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*“Suave y Se la Banca”*:  
A Critical Multimodal Analysis of Femininity in Contemporary Argentinean TV  
Advertising

By

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DISSERTATION

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of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

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2022

*Á miña avoa*

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## Abstract

Against a backdrop of economic unrest, Argentina has seen considerable social change in the arena of women's and LGBTQIA+ rights in the last decade. These changes position the country as a context of interest for analysis of cultural media productions such as advertising, which “construct hegemonic definitions of what should be considered as ‘reality’” (Carter & Steiner, 2004, p. 2). In this study I examine the representation of femininities in Argentinean TV advertising by deploying an integrated bottom-up approach which incorporates a descriptive analysis of visual and verbal resources (Economou, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Martin & White, 2005) and an intersectional framework (Collins & Bilge, 2020) to explore how the results of the descriptive analysis fit with contemporary Argentina, in particular how gender intersects with national identity and social categories such as class.

I recorded data from mid-August to mid-September in 2019. Ads in the corpus were designed for the Argentinean audience and have a running time of 25-40 seconds. The ads are additionally categorized into two categories: skin care and packaged foods. At the descriptive level, the ads analyzed construe group membership between the women onscreen and the audience by deploying close shots and placing represented participants in situations to which the audience will relate. Women are additionally portrayed in a variety of professions, including some which would have been held by men in the past. Women further retain characteristics stereotypically associated with femininity, such as an appreciation for interpersonal relationships and a desire to attain young-looking skin. This middle-class femininity intersects with whiteness, reproducing an Argentinean white national identity. These findings additionally offer an examination of how gender, national identity, and the media intersect in contemporary Argentina.

## CHAPTER 1

“El mundo audiovisual es tan de clase media y blanco...”

Lucrecia Martel (cineasta) en entrevista con El País (Rodríguez Marcos, 2018)

### 1. Introduction

This project stemmed out of the interest to examine to which extent any of the recent societal changes had made their way to advertising. When the turmoil of the 2001 economic crisis somewhat quieted, Argentina saw a wave of queer and transfeminist activisms that led to increased rights for these collectives. These conversations in the public sphere led to the inclusion of more queer characters and stories in mainstream television. Some racialized identities made their way to the small screen, albeit in small numbers and with small, often stereotyped, roles in soap operas, where I had not seen them before. More trans celebrities began to host talk shows and gameshows. As I was collecting data in 2019, I noticed that participants in gameshows had also gotten more diverse. Intersections of gender, sexuality, ability, and race seemed to be gaining some visibility in some spaces. These changes made me curious as to what would be the case for other cultural productions, namely advertising.

I started collecting data on August 19, 2019, a week after the results of the primary elections signaled a change in the party in power and caused the economy to take another hit. To this day, the economic situation has only worsened. As I wrap up this project in 2022, *Ni Una Menos* has been marching every June since 2015 to denounce femicides and other forms of violence, and women anonymously share a myriad of stories of oppression via *Mujeres Que No Fueron Tapa* on social media<sup>1</sup>, a virtual space for those women who are not featured on the

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<sup>1</sup> @mujeresquenofuerontapa on Instagram.

cover of magazines. Women from different class backgrounds, some with access to higher education and some without share stories covering topics such as beauty standards, societal expectations, harassment, abuse, motherhood, and post-partum depression. Although the current economic situation moves the focus away from gender to class, there is a sense of awakening.

At first glance, however, these changes have not made their way into advertising. *Suave y se la banca* in the title is meant to capture that. The expression comes from one of the ads analyzed here and it can be roughly translated as soft and strong. Strong and resilient like the femininities portrayed: successful at work, even in positions that would have been held by men, and they power through, they do it all. But still soft, retaining qualities stereotypically associated with femininity. Whereas femininities are plural, the singular noun in the title links back to the findings and the uniform representation of femininity in this advertising. This research is situated in this tension. In the following sections I discuss advertising as a site for multimodal critical analysis and state the objectives and research questions guiding this inquiry. Section 4 sketches the context of production, and the last section presents an overview of the dissertation organization.

## **2. Advertising as a site for (multimodal) critical inquiry**

Carter and Steiner (2004) argue that “media texts [...] construct hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as ‘reality’” (p. 2). In other words, media texts, such as advertising, can be thought of as discourse through which ideologies are disseminated but also challenged. Van Dijk (2006) defines ideologies as “shared representations of social groups [which are] reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse” (p. 115).

In the case of gender representation, the topic of this research, onscreen portrayals can show how various social groups are viewed in society. Portrayals can contest and challenge commonly held beliefs of groups, but limited portrayals for certain groups – or the lack thereof – can by contrast perpetuate systems of oppression and continue to invisibilize them. For that reason, there is a need within critical studies to examine a variety of media texts. In particular, critical analysis of advertising can uncover these biases and contribute to the understanding of how social inequalities translate to a symbolic plane. In the words of Cebrelli and Arancibia (Cebrelli & Arancibia, 2010) “[l]a cultura mediática se ha transformado, en los últimos años, en el espacio simbólico donde se libran las batallas por la visibilidad y audibilidad de los diferentes grupos sociales” (para. 2).

### **3. Research questions and objectives**

Corpus construction, sketched in Chapter 3, yielded a corpus of 16 commercials. Out of this total, 15 ads have cisgender, and assumedly heterosexual, women as the main represented participants. As I will discuss in the next section, the last decade has seen increased activism in the area of women’s and LGBTQIA+ rights, which ties in with this research’s objective to examine gender representation in TV advertising. With this under consideration, the objectives of this research are the following: 1) to explore the representation of femininity/femininities in advertising, 2) to gauge the extent to which more diverse constructions of identity have permeated into advertising, and 3) to contribute to the development of our understanding of how visual and verbal meanings are deployed to construct identities discursively. The research questions are formulated as follows:

1) How are femininities portrayed in advertising? To which extent have more diverse identity constructions permeated into advertising?

2) How can those portrayals be interpreted in terms of the sociohistorical context?

To answer these questions, I deploy a bottom-up approach to discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015). This approach allows for the construction of a methodological framework suited for the analysis of a medium such as advertising, which relies both on visual and verbal language to construe messages about social groups. For the former, I use Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006)<sup>2</sup> visual grammar and Economou's (2009) work on visual appraisal. In line with previous research on visual modalities, the deployment of this framework supports the first objective stated at the beginning of this section. For verbal appraisal, I mainly draw from Martin and White (2005). Another advantage of Fairclough's (2015) approach to discourse analysis, particularly in its critical form, is that it calls for the incorporation of social theory. For this project I apply an intersectional analysis (Collins & Bilge, 2020) and Butler's (1997/2013) conceptualization of gender as performative to shed light on how gender, class, and race intersect in the data. The analysis uncovers how femininity is portrayed in advertising and how those representations articulate notions of gender and nation in contemporary Argentina. As I will show, there have been a few intersectional analyses of advertising, none of them focusing on Argentina. This group of articles mostly deploys quantitative and qualitative content analyses. For that reason, pursuing this inquiry combining the intersectional perspective and Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis can not only increase our understanding of social dynamics in the symbolic plane, but also contribute to the field of multimodal studies.

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<sup>2</sup> A new edition of this volume became available in 2021. Data analysis and earlier drafts of this work were completed using the 2006 editions as a reference.

Section 4 contextualizes this interpretative analysis by summarizing relevant social movements and changes that have shaped the Argentina of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, I sketch the landscape of Argentinean media and then, I turn to the construction of national identity. The last section traces the genealogies of the activism of the last decade.

#### **4. Context of production**

##### **4.1. Television and advertising**

Regardless of provider and location, watching TV in Argentina largely equates to watching the Buenos Aires City-based media. TELEFE and El Trece are two of these Buenos Aires City-based stations. They are the leading TV stations, and they are in direct competition. They have the most viewership and produce both fiction and non-fiction shows. As other Buenos Aires City TV stations, their signal reaches the whole Metropolitan Area, which includes Buenos Aires City and the *partidos* of Buenos Aires Province that surround the capital. *Partidos* are political/geographical units into which Buenos Aires Province is divided. *Partidos* further away from the capital city have their own *repetidoras*, i.e. stations that repeat the signal of capital-based stations. These *repetidoras* often produce some local content, such as their own news shows. Other provinces have a couple of local stations and produce some local news and talk shows, produced in their own urban centers. These local stations have contracts with Buenos Aires City-based TV stations and broadcast some of their shows as well, typically – but not limited to- the big prime time shows. The advertising industry is based in Buenos Aires City as well: local and international advertisers produce and film commercials in Buenos Aires City<sup>3</sup>. These TV ads are later broadcast across the country either on local stations or the Buenos Aires

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<sup>3</sup> I grew up in Rawson, San Juan Province, where Pepe de la Colina's production company was responsible for many of the ads for local restaurants and taxi companies in the 90s. These ads were produced for local TV and radio.

City stations with national reach. An implication of this centralized organization is that if you live in Buenos Aires, *el interior* – i.e., the areas of Buenos Aires Province further from the capital, as well as other Argentinean provinces –, its people and its linguistic varieties are only featured on TV occasionally, usually in the news and some shows in the state channel. If you live in *el interior*, on the other hand, the presence of the capital is ubiquitous.

#### **4.2. National identity**

Alberto and Elena (2016) identify a fissure in the construction of national identity in Argentina in 2001-2002, with the economic crisis. Prior to this moment, identity was generally constructed as white, homogeneous, although this intersection of identities is commonly thought of as simply “*argentino*” – Alberto and Elena (2016) use the term “unmarked Argentines” and the 2010 Census (2012) uses the term “*hombre blanco*” in opposition to indigenous populations. That is, “white” means primarily of European descent. Alberto and Elena (2016) suggest that “in the wake of independence and for much of the nineteenth century [...] elites attempted to create an Argentine ‘people’ out of this heterogenous, stratified, and formerly colonized population” (2016, p. 5). A series of state policies supported this enterprise. First, the education system was set up in order to incorporate the large number of immigrants arriving in the country during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Alberto & Elena, 2016). In the state-funded school system, the use of *guardapolvos*, a white lab coat worn on top of one’s clothes, homogenized the student population by hiding differences in apparel. Furthermore, rituals around the flag and other national symbols were introduced as a means of assimilating immigrants and encouraging patriotism. Some examples are the pledge of allegiance and the observance of national holidays such as May 25, a day of remembrance for the

first government after overthrowing the authority of Viceroy Cisneros in 1810, and July 9, Independence Day – which came six years later in 1816.

Second, there were a succession of campaigns to the south and northeast aimed at exterminating the indigenous population unwilling to assimilate and at incorporating land in what was part of a process of consolidation of the national territory. From Roca's *Campaña al Desierto*<sup>4</sup> in 1879 onwards, these campaigns occupied territories first through military force. The Church, especially the Salesian Order, joined later to contribute to “el disciplinamiento material y moral de la sociedad nativa a los efectos de su ‘adecuación’ a las nuevas pautas culturales” (Bandieri, 2000, p. 142). Alongside these processes of extermination and assimilation<sup>5</sup>, there was a simultaneous “renegotiation of the boundaries of ethno-racial difference in socioeconomic and cultural terms” (Alberto & Elena, 2016, p. 7), whereby ethno-racial differences were mapped out as class differences, in which affluence additionally means “white”. The large numbers of European immigrants settling in the country over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries made possible for the label “white” to be applied to the majority of Argentines as the default, unmarked national identity. Alberto and Elena (2016) further point out the complexity of this ideology:

[T]his ideology of whiteness [...] might be seen as “inclusive” for being conferred broadly and officially upon a majority of Argentines over the course of the twentieth century (thus buttressing the image of the white nation), but it also contains within it

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<sup>4</sup> In the name, desert – the lands occupied by indigenous populations – refers to the lack of progress and civilization (Bandieri, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> To my knowledge, some current indigenous populations live in what are called “*tierras ancestrales*”. Some groups, like the Mapuche, are still fighting for their lands. The 1994 Reformation of the Constitution and a series of laws passed since then grant rights to indigenous populations, such as access to bilingual education. More information can be found at <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/derechoshumanos/inai/normativa>. The fact that this legislation is in place should not be interpreted to mean that implementation is not without conflict and/or social friction.

vocabularies and visual codes for identifying shades of ethnic or racial difference embedded in performances of class, region, culture, gender, or propriety. These meanings, legible to most of the population, often remain tacit until moments of tension or conflict, when they become readily available for open deployment. (p. 12)<sup>6</sup>

This reworking of the notions of whiteness and mapping of differences in terms of class in turn facilitated the notion that there is no racial difference in Argentina, and as a consequence, no racism (Alberto & Elena, 2016).

Alberto and Elena (2016) suggest that the economic crisis of 2001-2002 shook “longstanding formulations of Argentine exceptionalism that had linked national progress to whiteness and middle-class status” (p. 10). During the administrations between 2003-2015, “state and non-state actors [...] increasingly put forth an image of the nation premised on antiracism and on the affirmative inclusion of various ethnic or racial groups” (p. 10). Alberto and Elena report that “the 2010 Bicentennial Census [...], for the first time in over a century, included categories for both Afro-descendants and indigenous people” (p. 10) and further note the limitations of this effort: Census questions addressing race and ethnicity were only included in an extended questionnaire, one of the three questionnaires in use, and administered to a probabilistic sample of the population. Because there was no prior census data to determine a systematic sample, this extended questionnaire was used in areas with *villas* or *asentamientos*, indigenous communities or Afro-descendant population<sup>7</sup> (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y*

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<sup>6</sup> Activist group Identidad MARRON works to fight racism in Latin America, although most of the recent posts are about Argentina. They can be found on Twitter and Instagram @IdentidadMarron. They are also on Facebook.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that despite the fact that the Census argues for the need of a probabilistic sample mentioning the lack of previous data, this is partially not true: the same 2010 Census cites previous attempts at counting the indigenous populations: Censo Indígena Nacional (1966/1968, although the initiative was not concluded), Censo Aborigen de Formosa (1970), Primero Censo Aborigen de Salta (1984), and Encuesta Complementaria de Pueblos Indígenas (2004-2005) (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario*, 2012). The 2022 Census reportedly asked the self-identification questions to the whole population. Self-identification both for indigenous populations and Afro-descendants was available.

*Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario*, 2012). In other words, this questionnaire was used in low-income households and in areas presumed to have racialized populations. In addition, other groups, such as Asian-Argentines did not had the opportunity to self-identify and were counted as having been born in Argentina or abroad (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario*, 2012; Ko, 2016). Because of these methodological considerations, Census data paints a limited picture in terms of the ethnic and racial make-up of the country. For example, individuals of Asian descent born in Argentina cannot self-identify as “Asian” and are counted as generically Argentinean, as a result they are undercounted in the census – which gives the impression that the percentage of Asian population is lower, out of all the immigrant populations 0.5% are from China and 1.2% are from other Asian nations (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario*, 2012). As a result, these methodological considerations potentially present a more homogeneous population and contribute to rendering invisible certain groups. Table 1 summarizes the Census information for place of birth and racial self-identification<sup>8</sup> (2012).

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<sup>8</sup> I put together this table with information from various chapters in the census report, as I could not find a single table with all of this information in one place. Because not the whole population was asked the self-identification questions, the data is skewed.

**Table 1: Population in Argentina in 2010** (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo del Bicentenario, 2012*)

	<b>Total numbers (2010)</b>	<b>Born in Argentina</b>	<b>Born abroad</b>
	40,117,096	38,311,139	1,805,957
<b>Indigenous population<sup>9</sup></b>	955,032	---	---
<b>Afro-descendant population</b>	149,493	137,533	11,960

### 4.3. Activism and equality

Throughout the last decade, a number of legislative projects were passed, and activist organizations formed. In the early 2010s FALGTB (Federación Argentina LGBT) propelled two legislative projects which sought to increase rights for the LGTBQIA+ community: *Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario* (Same-sex Marriage Law) and *Ley de Identidad de Género* (Gender Identity Law) (Bimbi, 2014). The former was passed in 2010 and modified the Civil Code to explicitly include same-sex couples. This modification further made it possible for same-sex couples to adopt children, a point which sparked the most controversy and that caused both proponents and opponents to organize rallies throughout the country.

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<sup>9</sup> For the Afro-descendant population, the Census (2012) provides information with regard to place of birth. This is not the case for the indigenous population, hence the dashes in the table. My interpretation is that these groups are considered to be born in Argentina. On this, the Census says: “La concepción de los responsables del Censo de 1869 queda plasmada cuando se analiza la migración interna por provincias: en este caso se disponen por columnas [...] y, al final se hace un lugar para los argentinos ‘Por naturalización’. Detrás de esta última columna, quedando fuera de la categoría de ‘Argentinos’, se añade a los indígenas, como si esta condición étnica bastara, sin determinar un lugar de origen, profundizando de este modo y a través de un instrumento estadístico, el reflejo de una concepción social que impedía el reconocimiento del ‘otro’” (p. 275). More on this can be read in the Census report (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario, 2012*), which can be found online at <https://redata.indec.gov.ar/redarg/CENSOS/CPV2010A/Docs/intro.pdf>. It should be further noted that Indigenous migrants from neighboring countries, such as Bolivia, are counted as born abroad. Bolivian immigrants make up 19.1% of the total immigrant population (*Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010: Censo Del Bicentenario, 2012*).

Two years later, Congress passed the Gender Identity Law, which states that every person has the right to have their self-determined gender identity recognized. The law further grants individual people the right to request a new birth certificate and a new national identity card with their chosen name without accrediting surgical interventions or hormonal treatments or any kind of psychological treatment. While the law still conceptualizes gender as a binary<sup>10</sup>, the bureaucratic simplification to obtain a new national identity card is quite significant: in Argentina people use their identity cards for enrolling at school, accessing health care benefits, voting, requesting a cell phone line, and traveling, among others. This makes possible access to basic needs and rights without using their “deadname” – the name assigned to them at birth. In 2014, Fundación Huésped surveyed trans people in all provinces and registered a slight improvement in their situation after the passing of the law (*Informe Sobre La Situación de Las Personas Trans En Argentina*, 2014). According to the report, “the legal recognition of their identity is perceived as the recognition of their existence and, thus, it is presented as a resource that has empowered the trans population, giving them a tool to confront stigmatization and discrimination” (2014, p. 11, my translation). Survey participants reported improvements in the access to education and job opportunities, particularly for the younger generations. Nonetheless, the survey also highlights how access varies across the national territory: in the more conservative provinces ignorance about the law makes its implementation more difficult. Moreover, in fields like the medical professions, there is still a lack of understanding of the specific characteristics and needs of the trans population. In recent years, trans people have

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<sup>10</sup> As I write this, the Fernández Administration has announced the inclusion of a third option for the gender category in all official personal documents (birth certificates, national IDs, and passports) to guarantee access to the rights stipulated by the Gender Identity Law (2014) to non-binary people (“Identidad de Género: Cómo Será El DNI Para Personas No Binarias,” 2021).

gained a wider mainstream representation as actors and TV hosts, which may indicate continued change for this collective, albeit slow.

In 2009, Congress passed *Ley de Protección Integral a las Mujeres*, whose goal is to foster equal treatment for women in all spheres of life and to prohibit discrimination and violence towards women. The law defines violence not only as physical attacks, but also as various forms of oppression, including symbolic and economic oppression. Despite this legislative effort, activist organization *Ni Una Menos* has continued marching since 2015 to denounce *violencia machista*, especially *femicidios*. Their first manifesto<sup>11</sup>, dated June 3, 2015, states that “in 2008 a woman was killed every 40 hours; in 2014, every 30 hours” (my translation). Since 2015, the Supreme Court keeps a record with statistical data of these crimes and publishes a yearly report. According to the 2019 report, the number of *femicidios* totaled 268, with five of these being additionally labeled as *travesticidios/transfemicidios* (*Registro Nacional de Femicidios de La Justicia Argentina: Año 2019, 2020*).

In 2018 Congress passed a law mandating gender training for low- and high-ranking government officials in all branches of government. The recently instated *Ministerio de Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad* oversees this training. According to the Ministry’s website<sup>12</sup>, this sensitivity training includes information and scenario analysis. This law seeks to address gender bias in the legal system, which affects how *femicidios* are investigated and perpetrators tried.

There are currently other activist organizations, such as the *Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito*, which originated in the *Encuentro (Pluri)Nacional de Mujeres* in 2003 and was launched in 2005. These *Encuentros* are held annually since 1986, each year in a different province so that cis and trans women all over the country can attend. The

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<sup>11</sup> Available online at <http://niunamenos.org.ar/>. It appears that this website is no longer available.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos>

*Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito* propelled a law proposal that finally passed in late December 2020.

These legislative changes suggest changes in the Argentine society. However, Argentine society is not homogeneous: different provinces face different struggles, different financial situations, and may be more or less conservative. All of these factors have an impact in the actual implementation of laws. This is quite a complex landscape, but example can serve to illustrate this situation. Since 1921, abortions are legal if the pregnancy is a result of rape or if the life of the pregnant person is at risk. In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that the authorization of a judge or a criminal complaint was necessary for people to access an abortion at a public hospital or clinic – a bureaucratic step that was apparently not required by law but that practitioners usually requested (Carbajal, 2012; “Córdoba: después de seis años se habilitó el aborto no punible,” 2018). Even after this court ruling, some hospitals were denying access to this right as late as 2018 (“La dejaron morir en nombre de la moral,” 2018; “Niegan Un Aborto Legal y Ponen En Riesgo La Salud de Una Mujer,” 2018). By the end of 2020, when the new abortion law was passed, some provinces<sup>13</sup> had not yet updated their protocols in accordance with the 2012 Supreme Court ruling, and others still did not have a protocol in place (“Cinco provincias no establecieron protocolos para garantizar abortos no punibles,” 2020).

## **5. Dissertation organization**

The recent social changes outlined in the second part of this chapter position Argentina as a context of interest to examine mainstream cultural productions such as advertising to gauge the extent to which more diverse constructions of identity have made their way to the screen.

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<sup>13</sup> There were pro-choice marches in these provinces as well (“El interior también grita aborto legal,” 2018).

Advertising has been examined from various perspectives across various fields. Chapter 2 begins by tracing the relevant literature on the discourse of advertising. Then, I define representation and show how feminist theory has affected how we view and study gender representation. Here I also discuss intersectionality and performativity and then summarize the literature on gender representation in the media and in advertising. Finally, I briefly introduce Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis, which I expand on in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 begins by detailing the criteria guiding the corpus construction and then provide an overview of the data analysis procedures. The ads in the corpus belong to two categories: skin care and packaged foods. Across Chapters 4 and 5 I detail and discuss the main findings of the analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings for the first half of the corpus, the skin care ads, and is organized along three themes prevalent in the ads. Chapter 5 deals with the ads for packaged foods. Ads in this section of the corpus are grouped by setting, the category of analysis that was more salient. In chapter 6, I discuss the contributions of the project and its limitations; I also suggest directions for future inquiries.

## CHAPTER 2

### **1. Chapter overview**

This chapter summarizes the relevant literature and introduces the main key concepts of this research. The first section describes the discourse of advertising, particularly as it relates to the indirect use of language and how audiences construct situated interpretations of ads. Section 3 starts with a discussion of gender representation and articulates the importance of research in this area. Here, I also introduce the feminist theories informing this inquiry and survey studies on gender participation in a variety of media, focusing on film and TV. Then, I turn to research on gender representation in print and TV advertising. The last section presents an overview of the theoretical perspectives that inform the methods.

### **2. Advertising: A socio-pragmatic perspective**

TV advertising must efficiently articulate a complex set of ideas about a product in a short period of time. To this end, it relies on persuasive language and indirect communication and imagery, such as metaphors (Geis, 1982; Sweetser, 2017; Velasco-Sacristán & Fuertes-Olivera, 2006). The main function of ads is to sell a product, but advertisements further amuse and inform, “though it may be argued that these functions are all in the service of the main function” (Cook, 1992, p. 5). To appeal to these other functions, particularly amusement, ads often deploy puns or other word play (García Vizcaíno, 2011; van Mulken et al., 2005). Research also suggests that advertising, especially advertising of cosmetics, lotions, and the like, resorts to scientific language in an effort to persuade the audience of the legitimacy of the product and its claims to efficacy (Canale et al., 2014).

Ads vary with regard to the degree of indirectness they employ. Advertiser Bernstein (1974) first classified TV ads into “reason” or “tickle”, attending to this difference. Reason ads are direct and articulate the reason for buying explicitly. Tickle ads, by contrast, deploy more covert meaning-making resources, which forces the viewer to sift through the information offered in the ad in order to infer the reason for buying via implicature (Martínez-Camino & Pérez-Saiz, 2012). Implicature, in Grice’s sense of the word (1989), refers to an inference that can be made based on what is being said in a specific communicative situation. According to Martínez-Camino and Pérez-Saiz (2012), “when the advertiser opts for tickle advertising, she obliges the viewer-consumer [...] to produce implicatures whose truthfulness or not will determine whether the message will be cooperative” (p. 456). In other words, the reason for buying rests on the inferences that the viewer-consumer will make.

Martínez-Camino and Pérez-Saiz (2012) further elaborated on the structural components of reason and tickle. Prototypical reason ads, which articulate explicitly the reason for buying a product, follow a prologue > exposition structure. The prologue is “a message that makes a direct reference to the product” and the exposition communicates the reasons for buying (Martínez-Camino & Pérez-Saiz, 2012, p. 461). Prototypical tickle ads, on the other hand, resort to indirectness and often contain a narrative that “functions only obliquely to the commodity it seeks to promote” (Simpson, 2001, p. 601). The narrative component, in turn, allows for the inclusion of a musical soundtrack and “intertextual echoes of other texts, such as films, popular television shows (or even other advertising copy” (2001, p. 601). This use of indirect language and oblique narration lead Simpson to suggest that tickle ads prove useful for promoting “luxury or non-essential products whose immediate necessity or efficacy is not obvious” (2001, p. 605)(p. 605).

Tickle ads additionally introduce a foreign element which raises uncertainty to later resolve it in the development. A foreign element is not explicitly or obviously connected to the product, but the development, which often takes the form of a narrative, “link[s] the product and the foreign element” (Martínez-Camino & Pérez-Saiz, 2012, p. 461). This combination of the foreign element and the development is what constitutes the tickle core of the ad and often aims to amuse the audience. Martínez-Camino and Pérez-Saiz further note that this kind of ad relies less prominently on verbal language. As a corollary, these ads feature visuals and other meaning making resources, which prompts the need for multimodal analysis to tease out the layered and subtle meanings implied.

