a corporate social responsibility initiative in 1984, when they began investing in the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. Since then, “General Motors Corporation has invested more than \$3.3 million in the Hispanic Scholarship Fund as part of its commitment to

providing access to education for minorities” (<http://www.hsf.net/donors.aspx?id=802> ).

In fact, since 1984, General Motors has steadily increased the annual amount of money donated to Hispanic causes and has also diversified the number of different Hispanic programs which it supports. For example, “In 2001, the latest figures made available to us, some \$3.8 million were donated to more than 30 Hispanic organizations.”

([www.hispaniconline.com](http://www.hispaniconline.com)). For over thirty years, General Motors has demonstrated a strong and steadily rising commitment to ensuring the advancement of Hispanics in America

While it is evident that General Motors is committed to the advancement of the Hispanic community and regards them as good employees, it is also important to understand when the automaker began to view Hispanics as a profitable consumer market. General Motors began actively targeting the Hispanics market in 1986 when the company hired “minority advertising agencies to develop Black and Hispanic advertising for the corporation and each of its car divisions” (GM to Hire Minority-Run Ad Agencies, 1986, p. D1). However, each individual division in the General Motors family launched their inaugural Hispanic initiatives at different times. For example, Chevrolet, the top-selling and best-known General Motors Company did not begin creating television ad campaigns specifically geared toward Hispanic consumers until 1995. (Halliday, 1995, p. 1). Today all the major divisions of the General Motors Corporation engage in some form of Hispanic advertising with the automaker spending over \$96 million on advertising in Hispanic media outlets in 2006 (Hispanic Fact Pack, 2007, p.11). In fact, the Hispanic market has become such a valued niche to General Motors, that in 2003 the automaker launched “the first commercial ever created specifically for

the Hispanic market that features the president of a major U.S. automotive company [Gary Cowger] speaking in Spanish” (www.hispanicprwire.com, 2003). This milestone shows that Hispanic marketing is a vital facet of General Motors’ marketing strategy, that is ingrained at the top echelons of the corporation. Sonia Maria Green, Director of Diversity Marketing and Sales for the Hispanic and Asian American Segments best captures the importance of Hispanic consumers in General Motor’s sales scheme, when she states, “the Hispanic market is a priority for General Motors. Our company is committed to bringing Hispanic consumers the best products and services, and to communicating with them in a culturally-relevant way,” (Green qtd. www.hispanicprwire.com, 2003). Therefore, although Hispanic consumers have only become the targets of General Motors’ advertisements in more recent years, it is clear that their spending power is now viewed as integral to General Motors’ continued success.

### *History of Toyota*

Kiichiro Toyoda, whose father, Sakichi was famous for inventing the automatic handloom, founded the Toyota Motor Company in Japan. In the 1930's Kiichiro began to research gasoline powered engines and in 1933 he established an Automobile Department in Toyoda Automatic Loom Works. By 1937 a Kiichiro began producing automobiles and formed a separate company out of the automotive division naming it Toyota Motor Co. From 1936 to 1943, only 1,7,57 cars were made – 1,404 sedans and 353 phaetons (model AB), as most of Toyota’s production was committed to producing trucks for the Imperial Japanese Army during the Pacific War. (<http://www.toyoland.com/history.html>).

It was only following World War II that Toyota began to produce the passenger car that would lead to the international success Toyota enjoys today.

In December of 1945, after the end of World War II, the United States' government allowed Toyota to restart production of its civilian vehicles. In 1947, Toyota produced its first civilian vehicle, the Model SA or the Toyopet, a cheap car that was made to handle the rough roads that were rife throughout Japan. The Toyopet was met with huge success in Japan and became the automaker's first popular model. In fact, the widespread success of the Toyopet led to the creation of the Toyota Sales Corp. as an independent entity from Toyoda Automatic Loom Works. "By 1955, Toyota was making 8,400 cars per year" (<http://www.toyoland.com/history.html>) and began producing luxury models such as the Toyota Crown, and civilian trucks like the Landcruiser. The domestic triumph winning over masses of Japanese consumers in the early and mid 1950's led to international expansion.

Toyota began its overseas ventures in 1957, when the automaker began importing the Toyopet and Landcruiser models to the United States. Unfortunately, these models did not enjoy the same success in the United States as they had in Japan. In fact, these models were widely rejected by the American public and Toyota had to temporarily withdraw from the United States market. However, the initial failures taught Toyota officials a valuable lesson that would be a crucial factor in the automaker's future success. "Toyota maintained a philosophy of localizing both production and design of its products that is, adapting vehicles to the places they will be used, as well as building them there" (<http://www.toyoland.com/history.html>). This breakthrough allowed Toyota to produce cars that were aligned with consumer preferences. Accordingly, Toyota engineers went to

work building a Toyota model specifically designed for the American consumer. In 1964, the first Americanized model, the Toyota Corona hit the United States market. The second attempt to penetrate the American market proved to be a great triumph for Toyota. In fact “sales hit 6,400 in 1965, and reached 71,000 by 1968, nearly doubling each year until by 1971 Toyota was selling over 300,000 vehicles per year” (<http://www.toyoland.com/history.html>). The success of the Corona led Toyota to import other new models into the United States such as the Crown, the Corolla, and most notably the rare 2000GT sports car. Thus, Toyota entered the 1960’s as a failure in United States market and emerged from the decade as a victor, slowly and steadily capturing market share away from the Big Three domestic automakers.

The 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s led to even greater victories for Toyota in America. The oil embargos that afflicted the United States in 1973 and 1979 respectively led to demands for fuel-efficient vehicles, which Toyota was prepared to fulfill. “The public turned to imports in droves, and suddenly Japan's modest but sturdy little compacts began popping up on highways all across America.” (<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=Article&id=7765>). By the end of 1975, Toyota had surpassed Volkswagen to become the number one import brand in the U.S. Furthermore, in 1978 the brand took the “Import Triple Crown”, leading all import brands in sales of cars, trucks, and total vehicles. The 1980’s brought even greater achievements for Toyota. “In 1986, with sales of 1,025,305 vehicles, it became the first import automaker to sell more than one million vehicles in America in a single year” (<http://toyota50th.com/UShistory.asp>). In that same year Toyota also began producing vehicles domestically within the United States. In 1989, Toyota unveiled its newly

established Lexus luxury car brand, which went on to become the number one luxury import to the United States in just three years after its creation. Finally, in 1997, the Toyota Camry was recognized as the number one selling passenger car in America. Hence, by the end of the twentieth century Toyota dominated the United States automotive market.

The new Millennium brought new ventures, innovations, and growth for Toyota within the United States. Toyota began the year 2000, by launching the Prius, an environmentally friendly and technologically advanced hybrid vehicle. Also, in 2000, Lexus became the top selling luxury vehicle in America, a title the automaker retains to this day. In 2002 Toyota continued on its innovative path, delivering, “its first two zero-emission, market-ready hydrogen fuel cell vehicles to customers in California for real-world testing” (<http://toyota50th.com/USHistory.asp>). In 2003, Toyota added yet another car brand to its portfolio, the Scion. The Scion became another Toyota success story, this time attracting the youth market. Due in large part to the success of the Scion, 2004 Toyota’s sales reached 2 million units. In 2007 Toyota celebrated its fifty-year anniversary in America. Today, Toyota remains among the top selling automakers in the United States, and has surpassed General Motors to become the world’s largest automotive company.

