

Broken Film Narratives: The Invisibility of Latinx Women in Education Through Film and Literature

Virginia Hernández
Utah State University

Lisset Delgado
Utah State University

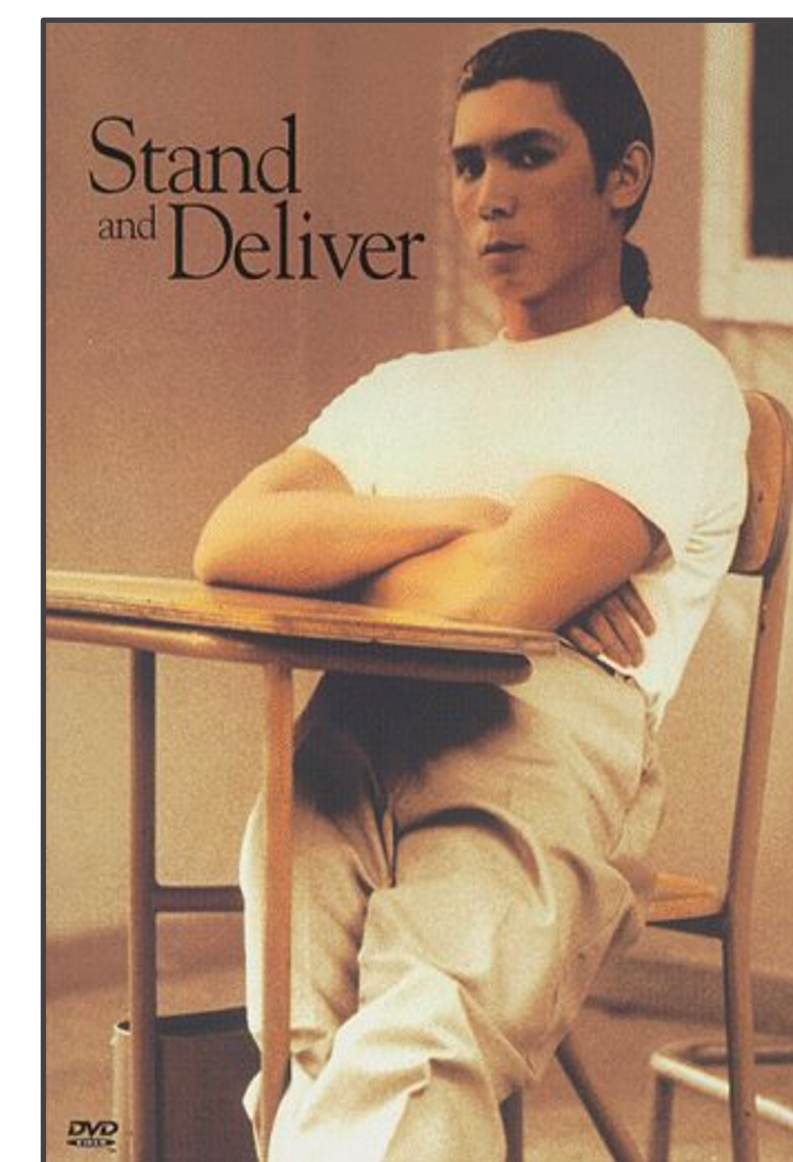
Abstract

Our research aims to explore the lack of Latinx women being portrayed in films with education as the central theme. Although there are Latinx women in films today, they are not portrayed in an entirely positive light. They are commonly represented in an oversexualized manner compared to latinx men who are portrayed as hard workers and commonly seeking education. A good example would be the film *McFarland USA* by Niki Caro in which young male adolescents are a part of a cross country team. Although the film does a great job of portraying their lives as latinx adolescents living in the United States, the film fails to depict the women's team overall. There are films on education that portray women, such as *Real Women Have Curves* by Patricia Cardoso, a coming-of-age film depicting a young Latina struggling to defend her right to obtain a higher education. However, a common theme throughout the film is her mother commenting on her body and her duties as a woman in serving men. As a result, we are looking to investigate the lack of Latinx women being depicted in a positive light in current films.