The use of covert visual and linguistic resources further forces the viewer/consumer to sift through the information offered in the ad to infer the reason to buy a product via implicature (Martínez-Camino & Pérez-Saiz, 2012). These implied meanings are not necessarily evident to all viewers alike. As Del Saz-Rubio (2019) notes, implicatures are perceiver-dependent, which means that the viewer/consumer is responsible for the characteristics attributed to the product which may induce them to buy it. Del Saz-Rubio had participants rate their agreement on implied meanings derived from the ads analyzed and produced a statistical analysis to determine how strong or weak the implicatures derived from the ads were.

Readings or interpretations are situated in this respect: they depend on the viewer/consumer and the broader sociohistorical context. Pennock-Speck (2016) offers a reading of two Spanish ads in which women use physical force against their male partners. Pennock-Speck argues that “[t]he presence of physical force in TV ads seems to be an unusual promotional strategy against a backdrop of concern for the numerous cases of gender violence in Spain” (p. 369). Hall (1973) theorizes that audiences may fully or partially accept a dominant

reading, or they may reject it altogether, giving rise to negotiated and oppositional readings. This suggests that as audiences change, so will ads, in order to adjust to these new audiences.

Viewers from different generations may read the same ad in divergent ways according to their lived experiences. Abel (2012) conducted focus group interviews with high school students aged 16-18 in the late 1990s and early 2000s in New Zealand. The study focused on two commercials and their discussions with the focus groups. The commercials in question “deal with the construction of masculinity and femininity using the exaggeration of gender stereotypes as a source of humor” (Abel, 2012, p. 405). One of the stereotypes included relates to the different roles people take up at a barbecue, with women loudly chatting while making salads and men quietly standing around a grill. Both ads used a knowing wink i.e. “a rhetorical strategy by which an advertisement draws attention to itself as a construction” (p. 401). Because the ads were recirculating old gender stereotypes, Abel notes that this resource “mesh[ed] easily with a postfeminist attitude” (p. 401). As a result, the first time around, it was possible to laugh at these stereotypes based on the assumption that sexism was no longer an issue.

In 2010, the aim was to illuminate the extent to which the same ads, “aimed at a particular sociohistoric moment, would now [in 2010] be seen as irrelevant” (p. 402). A second objective was to explore to which extent the new focus groups’ answers were similar or different from the original study. One of the most relevant findings stems from this objective. There was a stark difference between the responses of the young women: in 2000 their responses were marked by an “unrelenting optimism, fuelled by an absolute assumption of equality and choice” (p. 416). Ten years later, the young women’s responses “strongly suggest[ed] that their experiences with their male peers [had] not been as equal as they would have liked” (2012, p. 416). Abel analyzes this difference in light of women’s changing struggles in the past two

decades, and their impact on the lives of these young women. By the late 1990s, women had achieved what seemed a great deal in terms of equality, which infused the participants responses with optimism. This was realized linguistically in their use of the word “choice”. Ten years later, responses evince that despite past advances, full equality was elusive (Abel, 2012).

In summary, advertising as a genre often utilizes indirect resources to covertly communicate the reason for buying. The more directly and explicitly the reason for buying is articulated, on the other hand, the closer the ad is to a reason ad. The more indirect an ad is, the closer it is to a prototypical tickle ad. Indirectness causes the viewer to infer the reason for buying via implicature. Inferences are perceiver-dependent, i.e., different viewers may read the same ad and accept or reject its dominant reading to varying degrees (Hall, 1973). Research such as Abel’s (2012) suggests that socio-historic conditions may have an effect on such readings.

### **3. Gender representation: State of the field**

The first part of this section articulates the importance of the media as a site of research and introduces the concepts of performativity and intersectionality. I interweave theoretical developments feminist theory with their impact on gender representation research. The remainder of the section focuses on the main findings of research on portrayals on film and TV.

Researchers examine the media because “media texts [...] construct hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as ‘reality’” (Carter & Steiner, 2004, p. 2). While dominant discourses tend to be validated (Buciferro, 2012; Iadivito, 2014), media texts also offer a space for the disruption of hegemonic discourses, hence becoming “a site of struggle for the visibility and audibility of different social groups” (Cebrelli & Arancibia, 2010, para. 2, my translation). Research on gender representation has focused on presence/absence from the screen,

but also presence/absence behind the camera (i.e., producers, writers, directors, cameramen, and so on). When groups are present, research on gender representation seeks to illuminate the quality of their representation. In other words, the focus is to what degree such groups are portrayed stereotypically. Over the last four decades, research in the field has covered a wide range of media, from print and TV to digital media, and has traced changes in gender representation.

Research on gender representation took off in the 70s and initially focused on the presence or absence of women in the media, taking special interest in sexist and stereotyped portrayals in popular culture (Byerly, 2012). In the 80s, a conceptualization of gender as, in which masculinity and femininity were both defined in relation to one another (Cameron, 2005). This conceptualization brought about a focus on how women, as opposed to men, were portrayed in the media. In the following decade, there were two major developments. First, Butler (1997/2013) put forward that gender is performative: “it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (p. 462, emphasis in the original). What Butler is suggesting is that gender is produced and reproduced: “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (p. 465). It is in acts, performative texts, that gender identities come into being.

Second, gender came to be understood as situated. In other words, gender construction looks different across societies and time periods. Gender further intersects with other categories such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and ability, among others (Collins, 2005; Collins & Bilge, 2020). Each of these categories “are not discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but rather build on each other and work together; and [...], while often invisible, these intersecting power relations affect all aspects of the social world” (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2). Collins and

Bilge understand the focus on “intersectionality as a critical endeavor” (p. 70) which is in synergy with praxis to bring about social change. All of these intersectional categories or identities are performative in Butler’s (1997/2013) sense of the word as well: they are also brought into being – they are constituted – through action.

Intersectionality shifted the focus from “men” versus “women” as fixed categories to specific men and women bound to a specific socio-historic context and belonging to specific race and class categories, among others; and, as a result, the focus has shifted from hegemonic constructions of gender to alternative constructions (Cameron, 2005). Indeed, for Collins and Bilge (2020), “working at the intersections consists of using the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised groups to broaden and deepen understandings of human life and behavior” (p.42). Learning about alternative constructions additionally illuminates hegemonic constructions. This is explored in Connell’s (2005) ethnography on masculinities. Connell posits that there is a hierarchical relation among masculinities in which marginalized constructions of masculinity are subservient to hegemonic masculinity. Research on gender representation has also followed this trend as well. In the remainder of this subsection, I present an overview of intersectional inquiries into gender representation and address some of the work that has been done in the context of Argentina.

In their state of the field survey on film and TV gender representation, Byerly and Ross (2006) point out that there has been a shift and women are more commonly portrayed as strong and independent. However, they further note that **some** women are still **absent** from the screen: women of color, disabled women, older women, and lesbians, among others, “are often absent in circumstances when they would be present in real life” (p. 29). Other studies suggest that ethnic minorities rarely have leading roles, appearing instead in supporting roles to guide the leading

lady in her journey, with Black women overrepresented in this category (Matamala & Abraham, 2016). Additionally, when minorities are featured, they are more likely to be portrayed stereotypically (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Matamala & Abraham, 2016).

Wilson-Brown and Szczur (2016) trace the representation of African-American people in US media from the 1950s to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The authors interweave sociohistorical developments with their discussion of African American representation and point out a shift in representation as a result of the civil rights movement and Black power movement, which shook the construction of national identity. Their analysis of TV series produced by ShondaLand Productions suggests that traits of the early archetypes of Black characters are still present in the media landscape. Nonetheless, they additionally argue that there is tension between the message the producers and showrunners<sup>14</sup> may want to convey, and the need to make such political messages palatable to a wider audience for the shows to be successful.

In their examination of common television and film stereotypes, Matamala and Abraham (2016) contend that women in leadership positions in police procedurals in the US were portrayed as communal caretakers before 1970. *Charlie's Angels* in the 70s broke from this tradition and gave rise to a new portrayal, still present in 21<sup>st</sup>-century film and TV: the *runway-ready ringleader*. According to Matamala and Abraham, “[t]he runway-ready ringleader myth portrays women with model-like beauty, but also the physically aggressive leadership of a male hero character like the fictional character of James Bond” (p. 213). These women are portrayed as strong and independent, thus challenging some gender stereotypes, but the actors conform “in very obvious ways to the stereotypes of normative femininity, being beautiful, slender, and white” (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 26).

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<sup>14</sup> Matamala and Abraham (2016) explain that the showrunner role is relatively new. Showrunners wear many hats in the creation and production of a series.

Along with this shift in representation of women in crime shows, other work has focused on the representation of women in a variety of leadership positions. Yost (2016) examines women presidents or prime ministers in sci-fi shows in US and British TV and finds that women in these roles are portrayed either as assertive leaders or as weak and tentative in the face of a crisis. The author argues that this kind of show is more likely to have a woman in such a role, suggesting even the mere fact of having a woman leader situates the narrative in the future. Yost discusses that the narrative is not bound to a sociohistorical context (i.e., it takes place in an often distant fictionalized future, disjointed from the present), making it difficult to “contextualiz[e] leadership progression” (Yost, 2016, p. 206). With regard to leadership positions in government in dramas set in contemporary times, Rodgers, Yeomans, and Halliday (2016) portrayals in the US and the UK show both men and women as equally capable of countering terrorism or having a self-serving nature. Some examples of the former can be found in the US series *24* (Cochran et al., 2001) or the UK *Spooks* (Wolstencroft et al., 2002). Examples of self-serving nature, on the other hand, abound in *House of Cards* (Willimon et al., 2013) and *Scandal* (Rhimes et al., 2002). Rodgers, Yeomans, and Halliday (2016) further note the stark contrast between the way women in senior political positions are portrayed in TV and film and the way real women in politics are scrutinized in the media about their appearance, rather than their policymaking.

There has also been work on non-fiction TV and print media. Rakow and Kranich (1991) find that women in US news shows are presented as a homogenous group and tend to speak for organizations and institutions, such as government agencies, museums, and companies, among others. In a textual analysis of Bulgarian newspapers during the communist and postcommunist periods, Ibroscheva and Stover (2012) find that women politicians were portrayed in both periods following “the standards of deeply ingrained, patriarchal conventions” (pp. 48-49). Both

during communism and post communism, coverage on women politicians reinforced “their traditional roles as good mothers, wives, and daughters; loyal worker bees; or simply objects of the male gaze” (p. 48). Del-Teso-Craviotto’s (2006) study on gender ideologies in magazines in the US also supports the finding that women are portrayed as a homogenous group. With regard to the professions, the analysis further suggests differences regarding “what positions women occupy, and what role work plays on women’s lives” (p. 2011). For instance, the concordance analysis of the lemma “work” shows that magazines, despite sometimes depicting women in progressive terms, contain “general references to work [that] do not usually challenge social structures but place the burden of change on individual women” (p. 2012).

For the last decade, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media<sup>15</sup> has produced a series of reports examining on-screen and behind the scenes representation in terms of race, gender, age, ability, and LGBTQIA+ status, among others, in the US. In 2021 alone, the Institute’s research program has covered the representation of Black women in Hollywood, the composition of writers’ rooms, with special consideration of underrepresented writers, and representation in advertising for digital media, such as Google<sup>TM</sup> and Facebook<sup>TM</sup>. Inspired by earlier work of the Geena Davis Institute, Duhau and Wenceslau (2016) produced a similar report surveying the 10 most watched Argentinean movies in a three-year period (2010-2013). According to the report, women are more likely to be depicted as homemakers and to be objectified. Furthermore, women are underrepresented behind the camera i.e., they are less likely to be hired as screenwriters, producers, and directors, among others. While queer people are still underrepresented, people of color did not even make it in the report (Duhau & Wenceslau, 2016). The results of this report

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<sup>15</sup> <https://seejane.org/>

are undoubtedly impacted by the exclusion of independent and activist films but speak volumes in terms of what mainstream representation is like.

Also in the Argentinean context, Soich (2016) analyzes the discursive representation of trans people in non-fiction shows in Argentinean TV from 1993-2010, before the passing of the Gender Identity Law in 2012, which granted people the right to self-determine their gender identity and to more easily access a national identity card with their preferred name and self-perceived identity. Soich finds that discursive representations on these shows helped maintain the status quo by “reinforce[ing] stereotypes underlying discrimination; conceal[ing] the familial, social, and State agents that generate exclusion; and disregard[ing] travestis<sup>16</sup> as collective subjects entitled to rights” (p. 232).

Research has focused on a wide array of media, but this section summarizes mostly work on film and TV, particularly fiction. Findings suggest that certain groups of women, particularly queer, of color, or disabled, are underrepresented. In addition, when they are present, they tend to be stereotyped. Work on representation behind the scenes also suggests that these same groups are underrepresented in other jobs in the industry, such as producing, writing, and directing, to name a few. Analyses of print media suggest women are presented as a homogenous group. In sum, while representation has changed in the last four decades or so, it is still stereotyped and limited, with certain groups being having less quantity and quality of representations than others.

#### **4. Gender representation in advertising**

The first section of this chapter surveyed mostly work on TV and film and the second section touched upon how different audiences may perceive gender meanings in ads. This section

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<sup>16</sup> The word travesti is a pejorative term for trans people that has been reappropriated for activism (Soich, 2016).

focuses on research on gender representation in advertising. This strand of research has focused on both print (Behm-Morawitz, 2017; Chi & Baldwin, 2004; Dowling, 1978; Shinoda et al., 2021; Velasco-Sacristán & Fuertes-Olivera, 2006; Zotos & Tsihla, 2014), and TV and video ads (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Del Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009; Gill, 2009; Martín-Llaguno & Navarro-Beltrá, 2013; Noriega, 2012; Nölke, 2018; Persaud et al., 2018). Some of this work, has applied an intersectional framework to the study of advertising (Behm-Morawitz, 2017; Gill, 2009; Nölke, 2018; Persaud et al., 2018; Shinoda et al., 2021). In the remainder of this subsection, I present an overview of the research on gender representation from various perspectives.

Dowling (1978) analyzed sex-role stereotypes in Australian magazines in the early seventies. The analyses yielded a predominance of decorative and family roles for women, which the author argued was “well matched to the Australian woman’s dominant perceived role of mother-family” (p.72). Dowling further suggested that advertising mirrors society and “transmit[s] the currently held value and belief systems of a particular society” (pp. 71-72). With this statement, Dowling was supporting the mirror argument, i.e., advertising mirrors society. The opposing argument is the mold argument, i.e., advertising instills values and beliefs. More recent literature suggests that, when it comes to the mirror vs mold argument, the truth lies somewhere in between the two ends of the continuum (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014).

Chi and Baldwin (2004) analyze US and Taiwanese ads featured in magazines in 1988 and 1998. The magazines’ topics included women’s fashion, business, and general interest. They find that, across contexts, males were more likely to be portrayed in working roles. Conversely, females were more likely to be portrayed in non-working roles. This tendency held for both 1988 and 1998, although by 1998 more women were portrayed in working roles. Velasco-Sacristán

and Fuertes-Olivera (2006) analyze a corpus of ads published in *British Cosmopolitan* in 1999 and 2000 and also find that ads resort to metaphors which communicate sexist messages less explicitly.

Behm-Morawitz (2017) and Shinoda, Veludo-de-Oliveira, and Pereira (2021) do intersectional content analyses of print advertising. Behm-Morawitz (2017) analyzes US magazine ads for video games. The analysis shows that “minority and female characters appear significantly less frequently” (p. 227). The results also suggest an association between gender and violent behavior, and race and violent behavior: male characters were more likely to appear in violent games and Asian characters were more likely to be portrayed displaying violent behavior. With regard to weapons, Asians tended to hold swords, Blacks guns, and Whites were more likely to be portrayed without any weapons (Behm-Morawitz, 2017). Shinoda et al. (2021) focus on Brazilian print advertising from 1995-2015. Their longitudinal study shows a decline in the portrayals of people in traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, they note that older and bigger women were more likely to appear in dependency and housewife roles. While most women in these roles were fair-skinned, Shinoda et al. additionally report that the housewife role was “strongly associated with Asian women”. Another relevant finding pertains women who embodied at least two marginalized intersections, such as *elderly black women*: out of a sample of 7,850 ads, only 21 contained portrayals of such women (Shinoda et al., 2021).

Research on TV advertising paints a similar picture. Del Saz-Rubio (2018a) analyzes a corpus of contemporary British ads from the MATVA corpus, a British corpus of ads recorded between 2009-2011. Del Saz-Rubio’s analysis indicates that women are more likely to be portrayed in non-remunerated scenarios when they appear alone, but the distribution evens out when there are both women and men in the scenario. Del Saz-Rubio (2018b, 2019) additionally

works on the portrayal of female and male identities on the advertising of toiletries in a corpus of ads selected from the *Advertlog* database. In the 2018 paper, Del Saz-Rubio analyzed female portrayal in TV ads aired in the US and South Africa after 2000. The findings suggest that some ads implicitly link the use of the products to “the less tangible promise of [...] a happy romantic/sexual life” (p. 60), while others imply that product consumption is a means to solve inner emotional struggles and gain confidence. In other words, these ads present women as passive beings who experience emotional struggles and are empowered through the consumption of beauty products (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018b).

The 2019 paper, on the other hand, surveyed a corpus of ads aired in English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia between 2010-2017. This time around, Del Saz-Rubio (2019) analyzed the portrayal of male identities. The results indicate that some ads still “present the idea that masculinity and femininity stand at opposing ends” (p. 201) by emphasizing men’s inherently different approach to grooming. Men are portrayed approaching skin care with speed, practicality and resourcefulness, while women are depicted in the background as needing much more time to complete their skin care routine. The ads deploy extreme close-ups of women’s body parts, such as a woman’s bare long legs around a man’s neck, which not only objectifies women but also suggests closeness and sexual intimacy between the represented participants. This way, the ads construe a heterosexual object of affection for men who are shown taking part in an activity traditionally ascribed to women. In this manner, the ads manage to leverage societal expectations of heterosexuality and construe a masculinity that shares many of the traits of Connell’s (2005) hegemonic masculinity (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). In other words, because they construe a hegemonic masculinity, these ads get

away with placing men in situations traditionally associated with women, such as using skin care products.

An innovative aspect of Del Saz-Rubio's papers (2018b, 2019) is the inclusion of tested interpretations derived from the ads in the corpus. Participants in the study were asked to watch the ads and answer a survey. The survey included a set of possible interpretations for each ad and participants were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the interpretations. This instrument allowed Del Saz-Rubio to empirically test implied assumptions derived from the ads and gauge to which extent the audience related to the qualitative analysis. This statistical analysis supports interpretations relating to assumptions derived from the ads, such as that "men think originally" and "men can find a way to overcome obstacles or difficulties" (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019, p. 212). The cumulative effect of these ads is to universalize the embodied experience of the subjects on the screen by presenting it as fixed. Furthermore, because the audience is meant to relate to the represented participants, these ads set the bar for expectations regarding gendered behaviors. Indeed, in interviews with six young men, Benwell (2005) reported that the interviewees attempted to distance themselves from the feminized traits associated with the use of grooming products.

Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck (2009) analyze a corpus of Spanish and British ads for feminine hygiene products recorded from national and local TV channels between 2002-2008<sup>17</sup>. The analysis reveals that to create a sense of group membership between the represented participants and the audience, advertisers use "female models and [recreate] common situations which are familiar to the female audience" (p. 2542). In addition, the authors report that the voiceover contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of complicity between the models and the

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<sup>17</sup> The ads were downloaded from [pro.spotstv.com](http://pro.spotstv.com) and [www.visit4info.com](http://www.visit4info.com).

audience, which reinforces the sense of group membership. Noriega<sup>18</sup> (2012) adds that close shots are deployed to construe closeness between the represented participants and the audience.

Noriega's analysis focuses on three ads for products and explores how discourses surrounding beauty and health can be consolidated in advertising. Noriega notes that brands often include celebrities who endorse their products in ads. Celebrity endorsement implies that viewers can gain access to "the level of physical capital (ergo, power) that celebrities have" (p. 55) if they share in the same consumption patterns. Physical capital is an elaboration of Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital and refers to the body as a resource in social life (Shilling, 1991). Celebrities are often portrayed in two different "realities": the glamorous lifestyle a famous person is assumed to have and the everyday lifestyle ordinary people have (Noriega, 2012). In Noriega's analysis, this dualism serves to conflate beauty and health: on the one hand, beauty is key to celebrities' careers; on the other hand, health takes center stage in their role as moms – a role which women celebrities often take up. The message to the viewer is, then, that product consumption is a means to attain both health and beauty.

In the context of Spain, Pennock-Speck (2016) analyzes stereotype reversal in ads which include physical force perpetrated by females on their male partners. In the ads, women are depicted slapping the hands of their partners or giving them a blow with a pillow. In the ads, this behavior disciplines the men, which makes the women seem in control. Nonetheless, it is this control that allows their male partners to display childish behavior. Therefore, rather than reversing the status-quo, these ads reinforce stereotypes.

In a quantitative comparative analysis of TV ads from the US, Spain, Mexico, and Argentina, Martín-Llaguno and Navarro-Beltrá (2013) explore whether the presence or absence

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<sup>18</sup> This is an MA Thesis at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada). The author does not disclose whether the ads were aired on Canadian television, although this seems likely.

of gender bias in TV advertising correlates to legislation aimed at preventing the circulation of stereotyped and discriminatory messages in the media. The ads were selected from a pool of ads submitted at *El Sol: El Festival Iberoamericano de la Comunicación Publicitaria* in 2009. Out of the four countries under study, three have legislation in place: Ley orgánica de medidas de protección integral contra la violencia de género (Spain, 2004), Ley general de acceso a las mujeres a una vida sin violencia de género (Mexico, 2007), and Ley de protección integral para prevenir, sancionar y erradicar la violencia contra las mujeres (Argentina, 2009). The analysis suggests that legislative efforts do not seem to impact ad content: US ads portray social actors in a more egalitarian manner even when there is no legislation in place. By contrast, ads from Spain exhibit more inequality in spite of the legislation being in place for longer than in Argentina and Mexico. Sexist stereotypes were also identified in the ads from Argentina, although it should be noted that at the time the corpus was constructed *la ley de protección integral* had just been passed, so it could not have influenced the content of the ads. The analysis further reveals that men are more likely to be portrayed in professional settings and the public sphere, while women are typically portrayed in the home and in parenting roles. When women have a professional role, it is typically in the service industry.

Gill (2009), Nölke (2018), and Persaud, Grauerholz, and Anthony (2018) offer intersectional analyses of TV and video advertising. Gill (2009) is perhaps the first of such analyses and focuses on the UK context. Gill “seeks to interrogate the notion of ‘sexualization’ as a way of understanding the proliferation of sexually explicit imagery within contemporary advertising” (p. 138). With the analysis, Gill shows that sexualization is not a homogenous process: “different people are ‘sexualized’ in different ways and with different meanings – and indeed many remain excluded” (p. 138). In particular, Gill notes that only certain male bodies are

portrayed in an erotic manner and lesbian women and gay men are not portrayed in the same way. Images of toned, young, male bodies had proliferated in the decades prior to Gill's paper. Moreover, when lesbian women appear in ads, they fulfill a male fantasy. Gill also suggests that nonconforming queer identities remain excluded (2009).

Nölke's (2018) analysis of audiovisual ads for fashion, packaged foods, travel services, and alcohol brands, among others centers around LGBT representation in mainstream media. The ads, made for the USA and EU contexts in 2009-2015, sport an increase in LGBT representation throughout the period studied. The most represented group were Caucasian, middle-aged, middle-class, gay men and the least represented were trans and bisexual people with diverse racial and class intersections. Nölke's analysis additionally "highlights how the erasure of multiply marginalized groups in mainstream advertising continues to perpetuate a heteronormative, domesticized version of 'gayness'" (p. 224).

Persaud et al. (2018) analyze video advertisements for tech products and services in the US. Their content analysis documents gender and racial disparities which "reinforce the association between technology and masculinity, as well as whiteness and youth" (p. 137). Female characters were portrayed using devices in a careful and slow manner, while male characters showed more confidence and agency while using the products advertised. When children were present, women were seen encouraging kids to use the products. By contrast, men were not depicted allowing kids to use any devices. In terms of race, white males were the most represented group, with white females as a close second. Elderly adults were practically absent, and the same goes for Latinas. Latinas were more visible than their female counterparts but, when compared to the remainder of the corpus, they were still not as visible as other intersections of gender and race (Persaud et al., 2018).

The literature suggests that advertising portrays people in stereotyped gendered ways though there seems to be differences across ad types. Ads for grooming products, such as lotions and cleansers, conceptualize gender as a fixed binary, with femininity and masculinity standing at opposing ends (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018b, 2019). Masculinity and femininity, then, comprise a series of set attributes that align with the active/passive binary. At work, men are more likely to appear in remunerated positions when they are alone in the scenario; however, when both men and women appear together, they are equally likely to be depicted in remunerated positions (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018a). Some of the studies surveyed consider some contextual variables, like laws aimed at preventing gender violence (Martín-Llaguno & Navarro-Beltrá, 2013) and gender violence in general (Pennock-Speck, 2016). Legislation, it would seem, does not necessarily have its intended impact, though perhaps it is only a step in a gradual slow process of change.

In conclusion, research on gender representation suggests that on-screen portrayals in advertising are still stereotyped and do not match the more progressive sectors of society. Representation in advertising has been examined from various theoretical and methodological standpoints, with some surveyed studies deploying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal analysis (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Del Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009, 2009; Noriega, 2012). Several studies use quantitative and qualitative content analysis, and a smaller portion of studies incorporate an intersectional lens (Behm-Morawitz, 2017; Gill, 2009; Nölke, 2018; Persaud et al., 2018; Shinoda et al., 2021). With some exceptions (Chi & Baldwin, 2004; Martín-Llaguno & Navarro-Beltrá, 2013; Shinoda et al., 2021), most studied contexts are in the Global North.

This research adds to the literature by exploring gender representation in TV advertising in Argentina. Argentina is not only an understudied context, but also is a context undergoing significant social change. With this in mind, the objectives of this research are to examine the

representation of femininity/femininities in Argentinean TV advertising – an understudied context – and to gauge whether any of the more diverse constructions of identity present in society have permeated advertising. An additional objective is to contribute to the field of multimodal discourse studies by adding to our current understanding of how visual and verbal resources combine in meaning-making. To address these objectives and answer the research questions, I conduct a Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis informed by feminist theory. The next section outlines some of the theoretical and methodological considerations and highlights the rationale for this methodology.