While Toyota’s involvement in the United States market dates back fifty-one years, its relationship with the Hispanic American consumers is much younger. Toyota did not begin taking notice of Hispanic consumers until 1986, when the automaker began translating English language ads into Spanish. Two years later, Toyota hired Conill, its first separate ad agency chosen specifically to target Hispanic car buyers. Under the

direction of Conill, Toyota launched a \$2.5 million dollar campaign designed to reach the nation's Hispanics. (Newman, 1988, p.1). Since then, Toyota has continually increased its advertising efforts to Hispanics. For example, "Toyota increased its Hispanic advertising budget 42% to 20 million from 1998-1999" (Halliday, 2000, p.16). Beyond simply increasing their Hispanic advertising budgets, Toyota has taken many steps to ensure that Hispanics are effectively reached by Toyota's messaging strategy.

Specifically, in 1998, Toyota created a diversity council made up of several minorities at Toyota's headquarters who evaluated their ads to determine if they are appropriate for Hispanics. In 2001, Toyota expanded its objectives beyond the council, creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diversity Strategy, whereby the automaker strives to become the industry leader in diversity. For example, Toyota proclaims that it is committed "to capture the full promise of the ethnic market place," by allocating a minimum of \$25 million annually to Hispanic marketing and advertising firms (21<sup>st</sup> Century Diversity Strategy, 2001, p.6) Other initiatives include allocating 10% of Toyota's annual giving budget to minority causes and investing in minority owned businesses. In 2002, Toyota aimed its efforts at technologically advanced Hispanics, as it launched a Spanish language version of the Toyota website, which can be accessed through main site simply by clicking on the en Español option. Hence, Toyota continues to expand its Hispanic advertising efforts. Most recently, during the 2008 Super Bowl, Toyota made history by placing the first ad aimed at the Hispanic market during the most expensive annual advertising timeslot.

Toyota's heavy investment in Hispanic advertising has thus far yielded great returns. First, by 1999, Toyota had captured 10.5% of the Hispanic market in the United States, while its overall share of the total United States market was only 9% (Geist, 1999,

p.30). Second, by 2004, Toyota surpassed Ford, becoming “the most popular automotive brand among Hispanic consumers” (Stein, 2004, p.32). In 2005 Toyota was recognized for its Hispanic efforts, when Ad Age bestowed on Toyota the Top Hispanic advertiser of the year award. Therefore, although Hispanic consumers only captured the eyes of Toyota marketers twenty years ago, the automaker’s clever and insightful advertising tactics have caused it to become the brand of choice among Hispanics in the United States.

### *History of Nissan*

A final automaker whose advertising will be examined is the Nissan Motor Company. The Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. was founded in Japan in 1933, as a result of a merger between Jidosha-Seizo Co. Lt and Nihon Sangyo Co. Ltd. Yoshisuke Aikawa was the founder of the company. The First car model produced by the automaker was the small sized passenger car, the Datsun, which rolled off the assembly line in 1935. The car was well received by the Japanese public and began to be exported internationally, to Australia in its inaugural year. The popularity of the first Nissan model is best captured by the slogan of the time which stated, "The Rising Sun as the flag and Datsun as the car of choice" (<http://www.nissan-global.com/GCC/Japan/History/history/index-e.html>) By 1937, the Datsun type-15 became the first ever mass produced Japanese vehicle. Although Nissan was experiencing booming sales in the civilian car market, the outbreak of World War II caused the automaker to shift its focus and Nissan began instead building trucks, airplanes, and engines for the Japanese military. At one point during the

war Nissan was even forced to move its production headquarters to China when its Japanese plants were captured and occupied by American forces.

The end of World War II did not lead to an immediate restoration of Nissan to its former glory. Rather the automaker suffered several hardships. Among them, Allied requisition forces occupied Nissan's Japanese production plants for nearly 10 years after the war and many of the dealers who had been previously affiliated with the pre-war Nissan network switched to Toyota. To make matters worse, in 1953 Nissan plant workers went on a hundred day strike. Despite the many hardships Nissan managed to stage a comeback. By the mid 1950's Nissan realized that the small compact car could fulfill an unmet demand in countries like the United States and Australia. Accordingly, the company began exporting Datsun Sedans internationally on a large scale.

Nissan first entered the American market in 1958 when the first Datsun sedans arrived in the United States. In 1959 the first Datsun compact was sold in America. The model "featured a 48 HP 1200 CC... this quarter-ton pickup firmly established the Datsun in the American market" (<http://www.nissanusa.com/>). The 1960's became a decade of innovation and continued success for Nissan in the United States. In 1960, Nissan Motor Co. established the Nissan Corporation U.S.A whose headquarters were in California. That same year Nissan also began producing sports cars with its SPL 210 model. Throughout the 1960's Nissan engineered new cutting edge models. Among them were the three-speed transmission Bluebird, the world renowned 2000 Roadster sports car, and the Datsun 510. While all these models sold very well in America, Nissan's greatest success came in 1969 with the creation of 240Z model.

By offering European performance, plus creature comforts like roll-up windows and a heater , all at an affordable price, the 240Z becomes the best-selling sports

car in the world. The Corvette took nearly twenty-five years to sell 500,000 units; the Z does it in fewer than ten (<http://www.nissanusa.com/>).

Thus, it is evident that by the end of the 1960's Nissan had completely overcome the hurdles of the early postwar years and had firmly established itself as a key player in the American Automotive market.

In the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's Nissan continued to gain popularity and increase sales. As discussed earlier in Toyota's history, the oil embargo of the 1970's created a strong demand for small fuel efficient vehicles, which triggered a massive increase in Japanese exports to the United States, further propelling Nissan's growth. By 1971, Nissan USA's sales surpassed a quarter million units. In 1973 when the Environmental Protection Agency conducted fuel economy test, "the Datsun Sunny finished first and subsequently gained enormous popularity in the U.S. market under the advertising slogan of 'Datsun saves'" (<http://www.nissan-global.com/GCC/Japan/History/history/index-e.html>). Also in 1973, the one millionth Datsun was sold in America. By 1975, Datsun's became the top vehicle import to America. Nissan further expanded by beginning to produce truck lines in the United States in 1982 and by launching the Infiniti line of luxury vehicles. In the 1990's Nissan developed even more new car models and became a pioneer in the production of environmentally friendly vehicles. During this decade Nissan received many environmental awards such as being named Best of the Best by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1997. Thus, in the span of three decades, Nissan became a leader in the American automotive industry for its cutting-edge sports, luxury, and environmental designs.

Today Nissan is the sixth largest United States automaker. The company currently controls nearly 7% of the American automotive market. As Nissan engineers continue to pioneer new innovative vehicles, the company is expected to experience even greater growth in America.

