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Latinx Studies Journal:

A Journal of Chicanx & Latinx Experience and Thought

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Latinx Studies Journal, previously known as *Concientización*, is a student academic journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanxs/Latinxs in the United States. Latinx Studies Journal primarily gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

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Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
312 Ingraham Hall, 1155 Observatory Drive, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Contact the Program at chicla@letscli.wisc.edu to request copies or for submissions.

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Editor's Note to Reader

This volume of the *Latinx Studies Journal* brings together essays by students in the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program with poetry by CLS students, faculty, and community partners. Originally written for CLS classes, the essays range from literary criticism to sociology, psychology, and feminist theory. Common threads running through the essays include the concerns of undocumented youth, public health, gender and sexuality, and the complex relations between people of Latin American descent in the US and schools and social assistance agencies that often fail to serve them. Although the essays address daunting social problems, they also show a hopeful side, as CLS students engage with dedicated community activists and health workers who seek solutions to social problems and lead efforts to mitigate the racial disparities in health and education faced by Latinx people. The COVID-19 outbreak heightened and highlighted those disparities, and our student essayists also deal with the pandemic's effects on communities of Latin American descent.

The second section of the journal brings together one poem by CLS student Giovanni Zavala Ibarra with contributions by Madison Poet Laureate Angie Trudell Vasquez, CLS emerita and benefactor Andrea-Teresa Arenas, poet and editor Moisés Villavicencio Barras, and CLS Director Rubén Medina. The CLS Program was privileged to welcome Ms. Trudell Vasquez to campus this Spring when she gave a commencement address to our largest ever graduating class of Certificate students. The CLS Program is deeply grateful to all the students and to the community partners who shared their work with us for this journal. Our Program combines a rich intellectual exchange with deep commitment to justice inspired both by the legacy of the Chicano Movement and by the Wisconsin Idea. This volume should give a sense of the breadth and depth of our offerings and of the vital issues our students explore in their writing. We hope these essays and poems will inspire readers to write and share their own thoughts. Look to the end of this journal to find guidelines for contributors.

**SECTION ONE: RESEARCH AND
REFLECTION**

Transgressing Essentialist Monocausality: A Latina Feminist Epistemological Intervention

Ashley Semington

Introduction

Defining Latina Feminisms is not an easy task, as the act of defining can work to obscure the nuance and diversity that exists within the movement. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus my discussion on the late 20th century feminist interventions that addressed the oppressions faced by Latina women that are “shaped as much by experiences of colonization and U.S. imperialism and of diaspora and border- crossing, as it has been by day-to-day lived experiences of heterosexism, racism, and classism in the United States,” (Cotera 2017, 64). It is important to note that Martha Cotera’s definition of Latina feminism, which I will further describe below, comes from a retrospective reflection on the movement. This retrospective definition, when historically contextualized, is useful in analyzing Latina feminism’s impact on overall feminist epistemological interventions. However, it should not obscure the diverse motivations and viewpoints of the individual Latina feminists that helped found the movement. Central to this vital epistemological intervention is the expression of a unique subject positionality that was, and continues to be, explored through concepts of intersectionality, transnationality and queer identity.

The philosophical foundation of the Latina Feminist intervention was put into action through the creation of a unique form of story-telling and narrative building. From this unique epistemological intervention put forth by Latina Feminists, comes personal narrative and *Testimonio* as a form of counter-hegemonic resistance. *Testimonio* offers us a unique and powerful form of praxis which is a highly accessible pedagogical tool to inform a popular audience regarding the firsthand experiences of the systems of oppressions that govern our society. The process of crafting one’s own oral history is in and of itself also an important and accessible form of liberation that provides an axis to assess one’s

own subject positionality in a profound manner. *Testimonio* as a central praxis of Latina feminism can best be understood when situated in a historical context, in which personal narrative was utilized as a tool of resistance against hegemonic undercurrents within monocausal social movement organizing.

Historicizing the Chicana Movement

Foundational Chicana feminist Martha Cotera helped define Latina feminisms in her monograph, *Diosa y Hembra* (1976), establishing feminism as the “development of women and as the force which liberates women to be what they should and must as human beings,” (Cotera 1976, 189). Liberation in this context was a Latina Feminist framework that contested the racism Latinas faced within second-wave feminism and sexism from the identity-based movements they helped found. Latina feminist interventions worked to contest both sexism and racism in order to better social movements per the belief that “there is no place in a movement for human liberation for discrimination, abuse or exploitation of any of its members,” (Cotera 1976, 190). Thus, Latina Feminists sought to carve spaces for themselves where their compounding oppressions would not be sidelined in service of essentialist and monocausal social movement organizing.