## **5. Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

The main aim of Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (henceforward CMDA) is to illuminate the relation between ideology, discourse, and society (Djonov & Zhao, 2013).

Following van Dijk (2006), ideologies are

the basis of a social group's self-image [and as such] organize its identity, actions, aims, norms and values, and resources, as well as its relations to other social groups. (p. 115)

Fairclough (2015) adds that ideology is “essentially tied to power relations” (p. 107).

Power asymmetry is a dimension of ideology relevant here because representations about social groups are reproduced and circulated through the media and, as a result, understandings of the messages communicated through the media can yield insights about how ideologies play out in society. It should be further noted that there is additionally power asymmetry in the reproduction arena: some ideologies are validated while others are not. The media, in particular, tend to reproduce dominant/hegemonic ideologies (Buciferro, 2012). Hegemony is used here to mean “an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system

of meanings, values and actions which are *lived*” (Apple, 2012, p. 22, emphasis in the original). Ideologies are hegemonic in relation to other ideologies that are relegated or marginal.

CMDA, as opposed to other approaches to discourse analysis, focuses on **multimodal discourse**. As a starting point, **discourse** is “language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 53). This means that it is embedded in society and its communicative intent is dialectically determined by the conditions in which it is produced and interpreted (Fairclough, 2015). Often, discourse is assumed to be made of verbal language, however, spoken verbal texts are generally accompanied by gestures and facial expression (Fairclough, 2015). Written texts, likewise, need include more than verbal language: textbooks often include illustrations and the same goes for other written texts. Digital texts and other texts made for visual mediums, such as advertising, additionally include a variety of elements: photos, verbal language either in written or spoken form, and even music. These texts have become prevalent in our society.

In order to examine multimodal texts, we need an analytical tool that enables analysis of both written and verbal resources and how these resources combine to construe meaning. Advertising combines verbal and visual meaning-making resources which makes necessary the integration of analytical categories for its analysis. Oteíza and Pinuer (2016) theorize an intermodal integration “for the analysis of History textbooks, especially for the analysis of the unit ‘image + caption’” (p. 12). Similarly, I deploy appraisal and multimodal analyses to tease out how meanings around identity are constructed intersemiotically. Additionally, the value of this integrated approach lies in its potential to contribute to the development of analytical tools for the analysis of video-based texts.

Since advertising often makes use of communication with varying degrees of (in)directness, I deploy an appraisal analysis to examine how evaluative language is used to talk

about products and those who use them. Evaluative meanings in discourse further have the potential to construe “social positionings and alignments” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 4). Martin and White’s (2005) appraisal is additionally a robust framework for understanding how ideologies, understood as “set of values”, are discursively constructed (Thompson & Hunston, 2000, p. 8).

To explore the visual elements of advertising, I draw on a multimodal analysis and a visual appraisal analysis (Economou, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) grammar of visual design is a tripartite approach in which elements of visual composition add interactive, representational, and compositional meanings; whereas Economou’s (2009) framework for visual analysis maps out how evaluative meanings are construed in images. These frameworks for verbal and visual analyses are further detailed in the second half of Chapter 3.

The combination of these verbal and visual methodological tools can yield insights on how different modes of semiosis work together to construct meaning and how these meanings cluster around femininity and national identity. In addition, the exploration of advertising as a visually based text contributes to the literature by adding to “our current understandings of visual meaning” (Painter et al., 2014, p. 3) and by expanding the development of frameworks suited to the analysis texts which combine meaning-making resources from various modes.

CMDA, then, looks at texts which deploy different modalities and does this from a **critical** standpoint. Undertaking a critical analysis involves understanding the context in which texts are produced and asking questions about “the social problems that emerge in situations of social injustice” (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 70). The ultimate goal of this critique is to improve social reality (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Fairclough, 2015). Because this project aims at examining

gender representation and because gender practices are ultimately situated, it is important to incorporate social theory to undertake this enterprise. Social theory allows for the consideration of the social conditions of production and interpretation which add to the interpretative analysis. For this research I use an intersectional lens (Collins & Bilge, 2020) to examine the relationship gender, national identity, and advertising in Argentina.

These frameworks and theories come together in an integrated bottom-up approach fashioned after Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (2015). This approach is bottom-up because it starts with a description of the verbal and visual resources in the data. After the descriptive analysis has been completed, patterns across texts are identified. In an interpretative stage of analysis, I relate these findings to the conditions of production and interpretation. It is an integrated approach because each higher level of analysis incorporates the one right below it. The advantage of this approach is that it is not limited to the textual properties of the data. Instead, it articulates such textual properties with the intent of the text and the conditions under which it is produced and interpreted. The first half of Chapter 3 discusses the construction of the corpus and the second half details the integrated approach to data analysis as well as other methodological considerations.

## CHAPTER 3

### 1. Chapter overview

The present chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first half, I describe the data collection procedures and the criteria for ad selection. This section also contains information regarding the brands and ads analyzed. The second half of the chapter delves into data analysis. First, I present an overview of the bottom-up approach used for analysis and lay down theoretical and methodological considerations regarding the unit of analysis and data transcription. The remaining sections define and illustrate the categories of analysis with examples from the corpus.

### 2. Data collection

#### 2.2. Corpus construction

The corpus comprises 16 TV commercials aired between August 19 and September 13, 2019 on *TELEFE* and *El Trece* during prime time. Commercials selected have a running time of 25-40 seconds and belong to two categories: (1) packaged foods and (2) skin care. There are seven commercials in the first category and nine in the second. The rationale behind the time cut-out was to have a homogenous corpus. In addition, I favored longer ads because it seemed these were more likely to have a mini drama with more substance to analyze. With the exception of *La Serenísima 1*, all of the ads have women as their represented participants. However, it should be noted that an ad for a packaged food was excluded from the data based on the running time criterion. In this excluded ad, the man was portrayed in a parenting role, which, as I will show in Chapter 5, tends to be associated with women in the home setting. While this could be a methodological limitation of this study, the man in question was not in a home setting. Rather, he

was at a sports center with his son. All things considered, including this ad in the corpus would have probably not altered the findings much.

Previous studies on gender representation analyzed corpora of ads for grooming products, so the inclusion of skin care ads was deliberate, in order to compare current findings with previous work. Ads in this category feature creams and lotions. Ads for other grooming products were excluded because they did not meet the selection criteria i.e., they were too short and/or did not address the Argentinean audience exclusively. The situation for the packaged foods ads is different. Nölke (2018) analyzes some ads in this category. However, the findings are not broken down by ad category. I decided to include ads of this type to gauge how these group of ads manage gendered behaviors and expectations and to what extent they employ the same means that ads for grooming products do. Furthermore, the ads publicize Argentinean products or engage with the Argentinean audience specifically by including local celebrities, which can yield insights as to how the local culture and local identities are included. With the exception of La Serenísima 1 and Royal, all of the ads feature women. Table 3.1 lists the ads in the corpus, including the station on which they aired.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many of these are “tickle” ads, which include mini-dramas with a narrative element which often “functions only obliquely to the commodity [they seek] to promote” (Simpson, 2001, p. 601). In this corpus, the narratives often include scenes from the represented participants lives, such as family or workplace. The narrative component, in turn, allows for the inclusion of a musical soundtrack and “intertextual echoes of other texts, such as films, popular television shows (or even other advertising copy)” (p. 601). All these elements are not necessarily present together in all the ads in the corpus for example, along with the mini-drama, music features prominently in La Salteña, but not in others. Another example is Royal’s

deployment of intertextuality and interdiscursivity: the ad references Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland” and mimics an Instagram™ story which links it to the social media campaign that accompanied the brand’s campaign.

**Table 2: Ads in the corpus**

Category	Ad	Running time (in seconds)	Aired on
Packaged foods	La Serenísima 1 – Danette 1	25	TELEFE/El Trece
	La Serenísima 2 – Danette 2	25	TELEFE/El Trece
	La Serenísima 3 – Serenito	28	TELEFE/El Trece
	La Serenísima 4 – Yogurísimo	29	TELEFE
	Royal – #FelizNoCumpleaños	30	El Trece
	Unión – Suave y se la banca	29	TELEFE/El Trece
	La Salteña – Sabor irresistible	35	TELEFE/El Trece
Skin care	Cicatricure 1 – Gold lift	39	TELEFE/El Trece
	Cicatricure 2 – Antimanchas	25	TELEFE/El Trece
	Cicatricure 3 – Roll on ojos	26	TELEFE/El Trece
	Cicatricure 4 – Beauty care	27	TELEFE/El Trece
	Cicatricure 5 – Agua defense	31	TELEFE
	Goicoechea – Bomba	31	TELEFE/El Trece
	Teatrical 1 – La roja	30	TELEFE/El Trece
	Teatrical 2 – La amarilla	27	TELEFE/El Trece
	Teatrical 3 – La verde	25	TELEFE/El Trece

Most ads aired on both TELEFE and El Trece, with some exceptions (see Table 1). The Royal ad was only featured on El Trece, the station in which the chefs, Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar, were two of the hosts of the cooking show *Cucinare*. The ad was part of a bigger campaign which encompassed social media presence and the surprise appearance of Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar on other El Trece shows to celebrate the unbirthdays<sup>19</sup> of the stars and crew. In the ad in the corpus, both chefs decide to celebrate the unbirthdays of their own show’s crew. Because their own crew loves the celebration, they decide to surprise the stars and crew of

<sup>19</sup> In the fashion of Lewis Carroll’s narrative, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

other shows<sup>20</sup>. During the weeks I was recording data, two other ads only appeared on TELEFE: La Serenísima 4 – an yogurt ad from a dairy farm – and Cicatricure 5 – a facial cream ad from a lab which produces a variety of skin care products. However, both brands had ads during the same time period airing both on TELEFE and El Trece. It is likely that these ads were later aired on the other station as well.

The second objective of this project is to gauge whether more diverse constructions of identity have permeated advertising. This became the motivation to select ads that addressed the Argentinean audience. Initially, I considered the advertising agency that had produced each ad. However, information regarding the advertising agencies is not equally available for all commercials in the corpus. Don Buenos Aires is behind La Salteña while the Danette ads (La Serenísima 3 & 4 in Table 1) were produced by VLMY&R Argentina. According to the information in their websites<sup>21</sup>, Don Buenos Aires has a sister agency in Colombia but seems to have started out in Argentina. The company's website also lists works for other Latin American markets, such as Mexico. VLMY&R Argentina, on the other hand, is a daughter company of the multinational VLMY&R – an advertising agency resulting from the merger of VLM and Young & Rubicam. Thus, considering the advertising agency was not a good measure to determine that the ads were addressing the Argentinian audience. This became the motivation to include ads that promote a local product or are endorsed by local celebrities.

With the exception of Royal<sup>22</sup>, ads in the packaged foods category belong to traditionally Argentinean food brands and products. The companies producing the products, however, are in

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<sup>20</sup> While I was collecting data, they surprised game show host Guido Kaczka (September 11, 2019). As part of the publicity stunt, the chefs shared cake with everyone at the studio while singing and dancing.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.donbue.com/>  
<https://www.vmlyr.com/es-ar/argentina>

<sup>22</sup> The Royal ad has local celebrity endorsement.

some cases at least partially owned by larger international groups. For example, La Serenísima started out as a family business in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but later associated with the French Danone to form Danone Argentina and produce jointly certain dairy products. In the late 90s, La Serenísima sold 40% of their shares in Danone Argentina to Danone, giving the French company more control (“Danone Se Extiende En La Serenísima,” 1999). This has had an impact on product branding and labeling: with some products having names that are play on words on Danone – with a La Serenísima logo as well – or on La Serenísima, depending on which company has the rights to the manufacturing. Some examples of these names are Danette, a dessert marketed to adults, Yogurísimo, La Serenísima’s yogurt line, and Serenito, a dessert marketed to children. All these products are all labeled as La Serenísima ads in the corpus, as they all bear the brand’s logo and mention it by name also. Nonetheless, these products are advertised differently: the commercials for Serenito and Yogurísimo are advertised as manufactured by a long-established Argentinean company. These two ads further articulate the reason for buying more explicitly by linking the quality of the products to the quality of the production processes and the commitment this family-owned business has with its consumer base.

The situation for the skin care products is different in this respect. These products are not manufactured by Argentina-based laboratories, but they engage with the Argentinean audience by showcasing local celebrities, such as former high-fashion model Valeria Mazza and model turned actress Araceli González. There is a deliberate choice of celebrity depending on the product advertised. For example, Cicatricure Gold Lift showcases Valeria Mazza walking towards the camera as if she were walking down the runway. She is wearing a gold dress and the room is completely decorated in highly saturated golden tones. Valeria Mazza’s reputation as a

high-couture model and the color palette create an aura of luxuriousness. The target audience are meant to identify with Valeria Mazza in two different ways: (1) as belonging to the same age group, and thus requiring anti-age facial products, and (2) as being able to use the top quality – and likely expensive – products Valeria Mazza uses.

### **3. Data analysis**

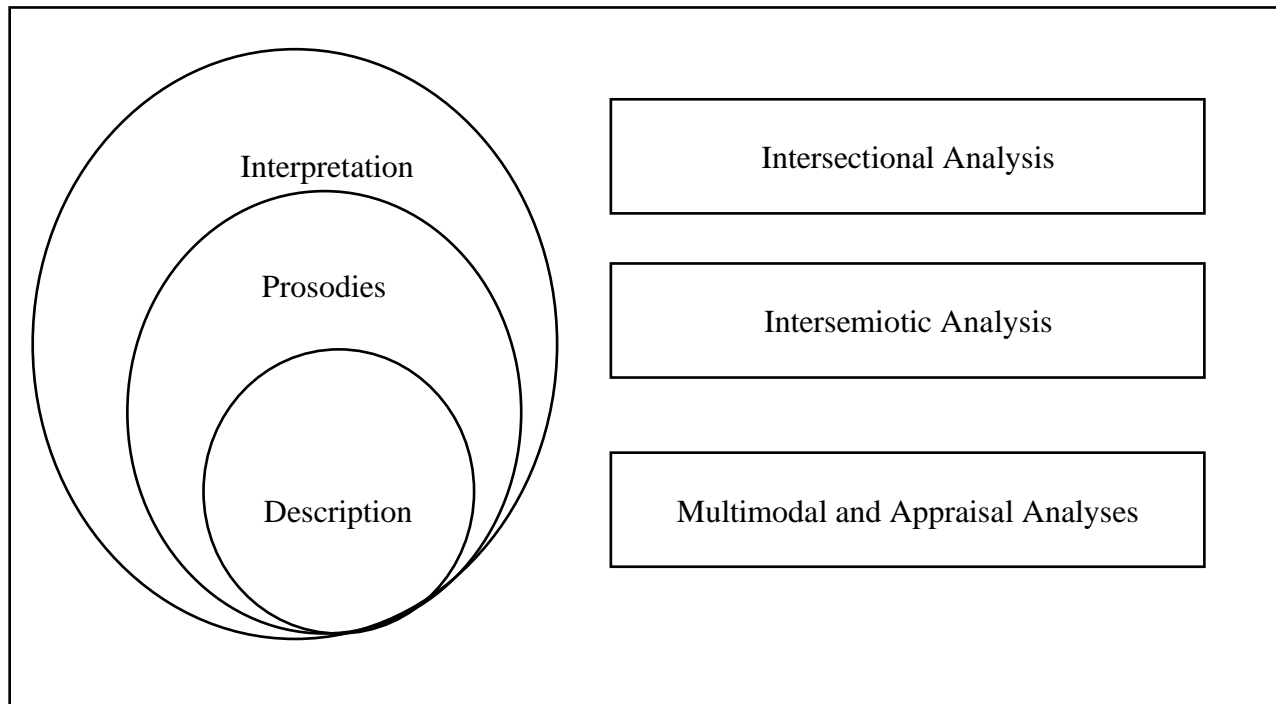
#### **3.1. A bottom-up approach to CMDA**

As stated in Chapter 1, the objective of this project is to examine gender representation, in particular femininity/femininities, in TV advertising and to gauge to which extent more diverse constructions of identity have permeated into commercials. Additionally, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how identities are discursively constructed both verbally and visually. The research questions guiding the inquiry are as follows:

- 3) How are femininities portrayed in advertising? To which extent have more diverse identity constructions permeated into advertising?
- 4) How can those portrayals be interpreted in terms of the sociohistorical context?

To answer these questions, I deployed an integrated three-staged approach to discourse analysis. This is a bottom-up integrated analysis which moves from a descriptive stage to interpretation (Fairclough, 2015). In other words, the analysis starts with a detailed descriptive analysis and zooms out to consider how the data can be re-signified in light of the context of production. Each level of analysis incorporates previous ones to expand them. In Figure 1, this is represented by the internally tangent circles to the left. Each circle stands for a level of analysis and the circles immediately surrounding the lower levels build on the results of the previous levels.

**Figure 1: Integrated approach to CMDA**



The first necessary step within this inquiry is a “description of the different modalities being brought into a relationship within any multimodal text” (Painter et al., 2014, p. 2) For this project, the descriptive step is a close examination of the visual and verbal<sup>23</sup> features of the TV ads in the corpus. To that end, I carried out a multimodal and appraisal analysis of each ad. The multimodal analysis focuses on the visual features, such as the composition and the structure of the ads. The appraisal analysis focuses on both verbal and visual evaluative resources, which build on attitudes towards the social actors and the products advertised. Both these analyses are elaborated on section 2.3. At the intersemiotic level, I consider how visual and verbal resources construe meanings together.

The intersemiotic level is a threshold stage stage constituted by evaluative prosodies which are constructed based on both visual and verbal descriptive analysis. “[I]nterpretations are

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<sup>23</sup> Here, verbal refers to either spoken – including sung – or written language.



generated through a combination of what is in the text and what is ‘in’ the interpreter” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 155). In other words, the analyst’s subjectivity, but also their knowledge of the conditions of production plays a role in this stage. In critical approaches to discourse, interpretation further draws on social theory. As discussed in Chapter 2, gender is performative (Butler, 1997/2013) and intersects with other identity categories. I draw on intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020), “an analytic tool [which] views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another” (p. 2). The main implication behind this framework is that categories like men and women are not universal. Instead, they are shaped in their relationship with categories, such as race and class among others. At this stage, the context of production contributes to illuminating how these categories work together in the current corpus. In Figure 1, the boxes next to the circles show the frameworks and theories employed at each stage.


### **3.2. Multimodal transcription**

A transcription is a dynamic and flexible tool intended to facilitate analysis (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011). Insofar as transcriptions are written representations of spoken and visual discourse, they are partial and can only highlight certain aspects of the original. For this reason, transcriptions are designed and implemented to fit specific analytical needs, and are thus imbued with the analyst’s subjectivity (Bucholtz, 2000). Bezemer and Mavers (2011) further contend that transcriptions are transductions or, in other words, a translation “from one mode to another” (p. 196). In another words, this term highlights that a transcription is a written representation of a text that was initially conceived of for a different mode and for different purposes. This movement from one mode to another enables analysis.

Following Del Saz-Rubio (2018), I devised a simplified transcription to suit the objectives of this project and coded the data manually (see Table 3). The table reads from left to right and the successive rows below show the progression through time. The first column shows the time and sequence, the unit of analysis. A sequence is a unit of content, usually composed of a succession of shots (Aumont & Marie, 2001; Casetti & Di Chio, 2007). An additional methodological consideration regarding the unit of analysis should be made. In this research, I rely solely on the sequence as unit of analysis and do not consider a different unit for verbal language. In other words, while verbal language and musical elements are considered in the analysis, there is no verbal unit of analysis. The motivation behind this decision is purely methodological and pertains to the heterogeneity of the corpus. In terms of spoken discourse, specifically, some ads include dialogue while, in others, represented participants only say a couple of words. Still other ads have planned speeches, whereas others portray more casual conversation. Methodologically, this would have implied different units of analysis for verbal language for each ad, depending on how they treat spoken language. For that reason, I consider the sequence as a unit which encompasses both visual and verbal elements. Table 3 is an example of one sequence from Unión.

**Table 3: Multimodal transcription of one sequence**

Time and sequence	Visual frame	Spoken discourse	Text on screen	Interaction		Representation	Composition
00:00-00:09 Sequence 1		[woman 1] necesito miel porque tengo mucha hambre la pancita		Offer Close shot Oblique angle High angle	caring for child [invoked positive judgment, social sanction, propriety]  suave [evoked visually and via intonation, appreciation, composition]	Narrative structure Actor (caregiver) Goal (child) Setting (bedroom)	Given (child) New (caregiver) Salient (book)
		me hace ruido que con el talento que veo yo acá no podemos llegar al		Offer Medium close shot Frontal angle Level angle Shallow depth of field	me hace ruido [affect, dissatisfaction, invoked, covert]  talento [inscribed positive judgement, social esteem, capacity]	Narrative structure Actor (boss) Goal (employees) Setting (work space)	Center (boss) Margin (employees) Salient (boss)

					<p>se la banca [evoked visually and via intonation, appreciation, composition]</p> <p>se la banca [inscribed positive judgement, social esteem, tenacity]</p>		
		<p>al pino más alto del bosque y ahí</p>		<p>Offer Close shot Oblique angle Level angle</p>	<p>caring for child [insvoked positive judgment, social sanction, propriety]</p> <p>no podemos [heterogloss, contraction, disclaim]</p>	<p>Narrative structure Actor (caregiver) Goal (child) Setting (bedroom)</p>	<p>New (caregiver) Salient (caregiver)</p>

The second column contains a visual frame and the following one, labeled spoken discourse, contains the auditory stimuli, including any dialogue, voiceover and sound effects or lyrics when applicable. The dialogue is presented in standard orthography and includes a closing question mark to note when questions are asked. The next column presents the text on screen, including text that can be read in the labels of the depicted objects when relevant. The remaining three columns present the metafunctional analysis, detailed in the following subsections. There are three columns: interaction, representation, and composition. The column for interaction is further subdivided into two: the first half comprises multimodal categories as conceptualized by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), while the second half contains the appraisal analysis. The model sequence in Table 3 is already coded. In the following subsections, I go into detail on the categories of analysis.

**Table 4: Appraisal groupings**

<b>Who/What is appraised?</b>	<b>Appraisal</b>	<b>Source and sequence</b>
Woman (caregiver)	Suave	Suave (evoked in tone and depicted actions in sequences 1 and 2) Text on screen (sequence 3)
Woman (boss)	Se la banca	Se la banca (evoked in tone of voice and depicted actions in sequences 1 and 2) Text on screen (sequence 3)

Verbal and visual appraisals are later compiled and grouped in a second table. Table 4 is an example from Unión. The first column shows who or what is appraised, in this case, the woman in the ad. The next column contains the appraisals, while the third presents the sources of the appraisals and the sequence in which they appear. The objective of this second layer of

analysis is to identify the patterning of evaluative meanings within ads and, later on, any potential patterns across ads.

### **3.3. Descriptive analysis**

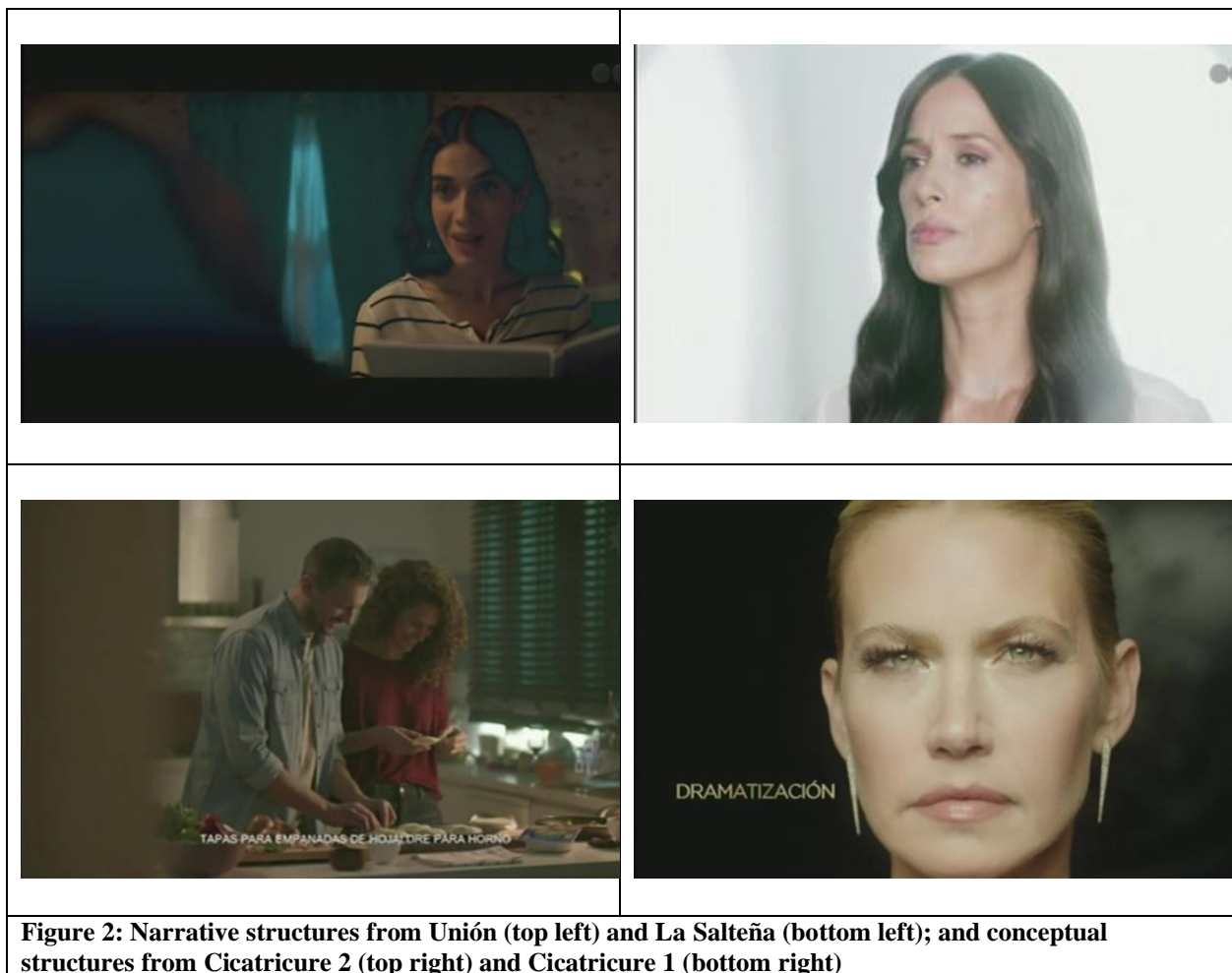
#### **3.3.1. Multimodal analysis**

Multimodality is a social semiotic approach which takes a tripartite view of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Kress and van Leeuwen adopt the notion of metafunction from Michael Halliday's work on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL hereafter). SFL is a theoretical perspective which views language as contributing different kinds of meanings, these meanings give rise to the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Thompson, 2014). This is an analytical distinction: all types of meaning co-occur in language. From a multimodal perspective, the three metafunctions are re-conceptualized as the following: representational, interactional, and compositional. As an analytical tool, the metafunction allows for the identification of meaning-making resources in multimodal texts. The following sections provide a detailed overview of each of the metafunctions and their contribution to meaning in visual composition.