One of the areas where Nissan stands to gain is the lucrative Hispanic market. Nissan has displayed a commitment to the Hispanic market through its internal corporate values and initiatives as well as through its advertising efforts. Internally, Nissan displays a strong affinity, naming diversity as one of the company's key corporate values. On the Nissan Corporate website it is stated that, "at Nissan, we believe that diversity is a source of strength." (<http://www.nissan-global.com/EN/COMPANY/DIVERSITY/>). Furthermore, Nissan believes that ethnic diversity will be crucial in making Nissan not just a strong company but a superior one. As Nissan proclaims, "as an international corporation, we're committed to diversity because we're committed to excellence" (<http://www.nissanusa.com>). As evidence of Nissan's strong support of diversity, the company has several diversity initiatives. First, Nissan has a Diversity Steering Committee, which is responsible for making certain that the company sets a range of Diversity policies. Second, in 2004, Nissan established the Diversity Development office, an entity, which is responsible for promoting employee diversity within the corporation. Third, Nissan has displayed dedication to promoting the educational advancement of the Hispanic community. Since 1995 Nissan North America has partnered with the Hispanic Scholarship Fund to provide financial assistance for Hispanic students attaining Bachelor's degrees. "To date, NNA has awarded 133 scholarships and has contributed nearly \$700,000 to HSF"

(<http://www.csrwire.com/PressRelease.php?id=3909>). As a result of these internal efforts, this year Nissan was the recipient of the 2008 Diversity Award (<http://www.nissan-global.com>). Hence, Nissans internal corporate actions show that the automaker highly values its Hispanic workforce and the advancement of young Hispanics to fill its future employee ranks.

From a consumer perspective Nissan only began actively targeting the Hispanic market in its recent history. In fact, Nissan was the slowest of the three automotive companies examined to begin specifically courting the United States Hispanic population through advertisements. Nissan's first campaign targeting Hispanic Americans appeared in 1996. The campaign titled "Para El y Para Ella" consisted of two 30 second television commercials for the Nissan Maxima and Nissan Altima (<http://www.highbeam.com>). In 1999 Nissan hired its first separate Latino agency, Ornelas & Associates to handle all the company's Hispanic advertising. In 2000, Nissan expanded its Hispanic advertising efforts beyond select regional areas with high Hispanic populations, by creating its first national Hispanic television campaign, which aired widely across the country (<http://www.allbusiness.com>). In 2003, Nissan launched a Spanish language version of its website. The website was appropriately titled, Nissan en Español. Samuel Lopez Jr., Manager of Interactive Marketing for Nissan said of the site, "the Hispanic market represents a significant portion of our customer base and we want to provide the right tools to help our customers gain easy access to Nissan products and information," ([www.hispanicprwire.com](http://www.hispanicprwire.com)). In 2007, Nissan became aware of the growing market power that Hispanics were amassing in the luxury sector, and in response the automaker launched its first Hispanic advertising campaign for its luxury Infiniti line. Although

Nissan was sluggish in its targeting of the Hispanic market, today, it is the 32 highest spending national advertiser to the Hispanic market (Hispanic Fact Pack, 2005, p.13).

With continual growth in spending and new thrust into the luxury Hispanic market with the new Infiniti campaign, Nissan's commitment to attaining Hispanic market share will likely continue to expand.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

The narrative paradigm will be the methodology utilized in this analysis.

Narrative has been a vital tenant of human communication since the beginnings of human history. As Karyn and Donald Rybackii observe, “Before organized education systems, before written languages, the values and rules of tribal and communal life were transmitted to children and reinforced for adults through narratives” (Rybackii & Rybackii, 1991, p. 107). Walter Fisher the father of the narrative paradigm similarly states in his 1984 article, “when our primal ancestors became able to go from sensations to words, that is when story came into the world (Fisher, 1984, p. 384). Accordingly, stories are an important part of human culture which have shaped the people’s belief and values for multiple generations. Not only have narratives shaped various cultures but they have also impacted the study of communication and rhetoric. As Rybackii and Rybackii explain, “some of the earliest theories on communication dealt with use of narrative” (p. 107). For example, the ancient Greek concept of poetics and ancient Roman theories of rhetoric both advocate the power and importance of narrative. Thus, narratives have long been recognized as influential in shaping the course of human history and the study of communication.

The use of narrative as a separate communication paradigm was first conceptualized by Walter Fisher through the propositions put forth in his 1984 article, “Narrative as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument”. Fisher argues that the basis of all human communication is stories or narratives. As he states, “man in his actions and practices is essentially, a story telling animal” (Fisher,

1984, p. 375). Accordingly he believes the human communication can be interpreted as “symbolic actions words and or deeds –that have sequence and meaning for those who create and interpret them” (p. 375). The narrative perspective contributes to the field of rhetoric because it challenges the idea that rhetoric must take place in the form of an argument. Instead this paradigm creates “a dialectical synthesis in two strands of the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive and the literary, aesthetic theme” (p. 375). This insight allows for the narrative paradigm to offer a more expanded means of analysis than its predecessor, the rational world paradigm, because it does not limit itself to the realm of public argument.

The central tenant of the narrative paradigm revolves around the idea of narrative rationality. Narrative rationality contends that audiences accept and identify with a narratives only when “they provide a rationale for decision and action”(Fisher,1984, p.364). In other words, as Fisher further explains, narrative rationality measures whether a story imparts, “practical wisdom” (Fisher, 1985, p.350). Two key elements contribute to creating narrative rationality. These include, narrative probability and narrative fidelity. Narrative probability, as Fisher explains, “refers to formal features of a story” and “concerns the question of whether or not a story coheres” or is “free of contradictions” (p. 349). Narrative fidelity alternately can be defined as the “truth qualities of the story” (p.349). Thus, narratives that have both narrative probability and fidelity are deemed to be functional narratives and are accepted by audiences.

There are several elements of a narrative that a rhetorical critic can analyze to evaluate its narrative rationality. Specifically, Rybackii and Rybackii identify plot, character, and setting as contributing factors to narrative rationality. The plot is

comprised of kernels (major plot elements) and satellites (minor plot elements). When kernels are removed a narrative loses its coherence and thus its rationality. Characters are also crucial, as “the extent to which a story is believable often depends on its characters, their motives and behavior” (Rybackii & Rybackii, 1991, p. 115). Finally, the setting or the aesthetic qualities of a story also determine its rationality, because as Rybackii and Rybackii point out, “the mood, tone, and emotional content of a narrative are influenced by its setting” (p. 116). While all these features can be important their significance to the ultimate narrative rationality can vary depending on the content of the story.

Having established the importance and central precepts of the narrative paradigm, it is also vital to understand why the utilization of this methodology will be most beneficial to conducting my analysis. This critique will examine the concept American Dream. Particularly, it will study how automotive advertisements have demonstrated to Latino Americans that they have become fully integrated achievers of the American Dream. The American Dream message lends itself to a narrative analysis because it is the fundamental a story that lies at the root of American culture. The American Dream narrative tells the tale that all residents of the United States can achieve success and accomplish their goals through hard work. This story has been present in American society since the creation of the country when the founding fathers declared, “all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” ([www.ushistory.org/Declaration/](http://www.ushistory.org/Declaration/)). Within the main American Dream story there are also a multitude of personal narratives of individuals and groups who have tailored the American Dream to their quest and achievement of success. For many Americans, American Dream has narrative fidelity because it resonates with the truth of people’s

individual experiences. Thus, since the American Dream is at its core a narrative, examining messages replete with references to the American Dream will benefit from an analysis through the narrative paradigm.