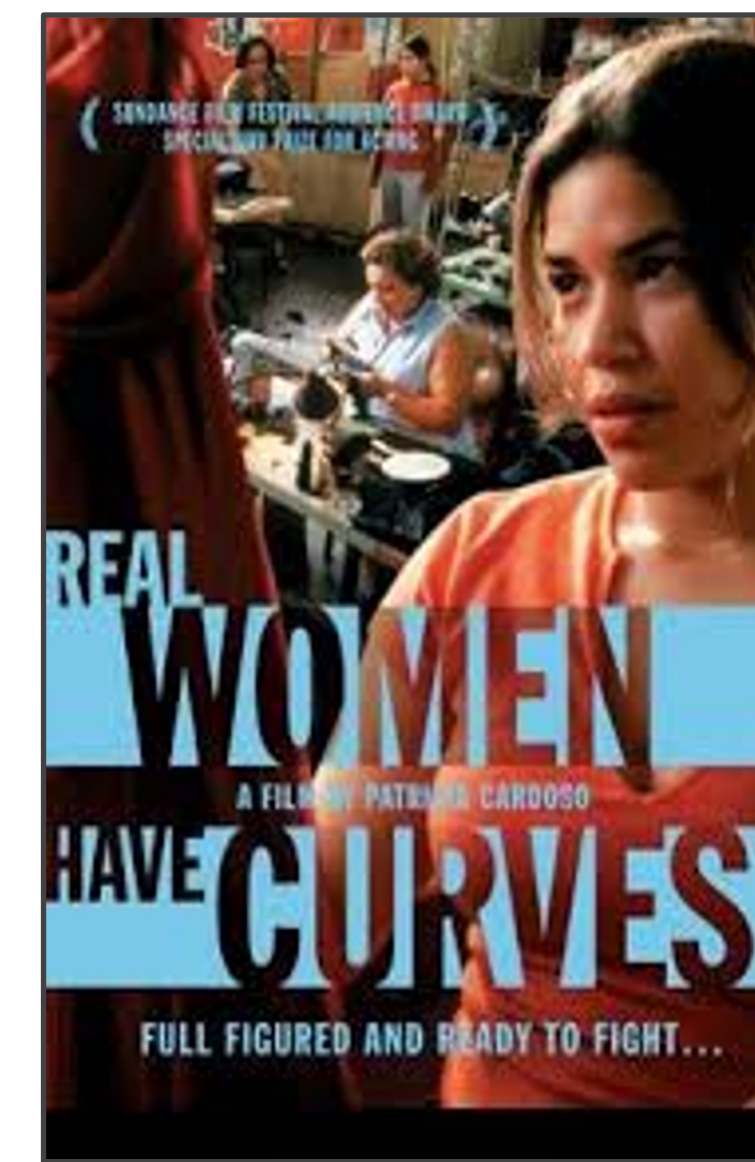
Films



(2015)