##### **3.3.1.1. Representation**

Visual representations can have different structures: narrative or conceptual. **Narrative structures** portray participants or social actors "*doing* something to or for each other" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59, emphasis in the original). TV advertising mostly resorts to this kind of structure, in which events unfold through time. In Figure 2, the frame on the top left (Unión) portrays a woman reading a bedtime story to a child. There is a vector which follows her eyeline.

Her gaze is directed at the child, who is listening to the story. Thus, this image has a narrative structure. In the still at the bottom left (La Salteña), the represented participants are cooking, also a narrative process. By contrast, in the images on the top and bottom right (Cicatricure 2 and 1, respectively) the women is not carrying out an action: the audience is meant to observe them and note the spots or wrinkles – or the lack thereof – in their skin, the problems that the products can help with. These are examples of images with a **conceptual structure**. In these instances, people are presented as objects of contemplation.



Conceptual structures are of three types: classificatory, analytical, or symbolic.

Classificatory structures present an explicit or implicit taxonomy with a superordinate and

subordinates (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). “*Analytical processes* relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 87, emphasis in the original). The carrier is the whole, and the possessive attributes the parts. “Symbolic processes are about what a participant *means* or *is*” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 105, emphasis in the original). Even when there are human participants, they do not take a narrative posture. The image still on the top right (Figure 2) can be read as having a conceptual structure of the symbolic type: she stands in for women who have skin with imperfections and could benefit from using Cicatricure.

### 3.3.1.2. Interaction

There are three kinds of interaction in visual design. First, represented participants, that is the social actors depicted on screen, interact with each other. Second, represented participants also interact with the audience. Third, the producers of the ad, i.e. the advertiser and the brand, interact with the audience as well. These interactions are enacted via the gaze, the size of frame, and the vertical and horizontal angles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

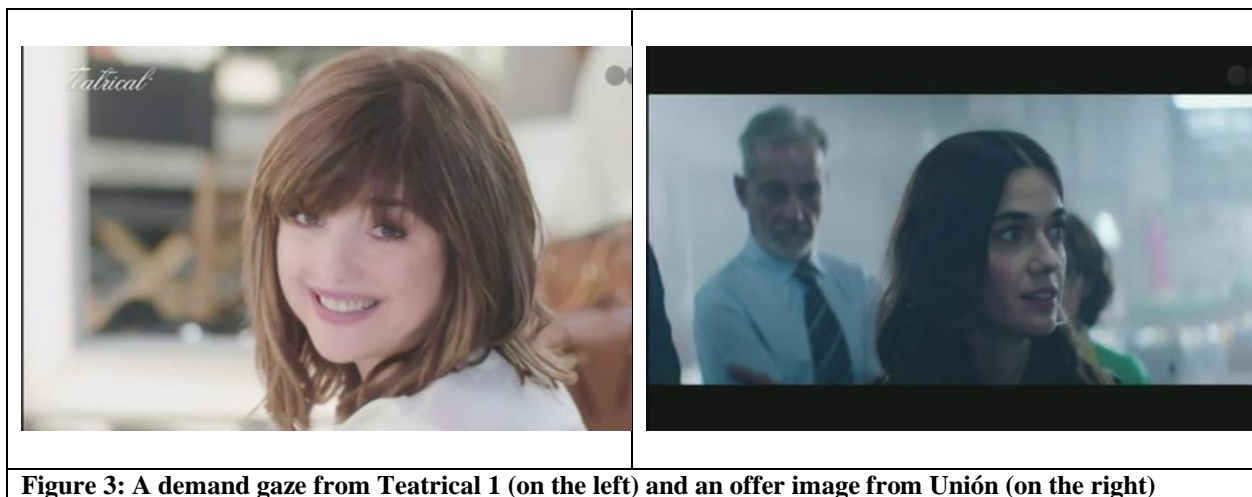


Figure 3: A demand gaze from Teatrical 1 (on the left) and an offer image from Unión (on the right)

Represented participants may direct their gaze to the viewer or not. When they do, as in the Teatrical ads (Figure 3), these are called **demand gazes**. Pictures that address the viewer indirectly are **offer images**: the audience are invited to look on the represented participants “as items of information, objects of contemplation” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 119). The image still on the right (Figure 3) is an example of an offer image. The size of frame enacts social distance. The **size of frame** is “defined in relation to the human body” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 124). Distance is a continuum that, for the purposes of television, goes from an extreme close-up to a very long shot. Figure 4 (on the left) illustrates a very long shot in which the full human figure is in frame. The viewer can further see the setting of the scene clearly. Figure 4 (on the right), on the other hand, illustrates a close-up: only the head and shoulders are in the frame. There are several cut off points in between. The wider the frame, the more background the audience can see. Distance, as enacted in the size of frame, emulates social distance. Close-ups make it seem as if the viewer was standing close to the represented participant, thus creating a sense of closeness and intimacy.

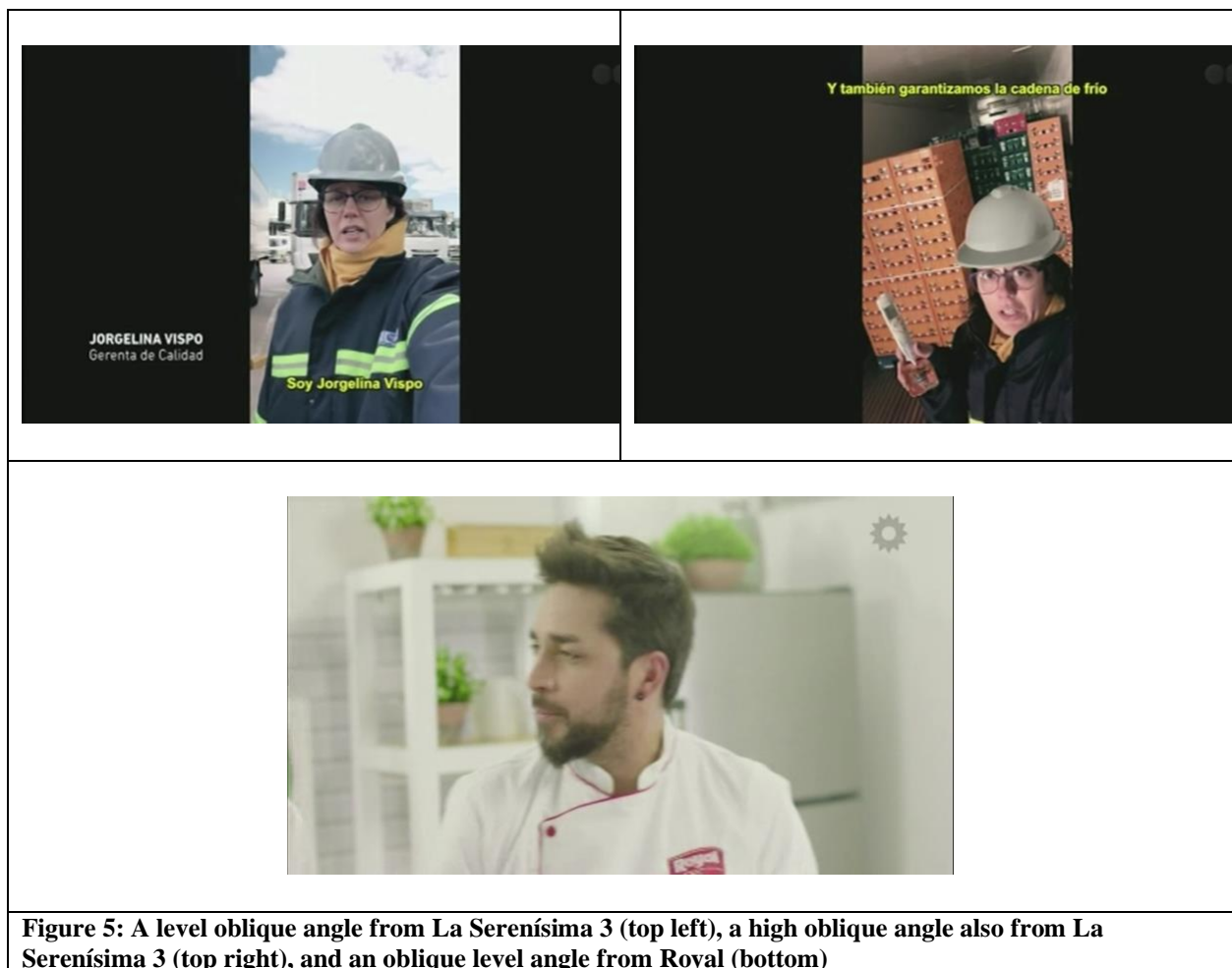


Figure 4: A very long shot from Cicatricure 1 (on the left) and a close-up also from Cicatricure 1 (on the right)

A related concept is that of depth of field, that is “the measurements of the closest and farthest planes in front of the camera lens between which everything will be in sharp focus” (Bordwell & Thompson, 2001, p. 430). Outside of this range, elements will be out of focus. The picture on the right (Figure 3) is an example of this: the woman, who appears closer to the camera, is in sharper focus. The remaining participants, farther from the lens, are in less focus (i.e., blurry). The background is completely out of focus, blurring the setting. A deep depth of field such as this one, suggests internal conflict or struggles of the represented participants (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007).

The **vertical angle** system network offers three choices: high, low, and eye-level. The high angle suggests that the interactive participants (the producers of the image but also the viewer) are in a position of power. Figure 4 is an example of a high angle: the interactive participants view the represented participants from above. A low angle, on the other hand, reverses the power dynamics and puts the represented participants in a position of power (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The interactive participants view the represented participants from below. The eye-level angle, which codes equality, is frequently used in the skin care ads of the corpus (see Figure 3). In these ads, the celebrity or other social actors are portrayed as equals, creating an aura of complicity between them and ordinary people. The **horizontal angle** offers two choices as well: frontal and oblique. This is determined as “a function of the relation between the frontal plane of the image-producer and the frontal plane of the represented participants” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 134). In television, a represented participant directly facing the camera is a frontal angle, such as the right-hand still in Figure 5. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “the difference between the oblique and the frontal angle is the difference between detachment and involvement” (p. 136). An oblique angle encodes

detachment, while the frontal angle encodes involvement. In other words, an oblique angle has the effect of othering the represented participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Figure 5 shows two examples from La Serenísima 3, in which the angles are oblique. The example on the right is also an example of high angle. In the case of television, oblique angles are additionally deployed when two participants are talking to each other. This kind of angle allows their faces and expression to be captured by the camera while giving the illusion that they are facing one another, a strategy that the Royal ad deploys.



**Figure 5: A level oblique angle from La Serenísima 3 (top left), a high oblique angle also from La Serenísima 3 (top right), and an oblique level angle from Royal (bottom)**

### 3.3.1.3. Composition

In a multimodal text, composition relates to two systems present in this corpus: (1) **information value**, and (2) **salience**. There are four information values: left and right, and top and bottom (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Left and right correlate to given and new information. In the example from Goicoechea (Figure 6), the woman is moving to the right. The text on screen, with given information value, reads “*the lotion you use*”. The frame suggests that the woman is moving away from their current product, which is not working, as the ad confirms in subsequent frames. Top and bottom correlate to ideal and real. In the top left frame in Figure 6, the product on the bottom has a real information value, while Brenda Gandini, the actress/model endorsing the product, is at the top with a value of ideal. It would seem that using the products is a means to achieve the social currency the celebrity has. While this is usually realized visually, deictics are shown to be used in this manner as well in this corpus. In Unión, *acá* and *ahí arriba* are used to create this contrast, with *arriba* signifying the ideal: the goals that the group could accomplish by putting their talents (the real) to work. The monologue interweaves two scenarios: the workplace and the home. “*Acá*” and “*arriba*” are both used at work, as shown in the following extract from the ad:

“[at work] *me hace ruido que con el talento que veo yo acá no podemos llegar al* [at home, reading story to child] *al pino más alto del bosque y ahí* [at work] *arriba no dudemos más tenemos todo para alcanzar* [at home, reading story to child] *el panal lleno de miel dulce y rica*” (Unión)



**Figure 6: Real vs ideal from Cicatricure 3 (top left), new vs given from Goicoecha (top right), and salience from La Salteña (bottom)**

Visual items that have more weight are more salient (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Weight can be realized through size: salient items may appear closer to the screen and, as a result, they seem bigger. Items placed at the center of a composition are also more salient (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In the bottom still in Figure 6, the product advertised, as well as the woman's hand, are the salient elements in the composition. Both elements appear closer to the camera and have a central location in the composition, especially the product.

### 3.3.2. Appraisal Framework

Since advertising intends to persuade the viewer/consumer to buy a product, evaluative resources are key in highlighting the positive attributes of products and the lifestyles of those who use them. To that end, I deploy an Appraisal analysis to elucidate how products and especially people are evaluated. Within SFL approaches, evaluative resources articulate interpersonal meanings “at the level of discourse semantics” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 33). Evaluations can be explicit – inscribed – or implicit – evoked – and are always context dependent. Martin and White conceptualize evaluative resources as belonging to three categories: **attitude**, **engagement**, and **graduation**. Economou (2009) later developed the appraisal system networks for the news photo. Economou’s work focuses on news photos, thus, some of the developments of the visual appraisal framework do not directly apply to advertising, particularly in the system of engagement. The subsections below briefly sketch and illustrate verbal and visual appraisal resources.

#### 3.3.2.1. Attitude

Attitude construes ways of feeling. The system network of attitude covers “what is traditionally referred to as emotion, ethics and aesthetics” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42). In the Appraisal Framework, these are mapped into **affect**, **judgement**, and **appreciation**. Affect is concerned with “registering positive and negative feelings” (Martin & White, 2005). Verbally, affect can be instantiated by qualities, processes, or nominal groups. An example from La Serenísima 3 is “*Disfrutá estos flanes y postres a \$30*”, in which the process *disfrutá* is an inscription of affect, and in particular, satisfaction. Similar inscriptions are frequent in the corpus, as the products are presented as solutions to problems or ways of acquiring social

currency. As Economou (2009) writes, facial expression denotes attitudes towards situations, people, and so on; and are thus inscriptions of affect. Figure 6 shows one example from La Salteña.

Judgement deals with attitudes towards human behavior (Martin & White, 2005). There are judgements of social esteem and of social sanction. The former has to do with qualities that are socially valued or criticized, such as being capable or resolute, whereas the latter pertains to truthfulness and ethics (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Like affect, judgement can be inscribed verbally or visually. In this corpus, verbal instances of judgement come from Unión and Royal:

- *“me hace ruido que con el talento que veo yo acá no podemos llegar”*  
(judgement: social esteem: capacity)
- *“che qué equipo divino”* (social esteem: normality)



Visually, judgement is evoked in depicted behaviors or actions (Economou, 2009). Figure 7 shows an example from Unión. On the picture of the right, a woman is shown reading a

bedtime story to a child and gazing lovingly at the sleeping child. Economou (2009) argues that naturalistic depictions of adults caring for children are likely to evoke appraisals of propriety in the audience. Following Economou's analysis, instances such as these in the corpus are classified as judgements of social sanction (propriety).

Finally, appreciation involves "resources for construing the value of things, including natural phenomena and semiosis" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36). There are three types of appreciation: reaction, composition, and valuation. Each of these can be encoded positively or negatively. Verbally, appreciation occurs often in the current corpus when participants react to the products and their results, or when they state the ingredients. Visually, appreciation is evoked, rather than inscribed. In other words, the association is implied. In Figure 7, the frame on the left evokes appreciation values: it implies that La Salteña is delicious or irresistible, as the slogan promotes.

### **3.3.2.2. Engagement**

Engagement is a system network that encompasses "the linguistic resources by which speakers/writers adopt a stance towards to the value positions being referenced by the text and in respect to those they address" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). Martin and White adopt this dialogic perspective from the work of Bahktin/Voloshinov. The authorial voice may omit or include other voices and opinions, if the latter, these different perspectives can be endorsed or rebutted. Martin and White operationalize the system network as an initial choice to include or not voices other than the authorial voice. When these voices are present, the dialogic space can be contracted or expanded. In the first case, the position is rejected, while in the second it is entertained as a viable possibility.

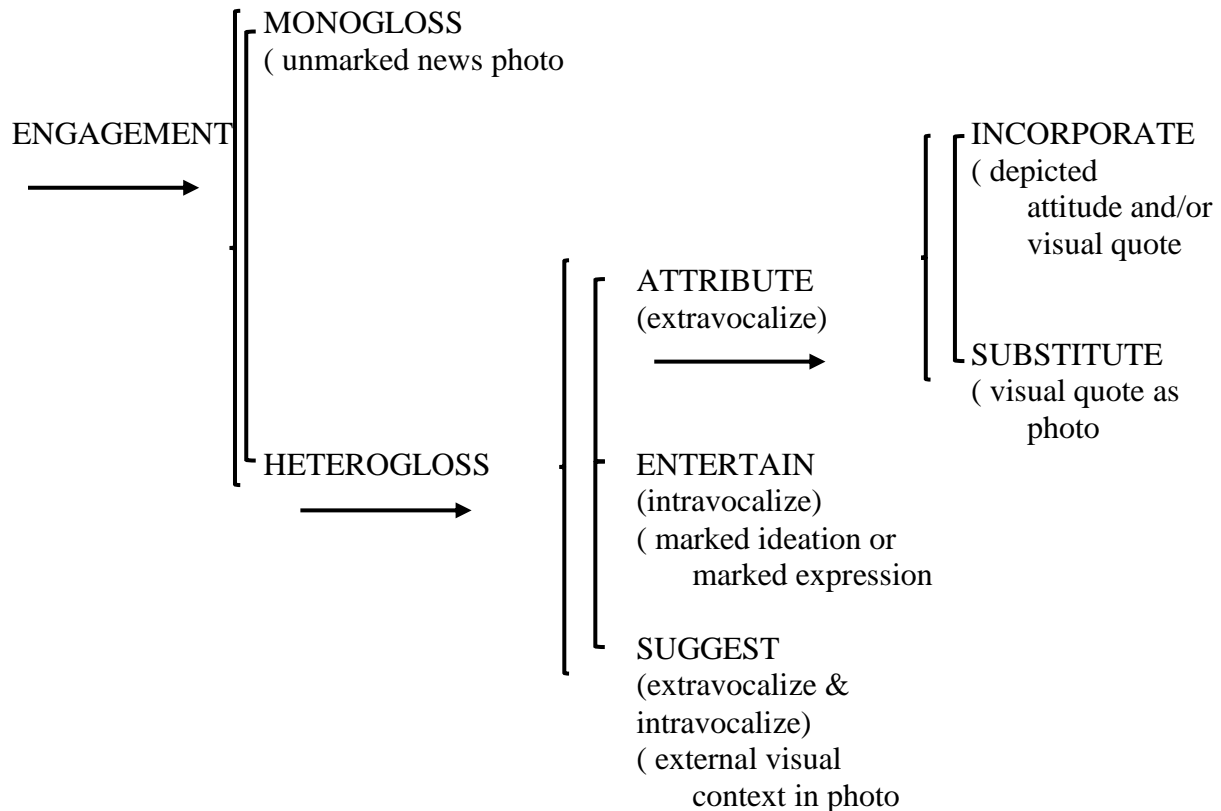
Verbally, represented participants in the corpus position themselves with regard to other opinions and, by extension, other products in several ways. In the ad for Cicatricure Gold Lift, Valeria Mazza says “*con el paso del tiempo aparecen las arrugas gravitacionales y una crema antiarrugas ya no es suficiente*” (my emphasis). Dialogically, she is rejecting the position that a product that simply addresses wrinkles is enough, potentially a commonly held belief by the audience, and justifying the need for the product being advertised, which goes beyond providing the benefits of other regular anti-age creams. This celebrity endorsement is prevalent in the skin care ads in the corpus. The implication in these cases might be that the celebrity herself uses the product and can speak for the results. The message to the audience is that they too can achieve the glamour and lifestyles that the celebrity represents if they only purchase the product in question.

Economou’s (2009) work on visual appraisal focuses on the news photo. Arguably, what is true for the news photo may not hold for TV advertising. In Economou’s conceptualization, the visual engagement system comprises two choices: monogloss and heterogloss, just like the verbal system. The unmarked news photo realizes monoglossia. According to Economou, this kind of photo “is presented and reads as a congruent, photographic representation of the material world, with the camera as a substitute for the human eye” (p. 203). This begs the question, is there an unmarked ad? Ads present their products as the option among all other similar products. They directly or indirectly allude to these other products via verbal language or visual resources<sup>24</sup>. Arguably, it would seem that a fully unmarked TV ad is not possible.

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<sup>24</sup> Argentinean advertising does not name the competition explicitly, this is in part due to current legislation (note that this seems to have changed in 2019, according to an opinion piece by Marcelo Gallo, available at [www.abogados.com.ar](http://www.abogados.com.ar)). As a result, advertisers have found creative ways to allude to competitors without naming them.

Whereas verbal heterogloss offers a choice between expanding and contracting the dialogic space, Economou (2009) argues that, expand is the only option of the visual engagement system network. Figure 8 below summarizes Economou’s conceptualization of the visual engagement system.



**Figure 8: The visual engagement system (Economou, 2009)**

One of Economou’s (2009) contributions relevant to advertising is the category “suggest” to include visual references to the external context. Advertising often includes “intertextual echoes of other texts, such as films, popular television shows (or even other advertising copy)” (Simpson, 2001, p. 601). The Royal ad’s font choice and color, coupled with the use of the hashtag, echoes an Instagram™ story (Figure 9). The frame also includes small emoticons or

reactions. Instagram™ users can use this feature to react to stories or live content. This specific campaign also had a social media component, including a hashtag that the audience could use to interact with the brand, product, and chefs turned celebrities endorsing the product. Authors such as Simpson (2001) would call this intertextuality; but Economou (2009) would call it an example of interdiscursivity in advertising. The use of the hashtag and font incorporates another type of text at the level of context.



Figure 9: An example of heterogloss (suggest) from Royal

### 3.3.2.3. Graduation

Evaluative meanings can be intensified or graded in various ways. Graduation is of two types: (1) **force** and (2) **focus**. Force is realized as intensification or quantification.

Intensification codes the degree of intensity while quantification has to do with numbers or mass amounts (Martin & White, 2005). La Serenísima 1 and 2 include a line that says “*con un toque de crema La Serenísima*” (my emphasis), in which “*un toque*” quantifies the amount of cream.

Focus, on the other hand, codes the grading “according to prototypicality [and] applies most typically to categories which, when viewed from an experiential perspective, are not scalable”

(Martin & White, 2005, p. 137). Martin and White provide the following example: “They don’t play **real** jazz” (p. 137). Regarding this example, Martin and White argue that:

[f]rom the experiential perspective, jazz music is a distinct category [but in the example] it is reconstrued to an interpersonal semantic by which some types of musical performances are assessed as prototypical of the jazz category and others as being only marginal exemplars. (p. 137)

Hood (2010) reformulated this system network to better account for graduation in academic writing. Hood theorizes that the system network of focus can be said to include two more delicate choices *valeur* and *fulfilment*, with each of these branching out two more delicate choices. *Valeur* can be of two types *authenticity* and *specificity*, while *fulfilment* can be either *completion* or *actualization*. Oteíza and Pinuer’s (2019) application of Hood’s work to the Spanish language helps identify inscriptions with these values. For instance, in *Cicatricure 2* Cristina Pérez says, “*para las manchas de la piel necesitas un producto que funcione **de verdad***” (my emphasis). The expression “*de verdad*” is an inscription of **authenticity**. The use of this expression suggests that the product advertised truly works, unlike other products in the market.

Visually, lighting, brightness, numbers, and cropping, among others, all work to upscale, downscale, or grade meanings in various ways. Economou (2009) builds on the force/focus distinction for visual graduation, but the visual system network differs in the more delicate choices with which it presents users. Visually, force offers three delicate choices: **quantification**, **repetition**, and **intensification**. Quantification is often realized via showcasing two or more participants, while repetition some element in the ad. Economou argues that there is an overlap between the two and that the context, such as the attitudes invoked, serve to disambiguate. In this corpus, there is often repetition for slogans or brand names, which are

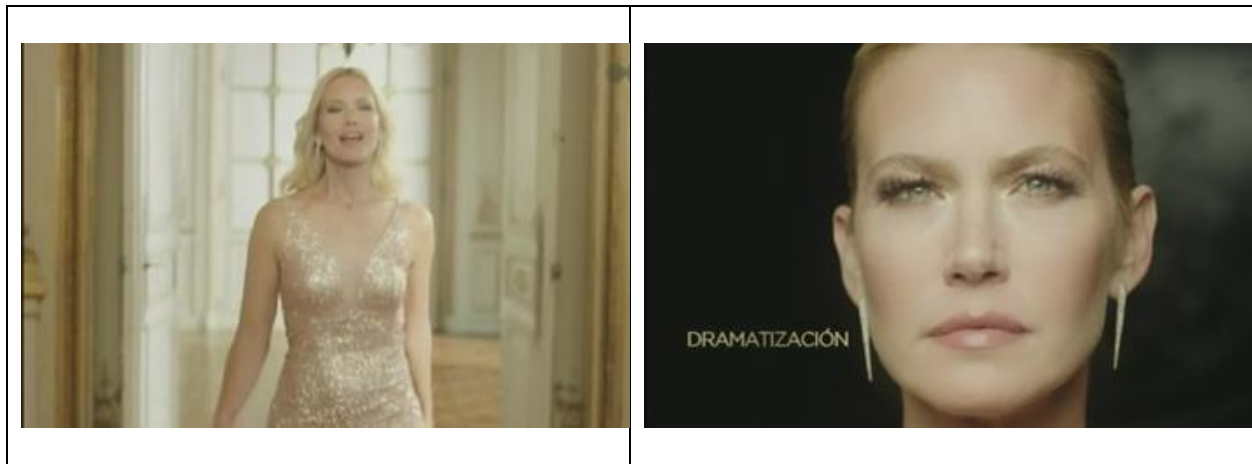
presented visually on the screen and uttered as well. In Unión’s ad, the words on screen “*suave y se la banca*” appear on screen on the woman. The words remain on screen and are subsequently uttered in relation to the product advertised “*así es Unión una yerba suave que se la banca*” (Figure 10). In other words, the brand’s slogan, “*suave y se la banca*”, is repeated.