Beyond the nature of the message, the medium of the artifacts also makes it useful to employ the narrative paradigm. The artifacts for this analysis will be a series of television commercials. Commercials should be studied through the narrative paradigm for several reasons. First, many commercials can best be categorized as stories. In fact, the creative process for conceptualizing an advertisement involves crafting a storyboard that serves as the basis for the ad. Second, the short stories that comprise television commercials are also an extremely powerful narrative form. As Rybackii and Rybackii observe, “our common culture and individual life experience are heavily influenced by television [commercials]” (Rybackii & Rybackii, 1991, p. 113). Furthermore, they list commercials as one “of the most important sources of narrative discourse” (p. 107). Finally, the narrative paradigm not only allows for analysis of the story within each individual advertisement, but it also provides a framework for the examination of the overreaching tale that the commercials convey collectively. Thus, creating a narrative paradigm. Rybackii and Rybackii explain how the narrative paradigm evaluates stories cumulatively when they state, “collectively they may become self validating with each successive narrative adding to what the audience has already come to believe” (Rybackii & Rybackii, 1991, p. 120). Therefore, examining these artifacts through the narrative paradigm acknowledges their inherit story form and allows for a critical analysis of their collective meaning.

## Chapter 5

### Artifact

The representative artifacts selected for this analysis were three distinct automotive television commercials, which were geared directly towards Hispanic consumers. Television commercials were chosen because they are considered to have the widest reach of all advertising mediums. Furthermore, they are also regarded as the most effective advertising medium. As Adam Armbruster explained in a recent article that appeared in *Media Planner*, which is an influential trade publication for the advertising industry, “television has proven itself to be the world's finest brand-building medium . . . used properly and consistently, television trumps all media, new and old, in generating massive immediate retail consumer response” (Armbruster, 2008, p. 30). Accordingly, the message delivered to the Hispanic audience through this medium has the highest potential of resonating with them and influencing their beliefs. Furthermore, since television commercials reach the largest percentage of Hispanics, they have the greatest potency to impact the whole Hispanic community. Finally, television commercials have the most explicit narrative structure among all of the advertising mediums, which makes them best equipped to relay the American Dream story to Hispanics.

Due to its effectiveness, a plethora of industries engage in television advertising for their respective products. However, the automotive industry was selected as the industry best suited to achieve the objectives of this analysis. First, while there are various luxury goods industries that could have effectively demonstrated the same point, the automotive industry is the leading advertiser to the Hispanic market. In fact, as *Advertising Age's* “Hispanic Fact Pact” reports, automakers spent nearly \$700 million

dollars in 2006 in efforts to sell their vehicles to Hispanics (Hispanic Fact Pack, 2007, p. 6). Second, a major facet of participating in the American Dream narrative involves achieving monetary success, which is often measured through the ability to purchase luxury products. Therefore, choosing a luxury goods industry such as automobiles was deemed necessary to illustrate Hispanic attainment of the American Dream. Since automotive commercials are the most prevalent luxury goods messages targeted at Hispanics, the overreaching message they propagate will likely affect the largest segment of the Hispanic target audience.

The three specific campaigns chosen were; General Motor's the Chevrolet Silverado "Una Marca Que Dura", the Toyota Camry Hybrid "Super Bowl Ad" and the Nissan Infiniti "Design and Performance". They were chosen by conducting a google search with the search terms 'Hispanic car campaign'. The results were organized by relevance and these campaigns appeared at the top of the list out of thousands of results. Thus, their message can be categorized as the most pertinent to the Hispanic community. Second, these campaigns all occurred in either 2006 or 2007. The recentness of the campaigns further adds to their relevance because they are the most up to date messages being delivered to the Hispanic audience. Furthermore, it addresses one of the weaknesses found with in the literature review; that all of the research was outdated. Finally, not only is this sample of commercials current and relevant, but it is also representative. By choosing three different advertisements from distinct automakers, it ensures that the message being sent by each individual commercial is not just a singular example, but instead a significant part of a growing trend in the industry. Also, the automakers whose campaigns were chosen are among the largest advertisers to the

Hispanic community. In fact, General Motors is ranked as the number one advertiser to Hispanics, Toyota is the eight, and Nissan is the thirty-second. (Hispanic Fact Pact, 2005, p. 13). Accordingly, their message is most likely to saturate the market as the companies are spending the highest amount of money for media exposure. Hence, the study of these representative artifacts will allow the uncovering of the most recent and representative message being delivered to Hispanics across the automotive industry.

These artifacts are worthy of study because advertising in general and commercials specifically are an incredibly persuasive narrative form that are designed with the sole purpose of influencing beliefs and behaviors. As author and communication scholar, Ronald Berman points out, “advertising has become a kind of social guide . . . it provides ideas about style, morality, behavior” (Berman, 1981, p. 13). Accordingly, the messages that these commercials are conveying to Hispanics influence how they view themselves as a subculture, interpret their role in American society, and evaluate whether they have become integrated into the American Dream.

## Chapter 6

### **“Una Marca Que Dura” Chevy and the Progression of the American Dream**

The artifacts just discussed will be analyzed in several different ways to expose how automotive commercials are narratively communicating to Hispanics that they have become fully integrated into the American Dream. Particularly, this analysis will study how the narrative elements of each commercial, such as the plot, characters, and setting interplay to express the attainment of different facets of the American Dream. In addition these messages will also be examined collectively to show how each satellite commercial serves to contribute to the overarching kernel message of the American Dream.

The first facet of the American Dream narrative shown through these commercials is progress. Meaning how through time the concept of achieving the American Dream has changed for Hispanics over time. By examining the plot, characters, and setting of the “Una Marca Que Dura” commercial for the Chevrolet Silverado, this section will analyze how the advertisement communicates this element of the American Dream to Hispanics.

#### *Plot*

The plot of “Una Marca Que Dura” propels the message that through time Hispanics have advanced as a societal group, and thus have achieved a progressive definition of the American Dream as well as a full integration into the American Dream narrative. The plot of the commercial is centered around the theme of milestones, or the marks that Hispanics have left on this country through their individual and collective achievements. The plot unfolds historically starting at the beginning of the twentieth

century and highlighting different periods up until the present to illustrate the ever-growing impact that Hispanic Americans have had on the United States. The following section will relay the commercial's plot in detail to explain how this is achieved.

The commercial opens with a baseball hitting glass bottles in an empty backyard. Suddenly, the camera angle shifts upwards to draw the audience's attention to a young boy with unkempt clothing and a dirty tattered baseball in his hand standing in the middle of the yard. Despite, his obvious poverty, he proudly stands there and his eyes intensely stare at the bottles with a look of utter determination. These visual plot cues indicate to the audience that the little boy is intent on breaking free from his destitute state and advancing in society. As he winds up and throws the second pitch, text appears on the screen to inform viewers that he does in fact escape poverty and achieve the American Dream of success. As the text states, (note: this commercial aired in Spanish but I will translate all quotes into English for the purpose of clarity for readers) "1923, Adolfo Luque, outstanding pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds" ("Una Marca Que Dura"). Luque's initial milestone begins the development of the plot. Through this opening scene Hispanics are sent the message that from as early as their original migration to the United States it was possible, at least for some, to attain the American Dream. During this time, it is common knowledge that Hispanic Americans were largely subjected to lives of labor and abject poverty. They were viewed as "the other," or those who were allowed to be residents of the United States but who could never become integrated enough into American society to accomplish the American Dream. However, Adolfo Luque's story illustrates that this is not to be the fate of Hispanics in America. His individual advancement instead shows that Hispanics are a skilled and resolute societal group.

