

## Abstract

**Background:** Selena Quintanilla was a Mexican-American who was born in Texas, near the Mexican border. Her father, Abraham Quintanilla recognized Selena's singing abilities and began teaching her music. Having been raised near the border, she was influenced by Tejano music. Tejano Music is a combination of traditional Mexican music that has been infused with Anglo-American sounds. Selena began her music journey exploring and establishing her own unique sound in Tejano Music. Consequently, she would be deemed as the "Queen of Tejano".

**Methods:** I would be using primary resources, specifically Selena's interviews to understand the hardships and difficulties that Selena as she began to crossover from Tejano music to Anglo-American music. I will also be referencing journal articles that examines Selena's impact on the American culture.

**Results:** Selena Quintanilla was successfully able to bridge the cultural gap between Hispanics and U.S. Americans through her influences in music. However, majority of her success would be attributed to her death as her success would exponentially rise posthumously.

**Conclusions:** The purpose of this research project is to understand and analyze Selena Quintanilla's cultural infusion of her music and in turn herself. Selena Quintanilla represents majority of Hispanic-Americans as they struggle with their identity. Selena Quintanilla overall displays her pride in being Hispanic-American as she embraced her roots on both sides of the border.

## Introduction and/or Research Question

For the last thirty years, Selena Quintanilla has been a quintessential figure for Hispanics, specifically Hispanic-Americans. Consequently, I remember learning about Selena Quintanilla at a young age. Growing up, I remembered watching the biopic *Selena*, as the movie would always be playing on the television. After watching the movie countless of times, I began to sing along to her songs and watch videos of her interviews on my free time. Many Hispanic-Americans had a similar relationship to Selena, some more than others as Mexican-Americans strongly resonated with Selena's cultural background. As I began researching and watching Selena through her videos, I began to connect to her as she became a personal figure to me.

While I was researching, I found a broad range of topics pertaining to Selena Quintanilla. Selena Quintanilla, even though she had a short career, approximately eight years, she had a long-lasting impact on the Hispanic-American community. I decided that I wanted to focus on her impact in the Latin culture, specifically in America. This then transition to me asking: *How did Selena Quintanilla bridge the cultural gap between Latin American and U.S. America through her talent?*

## Methods

Methods I utilized for this project was analyzing her interviews and concerts videos as my primary sources. Selena Quintanilla was very vocal in displaying her appreciation of being Mexican-American during interviews. Quintanilla would also include disco medleys in her concerts, including the last concert that she would perform in. The interviews and concerts videos ultimately provide a significant proportion of my research. However, I the transitioned into utilizing secondary sources such as journal articles to understand her influenced in U.S. American pop culture. The articles explains and details her significance in Mexican-American history. The article continues to demonstrated how Selena Quintanilla paved the way for other upcoming Hispanic artists in U.S. America. Lastly, I would analyze Christopher Perez book, *To Selena, With Love* to determine her passion and love for both the U.S. and Mexico as she uniquely unites the two cultures.

"I tried to be the best role model that I possibly could." –Selena Quintanilla



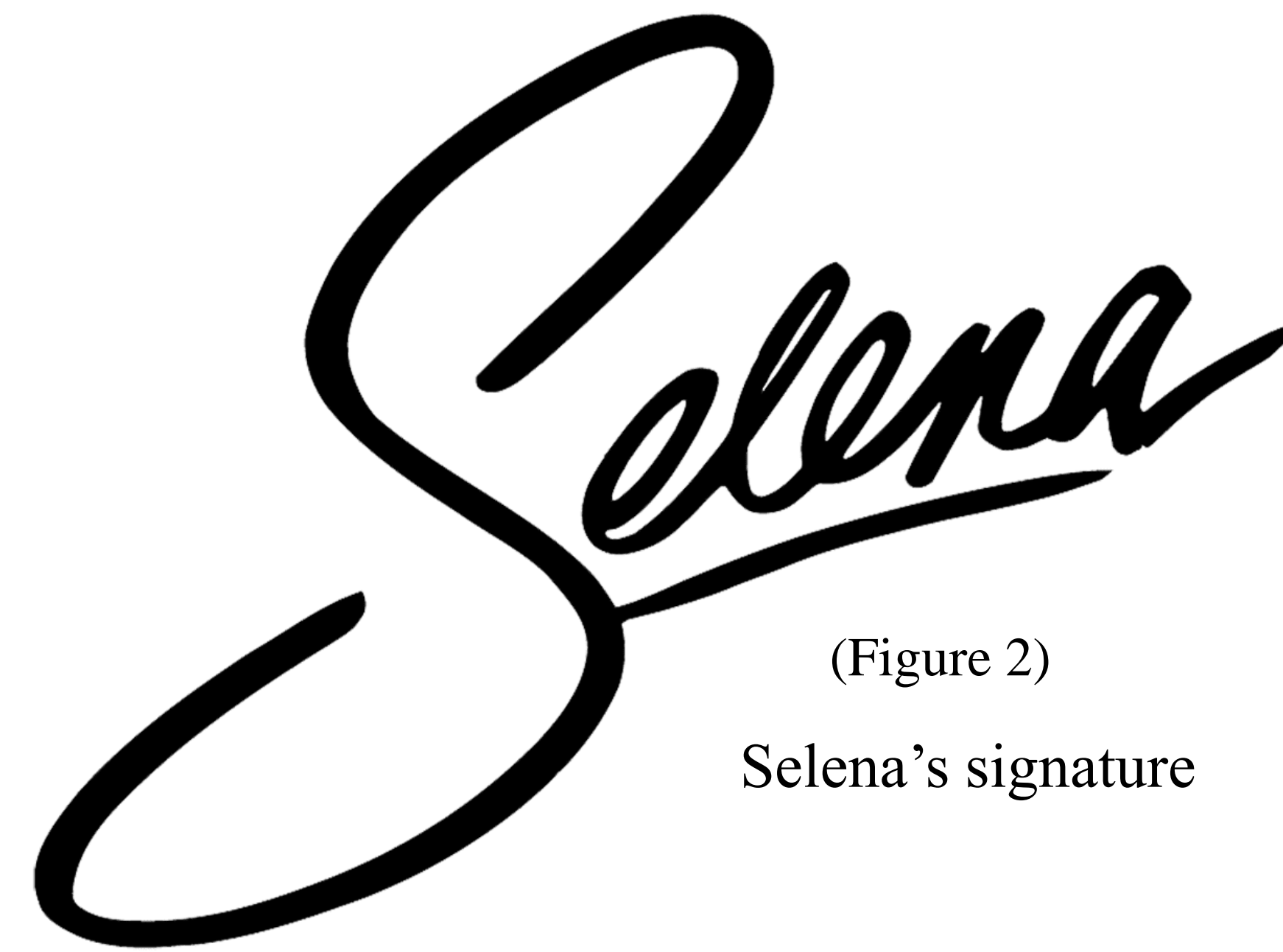
(Figure 1)