There are also examples of quantification, such as in the Teatrical ads (Figure 10). At the end of each ad, there is a frame presenting the range of face creams the brand offers, each with a different purpose such as moisturizing or antiaging. Each type of cream is distinguished by a

distinct color, which is also used in the ad. Rather than repeating the exact same product, the image shows the different types of lotion one next to the other.

Visually, intensification is instantiated via brightness and vividness of color. For example, in Cicatricure 1 the parts of the ad that present the results are brighter and the model is in a well-lit room, as opposed to the dimmer atmosphere for the dramatization that shows what the model's face would be like if she did not use Cicatricure (Figure 11). The color scheme contributes to this effect. The room and her dress are golden, a callback to the products name and ingredient list. This produces the effect of glitter and shine, which is absent in the dramatization. The lights go down some seconds before the dramatization, just as Valeria Mazza says "*una crema anti-arrugas ya no es suficiente*".



**Figure 11: An example of force (intensification) from Cicatricure 1**

According to Economou (2009), the visual system network of force has one choice only: specification. In turn, specification can be of three types: clarity, substantiation, and completion. Clarity is inscribed via sharpness of focus and internal framing. Substantiation is realized in depth and dimensionality, achieved in photography through light variation, exposure, and film speed (recall that Economou focuses on the news photo). Finally, completion is instantiated in

the use of rear angles, cropping, or overlapping, which cause participants or objects to be partially depicted on screen. Verbally, focus scales meanings along a cline of prototypicality, whereas visually focus scales meaning in terms of specificity and detail. Figure 12 presents an example from Cicatricure 4. The rear angle in the frame instantiates specification (completion), as the audience get less details on the participant.



### 3.3.3. Affiliation and resemiotization

There are two more categories of analysis relevant for this research: **affiliation** and **resemiotization**. Affiliation has to do with the construal of group membership and the “negotiation of alignment/disalignment as it applies to the relationship which the text construes as holding between speaker/writer and the text’s putative addressee” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95). The ads in the corpus resort to various resources in order to align the value positions which they present with those of the intended audience. Additionally, resources such as pronoun usage construe group membership between the represented participants and the audience. Furthermore, advertisers and creators can deploy interpersonal linguistic resources to align audiences with the values presented in the ad (Zappavigna & Martin, 2018).

Resemiotization refers to “how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next” (Iedema, 2003, p. 41). In other words, a resemiotized element is deployed in a new way which changes its original meaning and re-orient it in the new context. In the Goicoechea ad, the musical soundtrack is a resemiotized version of the late 90s hit song “*La bomba*”. The ad version of the song takes the original lyrics, which involve references to how people dance this song, and slightly reformulates the words to describe the process of applying the lotion that is being advertised.

This chapter outlined the criteria for ad selection and the data analysis procedures. Commercials in the corpus all have a running time of 25-40 seconds and address the Argentinean audience by advertising a local product or with local celebrity endorsement. Across the next two chapters, results from the descriptive and interpretative analysis are summarized. Chapter 4 deals with the skin care section of the corpus, and Chapter 5 presents the findings for the ads for packaged foods.

## CHAPTER 4

### 1. Introduction

The skin care section of the corpus is comprised of 9 ads. To be included in the corpus, ads had to have a running time of 25-40 seconds and appeal to the Argentinean audience, either by advertising a local product or showcasing a local celebrity. In the case of this section of the corpus, they showcase a local celebrity. The ads further introduce other aspects of the local culture: the use of *vos* verb forms and the presence of *mate*, considered the national drink. Both of these are referred to throughout the discussion. Table 5 contains a list of ads, their running time, and the names of the celebrities who appear in them.

**Table 5: List of ads**

<b>Ad</b>	<b>Running time (in seconds)</b>	<b>Celebrity</b>
Cicatricure 1 – Gold lift	39	Valeria Mazza
Cicatricure 2 – Antimanchas	25	Cristina Pérez
Cicatricure 3 – Roll on ojos	26	Brenda Gandini
Cicatricure 4 – Beauty care	27	Brenda Gandini
Cicatricure 5 – Acqua defense	31	Brenda Gandini
Teatrical 1 – La roja	30	Araceli González
Teatrical 2 – La amarilla	27	Eleonora Wexler
Teatrical 3 – La verde	25	Natalie Pérez
Goicoechea - Bomba	31	Claudia Fontán (voiceover)

The products advertised aim at reducing wrinkles and hiding signs of exhaustion or alleviating tired legs. Cicatricure 1 showcases former high-fashion model Valeria Mazza in an ornate room. Saturated golden tones predominate in the luxurious room furnishings and her attire, a gold dress. Her hair is blond, which follows the color scheme. The color scheme links back to the name of the product, Cicatricure Gold Lift, and one of its ingredients, *péptidos de*

*oro*. She walks towards the camera in a manner reminiscent of a model walking the runway and she shares with the audience “Cicatricure’s new finding”: “*Cicatricure presenta su nuevo hallazgo*”. The product, Cicatricure Gold Lift, helps reduce wrinkles. Cicatricure 2 showcases journalist and news anchor Cristina Pérez. The advertised product whitens dark spots and evens skin tone.

Brenda Gandini stars in Cicatricure 3, 4, and 5. In all the ads, she is shown going about her everyday life: dropping off her kids (Cicatricure 3), getting ready for the day in the morning (Cicatricure 4), and driving around the city to, presumably, run some errands (Cicatricure 5). In the ads, she runs into an acquaintance, a man, who compliments her on how well she looks and prompts her to share her beauty secrets: Cicatricure products. Cicatricure Roll on ojos (Cicatricure 3) reduces signs of exhaustion by alleviating bags under the eyes and by working as concealer. Cicatricure Beauty care (Cicatricure 4) makes mornings easier by saving time because it is both a lotion and a foundation. Cicatricure Acqua Defense (Cicatricure 5) protects skin from pollution and keeps it moist.

Teatrical 1 and 2 have a similar format. In Teatrical 1, Araceli González arrives at the set and meets a stylist who will get her ready for work. The stylist appears to be middle-aged and is wearing a black blouse which contrasts with the white shirt Araceli González is sporting. In Teatrical 2, Eleonora Wexler is seen interacting with an unidentified blond woman who seems young and is wearing scrubs. In both ads, the women praise the celebrities on account of how well their skins look. In both instances, the celebrities share their secrets and give the women their cream. In Teatrical 3, Natalie Pérez discusses the benefits of Teatrical’s products. Other women are featured demonstrating how to use the cream, which was initially shown in Teatrical

1 by Araceli González. Finally, in Goicoechea, a group of women are shown struggling with tired legs. The products they have been using are not working and they switch to Goicoechea.

The represented participants in these ads are all women. The absence of men in this corpus is not by (my) design: there were no ads for lotions or creams featuring men in the recorded data. This suggests that lotions and creams are a woman's realm and, as a result, men do not make use of them. In turn, this points to a construction of masculinity in opposition to femininity, which Del Saz-Rubio (2019) has also reported.

But this is not the only notable absence in this set of ads. Women in these ads comprise a homogenous group, with the most common intersection being fair-skinned and cisgender. In terms of class, there are celebrities, who we would assume are affluent, and other women, who are proxies for the audience. This second group of women is sometimes portrayed in lower paying jobs and sometimes they are not portrayed in connection with any profession. They are additionally presented as aspiring to the lifestyles, products, and other attributes celebrities have, as evinced by their interactions with the celebrities. The absence of women of color, disabled women, diversity of bodies, and queer women suggests that the world of "beauty" is largely thought of as a space for white, thin, heteronormative, and fully abled folks. Further applying an intersectional framework (Collins & Bilge, 2020), we can additionally find parallels between this symbolic distribution of the onscreen space and the place marginalized identities occupy in Argentina in which the construction of a white Argentina is reproduced in the media.

As I will explain in the next section, ads for skin care construe three themes: (1) objects of contemplation, (2) flawless skin = confidence, and (3) group membership. First, similarly to Del Saz-Rubio's (2018b) findings, in this set of the corpus women are portrayed as passive beings in images with conceptual structures. Passivity carries onto the second theme: flawless

skin = confidence. Del Saz-Rubio finds that passivity extends to women resolving inner struggles via consumption. The ads in my corpus construct confidence as being dependent on younger looking skin and the absence of signs of exhaustion, paralleling Del Saz-Rubio's findings. Finally, the ads aim to create a sense of group membership by deploying close shots and portraying celebrities in a relatable manner by showcasing their everyday lives. In other words, they appear closer to the audience than they would in real life and are depicted in situations with which the audience will identify (Del Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009; Noriega, 2012). By portraying celebrities on screen as relatable, the ads construe group membership and solidarity between the represented participants and the audience. This finding parallels Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck's (2009) analysis of ads for products for menstrual hygiene management. In their corpus, this was achieved via the voiceover and the representation of participants in situations relatable for the audience, such as "not feeling dry enough, restrictions regarding the physical exercise that women can carry out, and having to deal with leaks during menstruation", among others (p. 2542). The scenes are voiced by women who offer sympathy and recommend a product, since they are knowledgeable on the topic.



Overall, these ads are performative, in Butler's (Butler, 1997/2013) sense of the word, of a femininity constituted in *hábitos de belleza*, as they are called in the Brenda Gandini ads, whereby femininity comes into being by caring for one's appearance. The following sections delve into each of the themes identified in the present corpus in detail.

## **2. Objects of contemplation**

Women in the skin care ads of this corpus are portrayed as objects of contemplation. At the descriptive level, this plays out differently in images with narrative or conceptual structures.

In narrative structures, participants are shown “*doing* something to or for each other” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59, emphasis in the original). In contrast, conceptual structures depict analytical, classificatory, or symbolic processes. The ads in the skin care category feature both types of structures.

**Table 6: Brenda Gandini (Cicatricure 4) multitasking in the morning**

Sequence	Frame	Spoken discourse
Sequence 1 (problem)		<p>[man 1] hola Bren contanos cómo es tu rutina a la mañana?</p> <p>[Brenda Gandini] estar a mil</p> <p>teneme</p>
Sequence 2 (solution)		<p>[man 1] un producto que te la hace fácil?</p> <p>[Brenda Gandini] este Cicatricure Beauty Care</p>

On the one hand, women are portrayed in actor and interactor roles of narrative processes. In these instances, the conversation often revolves around the admiration other participants have for the participants' perfect skin, which in turns prompt women to share their beauty secrets. In Table 6, Brenda Gandini (Cicatricure 4) is shown getting ready in the morning. In the first sequence, she is having coffee as she opens the door. The man behind the camera asks about her morning routine and she replies "*estar a mil*", which translates as being in a hurry and on the go. In the following sequence, the man asks about a product that makes mornings easier, to which she replies Cicatricure Beauty Care and proceeds to apply it. This multitasking positions her as a woman who does it all. Because this is one of three ads with her airing in the same period of time, the audience can surmise that Brenda is very busy due to all of the demands that make an appearance throughout the ads. In Cicatricure 3, we see her after dropping off her kids at daycare and in Cicatricure 5 she seems to be running errands. On top of this, we know her to be an actress and model.

Another example comes from Cicatricure 1, in which Valeria Mazza's walking is supposed to emulate her walking the runway (see Figure 13). She is shown walking forward, towards the camera, and turning sideways when she stops, closer to the camera. The camera sits still in one position, so the audience can experience this fashion show as if they had first-row seats. While Valeria Mazza has the role of an actor, from the point of view of visual representation, the action establishes a connection with her modeling career; thus, making her an object of contemplation. Figure 1 shows Valeria Mazza in two different instances. In the top picture, she is walking towards the camera. In the bottom picture, she is standing closer to the camera and moving side to side as she addresses the audience saying: "*un resplandor de juventud para tu piel*". Her utterance references the effects of the product, which can make skin

shine with youth, and is an inscription of positive appreciation. This idea of glowing skin is reinforced with the references to gold – as in the ingredients list – and, more notably, through the color scheme. Her hair, her dress, and the furnishings in the room have all predominantly golden tones.



**Figure 13: Valeria Mazza (Cicatricure 1)**

In these ads, women are portrayed as actors: they are shown taking part in activities. They are also admired for their youthful skin. They additionally appear busy and “in the middle of things”, especially in Cicatricure 3-5. Nonetheless, all the activities that make them busy are conjured up in the mind of the audience: they are not shown on screen. In the case of Cicatricure 1, Valeria Mazza is shown walking along the room in a manner that evokes walking down the

runway. This throwback to her past as a fashion model positions her explicitly as an object of contemplation: models are there to be gazed at by the audience.

Women are also portrayed as interactors, a representational resource in visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). A notable instance of this is when they are at work. Despite the setting, the audience does not get a glimpse of these women doing their job. Rather, they are seen socializing with other women (see Figure 14). They talk about being busy, as in the Cicatricure ads with Brenda Gandini, but the audience does not get a glimpse of what is making them busy. In these ads, women, if shown in connection to a job, are either celebrities or in the service industry. For example, in Teatrical 1 the woman seems to be a stylist, perhaps working in hair and make-up with some production, since the setting suggests that they are in a studio. At the beginning of the ad, Araceli González arrives and sits on the chair to get styled for work, an assumption based on her modeling and acting career. She announces she has arrived, which suggests she might be a bit late. Despite this, instead of getting her ready, the stylist asks how she stays so young. Araceli replies that she uses Teatrical, which surprises the stylist, and then proceeds to explain how to use the product and to enumerate the benefits. In the end, Araceli gives the stylist her cream so that she may try it and see for herself the wonders the product works. This portrayal of women at work seemingly having fun or enjoying themselves, rather than working, is not new in the literature.

Rodgers, Yeomans, and Halliday (2016) examine how women position themselves in relation to TV and film archetypes for their jobs. In order to examine the extent to which these stereotypes were still pervasive, they formed focus groups with women in the investigated professions. Their analysis suggests that some stereotypes are naturalized, in particular jobs in public relations which are portrayed on screen as involving more fun than “actual work”: The

stereotypical PR girl constantly attends parties and events, a portrayal in dissonance with the experiences of the participants of the focus groups. Rogers et al. do not examine jobs like hairdressing or styling, as they focus on public relations, public service, and police, but there might be a similarity here. The ad could be toying with preconceptions the audience might hold in relation to jobs in the industry. In my personal experience, salons are thought of as venues for socializing and gossiping. Another preconception seems to be connected to the opportunity some stylists have of working with stars, which might afford these professionals prestige – compared to other people in the same line of work. This opportunity may conjure in the audience ideas regarding friendships that these professionals might have with the stars they work with. Teatrical 1 toys with this when Araceli Gonzalez gifts her cream to the stylist.






**Figure 14: Socializing at work in Teatrical 1**

On other occasions, women are carriers of attributes in symbolic processes, a type of conceptual structure. Human participants in these kind of processes “usually pose for the viewer [...] they just sit or stand there, for no other reason than to display themselves to the viewer” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 105–106). The deployment of this kind of processes is a

striking feature of skin care ads and it combines with close-ups, perhaps so that the audience can see the before and after shots and appreciate the results from up close. Table 7 shows three examples in the skin care corpus in which symbolic processes co-occur with close shots.

**Table 7: Symbolic processes and close-ups**

<b>Ad / sequence number</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Representation</b>	<b>Interaction</b>
Cicatricure 1 / Sequence 1		Symbolic process, carrier/attribute	Offer Close shot Frontal angle Level angle
Cicatricure 2 / Sequence 1		Symbolic process, carrier/attribute	Offer Close shot Oblique angle Level angle
Cicatricure 5 / Sequence 2		Symbolic process, carrier/attribute	Offer Close shot Frontal angle Level angle

The first two examples in Table 7 have a conceptual structure with symbolic processes in which the women carry undesirable attributes: wrinkles and dark spots. Their faces are stern, with almost sad expressions, suggesting discomfort and displeasure arising from the negative characteristics. These expressions inscribe negative appraisals of the skin imperfections, which are to be avoided to look youthful and full of life. This suggests that happiness and confidence come from a young-looking skin: firm, toned, flawless, a theme that I will develop in more detail

in the next section. This conceptualization creates a connection between femininity and the effort for a younger-looking appearance, so that each use of the products in the ads becomes a constitutive gender act (Butler, 1997/2013). In the example from Cicatricure 2, the woman is seen standing still for most of the sequence. Towards the end, she leans forward and touches her face, where the spot is, as if she had been gazing at herself in the mirror.

The third example in Table 7 comes from Cicatricure 5. Unlike the previous two examples, this one shows the product in action. One of the properties of Cicatricure Acqua Defense – advertised in Cicatricure 5 – is that it creates a layer of protection which protects the skin and repels pollution. The succession of shots shows a dark cloud of pollution approaching Brenda Gandini’s face and staying at bay, presumably due to the protecting layer of Cicatricure Acqua Defense.

In the “before” shots – usually in the first sequence of the ad – women are carriers of undesirable attributes: wrinkles, spots, and signs of exhaustion, such as bags and dark circles under their eyes, and they also visually emote affect (Economou, 2009). In particular, these women’s facial expressions convey sadness (see Table 7). In the “after” shots – in the second or third sequences – they are carriers of positive attributes. Sequence structure in relation to before and after product use is explored in more detail in the following section.

In conclusion, women are portrayed as objects of contemplation in images with both narrative and conceptual structures. In narrative processes, the women in the ads are shown socializing quite prominently. Often the topic of conversation revolves around the admiration for the celebrities’ youthful skin. They also appear modeling, walking, getting ready for the day, and taking care of children (off-screen). While in these portrayals women are actors or interactors, they do not involve a lot of action and prominently feature women in activities stereotypically

ascribed to them. In images with conceptual structures, women are carriers of attributes in symbolic processes. In these cases, they are portrayed passively for the audience to gaze at them.

### **3. Flawless skin = confidence**

Beauty products are conceptualized as the solution to a problem, usually signs of age and exhaustion. Solving these problems further results in the represented participants having more confidence and looking and/or feeling younger. At the descriptive level, ads do this in various ways. First, when broken into units of analysis, all ads but one have the same sequence structure. Second, some ads use information value, particularly old – left – and new – right – in combination with other resources to help construe this theme. Finally, conceptual structures i.e., structures in which human participants are depicted as objects of contemplation, construe this theme as well. These three resources combine with verbal and visual appraisal to construe the theme of confidence. Confidence is, in these instances, a result of using a product. Del Saz-Rubio (2018b) also finds that toiletries ads do this by deploying close-ups and narratives showcasing women feeling vulnerable and insecure before trying the product advertised. In these portrayals, products are a means to resolving inner struggles (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018b).

In the present corpus, 8 out of 9 of the skin care ads are structured in three sequences (see Table 8): problem-solution-evaluation. The sequence, as a content unit, consists of a succession of shots (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007). The first sequence introduces the problem; while the second presents the solution: the product advertised. In addition, the second sequence usually introduces the composition of the products and their effect on people's skins. The third sequence usually contains a tag line which serves as a final evaluation of the product, and a final frame which showcases the product in all its forms available in the market. While advertising in general

presents products as a solution to a problem, this structure is prominent in the ads for skin care products and is absent from the ads for packaged foods (see Chapter 5 for more on the ads for packaged foods). The nature of the products advertised is likely at play here. Whereas skin care products can be conceptualized as having active ingredients which improve aspects of people’s skins, and as a result “solve a problem”, the same cannot be said of foods.

**Table 8: Sequence structure of the ads**

<b>Ad</b>	<b>Number of sequences</b>	<b>Sequences</b>
Cicatricure 1 (Gold lift)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Cicatricure 2 (Antimanchas)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Cicatricure 3 (Rool on ojos)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Cicatricure 4 (Beauty care)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Cicatricure 5 (Acqua defense)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Goicoechea (Bomba)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Teatrical 1 (La roja)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Teatrical 2 (La amarilla)	3	problem-solution-evaluation
Teatrical 3 (La verde)	2	solution-evaluation

In these ads, this structure communicates that these imperfections are to be removed by using the product. At the descriptive level, the verbal evaluative patterns suggest that the use of the product does away with the expression of sadness wrinkles cause or signs of exhaustion an eventful day causes. Table 9 provides examples of how products are described in the second and third sequences and the results on the skin’s appearance. The qualities of the product that are positively appraised in the products reduce wrinkles and signs of tiredness; the skin, on the other hand, is talked about in terms of the positive qualities it will possess after using the product (*un tono uniforme, distinta, limpia*).

**Table 9: Verbal appraisals**

<b>Ad / Sequence number</b>	<b>Appraisal</b>	<b>Item appraised</b>
Cicatricure 2 / Sequence 2	Cicatricure tiene para vos <b>una nueva línea antimanchas</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Antimanchas
Cicatricure 2 / Sequence 2	una crema <b>con acción antiage</b> y protección solar y <b>un serum concentrado</b> de aplicación puntual [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Antimanchas
Cicatricure 2 / Sequence 2	su fórmula con niacinamida disminuye manchas a partir de las cuatro semanas dejando <b>un tono uniforme</b> en rostro escote brazos y manos [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Skin
Cicatricure 2 / Sequence 3	<b>nueva línea antimanchas</b> de Cicatricure [inscribed positive appreciation, valuation]	Cicatricure Antimanchas
Cicatricure 3 / Sequence 2	<b>tiene efecto frío y descongiona bolsas</b> [evoked positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Roll On Ojos
Cicatricure 3 / Sequence 2	sí el color me <b>tapa las ojeras</b> [evoked positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Roll On Ojos
Cicatricure 4 / Sequence 2	es <b>antiedad</b> controla el brillo tiene protección solar y hasta la uso como base [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Beauty Care
Cicatricure 4 / Sequence 2	es antiedad <b>controla el brillo tiene protección solar</b> y hasta <b>la uso como base</b> [evoked positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Beauty Care
Cicatricure 4 / Sequence 2	es antiedad controla el brillo tiene protección solar y <b>hasta</b> la uso como base [graduation, force, intensification]	Using Cicatricure Beauty Care as a foundation

Cicatricure 4 / Sequence 3	tu <b>toque</b> beauty <sup>25</sup> todos los días [graduation, force, quantification]	Using Cicatricure Beauty Care
Cicatricure 5 / Sequence 2	con Cicatricure Acqua Defense es <b>hidratante y antiadherente de la polución</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Cicatricure Acqua Defense
Cicatricure 5 / Sequence 2	y sentís tu piel <b>distinta?</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, reaction]	Skin
Cicatricure 5 / Sequence 2	siento que me forma una capita que me deja la piel <b>fresca y limpia</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, reaction]	Skin
Goicoechea / Sequence 2	para tus piernas usá Goicoechea que es <b>una bomba</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, valuation]	Goicoechea
Teatrical 1 / Sequence 2	<b>en serio</b> vos usás Teatrical? [graduation, force, intensification]	The fact that Araceli González uses Teatrical
Teatrical 1 / Sequence 2	uso la roja <b>antiarrugas</b> [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Teatrical (la roja)
Teatrical 2 / Sequence 2	<b>en serio</b> usás Teatrical? [graduation, force, intensification]	The fact that Eleonora Wexler uses Teatrical
Teatrical 2 / Sequence 2	es <b>súper humectante</b> y me resultó muchísimo con las manchitas [inscribed positive appreciation, composition]	Teatrical (la amarilla)
Teatrical 2 / Sequence 2	es súper humectante y <b>me resultó muchísimo</b> con las manchitas [evoked positive appreciation, reaction, intensified]	Teatrical (la amarilla)

<sup>25</sup> This word is said in English in the original. It is a play on words alluding to the name of the product. The use of the word in English may carry the additional connotation of higher social status.

The use of close shots, which show the represented participants from the shoulders up (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), allows the audience to see the facial expression and/or any imperfections in the complexion of the represented participants up close, closer than it would be possible if they were meeting them in person (Noriega, 2012). This construes a sense of closeness and intimacy between the audience and the represented participants and allows the audience to see the celebrities' skin from up close. This has the additional benefit – for the audience – of seeing the results of using the products consistently: flawless skin.

Table 10 shows before and after product frames from Cicatricure 3, with Brenda Gandini. The still at the top comes from the first sequence, which sets up the problem: tiredness, which causes bags and dark circles under the eyes. Brenda Gandini even points under her eyes with her index finger in an outward motion (not depicted in Table 10) as she makes a stern, almost sad expression. This gesture points at invisible signs of exhaustion which prompts the man behind the camera to say “*no se te nota*”. In other words, the product has successfully hidden any signs of tiredness, “you can’t tell [you’re tired]”. In addition, the way she enunciates “*unas ojeras*” makes *unas* an intensifier (graduation, force, intensification), which would suggest that the dark circles under her eyes were very noticeable before the product was applied. The man further asks questions to prompt Brenda to describe the product. The appearance of this man set the Brenda Gandini ads apart from all the other ones. All represented participants are women: in the Teatrical ads women share their beauty secrets with other women on screen. In the Brenda Gandini ads, she exclusively interacts with this man, who is out of frame. The ad does not make explicit who this man is, but their conversation suggests they are acquaintances or perhaps friends. He calls her “Bren”, short for Brenda, mentions her kids, and visits her in her house. The

kind of interactions is similar: Brenda talks about the benefits of the products, just as the celebrities in the Teatrical ads do.

The frame on the bottom (see Table 10) comes from the following sequence, which presents Cicatricure Roll On Ojos as the solution. Her expression changes as she describes the benefits of the product and how it helps conceal signs of exhaustion. She is even visibly smiling as she talks about the product. These facial expressions inscribe attitudes towards products and are a means of visual evaluation (Economou, 2009). The represented participants sport facial expressions which reinforce the idea presented via the structure: by using the product you get rid of the imperfections, and you feel happier, prettier, and more confident. In the bottom still, Brenda Gandini is also posing, which makes her an object of contemplation for the man she is talking to. It is interesting also that Brenda is describing the benefits of the product to this man whom the audience cannot see. In the Teatrical ads, by contrast, the benefits, and explanations of how to use the product are enumerated to women who also appear onscreen. Perhaps, the appearance of this man behind camera for whom Brenda models the product implies that women “take care of themselves” and follow these beauty tips offered in the ads – i.e., covering bags and circles under their eyes – for the benefit of men, given that the audience sees Brenda from his perspective. This could signal an expectation for a heterosexual object of affection. In other words, Brenda’s performance is bringing into being what Butler (1997/2013) calls “the deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence” (p. 466).