Furthermore, his contribution to American society as an accomplished professional athlete integrates him into the American Dream narrative and paves the way for other Hispanics to be similarly included.

From Luque's success story the plot moves forward to 1935 to unfold a second milestone narrative. Here the viewers witness a shovel digging into the rigid dirt surface of the earth. The camera angle then changes to expose a group of Hispanic laborers, who are standing with their tools in their hand, serious and stout, as beads of sweat form on their faces. Visually they appear tired and their clothes are filthy from the soil, which they have tilled. Yet, they continue to stand as one collective unit staring straight at the audience, so as to represent that they have toiled for them. Suddenly, the camera angle again shifts upwards to reveal that these laborers were in fact standing at the base of a dam. Simultaneously, music by the Mexican band, Maná, begins playing the lyrics, "justice, land, and liberty" and text again appears on the screen with the words, "1935, the strength of Hispanics left its mark on the Hoover Dam" ("Una Marca Que Dura"). At this point, a Spanish worker appears looking upwards as he stands on a crane lift filled with pipes that is being raised to the top of dam. His eyes point to the sky to signify that he is looking to the future. A second later, the scene again shifts to show two Hispanic laborers standing at the summit of the completed Hoover Dam, reveling in the feat they accomplished. The scene just described, literally illustrates how the physical strength of Hispanics built an iconic symbol of American progress, the Hoover Dam. Yet, it also serves to show the progression of the American Dream narrative from 1924 to 1935. In Luque's story the audience is shown individual success through physical talent, but here the theme is centered on the future advancement of Hispanics as a group. The

completion of the Hoover Dam by Hispanics serves to demonstrate that they made a large contribution to the advancement of American society. In turn, they expect their children and other subsequent generations of Hispanics to advance in America and become fully integrated into society. Images such as the laborer standing on the pipes looking to the future visually reinforce this message. While, the lyrics “justice, land, and liberty” textually explain that in enriching America through the building of the Hoover Dam, Hispanics expect their offspring to attain justice, land, and liberty that the American Dream promises. Thus, the second scene further develops the plot to express hope for the future for all Hispanics, not just those blessed with athletic ability.

Next, the plot moves forward to 1946 with Maná singing the transitional lyrics “listen to my song”. These words signify that hopes of the Hispanic Hoover Dam workers have been realized. In this scene the audience sees, a young well-dressed Hispanic man, who is standing by the window of his ornate home holding up a yellow glass panel. Text appears on the screen revealing that the young man is “Guillermo G. Camarena, inventor, of the color television” (Una Marca Que Dura”). Upon shining the glass panel up to the sun, Camarena gazes into it with a look of inspiration, and instantly goes up to his television and places the panel in front of the screen. As he does this the television screen is transformed to color. Camarena’s invention again shows the progress made by Hispanic Americans throughout history. In the prior two scenes success was defined through physical skill, but here Camarena’s ability to think innovatively illustrates that Hispanics have become educated, one of the vital aspects of the American Dream. Thus, Hispanics have not only impacted America through their physical strength but also through their intellect.

From 1946, the plot moves advances to 1980, showing a young boy boxer hitting a punching bag that is being held by an older man, who is presumably his trainer or his father. As the boy proceeds to furiously strike the bag, a text caption comes up on the screen explaining to the audience that he is, “Roberto Duran, Welter Weight World Boxing Champion” (Una Marca Que Dura”). With that, the scene shifts to show the boy standing there with fists in the air as his trainer stands behind him. While, this scene again reverts to showing accomplishments achieved through physical skill, it still unveils another facet of the progression of the American Dream. In the previous scenes, the young Hispanics, like Luque and Camarena, were shown alone, hinting that they achieved success only because of their individual resolve, not because others supported them. However, in this scene the audiences sees that Duran’s triumph is the result of the guidance provided by his older trainer as well as his own determination. This demonstrates that by the 1980’s, Hispanics of all age groups fully prescribed to the American Dream narrative and believed that if they banded together they could achieve it. Interestingly, this plot element is reinforced by actual events of the 1980’s, when Hispanics first began to drastically increase their market power and garner the attention of advertisers.

The conclusion of the milestones plot in the final two scenes of the commercial illustrates the ultimate progression of the American Dream narrative; its accomplishment by the everyday Hispanics. From the boxer scene, the plot moves forward to a shot of a sleek black Chevy Silverado on the open highway with Maná narrating to the audience that “overtime we have marked this nation” (“Una Marca Que Dura”), as the milestones in the previous scenes have shown. In the reflection of the car, the audience is pointed to

a Hispanic man in a cowboy hat, who is standing proudly at the gate of his farm. He is representative of the Hispanic population's transformation from laborers to landowners. Then we see another Hispanic man leaning over the hood of his Chevy Silverado analyzing architectural plans. As the man looks over the plans, Maná tells the viewers that, "today our mark continues stronger than ever" ("Una Marca Que Dura"). The man looks up and nods so as to reemphasize what Maná has just said. As he does this his son emerges from behind the car and looks up in amazement as he sees the tree house that his father has built him. Simultaneously, the viewers again hear the "justice, land, and liberty" refrain that was initially heard in the Hoover Dam scene ("Una Marca Que Dura"). This song being played again represents the full revolution of the plot from the 1935 typical Hispanic workers longing to be integrated into the American Dream to the 2007 average Hispanic actually achieving it for himself, and bringing new depths to its definition for his son. The commercial ends with Maná inviting the audience to participate in the American Dream narrative saying, "our mark that is lasting, the new 2007 Chevy Silverado, get on!" ("Una Marca Que Dura"). The invitation to buy the Chevy Silverado signifies that all Hispanics, not just those depicted in the commercial, have accomplished the American Dream in every sense of the definition. The target audiences' ability to buy the vehicle shows that they have achieved the economic facet of the American Dream. While, the individual representatives of Hispanic society appearing throughout the commercial illustrate how Hispanics have progressively achieved various other elements of the American Dream such as determination, hard work, a hopeful future outlook, and the collective support of their friends and family.

Hence, the plot underlying the narrative of the “Una Marca Que Dura” commercial is the idea of progress. Throughout the commercial the audience witnesses progress through the individual successes of famous Hispanics in different fields and the status of everyday Hispanic in present day society. At the conclusion of the commercial the plot culminates revealing that the American Dream has been actualized for the viewers, as they are now successful enough to afford the iconic Silverado.

### *Characters*

While the plot clearly delineates the American Dream narrative implicit in the Silverado commercial, the characters are also a contributing factor in the audience’s acceptance of the story. As explained in the methodology section, the narrative paradigm asserts that the extent to which an audience accepts a narrative to be true is determined by the believability of its characters (Fisher, 1984). The characters presented in this commercial illustrate the progression of the American Dream narrative and also serve as credible and identifiable representatives of this ideal for viewers.