Selena Quintanilla winning a Grammy for her *Selena Live!* Album in 1994. She was the first female Tejano artist to win a Grammy.



(Figure 4)

Selena's fifth and last studio album released posthumously in 1995. Her song "Dreaming of You" became highly popular in both US and Latin countries.



(Figure 2)

Selena's signature



(Figure 5)

Selena's notorious purple outfit that she would wear at her concerts. She would also wear this outfit in her last concert.



(Figure 3)

Selena released her fourth studio album, "Amor Prohibido". The album gained double-platinum status.



(Figure 6)

Selena opened her fashion boutique, "Selema Etc.," in 1994. Selena participated in designing clothing and jewelry as she established her signature style.

"I feel very proud to be Mexican. I didn't have the opportunity to learn Spanish when I was a girl, but it's never too late to get in touch with your roots." –Selena Quintanilla

## Results and/or Conclusion

**Results:** I understood that majority of Selena Quintanilla success is due to her determination, values, and her personality. Selena Quintanilla was determined to release an American album as most of her songs would be sang in English. She wanted to have a crossover and bridge the gap as she finalized her sound. Her music taste was a combination of Tejano music as well as American pop and disco music. She overall desired for her music to reflect on her music taste and for people to enjoy. Similarly, Selena Quintanilla had strong values and morals. She did not want anything to compromise her values and in so remained out of media scandals. May people try to call Selena Quintanilla the "Latina Madonna"; however, she avoided controversy and valued a quiet life, despite her outfits. Her outfits were only for performing and to give her a unique stage presence. Nevertheless, Quintanilla preferred a quiet life that is dedicated to spend time with her loved ones. Lastly Quintanilla, had a beautiful personality. Her personality shone through her interviews through the manners in which she interacted with people. She treated everyone with respect and kindness no matter their background. Selena also did not allow her celebrity status affect or change her personality. Through these three factors, Selena was able to have a contract deal with Coca-Cola, be a feature in the movie *Don Juan DeMarco*, and overall began to integrate into American popular culture.

### Conclusions

Selena Quintanilla was able to bridge the gap between Hispanics and U.S. Americans through her musical influences. Unfortunately, majority of her success did not arrive until after her death in which she continued to win awards posthumously and her album *Dreaming of You*, release posthumously, would be on the Billboard Top 100 list for nine weeks.

## Future Work

1. Determine specific barriers that Selena Quintanilla Y Los Dinos endured prior to their success in US commercial music.
2. Further research Selena and her crossover into the American popularity and music industry.
3. Utilizing Pop Culture history as a reference to understand societal pertaining to Hispanic-Americans.
4. Understanding other cultural influences on American commercial music.

## References and/or Acknowledgments

- Henriques, Donald A. "Tejano Music." Grove Music Online (January 2014).
- Koegel, John. "Crossing Borders: Mexican, Tejana, and Chicana Musicians in the United States and Mexico." In *From Tejano to Tango: Latin American Popular Music*, edited by Walter Aaron Clark, 97-125. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Liera-Schwichtenberg, Romano. "Crossing Over: Selena's Tejano Music and the Discourse of Borderlands." In *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory*, edited by Thomas Swiss, John Sloop, and Andrew Herman. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Selena, Artist, Grammy Awards. <https://www.grammy.com/artists/selena/10071>
- Selena Quintanilla, Famous Musicians, Biography. <https://www.biography.com/musicians/selena>
- Vargas, Deborah R. "Cruzando Fronteras: Remapping Selena's Tejano Music 'Crossover.'" In *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Readers*, edited by Angie Chabram-Dermersesian, 314-323. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Images:  
 Figure 1: Selena winning a Grammy, Celebnet.com  
 Figure 2: Selena's Signature, PinClipart  
 Figure 3: Amor Prohibido, Getty Images  
 Figure 4: *Dreaming of You*, The Austin Chronicles  
 Figure 5: Selena's Purple Jumpsuit, Google Images: [selena quintanilla purple jumpsuit - Search Images \(bing.com\)](https://www.google.com/search?q=selena+quintanilla+purple+jumpsuit+Search+Images+(bing.com))  
 Figure 6: Selena's Checkered Jacket, William Jacket