**Table 10: Problem and solution in Cicatricure 3 (Roll on ojos)**

Sequence	Frame	Spoken discourse
Sequence 1 (problem)		[Brenda Gandini] y me levanté con <b>unas</b> ojeras
Sequence 2 (solution)		[man 1] y además tiene color no?  [Brenda Gandini] sí el color me tapa las ojeras


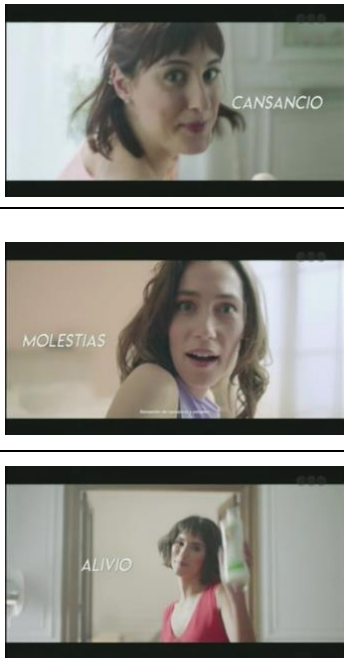
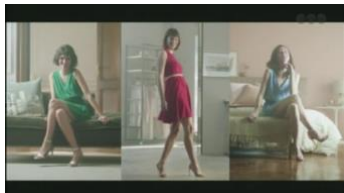
The Cicatricure ads further conceptualize these solutions as benefits, which suggests an attempt at reframing the use of the product by using a word with a positive connotation. In this way, it is not about solving a problem, which would perhaps suggest more directly that flawed skin is “wrong” and has to be fixed, rather, the implication is that the product gives you benefits which in turn make you happier with your skin and possibly more confident, attributes Brenda Gandini displays in the ad. In the Teatrical ads, on the other hand, the idea of confidence is inscribed verbally in expressions such as “*sentite confiada de tu piel*” (affect, security), in which confidence is attributed to flawless, younger looking skin.

Goicoechea further uses compositional elements and verbal elements, including song lyrics, to construe the idea that using the product advertised results in feeling more confident and sexier. At the level of composition, the left carries old information value, whereas the right

carries new (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The women in the ad move away from the left i.e., the product they are currently using and that is not working (see Table 11). The rightwards movement could be interpreted as changing products, as in later shots the same women are shown using Goicoechea and looking satisfied with the results. In other words, it is information value in motion: from left to right, in which left has old information value and right, new. Table 11 shows the women in the ad before and after trying Goicoechea. In the first row, the before stills, the women are visibly disappointed with the “old” product, their facial expressions inscribe dissatisfaction and, to some extent, annoyance; both negative evaluations of the product they have been using. They both discard the product and move away from it, rightwards. Verbally, this meaning is instantiated in the caption “*LA CREMA QUE USÁS, NO TE ALIVIA*”, which is also voiced over by Claudia Fontán. In other words, the idea of the product not working is repeated in three instances both visually and verbally. This kind of repetition has the effect of instensifying the proposition.

After using the product, the women present themselves in sexy poses, looking confident (Table 11). There is a succession of shots in which the women are shown massaging their bare legs to apply the product. Right after, they feel instantly satisfied with the product, inscribed in their expressions of surprise as they turn to say, along with the song lyrics, *bomba*. Afterwards, their facial expressions inscribe confidence and satisfaction with the product.

**Table 11: Goicoechea (Bomba)**

Sequence	Frames	Spoken discourse
Sequence 1 (problem)		<p>[Claudia Fontán, voiceover] <b>encima</b> la crema que usás no te alivia</p> <p>[text on screen] LA CREMA QUE USÁS, NO TE ALIVIA</p> <p>[man 1, singing] para tus piernas usá Goicoechea</p>
Sequence 2 (solution)		<p>[man 1, singing] esto es una</p> <p>[man 1, singing + woman 1] <b>bomba</b></p> <p>[text on screen] CANSANCIO</p> <p>[man 1, singing + woman 2] <b>bomba</b></p> <p>[text on screen] MOLESTIAS</p> <p>[man 1, singing + woman 3] <b>bomba</b></p> <p>[text on screen] ALIVIO</p>
Sequence 3 (evaluation)		<p>[man 2, singing] <b>sensual</b></p>

The song lyrics also build on meaning on two different levels. The song in the ad is a **resemioticized** or recontextualized (Iedema, 2003) cover of the hit single “La bomba”<sup>26</sup>, released in the late 90s by Azul Azul. In the original song, the term “*bomba*” applies to the song itself, which is the greatest and makes everyone dance sensuously. The changes in the lyrics make the song fit with the situation. For instance, instead of the usual “*y las mujeres lo bailan así*”, the lyrics for the ad version go “*y las mujeres la usan así*”, which references the application of the product simultaneously shown onscreen. The women in the ad even say “*bomba*” when applying the product, meant in this context as a positive appreciation of the product, which means that the product works wonders. The lyrics clarify this with lines like “*para el cansancio es una bomba*”. Here, “*cansancio*” likely refers to tired legs, as the brand Goicoechea has been marketing their lotions to be used on legs. In the ad, this is made explicit in the tag line: “*Goicoechea, el especialista en piernas*”. The resemioticized version of the song, hence, means that the lotion is the best for tired legs. The choice of song is interesting not only because it is being repurposed for the context of the ad, but also because it can be used to address a specific generation of women who perhaps danced to this song when they were younger and will understand the cultural reference.

The word *bomba* can also be used in Argentina to describe a sexy woman. This second meaning plays out at the end of the ad when the three women are shown looking sexy and confident (see Table 11). Thus, the ad also toys with the various meanings of the word *bomba* and brings into the ad all these contexts. The meaning of the word *bomba*, coupled with the facial expressions of the women, suggests that using the product results in one ridding oneself from any discomforts and looking more confident. As a result, these expressions are inscriptions

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<sup>26</sup> The song was an instant hit when it came out in 1998 and several artists and bands released covers in the years that followed.

of positive evaluation: it is an effective product. At the end, the singers who utter the final “*sensual*” sound male. This is interesting because the utterance appears to be a direct evaluation of the women on screen, who are now – after using the product – shown posing sensually and looking confident. As in Cicatricure 3, this resource makes the audience align with the male gaze. This is the lens through which the evaluation is made, which suggests a heterosexual object of affection: men admiring women. These men are not depicted on screen, but their appraisals are relevant as they indicate that these women may desire such admiration. Whereas the Cicatricure ads with Brenda Gandini achieved this with camerawork, the Goicoechea ad resorts to a male sounding voice to reproduce sedimented gender norms (Butler, 1997/2013).

One striking feature of skin care ads is their deployment of conceptual structure, i.e., shots in which people are objects of contemplation, rather than actors. This kind of structure positions women as passive beings. This kind of structure is used to construe the theme of confidence as well. Table 7 shows examples of conceptual structure with symbolic processes in which the women carry undesirable attributes: wrinkles and dark spots. Their faces are stern, with almost sad expressions, suggesting discomfort and displeasure arising from the negative characteristics. These expressions inscribe negative appraisals of the skin imperfections, which are to be avoided to look youthful and full of life. This suggests that happiness and confidence come from a young-looking skin: firm, toned, flawless. In the example from Cicatricure 2, the woman is seen standing still for most of the sequence. Towards the end, she leans forward and touches her face, where the spot is, as if she was gazing at herself in the mirror.

Sequence structure, compositional resources, and symbolic processes combine with evaluative resources to construe imperfections as undesirable attributes which cause women to feel insecure and sad. Products are shown to work wonders very quickly, which makes women

feel sexier and more confident. This is instantiated visually through the represented participants' facial expressions, which change from a stern and sad countenance to happy and confident smiles after trying the product. In the Brenda Gandini ads (Cicatricure 3, 4, and 5) and at least partly throughout the Goicoechea ad, the audience is meant to align with the male perspective. This places value on women being attractive to men and implies heteronormativity.

#### **4. Group membership**

In most of the skin care ads, celebrities are presented as approachable and friendly to those with non-celebrity status. Social distance and narrative structure are deployed to create a sense of group membership with the audience in 7 out of the 9 skin care ads. From the point of view of interaction, represented participants interact with other represented participants and with the audience. Represented participants in most of the skin care ads interact with both kinds of participants. Interaction with other represented participants is most notable in the Teatrical ads, especially Teatrical 1 and 2, and in the Cicatricure ads with Brenda Gandini. In Teatrical 1 and 2, the social distance between the actors and the other participants is close. At the visual descriptive level, this is achieved differently in the Teatrical and Cicatricure ads. In the Teatrical ads, the other participants appear on screen: the audience can see both the celebrity and the other person as an onlooker as they chat. Depending on the ad, they are also either standing or sitting close together. In the Cicatricure ads with Brenda Gandini, this closeness is achieved through camerawork. The man with whom she is talking is behind the camera and the audience sees the action through his perspective. Close shots, in which the audience only sees Brenda Gandini from the shoulders up (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), indicate she is standing very close to the man. At the beginning of Cicatricure 3, Brenda Gandini is walking down the street. As she gets

closer to the man, the type of shot changes from a long shot to an extreme close-up, in which the audience only sees her cheek. This camerawork contributes to the storytelling: she runs into the man and greets him with a kiss on the cheek, a greeting which indexes Argentinean cultural practices, and thus associates these beauty practices with Argentinean national identity.

Closeness between the celebrities and other on- or off-screen participants suggests there is a friendship or some degree of familiarity between them (see Figure 15), even when there is an imbalance of social status between them.



**Figure 15: Social distance between represented participants in Teatrical 1 (left) and Teatrical 2 (right)**

From an intersectional perspective (Collins & Bilge, 2020), this social class imbalance is indexed in the kinds of jobs participants are portrayed in. While a stylist working with TV stars and models might have some status by association, this job is still lower paying, compared to acting, modeling. In Teatrical 1, the scene represented takes place at what seems to be a set, either a TV or photography set, as Araceli González arrives (fashionably late) for hair and make-up. The other woman is presumably the stylist that will get her ready. In Teatrical 2, the woman is wearing a uniform. The scene and uniform by themselves do not explicitly convey a profession; however, because all three Teatrical ads build upon each other and are structured similarly, one could presume the uniform indexes a job in the service industry. These women,

then, have lower-paying jobs, compared to the celebrities and even other workers at the studio, and may belong to an aspirational middle class. The audience is likely to identify with these women and share in these class expectations. In both examples in Figure 15, the women appear close to one another. Furthermore, the actors are friendly to the other women, sharing beauty tips *y tomando mate juntas*. *Mate* implies a sense of community or closeness among those who share it and, here, it appears to have a two-fold role. First, it renders the celebrity as approachable or relatable: after all, she is engaging in an activity in which most people across social groups in Argentina engage. More tellingly, she is sharing *mate* with someone who belongs to a different social group. Second, *mate* is considered a national drink and it thus indexes national identity<sup>27</sup>. The ad, then, seems to construe the audience as Argentinean (women) belonging to the middle class or aspiring to belong to it. Advertising targets those groups with purchasing power, especially ads for non-essential items. Thus, it is not (that) surprising that these ads construct a middle-class audience.

What is telling, though, is the attributes that this middle class has. Celebrities are, thus, coded as approachable: they have conversations with other women and engage in sharing *mate*, both familiar scenarios for members of the audience. By making these celebrities relatable, ads communicate that audience members can also have the physical capital that these celebrities have if they engage in similar consumer practices (Noriega, 2012). Physical capital refers here to the body as a resource (Shilling, 1991). In other words, the audience can too have access to some of the attributes celebrities have: a flawless skin. Here it is pertinent to bring up intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020) once more. The represented participants are of European descent and the skin in question is always white, which is why it may be construed as a desirable trait. As I

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<sup>27</sup> The Mbyá people used *yerba mate* in various ways. *Mate*, as we know it today, was adopted from their traditions. While *mate* is not unique to Argentina, it is strongly associated with an Argentinean identity.

explained in Chapter 1, Argentinean identity, and thus normative Argentinean femininity, has been constructed as white, dependent on the waves of immigration from Europe in previous centuries.

	<p>Demand gaze Close up Level angle Oblique angle</p>
	<p>Demand gaze Close up Level angle Oblique angle</p>
	<p>Demand gaze Close up Level angle Oblique angle</p>
<p><b>Figure 16: ¿Todavía no la probaste? Interaction with the audience in Teatrical 1, 2, and 3, respectively</b></p>	

When they interact with the audience, celebrities appear close to the camera and gaze directly at the audience (see Figure 16). The close-ups suggest complicity and intimacy between the celebrity and the audience. The rhetorical question, “*¿Todavía no la probaste?*” (engagement, heterogloss, contract), also indexes this complicity and, to some degree, surprise that someone might not have tried it yet. The use of the *vos*<sup>28</sup> form of the verb, the demand gaze, and the close shot suggest Araceli González is socially close to the audience. Dialogically, the question serves to endorse the product: it’s so good you have to try it. Thus, this device exhorts the audience to buy the facial cream and see for themselves. Additionally, *vos* is a marker of Argentinean identity, one which both represented participants and the audience share. *Vos* is the only second person pronoun present in these ads.

In sum, interactive resources are deployed to suggest that celebrities are just like the audience, and, by those means, construe solidarity and group membership with them. Thus, the implication is that the celebrities’ physical capital is attainable for the audience if they buy the products advertised, which is in line with Noriega’s (2012) findings. Physical capital is not the only benefit of engaging in these consumer practices, as will be discussed in the next section, but it is likely one of the main appeals, since celebrity status tends to be associated with beauty.

In most of the skin care ads celebrities are portrayed as relatable and approachable. One exception to this is the Cicatricure 1 ad. In this ad, Valeria Mazza is endorsing a product which is presented as exclusive. Due to her career as a high-fashion model, which included working for designers such as Gianni Versace, Valeria Mazza is more internationally known than other celebrities in this group of ads. Throughout the ad, she appears at medium and long distance, which suggests she is further away from the audience. Saturated gold tones predominate in the

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<sup>28</sup> Second person, familiar

color scheme, establishing a connection between the setting, Valeria Mazza, and the product, Cicatricure Gold Lift. Her hair and her dress also play in this color scheme. Her strut towards the camera additionally parallels a model's walking of the runway. In this manner, the ad toys with her former career by displaying her walking along a luxurious room with a European feel. Thus, it is not just her flawless skin that is considered desirable, but also the glamorous circles in which she moved and likely still moves. In this sense, the setting connects the audience with a desirable lifestyle associated with Europeanness. This feature is relevant here because of the pride Argentina has taken in past European immigration to the extent of basing national identity on it.

	<p>Offer image Close shot Level angle Oblique angle</p>
	<p>Offer image Medium close shot Level angle Oblique angle</p>
	<p>Offer image Very long shot Level angle Frontal angle</p>
<p><b>Figure 17: From top to bottom (most to least relatable): Brenda Gandini (Cicatricure 3), Araceli González (Teatrical 1), and Valeria Mazza (Cicatricure 1)</b></p>	

From the point of view of representation, the theme of approachable celebrities is realized via the depicted processes. In sequences with a narrative structure, represented participants are shown doing things, as opposed to posing in sequences with a conceptual structure. Ads in the skin care category include both kinds of representation: narrative, in which represented participants are shown doing things, and conceptual, in which represented participants, if present, are posing. Except for Valeria Mazza, celebrities are shown doing seemingly everyday activities, particularly Brenda Gandini who is shown at home getting ready for the day, in the street running errands or dropping off her kids at school. In this sense, Valeria Mazza and Brenda Gandini are at opposing ends of a relatability scale (see Figure 17).

Natalie Pérez, Eleonora Wexler, and Araceli González from the Teatrical ads fall somewhere in between (see Figure 17). Araceli González is shown presumably at a TV studio (or some other kind of studio) (see Figure 15), she is about to get her hair and make-up ready, and she talks to the stylist. Eleonora Wexler seems to be at home talking with a woman whose job is unidentified<sup>29</sup> (see Figure 15). Natalie Pérez (Teatrical 3) is simply shown using the products, she does not interact with anyone, and we only see her in front of a mirror using the product. Even though they are shown in glamorous settings, or they are engaging in activities that might not be at the reach of everyone watching, they are shown interacting with ordinary people and being friendly with them (gifting them their facial cream). Relatability seems to interact with how affordable or exclusive products are – or, rather, are depicted to be. The Brenda Gandini ads stress all the benefits for the affordable price. By contrast, the Valeria Mazza ad, portrays the product as luxurious and links it to the model's past as a high-couture model for European designers. The Teatrical ads mention the bang for your buck factor, but they do not

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<sup>29</sup> The woman is wearing scrubs which are used in a wide range of professions, such as medicine, spas, or centros de estética. Other than the scrubs, there are no other markers indexing a specific profession.

overemphasize it. The less relatable the celebrity, the more expensive and luxurious the product seems.

In conclusion, the skin care ads discussed deploy interactive and representational resources to construct a sense of complicity and solidarity between the represented participants, often celebrities, and the audience members. Social distance and the narrative structure are the two main resources deployed in this way. In terms of social distance, celebrities appear closer to the audience. This is achieved via medium close and close shots in which the audience can see the represented participants from the waist up (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Cicatricure Gold Lift, an ad for a product portrayed as high-end, is an exception to this. In this ad, former high-fashion model Valeria Mazza's full figure is often in the frame. This resource conveys more social distance. In terms of representation, the celebrities in the ad are shown doing everyday activities, such as getting ready for the day or for work and dropping kids off at school, among others. Social distance and the narrative structure combine to portray celebrities as more or less relatable, which in turn is linked to the products, and their value for their price.

## **5. Chapter summary**

Using intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020) as a tool helps highlight that women in these skin care ads are a fairly homogenous group. They are all white and cisgender. In some instances, it is men who admire these women. This is the case in the Goicoechea commercial, which includes the men's appreciation of the women onscreen – "*Sensual*". This implies that, at least in part, grooming is for the benefit of men, and thus further implies heterosexuality. Despite the advent of gay, trans, and women's rights movements, these representations also do not offer

diversity in that respect. All the represented participants seem to construct their identities within the bounds of cisheteronormativity (Butler, 1997/2013).

In terms of social class, these women are not entirely homogenous: some of them are portrayed in lower paying jobs. In turn, this would account for class differences between them and the celebrities portrayed. As discussed in Chapter 1, class, rather than race, has been emphasized as the main marker of social difference in Argentina (Alberto & Elena, 2016). Insofar as the differences between these women is accounted for in terms of social class, these ads conform to longstanding trends that account for social differences by placing the emphasis on class, rather than other markers of identities. As a result, these ads are performative of both gender and national identity, dictating prescribed gendered and classed behaviors aligned with a white Argentina (Alberto & Elena, 2016; Butler, 1997/2013).

Women are further portrayed as objects of contemplation either involved in symbolic processes or narrative processes. In the case of the former, women are carriers of attributes, while in the case of the latter, they are actors of processes such as walking and talking, or they are interactors. The ads further emphasize socializing, an activity women are stereotypically good at. All ads include this aspect by having celebrities share their beauty secrets with other women on screen or with the audience.

In these ads, women also gain confidence by consuming skin care products. Del Saz-Rubio (2018b) argues that in this sense, product consumption is a means to resolving inner struggles: products fix qualities that can be seen as a source of insecurity and, in this manner, they serve to instill confidence. This confidence, as a result, does not come from within but, rather, from qualities acquired via product consumption. By having better looking skin, these women find confidence. This results in admiration from men in the Goicoechea ad. Nonetheless,

this is not the only kind of admiration depicted on screen. The Teatrical ads, especially Teatrical 1 and 2, emphasize the admiration celebrities get from other women. This admiration construes the celebrities as aspirational model for their female interlocutors and possibly their interlocutors.

In order to construe this theme of confidence boost as a result of using the products advertised, the ads deploy a combination of sequence structure and visual and verbal inscriptions. In addition, compositional resources, such as information value, reinforce this theme in some instances. In the first sequence, “skin imperfections” are established as a problem which a product, introduced in the second sequence, will take care of. In the problem sequence, represented participants emote sadness, while they look happy after using the product advertised and reaping its benefits. In the Goicoechea and Cicatricure 3, 4, and 5 ads, the audience is meant to align with the male gaze, as instantiated by resources such as male voices as sources of evaluation or via camera work that aligns with the male perspective. In Goicoechea, the audience can further relate to the women on screen, struggling to find a product that works for them. The musical soundtrack might also contribute to create a sense of generational group membership. In Teatrical 1 and 2, the audience is also meant to identify with the celebrities’ female interlocutors. In other words, the audience is expected to align with a variety of subject positions (Fairclough, 2015). Yet, these products are all marketed to virtually the same group of women in society. In keeping all of these audiences in mind, these ads might be sanctioning kinds of admiration contained in cisheteronormativity.

Finally, ads construe group membership by portraying celebrities as relatable. Ads have close shots and celebrities are showcased in everyday situations, that are likely to resonate with the audience. This sense of closeness with the audience implies that the audience can too have

access to the celebrities' physical capital (Noriega, 2012). Ads, however, play with social distance to make celebrities more or less relatable depending on the product. The Cicatricure ads with Brenda Gandini and the Teatrical ads portray celebrities in their everyday lives, which indicates that, despite the difference in lifestyles, they are just like their audience. In these ads, social distance, which is realized in the kind of shot, is medium to close. In Cicatricure 1, by contrast, the color scheme, and the predominance of medium to long distance suggests that the product is as exclusive as its endorser, a former high-fashion model.

On the whole, femininity in these ads intersects with whiteness (Collins & Bilge, 2020). In terms of class, there are two groups: celebrities and other women. The celebrities likely have higher incomes and more resources available to them. The second group of women is shown aspiring to the goods and status the celebrities have. Some of these women are portrayed in lower paying jobs, and others are not associated to any profession. As for performativity (Butler, 1997/2013), their performances point to taking care of oneself as equated to reducing signs of aging and other imperfections. In this sense, there is an emphasis on youthfulness. The use of *vos* verb forms indexes the local culture. Another marker of local culture is *mate*, which appears in Teatrical 2. On top of indexing the local culture, both *vos* and *mate* serve here to construe group membership and are thus references to national identity. Additionally, these markers are embodied in white bodies, which connects national identity to whiteness (Alberto & Elena, 2016). In the next chapter, I turn to the ads for packaged foods and examine how femininity is portrayed in that section of the corpus.

## CHAPTER 5

### 1. Introduction

This section of the corpus is comprised of 7 ads. To be included in the corpus, ads needed a running time of 25-40 seconds and had to address the Argentinean audience either by advertising a local product or by having a local celebrity endorse the product. In this section of the corpus, only one ad has celebrity endorsement: Royal, which features television chefs Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar. Table 5.1 contains a list of ads, their running time, and the product advertised.

**Table 12: List of ads**

<b>Ad</b>	<b>Running time (in seconds)</b>	<b>Product advertised</b>
La Serenísima 1 – Danette 1	25	Pudding
La Serenísima 2 – Danette 2	25	Pudding
La Serenísima 3 – Serenito	28	Pudding
La Serenísima 4 – Yogurísimo	29	Yogurt
Royal – #FelizNoCumpleaños	30	Cake mix
Unión – Suave y se la banca	29	<i>Yerba mate</i>
La Salteña – Sabor irresistible	35	<i>Tapas de empanadas</i>

The first four ads in the group are for La Serenísima products. La Serenísima is an Argentinean dairy manufacturer established in 1929. Despite manufacturing some products jointly with the Danone group (“Danone Se Extiende En La Serenísima,” 1999), still brands all products with its logo and advertises them as national industry. La Serenísima 1 and 2 advertise Danette, the line of desserts marketed to adults. In the ads, the puddings are used to resolve frustrations caused by occurrences in the represented participants’ daily lives. La Serenísima 3, on the other hand, advertises the line of desserts marketed to children. La Serenísima 4 advertises the company’s line of yogurts. La Serenísima 3 and 4 are different from the other ads in that they

also function as institutional videos in which employees vouch for the quality of the products manufactured by the company. The Royal ad advertises the company's cake mix and features "celebrity" cooks Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar<sup>30</sup>. While not a local product, this ad addresses the audience by having local celebrity endorsement. The Royal ad was additionally part of a campaign which included a social media aspect – in fact, the ad incorporates social media interdiscursively (Economou, 2009) – and live guest appearances by Valentina and Lucas on other shows airing on the same station. These were staged as surprise visits in which Valentina and Lucas shared cake with the host of the show on the receiving end of the visit. These surprise appearances replicated the unibirthday celebration depicted in the Royal ad.

The two remaining commercials advertise cultural foods: *yerba mate* (Unión) and *tapas de empanadas* (La Salteña). As mentioned in Chapter 4, *mate* is considered to be the Argentinean national beverage. In Unión a mother is seen telling a bedtime story to her child. The story blends into the woman's professional role in a succession of scenes that alternate the storytelling and her experiences at work. La Salteña features a family mealtime scene in which the parents are getting the food, *empanadas*, ready. *Empanadas*<sup>31</sup> are a popular traditional food and are a common family dinner. Once they are fresh out of the oven, the mother calls the children to sit at the table, but they are distracted playing video games or watching TV and do not hear her. She then uses the aroma of the food to get them to come. Along with the children, several neighbors sit at the table as well and everyone enjoys dinner together.

Applying an intersectional analysis (Collins & Bilge, 2020), one similarity between this section of the corpus and the skin care section emerges: the represented participants are all white

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<sup>30</sup> At the time this ad aired, they were hosting a late-night cooking show on El Trece, the only station on which this ad was aired.

<sup>31</sup> Empanadas are not unique to Argentina, but they are sometimes strongly associated with the country.

and seem affluent – a similarity between this section of the corpus and the skin care ads. Some women are portrayed in professions requiring university degrees. Others are portrayed in caregiving roles without a reference to a profession. In one of these instances, the woman appears with her children. The children are wearing school uniforms, which suggests an upper-middle class family. Much like the skin care corpus, they construe a homogenous group. This match between whiteness and affluence parallels the remapping of racial and ethnic differences to class distinctions (Alberto & Elena, 2016), a topic to which I return in Chapter 6.