Through the successive scenes depicting the different characters in the commercial, viewers can visually witness the progression of the American Dream. The first character, the little boy, through his destitute appearance and determined eyes signifies the longing that Hispanics of that period felt for attaining the American Dream. The dam workers in the second scene through their work dirtied work clothing, tools, fatigued appearance, and ability to stand together symbolize how Hispanics as one people are working hard to improve America so that subsequent generations can attain the dream. In the third scene, the audience begins to see the realization of the dream. The

young man in this scene is well groomed, well dressed, and he wears glasses to signify his intelligence. Also, most importantly he is in his own home that is filled with expensive items that indicate he has attained financial success. Specifically, he has paintings on the wall, a gold vase, and a television set. The boxer character is an example of even further integration into the dream as he not only attains financial success but he also achieves fame as a world champion. The farm owner, well dressed in a crisp flannel shirt, new straw hat, and a leather belt with a glistening gold buckle, embodies the current Hispanic. His appearance as well as his ownership of a farm and a new Silverado shows that present day Hispanics have fully achieved the dream and all the success that come with it. The final characters of the little boy and his father symbolize not only the full integration into the dream, but also suggest that future generations will extend the possibilities afforded by the American Dream, raising Hispanics to new platitudes of society. This is achieved by visually representing the possessions that the little boy owns at such a young age. His father is an architect, a landowner, and a Silverado owner. He has provided his son with fancy clothing and has built him his own plot of land, a tree house. This child doesn't face the obstacles that the little boy did in scene one. Instead he is born into opportunity. This privilege will allow him expand upon the original American Dream narrative bringing new expectations too it. Thus, these characters in the visual transformation from poverty to wealth, each show the gradual advancement of the American Dream narrative through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The audience accepts of the progression of the American Dream because the characters chosen are believable, and relatable. Many of the characters within the commercial are not just fictional representations of the American Dream, but rather they

are based on actual famous figures in Hispanic culture. Accordingly, the audience is familiar with them and knows that they did truthfully achieve the American Dream. Even, the narrator, who is literally calling the audience to participate in the American Dream narrative, is a credible representative of the dream, as he is the lead singer of the band Maná. Maná is a prime spokesperson for the American Dream as the band rose from humble beginnings and achieved incredible commercial success. In fact, the World Music Awards named them the World's Best Selling Latin American Artist in 2007 while the commercial was airing (<http://www.worldmusicawards.com/>). The characters representing everyday Hispanics also have narrative fidelity because the audience can identify with them. The Hoover dam workers are likely to resonate with Hispanics audience members whose parents or grandparents were laborers who worked hard everyday to make future attainment of the American Dream possible. The audience will also identify with the farm owner and the father and son because these characters are designed in their look, mannerisms, and status to epitomize the target audience. Hence, the ethos of the characters in the story contributes to the rationality of the narrative and further illustrates the progression of the American Dream.

### *Setting*

The setting is a final aspect of the Silverado commercial that contributes to the theme of progress and the American Dream. This is achieved through both the internal setting; the background of the actual commercial and the external setting; where the commercial aired for viewers. The internal setting of the commercial consists of typical scenes illustrating the lives of Hispanic Americans in different historical periods. From

scene to scene, the background literally changes moving forward through time. This movement serves to reinforce the progression of the American Dream. For example, in the first scene, the setting of the barren backyard strengthens the idea that the American Dream has not yet been realized. Similarly, the background of the final scene depicting the father and his son emphasizes that many of today's Hispanics are accepted and fully integrated into the American Dream. Specifically, the verdant grass field where the scene takes place, the brand new Chevy Silverado, and the tree house are all indicators of its accomplishment. Therefore, the setting of each historical scene gradually progresses to reflect the evolution of Hispanic's concept of the American Dream through time.

The external setting is also important in establishing the target audience's integration into the American Dream narrative. The 30-second commercial first aired on English language television during game three of the World Series ([www.ebuild.com](http://www.ebuild.com)). This is a prime advertising time slot with the cost of a 30-second spot averaging over \$400,000 dollars (Sports Business Daily, 2007). The fact the Chevrolet was willing to spend such an enormous amount of money and chose to allocate the timeslot to target Hispanics over other market segments evidences their market power. This contributes to the American Dream narrative because it shows the Hispanic audience that they have attained enough monetary success to garner attention in peak advertising periods. Consequently, the narrative's external setting bolsters the message within the commercial, further contributing to its truth.

## Chapter 7

### **“Toyota Camry Super Bowl Ad”: Emphasizing Family Ties to the American Dream**

The second artifact examined was Toyota’s commercial for the all-new 2007 Camry Hybrid, which aired during the Super Bowl. The plot of this commercial highlights the importance of family and its centrality to the American Dream narrative. The characters reinforce this theme, while again helping to establish the narrative’s truth for the audience. Finally, the external setting, like the one of the Chevrolet ad, validates for the audience that they have attained the American Dream.

#### *Plot*

The plot of the commercial revolves around a family, specifically, a father and a son. The pair is placed in the brand new 2007 Camry, with the father driving while his son sits in the back, in a car seat. The main action is centered on a conversation that is spurred by the little boy asking, “Papa, why do we have a hybrid?” (“Toyota Camry Hybrid Super Bowl”). The father explains to his son that he purchased the vehicle “for your future” (“Toyota Camry Hybrid Super Bowl”). When the son still doesn’t understand, the father delineates all the benefits of the hybrid such as the fact that it is good for the environment and saves money because it can alternate between gas and electric power. The boy now comprehends, drawing a connection between the car’s features and his father’s ability to switch between English and Spanish languages. He acknowledges this when he smiles and proclaims, “like you with English and Spanish!” (“Toyota Camry Hybrid Super Bowl”). In a moment, the boy’s clarity again reverts to confusion and he asks his father “but why did you learn English?” (“Toyota Camry

Hybrid Super Bowl”). The father explains that he did so for the same reason he purchased the hybrid, for the boy’s future. The narrative ends with a voice over by a Toyota spokesperson, who tells the audience that like the family just shown, Toyota is helping them to move forward.

The plot sequence just described represents that family element of the American Dream. This aspect of the American Dream narrative acknowledges although financial success is a tool in achieving the American Dream; it is not its ultimate goal. Rather, the chief aim of the American Dream is to provide a bright future for one’s children and family, affording them new opportunities. This aspect of the dream is especially significant for the Hispanic community. A report conducted by the National Community for Leadership found that, “for Latinos the most meaningful aspect of the American Dream was to provide a better life for their children” ([www.latinoleadership.org](http://www.latinoleadership.org)). The exchange between the father and the son communicates to the Hispanic audience that they have achieved American Dream, because all of the father’s actions are taken solely to ensure the future wellbeing of his son. For example, when the son asks why his father purchased the hybrid, the father could have answered that the car is a status symbol that represents his success in America. Yet, he instead explains that the hybrid will benefit the environment, which will allow his son to grow up breathing cleaner air. Similarly, the car narrative serves as a greater metaphor for the Hispanic version of American Dream, because the father’s decision to learn English is also centered on the desire to provide a better life to his son. Being bilingual will allow the boy to retain his cultural heritage, while at the same time afford him the ability to pursue the educational and employment opportunities that necessitate speaking English. The final voiceover at the conclusion of

the commercial reinforces the Hispanic attainment of the family notion of the American Dream through its “moving forward” tagline. This message signifies that Hispanic families, like the one just depicted in the story, are continually creating superior futures for one and other, and thus achieving the American Dream. This plot message creates narrative rationality because it will resonate with viewers. As Jim Farley, Toyota’s vice president of marketing states, “moving forward is relevant for Hispanics because it speaks to their goals and stages for their children as they pursue the American Dream” ([www.mph-online.com](http://www.mph-online.com), 2006). Thus, the plot of this commercial tells a story of a father creating a better future for his son. In doing so it relays a larger narrative about Hispanic’s achievement of the American Dream for their families, a message which Hispanic viewers highly value and will accept to be true.