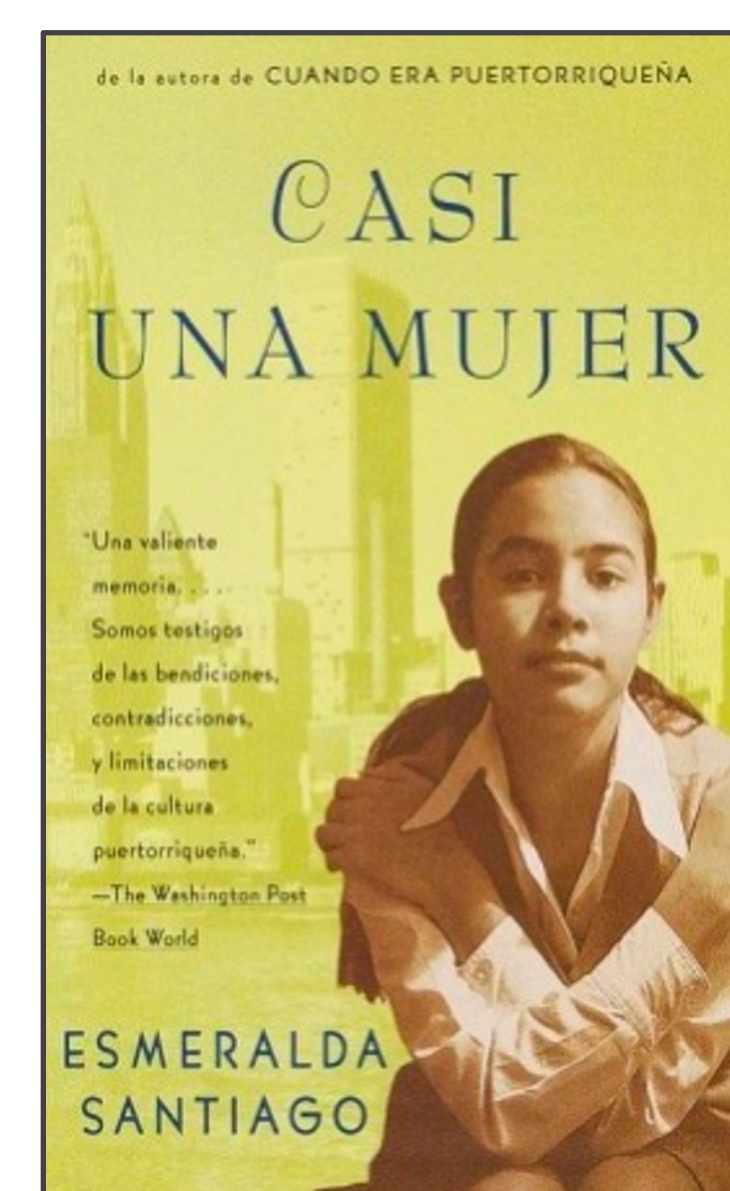


(1988)



(2002)

Literature



(1999)



(2017)



(2019)

“I never imagined I would have to protect and care for my mother—I didn’t know that was my job—but I said, “Yes, of course.”
— Erika L. Sánchez, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*

“Men can only perform like men, mama always says, when women are doing everything. We’re invisible little workers so they can puff out their chests.”
— Angie Cruz, *Dominicana*

Latinx in Film

LATINO CHARACTERS ARE INVISIBLE IN FILM

Across 100 top-grossing films from 2018, the number missing...



LATINO CHARACTERS ARE LEFT OUT OF FILMS

Number of films each year missing Latino characters

| MISSING CHARACTERS | '07 | '08 | '09 | '10 | '11 | '12 | '13 | '14 | '15 | '16 | '17 | '18 | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| OUT OF | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 1,200 |
| MISSING | 42 | 49 | 53 | 49 | 38 | 55 | 45 | 53 | 40 | 54 | 43 | 47 | 568 |
| OUT OF | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 1,200 |