However, there are more differences than similarities between both sections of the corpus. This set of ads differs from the skin care portion of the corpus in several ways. First, all the skin care products in the corpus are endorsed by celebrities. By contrast, celebrity endorsement occurs only once in the packaged foods ads considered. As it has already been mentioned, this is the case of Royal. The rest of the ads portray people going about their job or family life.

Second, while some ads for skin care contain conceptual structures in which people are objects of contemplation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), represented participants in the packaged foods section virtually always appear as actors in narrative processes. In other words, they are shown carrying out an action for themselves or others (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Figure 18 illustrates this: the top image still is an example of a conceptual structure from Cicatricure 1. In this frame, Valeria Mazza is standing still, and the audience can see her face from up close. The bottom still, by contrast, is an example of a narrative structure from Unión. In this case, the focus is on the action and the woman is shown talking to the other employees.



**Figure 18: Conceptual structure from Cicatricure 1 (top) and narrative structure from Unión (bottom)**

Finally, in terms of sequence structure, this set of the corpus is not a homogeneous group. The commercials in the skin care portion of the section, with the exception of Teatrical 3, consistently deployed a problem-solution structure in which the product advertised solved a problem by treating what was perceived as an undesirable feature. The ads for packaged foods show do not consistently fall into the same sequence structure. Table 13 contains the sequence structure information for the packaged foods ads.

**Table 13: List of ads, number of sequences, and sequence structure**

<b>Ad</b>	<b>Number of sequences</b>	<b>Sequence structure</b>
La Serenísima 1 – Danette 1	3	problem-solution-evaluation
La Serenísima 2 – Danette 2	3	problem-solution-evaluation
La Serenísima 3 – Serenito	4	product=people-exposition-evaluation-people=product
La Serenísima 4 – Yogurísimo	4	people=product-exposition-evaluation-product=people
Royal – #FelizNoCumpleaños	4	ideation-preparation-reaction-evaluation
Unión – Suave y se la banca	3	problem-solution-evaluation
La Salteña – Sabor irresistible	3	preparation-reaction-evaluation

As Table 13 shows, La Serenísima 3 and 4 verbally and visually construct the idea that buying their products is buying the effort and commitment of those who make them, which is developed in the first and last sequences. The sequences in the middle contain an exposition and an evaluation. These ads both contain an expository sequence in which employees share information regarding the quality processes involved in the manufacturing of the dairy products advertised. The same employee provides a positive evaluation of the products in the evaluation sequence.

In Royal, celebrity chefs Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar surprise their filming and production crew with cake during a break from filming. The cooks want to do something nice for the crew and, as no one has a birthday that day, they decide to celebrate everyone's unbirthdays<sup>32</sup>, a callback to Lewis Carroll's famous Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. This is the ideation sequence. After that, they prepare the cake and share it with the crew, whose reactions show surprise and delight. These are the preparation and reaction sequences. In the

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<sup>32</sup> In the ad, they use the Spanish words "*no cumpleaños*".

remaining sequence, Lucas and Valentina provide an evaluation on the success of their idea. Then, the logo with a callback to the product appear on screen. Finally, La Salteña features a family dinner scene with a twist. A man and a woman are making dinner (preparation). When the meal is ready, she calls the children to the table. When they don't come<sup>33</sup>, she uses the smell of the food to lure them in. The smell of the food not only gets the children to come, but also the neighbors (reaction). They all stay for dinner and enjoy the meal together (evaluation).

It should be noted, that while some ads in the packaged foods section also have a problem-solution structure, this plays out differently from the skin care ads. La Serenísima 1, La Serenísima 2, and Unión. La Serenísima 1 and 2 showcase people ridding themselves of frustration by enjoying the pudding advertised. These frustrations are mundane: being locked out of one's home banking account or dealing with kids while tired and forgetting one's home keys in the car. The dessert solves that problem in a metaphorical sense since it provides comfort. In the case of Unión, the product is a companion to the woman as she works. In the ad, she is telling a child, presumably hers, a bedtime story. In the story, the character is trying to reach a honeycomb. The story blends with her giving her employees a stirring talk intended to motivate them. At work, the problem is conceptualized as the lack of productivity of a talented team. In other words, the problem-solution structure is parallel to the conflict-resolution structure in storytelling, and it plays out in two different levels: the story the woman is telling her child and the pep talk she is giving the employees to increase productivity.

The more striking characteristic of this set of ads is its even distribution in terms of setting, a representational multimodal category (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006): 1) at home, 2) at

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<sup>33</sup> This could be considered a problem. However, the ad is organized according to stages of meal preparation and consumption, and the musical soundtrack breaks it down into those sequences. For that reason, I considered this a "reaction" sequence during coding and analysis.

work, and 3) both at home and at work. Both men and women appear in both settings, although women are more likely to appear in a home setting in parenting roles. As noted in Chapter 3, one man in such a role was featured in an ad that was not included in the corpus, based on the running time criterion.

At work, women are portrayed in some upper-middle class professional positions that in previous generations would have been held by men. This may be signaling a change in advertising to keep up with the times. This more “progressive” portrayal at work co-occurs with a dominance of women in caregiving duties, which seems to indicate that they are still seen as the main performer of tasks in the private sphere. Table 14 shows a list of ads in this category, where they are set, and who the main represented participant is for each ad – either a man or a woman. To be considered a main represented participant, the person on screen had to be an integral part of the plotline of the ad. For example, in the case of La Salteña, the woman is joined by a man. However, she is the actor of the main processes, those which move the plot forward.

**Table 14: List of ads, settings, and represented participants**

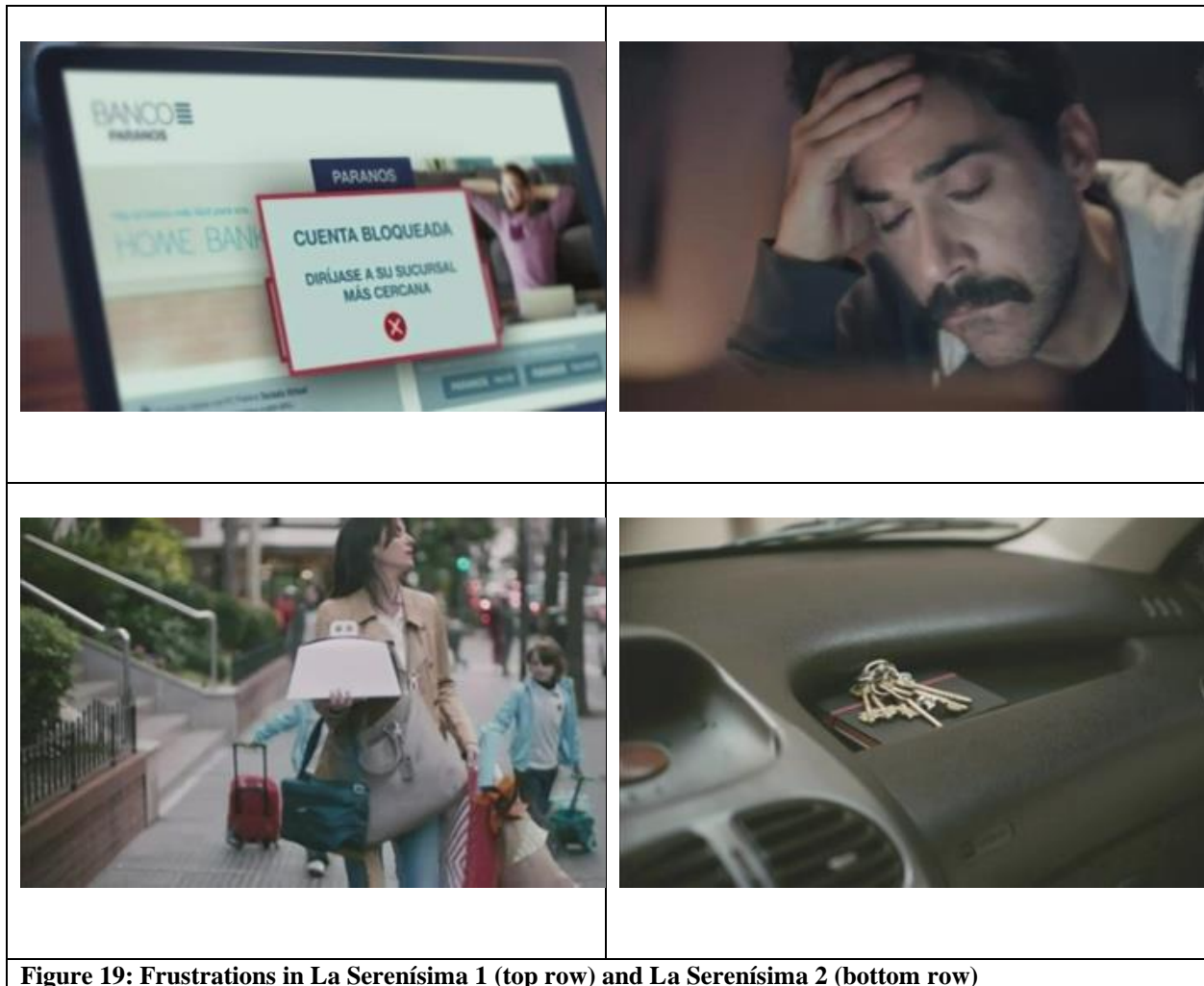
<b>Ad</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Main represented participant</b>
La Serenísima 1 – Danette 1	Home	Man
La Serenísima 2 – Danette 2	Home	Woman
La Serenísima 3 – Serenito	Work	Woman
La Serenísima 4 – Yogurísimo	Work	Woman
Royal – #FelizNoCumpleaños	Work	Man and woman
Unión – Suave y se la banca	Both home and work	Woman
La Salteña – Sabor irresistible	Home	Woman

The following sections explore each of the settings – home, work, or both - and provide a characterization of the represented participants, the processes they are involved in, and the

relevant visual and verbal evaluative resources at play. Because most of the represented participants are women, I focus on their portrayal. When men appear in the ads, I discuss their portrayal and compare it to that of women.

## **2. Women at home**

There are three ads set at home: La Serenísima 1, La Serenísima 2, and La Salteña. The main represented participant in La Serenísima 1 is a man, while the main represented participants in La Serenísima 2 and La Salteña are women. La Serenísima 1 and 2 are similarly structured. They both advertise Danette, a pudding, as a means to relieve frustration. The ads toy with the idea that the product makes everyday frustrations disappear. These frustrations are different for each represented participant. An intersectional approach can further highlight how gender and class intersect in these ads (Collins & Bilge, 2020). In the case of La Serenísima 1, the man is blocked out of his online banking account for not remembering his password. As a result, he will have to go to the bank in person to restore access to online banking. A visit to the bank in Argentina tends to be very time consuming: lines are long and so are wait times. In addition, banks are only open to the public during limited hours, which causes additional hassle. By contrast, the woman in La Serenísima 2 is shown walking home with two school-aged children. She is carrying various bags and packages and one of the children is calling on her to stop his brother from teasing him. She suddenly realizes that she has left her house keys in the car, so she will have to fetch them.



**Figure 19: Frustrations in La Serenísima 1 (top row) and La Serenísima 2 (bottom row)**

While this is a small sample, the contrast between the sources of frustration, illustrated in Figure 19, is striking. While the man is frustrated that his account has been blocked and will have to go to the bank in person to solve this problem, the woman is frustrated because she is tired: she is carrying several bags and the kids are teasing one another. On top of this, she has left her keys in the car. In other words, these two people are portrayed in different settings and circumstances. The man is alone in a small apartment and has a dog, whereas the woman has two children, whose uniforms suggest they attend a private school, and she is later shown in a spacious living room.




La Salteña also has a woman as the main represented participant, but a man makes an appearance as well. The ad showcases this woman making *empanadas*. She is joined in the kitchen by a man, who does not feature as prominently. He is shown cooking in the opening sequence, standing slightly behind the woman. The fact that they are taking on this chore together could suggest more modern roles in the home. After the opening, however, he is backgrounded through the end of the ad. At the visual descriptive level, this is instantiated in the shallow depth of field: the man is out of focus, which makes the woman in the ad more salient (see Table 15). When the meal is ready, she calls the children, a boy and a girl, who are in their own bedrooms, playing videogames and watching TV, respectively. When her call is unanswered, she bites an *empanada* and blows on it so that the aroma will get the children to come and sit at the table. This scene is accompanied by Marvin Gaye's "Let's get it on", in which the persona is not able to control or restrain intense feelings for another person. This choice is interesting because the lyrics<sup>34</sup> are in English and will not be understood by all audience members. Nevertheless, the song serves two purposes. First, the fact that it is in English could be an attempt to make the product look trendy. English is often tied to higher class educational opportunities and, as a result, its use additionally indexes global identities by suggesting that this family may have access to these kinds of opportunities. Despite this, they still enjoy local traditional foods, taking pride in Argentinean tradition and identity. Second, the rhythm, coupled with the depicted action, evoke an aura of sensuousness. The combination of the song and the reaction to the aroma of the food both construct the theme of irresistibility: the children, as well as some neighbors, smell the food and sit at the table. The senses play an important role in the ad: on the one hand, smell and taste are used to provide narrative coherence

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<sup>34</sup> The lyrics, heard in English, say: "I've been really tryin' baby / tryin' to hold back / this feeling for so long".

to the ad and, on the other hand, they also to evoke images in the mind of the audience. When everyone is gathered around the table enjoying the meal, the slogan, “*Simplemente irresistible*”, appears.

**Table 15: Represented participants and saliency in La Salteña**

Sequence	Frame
Sequence 1	 <p>A man in a light blue shirt and a woman in a red top are in a kitchen, focused on preparing food on a counter. The scene is dimly lit, with a window in the background showing blinds.</p>
Sequence 1	 <p>A woman in a red top stands in a dining room, holding a white plate. The table in the foreground is set with plates, glasses, and a bottle. The room has blue walls and framed pictures.</p>
Sequence 1	 <p>A close-up shot of a woman with curly hair wearing a red top. In the background, a man in a light blue shirt is visible but out of focus.</p>

Another consideration about the musical soundtrack is needed here. At the very beginning of the second sequence, when the children do not come to eat dinner, the woman

blows on the empanada so that the aroma will make the children come. It is exactly then that “Let’s get it on” starts playing. The combination of the song and her facial expression gives the scene a sexual undertone (see Figure 20). This connection between enjoying food, or its smell, and sensuality also comes up in La Serenísima 2. Figure 20 shows frames in which the represented participants are enjoying food either by tasting or smelling it. The top still comes from La Salteña and the bottom one from La Serenísima 2. Both stills depict the pleasure or satisfaction derived from enjoying food with a sexual undertone. In the first one, the woman blows on the *empanada* to get the aroma to entice the children, so that they sit at the table. The close-up makes her facial expression more salient: her lips are slightly parted, and her head is bent upwards. She is additionally slowly blowing on the *empanada*. The music further adds to this atmosphere of sensuousness. In the second one, the woman is indulging in dessert after a difficult day: the food is a source of comfort and pleasure. This pleasure is explicitly alluded to visually in her facial expression: her eyes are completely shut, and her tongue is sticking out, as she licks the spoon. By contrast, the middle still does not carry the same sexual connotation. The man is enjoying the dessert but the still does not read as sexually charged. It would seem that when women are the actors of the narrative processes involved – eating or smelling food – the scenes are more explicitly exploited for sensuousness.



**Figure 20: Reactions to smelling and eating food in La Salteña (top), La Serenísima 1 (middle), and La Serenísima 2 (bottom)**

In sum, ads portray women at home with childcare responsibilities, perhaps reproducing sedimented gender expectations (Butler, 1997/2013). The one man in these ads, by contrast, does not appear to have that kind of family life. In home settings, women are more prominent. At

home, they cook and take care of the children – picking them up from school, for instance. When women enjoy food, this is played for sensuality. In the case of *La Salteña*, the English-language music track reinforces this meaning, as well as suggesting upper-middle-class global identities, despite the fact that this is a “local product”. In the case of *La Serenísima 2*, the voice over has this same effect. The voiceover further combines with the woman’s facial expression. While the voiceover is the same for *La Serenísima 1*, the man’s facial expression is not as overtly sexualized.

### **3. Women at work**

Three ads in the corpus are set exclusively at work: *La Serenísima 3*, *La Serenísima 4*, and *Royal*. In the two *La Serenísima* ads, women are portrayed in professions not traditionally ascribed to women, a novelty by comparison to the skin care section of the corpus. These two ads showcase women in positions of authority and in jobs, which considered via an intersectional lens (Collins & Bilge, 2020), presuppose access to higher education, and are hence performative of professional upper-middle-class femininity (Butler, 1997/2013). *Royal*, on the other hand, showcases two celebrity chefs<sup>35</sup> – one man and one woman. The ad, which was part of a larger campaign which included social media presence, toys with the idea of these chefs being a duo – a throwback to the company’s famous duo: chocolate and vanilla pudding.

In *La Serenísima 3* and *4*, the audience is invited to see these women in action at their workspaces via the deployment of offer shots, or to interact with them directly, which is achieved visually through close social distance and demand gazes and instantiated verbally in

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<sup>35</sup> To my knowledge, there have been various celebrity chefs, both men and women, who have had TV shows in Argentinean television. This younger group of chefs are portrayed somewhat differently from previous generations. There appears to be less social distance between them and the audience.

second person pronouns which they used when they address the audience. Just like the celebrities in Chapter 4, these women use the pronoun *vos* for the audience, which indexes group membership as Argentineans, and thus constructs Argentinean national identity. Authority is explicitly acknowledged with captions, like in La Serenísima 3 and 4. For instance, La Serenísima 3 depicts a *gerenta de calidad* wearing protective gear in a manufacturing plant and La Serenísima 4 portrays a *jefa de medio ambiente* in a lab. The use of the words *gerenta* and *jefa* are worth noting as well: these are grammatically marked for feminine gender. It is possible in Spanish to say *la gerente* or *la jefe*, or in other words to mark gender in the article and keep the *-e* on the noun<sup>36</sup>. The deliberate choice of marking the nouns for feminine forms seems an attempt to make visible both visually and verbally that the company is employing women for positions traditionally held by men.


While these two women are shown at work, the audience does not see them doing their work. Instead, they are speaking about the quality processes, and, by extension, the quality of the products manufactured by La Serenísima. They also show the audience the plant premises. In other words, these women are speaking for the company: they are giving the audience a tour of the premises and sharing with them why their products are the best. This is in line with Rakow and Kranich's findings for television news (1991). They pose that "women are used to endorse an action or policy because of their organizational or institutional affiliations" (p. 17). In these two La Serenísima ads, the women speak for the company. This partly plays out via the metaphor, introduced in the first sequence, that choosing their product is choosing the commitment of those who make it. Visually, this metaphor is realized via two means: first, the symbolic process in which the product carries the attribute "those who make it", and second, the

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<sup>36</sup> The *-a* gender marking is common in Argentina and this could also, to some extent, index an Argentinean identity.

zoom in on the product label, which shows the names of those involved in the manufacturing process (see Table 16). An additional consideration regarding this is that the audience will make a connection between the product and an Argentinean company. Thus, “those who make it” refers to national industry and – more importantly – the need to support it.

**Table 16: Product = People**

Sequence	Frames	Spoken discourse
Sequence 1	 <p>The frames in this sequence are: 1. A top-down view of a green table with various colorful toys (blocks, letters, a spoon) and a small orange box of Serenito. 2. A close-up of the orange label with the text 'ELABORADO POR JORGELINA VISPO, ERG, MANUELA G...'. 3. A close-up of the name 'JORGELINA' on the label. 4. A close-up of a woman wearing a hard hat and safety vest, identified as Jorgelina Vispo. 5. A full-body shot of Jorgelina Vispo in her work attire, with her name and title 'JORGELINA VISPO Serenito de Calidad' displayed on the screen.</p>	<p>[man, voiceover] cuando elegís Serenito</p> <p>también elegís el compromiso de todos lo que lo hacemos</p>

Those involved in making the products are instantiated in one employee: Jorgelina Vispo, a woman. Before meeting Jorgelina Vispo, the audience sees only a cup of Serenito. The camera zooms in on the label until the words “*ELABORADO POR JORGELINA VISPO*” appear on screen. The camera continues to zoom in until only the “*I*” in Jorgelina is visible. In that same capital “*I*” the audience can see the figure of a woman, who will introduce herself as Jorgelina Vispo shortly. Before this introduction, there is a transition from the shot that follows the color scheme of the label to black. What was the “*I*” is now revealed to be a portrait shot of Jorgelina Vispo. The remainder of the ad, except for the last sequence, is filmed in this manner, as if she had shot it with her phone. This zoom-in sequence reinforces the metaphor that is articulated verbally: a product is those who make it (“product = people”). The following sequence showcases Jorgelina Vispo and the audience learns that she is a *gerenta de calidad* with La Serenísima. Jorgelina is shown in work clothes, including protective gear, giving the audience a tour of the manufacturing plant. Jorgelina Vispo addresses the audience and enumerates the reasons for the product qualities. She speaks on behalf of the company and from her knowledge of working there (*estamos, aseguramos, garantizamos*). This language also reinforces the metaphor “people = product”. It reads like an institutional/promotional video. The third sequence reverses the visual effect, and the camera zooms out from Jorgelina Vispo. This camera work further reinforces the metaphor “people = product”.

La Serenísima 4 is structured similarly and builds the same metaphor: the company is personified in its employees and their commitment to first quality products. This time, the products showcased are their line of yogurts. The employee in this ad is also a woman, but her job is in a lab. She is wearing a white coat and she is introduced as Constanza Depedri, *jefa de medio ambiente*. She is wearing a white lab coat and, presumably, is working in a lab. She

speaks in the first person when assuring the audience of the strict quality checkups on the products. She uses this knowledge to justify feeding them to her son when she says: “*A mi hijo le doy todos los días Yogurísimo porque sé quién lo hace, cómo lo hace y la cantidad de controles de calidad que tiene*”. In this manner, she is using her role as a mother to convey that the products are the best, otherwise she would not feed them to her child. Thus, the visual and verbal levels in La Serenísima 4 are not congruent. While the woman, whom we are told is Constanza Depedri, is located in what looks like a lab and appeals to her inside knowledge about quality checks to vouch for the product, she further mentions this is the reason she feeds her son La Serenísima yogurts. In other words, instead of citing scientific knowledge for justifying the quality of her products her authority on the subject comes from role as a mother. A good mother would not feed their children a product that was not safe for them. This can be read as an assumption about the audience as well: they are more likely to relate to parenthood, specifically motherhood, rather than to information about quality processes.

The third ad in this category is the Royal ad. In this ad, cooks Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar are shown in a break from recording. The commercial takes place in a TV studio and consists of four sequences. Valentina is younger than the women in the La Serenísima ads. The two cooks are part of a cooking show, and the ad is meant to recreate their working space. While they are at work, the ad captures a 45-minute break for the stars. In the first sequence, Valentina comes up with the idea of doing something for the crew and suggests baking them a cake. This gesture stems from the fact that the crew is great: “*che*<sup>37</sup> *qué equipo divino*”, in Valentina’s words. The word “*divino*” here is used to mean great, fantastic, or very nice and in this context carries the connotation that what is being appreciated are traits such as kindness.

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<sup>37</sup> Both chefs use “*che*” throughout the ad. This is an expression typically used in colloquial conversation to call someone’s attention. While not exclusive to Argentina, it is probably used here to index an Argentinean identity.

These traits are further instantiated in behavior: how the crew acts towards other members of the production team. “*Divino*”, as a result, is an inscription of judgement (social esteem, normality). In other words, it codifies “how unusual someone is” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 52). Social esteem inscriptions can be either positive – i.e., coding admiration – or negative (Martin & White, 2005). In this context, it is meant to be a positive inscription of judgement.

Valentina’s suggestion additionally makes her thoughtful and caring: out of the chefs, she comes up with the idea, coding these traits as feminine. Her idea to bake the cake also suggests that she values interpersonal relationships, a trait stereotypically associated with women. In this sense, this ad brings into being – or constitutes, to use Butler’s (1997/2013) word – a femininity that contrasts with masculinity: Lucas offers that no one has a birthday on that day, as if questioning whether there is an actual reason to bake the crew a cake. This will later be addressed in the tag line at the end of the third sequence: “*con tortas Royal siempre es un buen momento para celebrar*”. Lucas’s comment prompts Valentina to suggest celebrating the crew’s unbirthdays, a reference to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. In the following sequence, they bake a cake using Royal cake mix so that the cake will be ready in 45 minutes – the duration of their break. The making of the cake sequence plays out as Lucas half sings very rhythmically, as if it were a *reggaetón* – a musical genre later alluded to when he utters *ya tú sabes* towards the end of the ad. In this sense, this ad echoes several other contexts: a musical genre, social media, and literature, which perhaps serve to index the construction of a global identity. In the following sequence, they share the cake with the crew as they wish everyone a happy unbirthday. The director or stage manager finally summons the chefs back to filming and dubs them *Dúo Royal*. This reference to *Dúo Royal* can be read at various levels. First, it refers to a combination of

vanilla and chocolate in the brand’s desserts. Second, it is reference to both Valentina and Lucas working together to promote the brand.

**Table 17: Dúo Royal**

Sequence	Frames	Spoken discourse
Sequence 4		<p data-bbox="1029 548 1382 615">[Lucas Escobar] dúo Royal che</p> <p data-bbox="1029 768 1377 802">[Valentina Salezzi] *nods*</p> <p data-bbox="1029 989 1406 1056">[Lucas Escobar] vos serías la vainilla y yo el chocolate?</p>

In the last sequence, they additionally assign themselves the vanilla and chocolate part of the duo, evoking appreciation values. Lucas asks: “*¿Vos serías la vainilla y yo el chocolate?*”. This is, on the surface, a reference to the classic vanilla and chocolate desserts of the brand. I contend, nonetheless, that it merits further analysis. The grammatical genders of the flavors coincide with Lucas and Valentina’s gender presentations but, in addition, the vanilla/chocolate reference could play out as a comment on their complexions: Valentina having a fairer complexion and Lucas a slightly darker skin tone (see Table 17), which might be a way to code ethnic differences within European-descent Argentineans. Later in the ad, during the unbrithday

celebration, Valentina can be seen carrying a vanilla-flavored cake, while Lucas carries a chocolate-flavored one. Due to the success of the unibirthday celebration, Valentina suggests bringing it to the rest of the TV station, to which Lucas agrees. As part of the campaign, Valentina Salezzi and Lucas Escobar took this celebration to TV shows in the station, “surprising” them.