### *Characters*

The characters in this advertisement also contribute to the narrative because their appearance reemphasizes that the American Dream has been attained. Many aspects of the father’s appearance indicate that he has achieved success for himself. First, he is well groomed as he has a new haircut and is freshly shaven. His clothing also suggests his economic attainment. He is wearing a brown collared polo sweater and has a large silver watch on his left wrist. Finally, he is driving a brand new car that has lustrous leather seats and a sophisticated computer navigation system. All of these material items establish for the audience that this man has achieved the good life from an economic standpoint.

Beyond pure financial success, the father's appearance also indicates that he has attained that family element of the American Dream. Through observing the father's jovial facial expressions when talking to his son the audience can recognize that elation this man feels about being a father. Additionally, the wedding band that he wears on his left hand visually illustrates that he is in a happy loving marriage. Thus, through these visual cues the father character proves to the audience that he is a content family man, who has the monetary means to provide newfound opportunities for his child.

The son character through his appearance also embodies the father's achievement of the family element of American Dream. The little boy, is also well groomed and dressed. Additionally, he is playing with a high-tech portable video game system, which implies that his father is able to provide him with expensive items. Aside from material goods, the audience can see that the little boy is also granted safety and education. The fact that he is sitting in a car-seat illustrates that his father provides for his security. Finally, whenever the boy asks a question, his father completely acknowledges him and supplies him with an educational answer. This shows that the father is facilitating the boy's learning, so he will have increased opportunities as an adult. Hence, the father and son characters, through their appearance and interaction serve to further convey the American Dream narrative to the audience.

The Hispanic audience will accept the American Dream narrative as rational because these characters represent people with whom they can identify and relate. First, the scenario of being on a long car trip and having your curious child ply you with questions is commonplace to anyone who has children or has ever known people that do. As Alex Lopez Negrete, the chairman of the Association of Hispanic Ad Agencies

explains, "It is transgenerational in all races. Any father and son could be sitting in that car living that story" (Puente, 2006, p. 1). Hence, universal appeal of these characters adds to the credibility of the message and facilitates its acceptance by the Hispanic target audience and on a wider level by the general audience.

### *Setting*

A final facet of this narrative that contributes to the transmission of the American Dream message to the audience is its external setting. This commercial aired during the 2006 Super Bowl. The Super Bowl has always represented the zenith of commercial advertising, as it is the program that generates the highest number of viewers throughout the year. Accordingly, airtime during the Super Bowl is incredibly expensive, with 30-spots averaging a cost between 2.5 and 2.6 million dollars (<http://money.cnn.com>, 2006). The fact that Toyota was willing to undergo such an enormous cost to reach Hispanics reinforces for the audience their level of success and vitality as a market segment. As Sandi Kayse, National Car Advertising Manager for Toyota says about the ad, "it showed that we respect our Hispanic customers and that we're willing to go to the expense of buying a Super Bowl ad to reach them" (Farah, 2006, p.2). Moreover, this commercial was the first one that Toyota aired to promote the Camry Hybrid and it was the only commercial the automaker aired during the Super Bowl. This further shows the Hispanic audience that they have attained full integration into the American Dream, because Toyota has placed the need to target them above the need to reach the general market. Therefore, the external setting of the commercial occurring in the most coveted advertising timeslot

serves as additional evidence that the characters in the commercial and in turn the Hispanic target audience have accomplished the American Dream.

## Chapter 8

### **Infiniti “Design and Performance and Performance” Taking the American Dream to the Peak of Achievement**

The final artifact that was analyzed is the Infiniti “Design and Performance” campaign, which consisted of a three part storyline told over three separate thirty-second spots. This commercial series reflects the ultimate achievement aspect of the American Dream. This element, is focused on the idea that if one lives in the America they can become whoever they aspire to be. For example, by this philosophy, it is possible for the son of a janitor to become a famous artist, or a singer, or even President of the United States. While this element of the dream suggests that anyone can rise to the highest echelons of society, for much of their time as American citizens, Hispanics understood that “anyone” only pertained to the white race. Today, however, that is no longer the case, Hispanics have become integrated into the “anyone” category and these advertisements accentuate that through their plot and characters. The following sections will seek to explicate how this is accomplished.

#### *Plot<sup>1</sup>*

The plot of the commercial revolves around two artists, one who is a designer and one who is a performer. This commercial specifically features Mexican alternative pop musician Ely Guerra and Colombian conceptual artist Federico Uribe. In the spot the artists are facing off, each expressing their respective creative talents against a stark black background. The commercial begins with Uribe and Guerra walking up to one another

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<sup>1</sup> Since all three commercials have the same central plot, only first in the series will be analyzed, as it is representative of the set.

with their artistic tools in hand. As they meet in the center of a black room, Guerra begins strumming her guitar to the heavy sounds of her own original composition. Uribe stares intensely at Guerra while she plays and then the camera shifts, showing a close-up of Uribe's hand cutting the ends off a group of yellow and red wires. The camera then shows a glimpse of the new Infiniti G. Next, the viewers discover that Uribe was cutting the wires to create a sculpture that is shaped like the top half of a Mannequin. Following this, the narrative alternates back and forth between Uribe perfecting his masterpiece and Guerra passionately finishing her melody. At the end the two characters again come together in the center the room with the new Infiniti G between them and a narrator delivers a voice over saying, "the design the performance in harmony, the Infiniti G" ("Uribe/Guerra"). In a moment the car starts and it is implied that the pair rides off together.

This sequence is based on a theme of achievement. By the end of the narrative each artist has accomplish something truly great. Uribe, using commonplace wires was able to conceptualize and complete an exquisite sculpture. Guerra is able to deliver a unique musical composition without a band or a stage. This communicates that not only have Hispanics achieved extraordinary success for themselves, but in doing so, they have improved the United States by facilitating innovation in the automotive field among many others. Finally, the fact that the two drive away in a luxurious car reinforces their achievements because is proves they have become prosperous enough to afford the Infiniti G. Thus, the plot of this commercial conveys to the Hispanic audience that they all have the opportunity to achieve greatness and deserve to own items that reflect their greatness, such as luxury automobiles.

### *Characters*

While the plot of the commercials remains unchanged, each of the three commercials features a different set of characters. These characters are vital to conveying the message of achievement and the American Dream to the audience. First, these characters are not fictional, but rather are actual Hispanics, who have through their talents made enormous contributions to American culture and have reached the pinnacles of success in their industries. Federico Uribe, innovated the art industry by using industrial materials to create humanized artistic masterpieces. His work is also exhibited at prominent art galleries and museums worldwide. Ely Guerra is known as a pioneer in Mexican rock music and she has had four hit albums. Jose Chardiet, is a world renowned glass blower, whose work is featured at top museums such as the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Art Museum (<http://www.holstengalleries.com/>). Alfredo “Chocolate” Armenteros is legendary Cuban trumpeter, who has been influential to the Cuban music scene since the 1960’s. He has recorded several albums and has played with many Latin American legends. Douglas Rodriguez is an esteemed chef, who is globally acclaimed as the Godfather of Nuevo Latino Cuisine. Finally, Annette A. Aguilar is an accomplished percussionist who has had vast musical exposure. As Vicki Sola describes in an article in

#### *Latin Beat Magazine:*

She's done it all, played, recorded, shared stages with, and toured with so many cream-of-the-crop Latin, reggae, classical, pop, and jazz icons including the likes of Tito Puente, Stevie Wonder, Darlene Love, Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, Jimmy Cliff, Ladymith Black Mambazo, Suzanne Vega, Shawn Colvin, Toshi Reagon, and Casselberry-Dupree (Sola, 2004, p. 1).