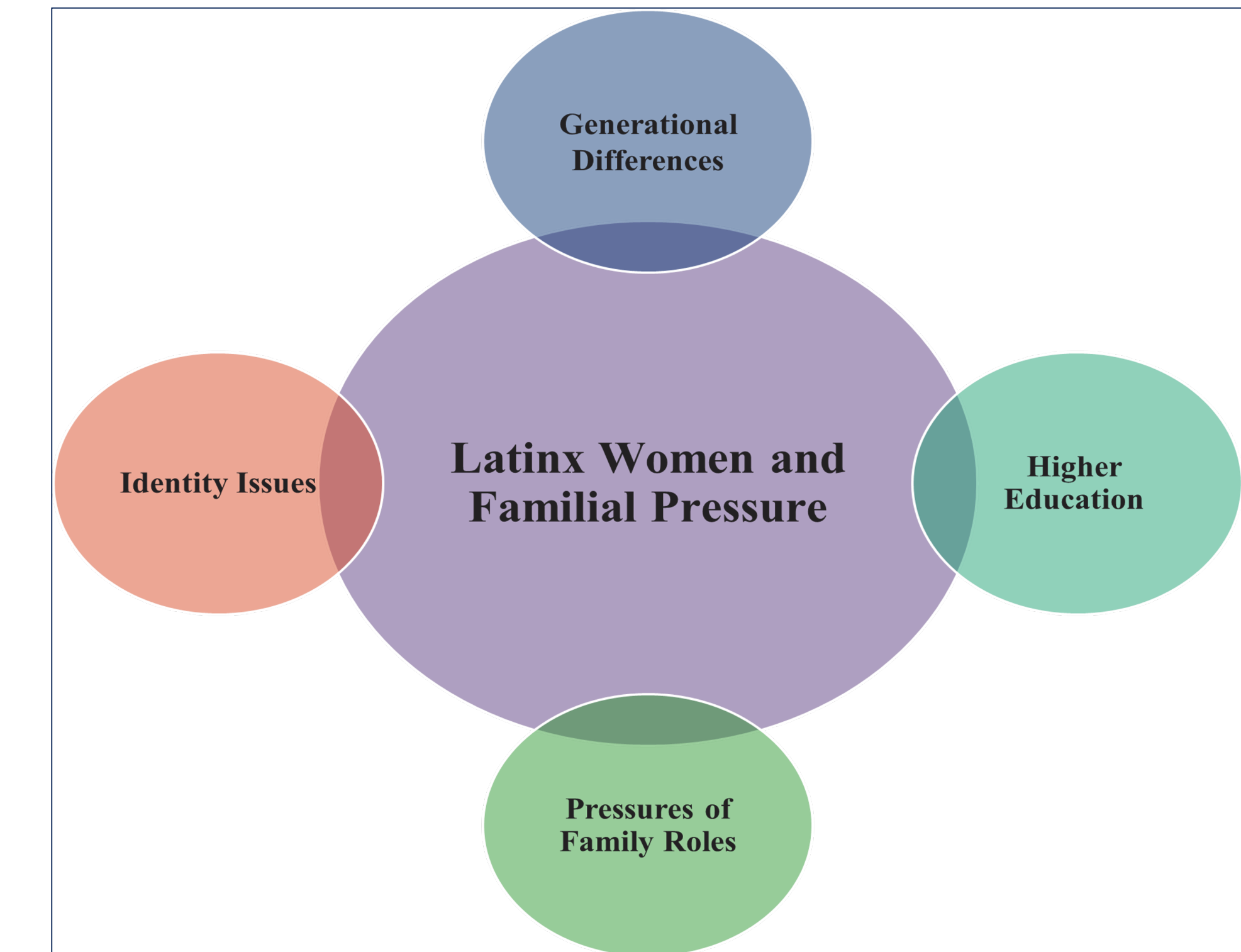


McFarland women's cross country team not depicted in the film.



McFarland USA men's cross country team.

Methods



“Somos una familia, y seguiremos siéndolo.”
Real Women Have Curves (2002).



“Boys dont like if you're too smart... Mom, I'm doing this so I don't have to depend on some dumb guy the rest of my life” - *Stand and Deliver* (1988)

Conclusion

Latinx women in current films and literature have been depicted as family-oriented and having to tend to familial responsibilities. They are stuck between adjusting to different roles in their family household because they do not want to abandon their family. Similarly, when latinx women want to pursue higher education or better themselves overall, they are seen as defying the family or going against their ultimate purpose. Because of this, many Latinx women have a variety of obstacles and can't pursue higher education because of their family duties. Although this may be true in some cases, applying this idea to a wide variety of films and literature aimed at young latinx women looking for representation is not sending the right message.

UtahState
University

Study conducted with assistance from USU Associate Professor of Spanish, Dr. Crescencio López-González.