In conclusion, women at work are portrayed in jobs which require professional training and/or education and which would have been held by men in previous generations. In these positions, women in this sample vouch for the company, which is in line with Rakow and Kranich’s (1991) findings. Even if these professional scenarios, women may appeal to their roles as mothers, as is the case in *La Serenísima 4*. Women are also portrayed as caring. In *Royal*, it is Valentina that suggests doing something for the crew because they are, to use her words, “*divinos*”. Her suggestion of baking their crew a cake positions her as the caring one of the pair: she is thoughtful and values the interpersonal connection with the team; qualities that are considered feminine.

#### **4. Women at home and at work**

Only one of the ads takes place both at home and at work: *Unión*. This ad consists of three sequences: problem-solution-evaluation, albeit this is played differently than in the skin care ads. The problem here is not one that can be solved by the product. Rather, the ad construes a problem that plays out at a metaphorical and a literal level: a character in a story trying to reach a honeycomb is compared with a group of employees’ lack of productivity. In the first sequence a young woman is shown first reading a bedtime story to a child and successively addressing employees who appear to be in her charge. The sequence establishes the problem: in the story the

character is hungry and wants to eat honey, while in her speech she seems dissatisfied by the lack of productivity and inability of the team to reach their goals. Table 18 shows the first two sequences of the ad.

**Table 18: Unión**

Time and sequence	Visual frame	Spoken discourse
00:00-00:09 Sequence 1		[woman 1] necesito miel porque tengo mucha hambre la pancita
		me hace ruido que con el talento que veo yo acá no podemos llegar al
		al pino más alto del bosque y ahí
00:10-00:17 Sequence 2		arriba no dudemos más tenemos todo para alcanzar
		al panal lleno de miel dulce y rica

Her monologue is interweaved across the two different settings. In the work setting, she begins “*me hace ruido que con el talento que veo yo acá no podemos llegar*” (judgement: social esteem: capacity). There is a change of setting as she continues “*al pino pino más alto del bosque*”. This latter utterance is taken from the story she is reading to the child but applies to the work context as well: such a talented team should be able to reach the highest pine tree, or in other words, their objectives. In this sense, the story she is reading to the child applies to the woman’s professional life, but also can be interpreted as a message on resiliency and hard work being passed onto the child.

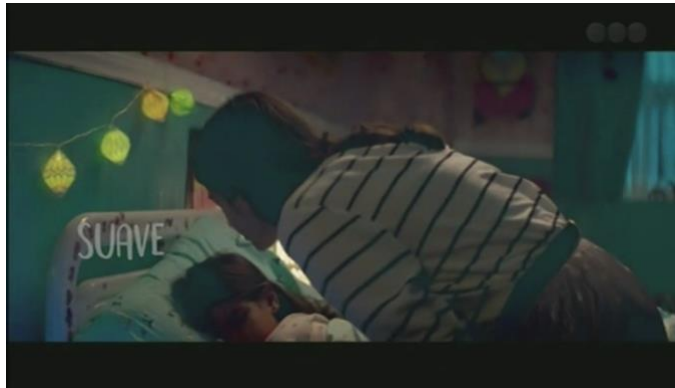
**Table 19: Appraisals for *suave y se la banca***

<b>Who/What is appraised?</b>	<b>Appraisal</b>	<b>Source and sequence</b>
Woman (caregiver)	Suave	Suave (evoked in tone and depicted actions in sequences 1 and 2) Text on screen (sequence 3)
Woman (boss)	Se la banca	Se la banca (evoked in tone of voice and depicted actions in sequences 1 and 2) Text on screen (sequence 3)

The story and her speech build the same ideas, with the story metaphorically expanding her speech at work. This build-up continues in the second sequence, in which it reaches its climax. In the second sequence, the speech concludes by stating that the team has everything they need to reach their goals while in the story the character presumably reaches a honeycomb. In addition to developing the story across contexts, the first two sequences also indirectly construe the two characteristics that will be both explicitly attributed to the woman and transferred to the product in the third sequence: *suave y se la banca*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, these terms translate literally as soft and tough and also metaphorically suggest a construction of

femininity distinct from that of previous generations without disrupting it. These characteristics are evoked in the participants actions and the tone of her voice. Table 19 compiles the appraisals for the woman in both roles.

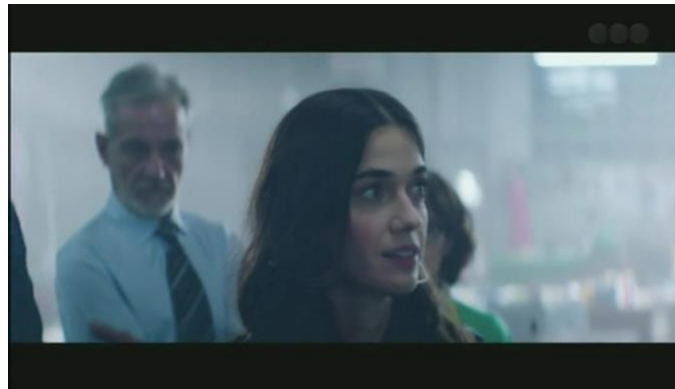
In the third and last sequence, the woman is appraised as soft in her role as caregiver to, presumably, her child, and as resilient in her role as boss, asserting herself in a position of authority with male employees in her charge, which has been implied since the beginning of the ad. In the caregiving role, her features as softened all throughout and she looks at the child lovingly. These facial expressions, coupled with the soft tone of her voice, inscribe affect. All of this body language and her actions convey the softness alluded to (see Figure 21). This is furthermore performative of a trait stereotypically associated with femininity. In the workplace scenario, her body language conveys the toughness: she raises her voice and addresses the employees confidently. Although each of these characteristics becomes relevant in a different setting, she embodies both of them. Figure 21 shows the woman walking away from the employees after delivering her speech. This is a stereotypical portrayal in which mothering is associated to sweetness and softness, while in other contexts the resilience shows up. Figure 4 shows the woman in both roles: as the action progresses the text appears on screen: *suave* while kissing the child's forehead and tucking them in; *se la banca* when she turns away and is shown walking away from the employees. These two characteristics are later transferred to the product, *yerba mate* Unión. Soft applies to the taste, while resilient may describe a *yerba mate* that lasts a long time without needing a change or simply that a soft tasting *yerba* might be a long-lasting favorite. *Mate* is also thought of as a company when working or studying, so the quality strong could also be a reference to the caffeine in the beverage, which could make one feel "stronger" to power through these tasks.



**Figure 21: Soft (top) and tough (bottom) in Unión**

Again, the ad showcases a woman in a position of authority. The shallow depth of field, used to convey a character's internal struggles (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007), and her facial expression in the workplace setting would suggest a degree of discomfort or conflict in this position. Going by the narrative in the ad, the source of the discomfort may be related to the challenges of being in a position of authority in a male-dominated workplace or coping with the demands both at home and at work. Right after turning away from the child – depicted in the bottom picture in Figure 21 – the woman takes a deep breath. The accompanying facial expression signals her discomfort with the situation. I would suggest that she has just overcome an obstacle that is challenging. This reading is reinforced by the narrative structure. The woman has an actor participant role throughout the ad, but there are simultaneous subprocesses in which

she is a phenomenon. There is a vector emanating from the eyes of the man in the background in the direction of the woman i.e., he is looking at her (see Figure 22). This could point to the source of discomfort being related to how she is perceived by others in the workplace.



**Figure 22: Woman at work as phenomenon**

The woman is the participant with the most prominence throughout the ad. The last sequence contains frames with a conceptual structure or conceptual elements. In this sequence, the two characteristics that have been attributed to the woman are attributed to the product. The ad additionally uses a shallow depth of field in the workplace setting but not in the home setting. With a shallow depth of field, objects and persons appearing beyond a certain distance from the lens are blurred (Bordwell & Thompson, 2001). In Figure 22 the woman, standing closest to the camera, appears in sharp focus. The man staring at her, standing somewhat behind her, appears in less sharp focus: the audience can distinguish him and his actions, but cannot see his facial expression as clearly. Furthermore, the background is completely blurred. This depth of field occurs throughout the workplace setting in the ad. In cinematography, this resource is used to indicate an internal struggle (Casetti & Di Chio, 2007). What is not explicit in the ad is the source of the struggle for the woman: perhaps having to assert herself in a work context

dominated by men, given that the man behind her seems to have a look that contains defiance or dissatisfaction with the woman's performance; or perhaps it is the demands of being a working mom.

In conclusion, women are portrayed in a dual manner: home life and work life. This representation is recurrent in this section of the corpus: women work both at home and another job outside the home. Unión is the only ad in which both settings – home and work – appear. At home, the main represented participant is a soft and sweet mom. At work, the audience sees her resilient and tough side. What stands out from this ad is that representation is encapsulated in two roles: at home and at work, potentially conceptualizing these roles as the choices a woman of a certain age makes: a profession and/or a family. On the surface, this portrayal indicates a change by having a woman in a position of authority. However, the two scenarios present stereotypical qualities and, at the very least in the home setting, socially sanctioned ways of being, making her acts are performative of a femininity that coincides with those ways. The woman further has the responsibilities of her job and parenting: none of these roles seem to be shared with others. The ad presumes that other professional women (similar to her in gender and social class) will identify with her dilemmas.

## **5. Chapter summary**

From an intersectional framework (Collins & Bilge, 2020), the cisgender women in the ad comprise a homogeneous group in terms of race and class. In other words, just as the skin care section of the corpus, the present section is in keeping with longstanding trends in Argentina by constructing white national identities. This national identity is further constructed as global. In La Salteña, this is achieved by the inclusion of English-language music, and in Royal the

interdiscursive allusions to social media coupled with the references to *reggaetón* and English-language literature accomplish a similar effect.

The cisgender women in this set of ads are portrayed in three settings: at home, at work, or at both home and work. Across scenarios, women are portrayed as mothers, suggesting that the private sphere still is considered mostly the domain of women. These portrayals flag visual appraisals of propriety (Economou, 2009). Interestingly, some professions not traditionally ascribed to women make an appearance. Two examples are *la gerenta y la jefa* in La Serenísima 3 and 4, respectively. The inclusion of these women in positions with authority and professions which require specific training suggests an attempt at reflecting changing times and the social changes in Argentinean society. However, these women retain traits traditionally associated with femininity: in La Serenísima 4, *la jefa de medioambiente* articulates her recommendation with her role as mother: since she works for this company, she knows about the quality controls and that is why she feeds these products to her child.

The woman in Unión is portrayed both at home and at work. In this ad the audience can peek at the two pulls on a woman's life: a home life with a family and a successful professional role. She embodies both characteristics in the brand's slogan – softness and resiliency – with one of those being more prominent in one setting than the other. The shallow depth of field throughout the ad, but especially in the workplace setting, suggests an internal struggle. In the context of the ad, this can be interpreted as her struggle in her professional role i.e., facing the challenges that come with positions of authority.

Softness is recurrent in the home setting and at work in the case of the Royal ad. Women in their role as mothers read bedtime stories and make dinner. They are further shown displaying affection to their children, such as kissing them in the forehead (Unión). In the Royal ad, it is

Valentina Salezzi the one who proposes baking a cake for the crew. Caring for others, coworkers instead of children in this case, is extended to the workplace. This conceptualizes female bodies as possessing certain kinds of qualities (Butler, 1997/2013). In the workplace, resilience and toughness seem to play a role when these women are in positions of authority.

In this construction of femininity, cisgender women embody both softness and strength. By characterizing women as strong, these ads attempt to keep up with the times. Just as they index more global identities, these ads attempt at constructing a modern femininity. Thus, these ads portray a modern Argentinean femininity with both ties to the local and the global. The soft side, however, keeps in line with traits stereotypically associated with femininity. In this way, these ads innovate without disrupting gender constructions which link female bodies to certain qualities (Butler, 1997/2013).

## CHAPTER 6

### 1. Introduction

Against a backdrop of economic unrest, Argentina has seen a variety of social reforms in the last decade and a half. The economic crises, especially the 2001 crash, shook off the notion of exceptionalism from the national identity (Alberto & Elena, 2016). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of national identity was based on whiteness and homogeneity in the population. This was reinforced via the immigration waves coming from Europe. This white national identity not only erased many identities from the national subject position, but also led to a remapping of differences as class differences, rather than race or ethnicity. In 2001, the depreciation of the peso, coupled with a destabilized executive power, shook notions of white exceptionalism.

At the close of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminist and queer activism secured increased rights and protections for women and queer collectives. Queer and feminist activist groups strategically organized which resulted in the visibilization of their struggles. These organizations mobilized at a time during which there was some economic recovery and were able to secure increased rights. Most notably, I refer to the passing of the following laws: *Matrimonio Igualitario*, *Identidad de Género*, and *Protección Integral de las Mujeres*. The first expanded marriage and adoption rights to same-sex couples. The second made it possible for people to self-determine their gender identity, making it easier to access documents with the self-perceived identity. Finally, the third of those defines gender violence and includes stereotyped and sexist messages propagated through mass media as a form of *violencia mediática*. In recent years, more laws came into fruition. One such law is la Ley Micaela García, which mandates gender sensitivity training to all public officials in all three branches of government. Currently, the

training is in charge of the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity, established by the Fernández Administration in December 2019.

These legislative advances are relevant because they signal a change towards a more egalitarian society and attempt at increasing rights and protections for certain groups. Additionally, they bring forward the construction of more diverse identities, especially when we consider that there is another the simultaneous attempt at remapping a national identity. Alberto and Elena (2016) identify a move towards the construction of a more multicultural national identity at about this time. The authors cite the inclusion of a racial/ethnic identification in the 2010 Census. Throughout the edited volume, however, racial/ethnic differences are conceptualized as embodied as physical traits, while an incipient notion of multiculturalism continues to exoticize and render invisible a host of groups.

The activism of the last decade sparked conversations about identity and gender-based societal expectations. While still in Argentina, I witnessed these changes first-hand: people had opinions and were taking to the streets to make their voices heard. Throughout the 2010s, more queer stories entered the small screen and some racialized identities appeared – albeit stereotyped – on prime-time soaps or *tiras diarias*. This inclusion did not come without backlash from some conservative sectors in society who felt very uncomfortable particularly with stories that were either queer or pro-choice. These latter changes I saw while completing studies abroad, an experience that changed my perspective and challenged my notions of my own identity. From the US, this context of social change seemed an interesting site of research and I even noted during data collection that game show participants had gotten more diverse in terms of ability, social background, and race.

Emerging representations in *tiras diarias* often seemed stereotyped and contestants' stories seemed exploited for ratings, but nonetheless these identities had made it to the screen. I wondered whether a corpus of TV ads would display similar trends and whether more diverse gendered identities would make an appearance as well. Instead, I found a predominance of white, affluent femininities. The emergence of more diverse representations in some TV genres is met with a reproduction of the white national ideal in television commercials. There is some tension in that. Ads target populations with purchasing power because their objective is to sell. Those who can buy are meant to identify with the white identities on screen.

With this realization, I went back to examine the activism only to find the same lack of diversity evinced in my corpus. Both in Argentina and in my data, race and gender seem disconnected rather than intersectional, perhaps reproducing the ideological whiteness of Argentina. Despite the activism and some social change, that split still predominates and is upheld to some degree by media portrayals. In this chapter, I discuss that disconnection and the tension arising from the conservative portrayals in my data and some of the emerging diverse constructions of identity. First, I provide an overview of what the construction of femininity looks like in Argentinean TV advertising. I first present the general findings present in both halves of the corpus. Secondly, I summarize the findings of the discourse analysis for the skin care and packaged foods corpus. Finally, I discuss the findings and the contributions of the project. I then address the limitations of the current study and suggest directions for further research.

## **2. The construction of femininity in Argentinean TV advertising**

In this section I recapitulate the findings for this research and review the answers to my

research questions. The first subsection answers the first question and summarizes the results of the discourse analysis, whereas the second subsection connects these results to the context of production.

**2.1. Question 1: How are femininities portrayed in advertising? To which extent have more diverse constructions of identity permeated into advertising?**

At the descriptive level, women onscreen are presented as relatable by deploying interactional and representational visual resources: they appear close to the audience in terms of social distance and in situations with which the audience will relate, replicating Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck's (2009) findings. This is achieved by medium to close shots (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), which construe closeness with the audience. Additionally, celebrities are presented in everyday situations, with which the audience will relate such as socializing with people at work or sharing *mate*, a daily ritual for many Argentinians. These processes help show celebrities as engaging in the same type of activities that the audience does, thus making them close to the audience and creating a sense of group membership. In the context that these ads are embedded, this contributes to the construction of a shared Argentinean identity. In addition, the use of English-language musical tracks (La Salteña) or the inclusion of words in English (Cicatricure 3 "Beauty care") create connections between local and global identities.

Traits stereotypically associated with femininity, such as socializing, are emphasized in the Teatrical 1-3 and Cicatricure 3-5 ads. In these ads, celebrities are shown conversing with others who have no celebrity status. The latter participants are shown admiring the celebrity and the ads use this resource to imply that sharing in consumer practices with the celebrities is a way to have access to the same physical capital (Shilling, 1991), a finding in line with Noriega's

research (2012). This interaction is supported visually by the use of demand shots, in which represented participants – often the celebrities themselves – invite members of the audience to try the products.

Ads for beauty products emphasize a desire to have a flawless and young-looking skin by deploying visual evaluative resources which combine with sequence structure to support the message that not only does the advertised product work, but also that it will result in confidence or in feeling better about oneself, a finding which Del Saz-Rubio (2018b) also reports. This group of ads further deploy images containing human participants with conceptual structures. In these images, human participants are on display for the audience (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The setting, the circumstances in which the action takes place (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), is another relevant category of analysis in this research. The packaged food ads are split in three groups in terms of setting: 1) home, 2) work, and 3) both home and work. As previous research has found, women are more likely to appear in caregiving roles (Chi & Baldwin, 2004; Del Saz-Rubio, 2018a). At home, women are portrayed as present mothers who read bedtime stories and make dinner.

At work, women are portrayed as successful in jobs which would have previously been held by men. These women, nevertheless, speak for the company, a finding which parallels Rakow and Kranich's findings for women in television news (1991). Despite the inclusion of professions in which women tend to be underrepresented, in *La Serenísima 4* the woman's professional role is used to support her personal decisions as a mom: she articulates her knowledge of the quality of the products with her responsibility as a mother by using her knowledge as an employee to justify allowing her son to eat the products advertised (*La Serenísima 4*). In addition, when men are present, women are shown to be the caring and

thoughtful members of the pair. In Royal, Valentina Salezzi suggests baking the crew a cake in appreciation for being “*unos divinos*” because of their disposition, perhaps emphasizing an appreciation for interpersonal relationships. This construction of femininity binds a female body to certain qualities and is additionally continually reproduced throughout the time in which the ads in the corpus were aired (Butler, 1997/2013).

Another finding of this research has to do with the use of music, taste, and smell. These ads use music to connect with their audience. In Goicoechea, the music serves to make a generational connection. This resource construes group membership and additionally gives information about the putative audience i.e., women who have known the song being referred to since their youth, and who might have even danced to it. In La Salteña, the English-language musical track has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it indexes global identities and references the upper-middle class background of the family in the ad. On the other hand, it also connects to the theme of “irresistibility. The rhythm creates a sensuous atmosphere, which in turn connects to the taste and smell of the food advertised. In other words, the ad creates an imagery around the irresistibility of the food by appealing to various senses.

In terms of intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2020), the women in these ads construe a homogenous group: they are white and cisgender. There is some degree of variation for class, with some participants, such as celebrities, assumed to be wealthier than participants portrayed in lower paying jobs. In the next subsection, I explore how these identities can be thought of in terms of the context of production.

## **2.2.Question 2: How can those portrayals be interpreted in terms of the sociohistorical context?**

These ads reproduce and bring into being a quite uniform identity in terms of class, race, and gender (Butler, 1997/2013). The intersection of white and middle-class identities is reminiscent of a European-appearing national identity emphasized from the nation-building times, as I explained in Chapter 1. Some ads further index global identities by referencing English-language texts, thus connecting the local identities to an increasingly globalized world. The femininity portrayed in these ads, strong but still soft, participates in nation-building. On the one hand, these women are strong: they work all kinds of jobs, even jobs which would have gone to men decades ago, which could suggest an attempt at keeping up with the times and constructing a modern femininity. They additionally retain qualities stereotypically associated with femininity, such as valuing interpersonal relationships. In other words, these ads are performative texts that reproduce and bring into being gender and national identities that support a white national identity, a topic which I explore more in depth in the next section.

### **3. Contributions to the literature**

The media produce, reproduce, and circulate representations with political and economic interests in mind (Koziner, 2013). Insofar as media circulates these representations, they are “construct[ing] hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as ‘reality’” (Carter & Steiner, 2004, p. 2). TV advertising is not the exception. Because of its reliance on indirect communication, representations are articulated in great part via covert semiotic resources such as visual imagery, music, and tone of voice, as well as verbal language. The consideration of these elements constitutes a contribution of this research. These resources index meanings of gender

and class and, thus, support the discursive construction of identities in these ads. This is additionally made possible due to the deployment of an integrated multimodal-appraisal analysis which incorporates feminist theory. In this sense, this study is also an exploration of the articulation of theoretical-methodological frameworks for the study of advertising.

The construction of identities in advertising matters because the main function of advertising is to sell a product (Cook, 1992) and, as a result, ads will target social groups with purchasing power. Analysis of how onscreen portrayals address those groups can further our understanding of social dynamics outside of the symbolic space. The present analysis reveals a homogenized representation of femininity equated to cisgender, heterosexual, white, affluent women to the detriment of any kind of diversity. In addressing an Argentinean audience, these ads are deliberately constructing visually and verbally a homogeneous group that presumably the audience will relate to because of pervasive ideas of a white national identity. In this way, in spite of the attempts at the reconfiguring of national identity that Alberto and Elena argue for (2016), portrayals in these ad reinforce previous conceptions of national identity. These conceptions conflict with emerging more diverse constructions of identity. These messages, in addition, are created in the capital and recirculated across Argentina, further homogenizing the population.

In terms of gender, portrayals in these ads are in line with previous research in that they stay on the conservative side and do not match the more progressive sectors of society (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Dowling, 1978; Zotos & Tsihla, 2014). Additionally, no marginalized intersections make an appearance, in line with the findings of Shinoda et al. (2021). These ads attempt at keeping up with the times by including professional women in positions of authority. However, these women either speak for the company (La Serenísima 3 & 4) or are torn between

caregiving duties at home and the demands of the workplace (Unión). In addition, women in the ads keep up with all their responsibilities while looking fabulous (Cicatricure 3, 4, & 5). This portrayal is consistent with representations for other media such as TV and film (Matamala & Abraham, 2016). Products are praised for all the benefits they provide because they are practical for the modern woman who is always on the go. Furthermore, there is an oxymoronic emphasis on looking young while aging (Teatrical 1 and Cicatricure 1). Women are additionally portrayed as caregivers to children, in the professions, or both.

Going back to the title of this research, these women are both soft and strong. This femininity is also middle-class and intersects with whiteness. In this way, these ads reproduce an Argentinean identity of European descent which is in line with longstanding trends in Argentina (Alberto & Elena, 2016). Overall, this reading offers a way to analyze how gender, national identity, and media intersect. In other words, much like the categories under study here, gender, nation, and media “work together and influence one another” (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 11): advertising is instrumental in disseminating a construction of identity that supports notions about what a prototypical Argentinean woman is (white, middle-class, heterosexual). Likewise, advertising is inserted in this culture and takes form in it.

#### **4. Limitations and future directions**

One of the challenges of corpus analysis is defining criteria for corpus building. Constructing a corpus carries the limitation of what may seem arbitrary decisions in criteria for ad selection. While I have tried to justify those decisions, selection criteria always exclude ads which, if analyzed, could add to a richer analysis. To be included in the corpus, ads had to advertise either skin care products or packaged foods. These categories were selected

based on previous research and availability during the recording period. Ads further needed to address the Argentinean audience in some way and had to have a running time of 25-40 seconds.

The decision to include ads for skin care products and packaged foods was based on previous research. Several studies have looked at how identities are constructed discursively in commercials for grooming and personal hygiene products (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018b, 2019; Del Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009). In the case of the foods, while there were not previous studies that I could track, the rationale was that because the home sphere tends to be associated with femininity, findings could be contextualized in terms of gender roles and dynamics for those. These categories may also presuppose the age of the target audience. It is possible that ads with a younger target audience will attempt to construct more diverse identities in the ads, as younger audiences have interacted differently with newer constructions of identity. Future studies could address this by examining ads with a different target audience, since ads for a younger audience may be more progressive.

In addition, these ads were readily available during the recording period and explicitly addressed the Argentine audience by advertising a local product or recruiting local celebrity endorsement. In an increasingly more connected and globalized world economy, companies are often present in several countries, which makes it hard to determine and define the target audience<sup>38</sup>. This makes ad selection challenging and was the motivation for only including local products or products with local celebrity endorsement. This criterion was meant to ensure that the ads were designed for the Argentinean audience.

The remaining criterion for ad selection was the length of the ad in seconds. The motivation behind this decision was to have a relatively homogeneous set of ads and to exclude

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<sup>38</sup> Companies such as The Coca Cola Company often air the same ad all throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America with dubbing for the local dialect.

shorter ads, which tend to have less of a narrative component to them. Ads that are longer simply have more time in which to articulate their message and, as a result, I presupposed these ads were more likely to include the narrative component characteristic of tickle ads (Simpson, 2001). However, this could have excluded shorter ads whose inclusion in the corpus could have painted a different picture. Also, shorter ads may need to deploy resources more creatively in order to articulate the reason for buying in a shorter time and might, as a result, result to more stereotypical portrayals whose analysis would be valuable. To overcome this limitation, future studies could do away with this criterion.

## **5. Coda**

In the midst of social change and the emergence of more diverse representations in some media, portrayals in this corpus point to a construction of femininity in keeping with long-established trends in Argentina: white, affluent, cisgender, and presumed heterosexual. This construction also brings to the forefront remnants of a homogeneously white national identity. In this sense, the lack of racial diversity in these ads can be read as performative of a national identity still thought of as white, despite the changes of the last decades. This analysis of advertising additionally highlights how the media “present important scripts of gender, race, sexuality, and nation that work together and influence one another” (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 11).

In these ads, women embody both softness and toughness, which arguably construes a femininity that has kept with the times, perhaps marking a break with respect to previous generations, all the while staying within the bounds of a femininity bound to a female body that

retains the traits stereotypically associated with it (Butler, 1997/2013). In other words, a femininity that is *suave y se la banca*.

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