Although early influential figures within the Latina Feminism movement self-identify as Chicana and largely make their social and political claims based upon this identity, I deliberately use the umbrella term of “Latina Feminisms” rather than “Chicana Feminism”. This decision was not made to obscure the essential contributions that influential Mexican American women during the 20th century made towards the development of third space feminism, but to be inclusive of the plethora of diverse Latina women like Aurora Levins Morales and Rosario Morales among others who have been foundational in contesting the hegemony of a white supremacist and patriarchal society. Additionally, I focus here on Latina Feminisms as it is a feminist framework that most reflects my experiences as a second-generation Latina woman in the United States. Latina Feminist intervention would not have been made possible without the creation of a third-wave feminist

movement, which was a collective undertaking by feminists of color to center an intersectional approach to social movement organizing in the United States. The Latina Feminist experience which speaks to the unique intersections of oppression created through the racialization of Latina women in the United States should be understood as a subset of a larger third-wave feminism that was a groundbreaking effort undertaken by not only Latina Women, but revolutionary Black, Indigenous, and Asian women. Acknowledging its predecessors, collaborators and the importance of the collective is important before analyzing the nuance and impact of Latina Feminism as a unique epistemological intervention.

Latina Feminism can be characterized as a resistance against the sexism experienced within Latine identity-based social movements and racism within Anglo-feminist spaces of the second wave (white) feminist movement. In participating in Latine social movements of the 20th century, Latina women found themselves constantly having to push back against their tendencies towards a “patriarchal nationalism” (Cotera 2016, 3). Within the sphere of Mexican American activism, “although Chicana feminist activities [had] been intricately interwoven with the entire fabric of the Chicano Civil rights movement from 1848” and onwards (Cotera 1977, 4), advocating for a feminist inclusive platform fostered resentment by many male leaders of the movement who bombarded Chicana feminists with charges of being “‘Agringadas,’ ‘Anglocized,’ ‘feminists’ and worst of all ‘anti-traditionalists’” (Cotera 1976, 8). By essentializing and prioritizing ethnic identity over the intersectionally-informed lived experiences of Latina women, patriarchal leaders would reinforce oppressive practices used to subjugate racialized women in the United States. This was seen as simply unacceptable to Latina Feminists who would go on to criticize the oppressively singularly orientated organizing put forth by primarily male leaders who were resistant to relinquish the power afforded to them within patriarchal norms in service of a more inclusive platform.

Within the sphere of second-wave feminist interventions, Latina Feminists were likewise ostracized and silenced by white leaders whose monocausal orientation led to a refusal of tackling internal issues of racism and their exclusion

of women of color. According to Cotera, “Anglo Feminism has little to do with the Chicana” (Cotera 1977, 8) ... as “The Anglo-American feminists do want her, on the condition... that she melt into the melting pot of femaleness rather than divide the women’s movement,” (Cotera 1976, 190). “Anglo Feminism”, as Cotera refers to it here is most popularly known as second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism can be defined as a mid to late 20th century women’s movement that largely centered white feminist voices. Second-wave feminists sought to undermine patriarchal norms primarily through challenging the relegation of women to the household while emphasizing the rights of women to be empowered through professional development and career driven ventures. White feminism attempted to universalize, and thus prioritized the plight of white women that is steeped in a racial privilege that went largely unacknowledged by white feminist leaders. Thus, the creation of a third space by Latina Feminists and other feminists of color was required to address the sexism of ethnic and race-based social movements and the racism of white feminism.

An intersectional approach to understanding identity was introduced and developed within the spheres of Latina Feminisms as a response to the racism and sexism faced by racialized women from within the monocausally orientated Anglo feminist women’s movements and patriarchally orientated Latine identity-based organizing in which they participated. Although problematically racially essentialist in her citations of José Vasconcelos and the ideas of *la Raza Cósmica*¹, Gloria Anzaldúa summarizes this third space intersectional intervention succinctly in her chapter titled *La Conciencia de la Mestiza/ Towards a New Consciousness*: “From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollination, an ‘alien’ consciousness is presently in the making– a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands,” (Anzaldúa 2007, 99). The intersectional ideology adopted by Latina Feminists, originally adapted by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, contested monocausality by “attempting to work out a synthesis [where] the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts” (Anzaldúa 2007, 100). Within this framework, social movement organizing would be injected with a much-needed

dose of nuance that worked to de-essentialize identity and situate subject positionality within a complex web of intersecting systems of oppressions.