Since most Hispanics are familiar with these artists and are aware of their amazing accomplishments, they are the optimal ambassadors of the achievement message within

the commercial narrative. These characters teach the audience that they too have the opportunity to become whomever they want and should embrace their achievements by purchasing luxurious items such as the Infiniti.

Besides the credibility these real life symbols of achievement in the Hispanic community bring to the message, they also appeal to a variety of cultural sects within the Hispanic community. It is important that these artists were chosen from across Latin America. Guerra is Mexican, Uribe is Colombian, Chardiet, and Armenteros are both Cuban, Aguilar hails from Nicaragua, and Rodriguez, who was born and raised in the United States, is a self proclaimed Miamian. The mosaic of cultures represented in the narrative proves to the audience that all Hispanics regardless of their ethnicity can accomplish limitless achievements. Thus, the characters within “Design and Performance” illustrate the theme of achievement for the Hispanic audience and in doing so also suggest this community’s achievement of full integration into the American Dream narrative.

## Chapter 9

### **The Power of Numbers: Centrality of American Dream to Each Narrative**

“Una Marca Que Dura”, “Camry Hybrid Super Bowl” and “Design and Performance” is each embedded with a different satellite message. Progress, family, and achievement respectively. However, they are all collectively centered on the wider kernel message of Hispanic’s integration into the American Dream. The fact that the American Dream appears consistently throughout these messages is important for several reasons. First, it reinforces that the sample is representative, as three distinct automakers with unique product offerings each chose to utilize the same central theme to persuade the Hispanic audience to purchase their products. Second, it uncovers the American Dream as a new narrative genre, at least in the automotive industry that is employed to appeal to the Hispanic market. Finally, and most importantly, the constant reiteration of Hispanic’s integration into the American Dream continually facilitates the audience’s increased acceptance of the message. As Rybackii and Rybackii state, “collectively they may become self validating with each successive narrative adding to what the audience has already come to believe” (Rybackii & Rybackii, 1991, p. 120). The more frequently the Hispanic target audience and the general audience are told that Hispanics have achieved the American Dream the more likely these groups are to embrace this narrative as truth.

## Chapter 10

### Implications and Conclusions

#### *Implications*

The fact that automotive advertisers are actively targeting the Hispanic market and are doing so primarily by utilizing an American Dream narrative has several important implications. First, large corporations creating advertisements specifically designed for the Hispanic market serves as evidence of the Hispanic market's importance. Large automakers such as General Motors, Toyota, and Nissan would not allocate significant portions of their media budget to Hispanics if they did not have considerable market value. Also, this contributes to communication studies on the Hispanic market because it demonstrates that as hypothesized, the conclusions drawn by previous research about the importance of the Hispanic market to advertisers are now outdated. For example, as cited earlier in the review of literature, researchers studying the portrayal and frequency of Hispanics in television commercials found that, Hispanic mainly appeared in background scenes of commercials and were "unimportant to the commercials" (Wilkes & Valencia, 1987, p.22). In all three representative artifacts analyzed, this is no longer the case. On the contrary, Hispanics are the sole focus of the advertisements and are crucial in delivering the commercial's message to the audience. This research confirms that companies that seek to sell products to the current Hispanic market must communicate to Latino's through targeted advertising that shows them they are valued. Thus, this thesis reinforces that Hispanics are an incredibly significant market segment, debunks pervious research stating that advertisers view Hispanics as

insignificant, and exposes for advertisers the need for specific targeting to capture Hispanic market share.

Second, the overreaching American Dream narrative implicit in the commercials also has significant implications for the Hispanic target market. The stories in these commercials with their believable plots, identifiable characters, and a reinforcing settings, lead the Hispanic audience to believe that as a societal group, they have been integrated into the American Dream. For middle class and affluent Hispanic's it reinforces their status and promotes that they deserve the luxury that comes along with achieving the American Dream. For lower class Hispanics, this message illustrates that they are not just bystanders of outside of the American Dream narrative but rather aspirants who will likely attain it. These effects are compounded by the fact that the same message appears in all three artifacts. The greater frequency of the message increases the likelihood of its acceptance by both subgroups within the audience. Finally from an advertising standpoint, incorporating the American Dream message has been an influential persuasive tool that has spurred automotive sales. As a 2007 report provided by Conill, the advertising agency that created the Toyota Camry Super Bowl ad stated, "They're [Hispanics] also buying luxury automobiles at a faster rate than the overall market" (Medina, 2007, p. 1). For example, the Infiniti G Sedan experienced a record-setting November, with sales of 4,399 units, up 4.0 percent, the same month that the "Design and Performance Campaign" first aired ([www.autospectator.com](http://www.autospectator.com), 2007). Hence, these advertisements are effecting the Hispanic markets purchasing decisions and likely are also influencing their self perceptions.

Third and finally, the message about Hispanic's attainment of the American Dream also has implications for the general audience. Since, all three campaigns aired on national television during high visibility periods such as the World Series and the Super Bowl, they achieved exposure beyond the Hispanic target to the general market. Just as with the Hispanic target audience, continued viewing of this message will likely lead to the acceptance of this message by the mass market. This is important because it cause additional integration of Hispanics in American society and thus further facilitate their attainment of the American Dream.

### *Conclusions*

Advertising's chief aims are persuasion and value creation in order to spur purchases. These goals have remained static since the beginnings of the profession. What is ever changing however, are the targets of that persuasion and the specific tactics used to accomplish it. From the perspective of a communication scholar it is vital to remain attuned to these trends to uncover new genres of communication and understand how these messaging strategies affect the intended audience.

This thesis has argued that Hispanics have become a new significant target audience for advertisers, especially those promoting the sale of luxury items, such as automobiles. Further, it discovered that the American Dream narrative is the chief genre used to sell the luxury concept to Hispanics. This has been an effective advertising tool, as it has driven Hispanics to purchase the vehicles promoted. Yet, on a wider level it has conveyed to the Hispanic market that they have been integrated into the American Dream and also facilitated the general public's acceptance of that message.

While this analysis has made significant steps in addressing the weaknesses in previous research and gaining deeper insights into advertising to the Hispanic market, future study is still necessary. This analysis was limited to examining automotive television commercials. Future research would benefit by examining other mediums and industries to determine whether this American Dream is consistently employed by different luxury good manufacturers across media platform. Additionally, this analysis focused mainly of the content of message contained within the ads, future studies could examine how often commercials featuring Hispanics appear on television to update the studies conducted by Wilkes & Valencia (1987) and Stevenson & McIntyre (1995). Finally, it is vital that researchers continue to study this topic so that insights remain current and relevant. Many Hispanics have achieved the American Dream and in doing so have also become a critical market segment. As more and more achieve positions of market power, it is critical to continue to understand how advertisers respond and the effect that such a response has on the beliefs and value systems of Hispanics.

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