In accounting for the complexities of intersecting identities, particularly ones that are transnational² in nature, Latina Feminism emphasizes the international nature of the ethnic and cultural elements that inform their identity. Through the exploration of the transnational nature of dual national identification, Latina Feminism provides a compelling understanding of how unique structural violences of different cultural and geographic contexts create complex lived experiences for Latinas. Exemplified in Martha Cotera's works on Chicana feminism, Cotera works to trace a Chicana feminist lineage through Mexican feminist legacies. In her essay titled, *Our Feminist Heritage*, she analyzes the ways in which Mexican women's involvement in both the war for independence and revolution expanded the imagined role of Mexican women in greater society and eventually helped facilitate feminist movements towards suffrage and socialist interventions (Cotera 1977, 1-3). Through the analysis of Mexican feminism, Cotera traces a feminist lineage that situates her own interventions as a Chicana feminist among a long legacy of feminist fighters from her tierra natal.

Transnationality can also be seen in the works of Puerto Rican author activists like Rosario Morales. Puerto Rico is a colony³ of the United States, and therefore feminists like Rosario Morales are nationals of both the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States. Despite this fact, I will speak here on the transnational nature of Puerto Rican feminisms since the racialization of Latina women, regardless of their national origin has othered Puerto Ricans in a way in which there is a strong dual national identity that exists within the works of Puerto Rican Feminists.

Unlike Cotera's quasi-genealogical tracing of international feminist legacies, Rosario Morales situates transnationality within her feminism through the exploration of a dual identity informed by intersecting national identifications. In an excerpt from her poem *I Am What I Am* this dual national identity is developed and creates a sense of cultural hybridity that informs her feminism.

“I am what I am, and I am US American/ I haven’t wanted to say it because if you did, you’d take away the Puerto Rican but now I say go to hell/ I am what I am, and you can’t take it away with all the words and sneers at your command... I am Puerto Rican/ I am US American/ I am New York Manhattan and the Bronx/ I am What I am I’m not hiding under no stoop/ behind no curtain/ I am Boricua as Boricuas come from the isle of Manhattan ...” (Morales 2015, 12)

Combating the oppressive assimilationist demands of United States Society, the duality of cultural and national identity that Morales represents here situates her Latina Feminisms as a counter-hegemonic force that is informed by her unique reiteration of a *mestiza consciousness*. I use the idea of a mestiza consciousness here not to signal an ethnic identity situated in a “racial cross-pollination” like Anzaldúa does, but to emphasize the third space that is discursively created through the embrace of hybridity and duality.

Queer identity as a form of resistance has also played a predominant role in Latina Feminist resistance. Queer sexuality as a form of hybridity and thus resistance has been extensively explored in foundational Latina Feminist texts. Gloria Anzaldúa in her chapter titled, *Movimientos de Rebeldía y Culturas Que Traicionan* lays out the idea of sexuality as a form of counterhegemony by contesting the pathologization of queer identity and instead positions herself in the following way: “I, like other queer people, am two in one body, both male and female. I am the embodiment of the *hieros gamos*: the coming together of opposite qualities within... For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality,” (Anzaldúa 2007, 41). Queer expressions are considered sexually deviant practices, insofar as sexual deviancy is defined within hetero-patriarchal structures. Thus, queer existence is in and of itself, as conceptualized by Anzaldúa and many other queer Latina feminists, one of the most powerful ways to erode the oppressive structures that narrowly define spheres of race, gender and namely here, sexuality. Although the binary-ness that characterizes Anzaldúa’s ideas of queer rebellion against hetero-patriarchal

structures may seem outdated in light of more nuanced ways gender and sexuality are currently understood, her envelope-pushing reconceptualization of sexual norms was an important starting point to combatting oppressive heteronormativity. Additionally, the binary quality of an Anzaldúan lens can also be seen as a product of the way in which a mestiza consciousness was deeply embedded in a sense of dual hybridity, a hybridity of not just gender and sexuality, but of bi-national and biracial identifications.

An exploration of hybridity as an important nucleus of Latina Feminism is undertaken not only in academic feminist circles, but also in contemporary pop culture, through poetry and music as well. Latina counter-hegemonic sexuality is a practice that has been exemplified, contemporarily, in Chicana rapper, Snow Tha Product's music. In her song *Bilingue*, Snow Tha Product situates an exploration of her bisexual identity through a clever play on words that employs ideas of cultural and linguistic hybridity. In the following verse: "Bitch I 'Jaja' con jota/ 'haha' with the 'J'/ I speak English and Spanish/ I'm bi-lingual all day... Ni de aquí ni de allá/ a mí me gustan los dos/ mucha crema a tus tacos/ y se te quema el arroz," she plays with language to express her identity as a confluence of linguistic, cultural, and sexual hybridity. The linguistic diversity of her music and unapologetic code switching is in and of itself an act of resistance. Hegemonic white supremacist norms within the United States value linguistic erasure through the sole adoption of the English language. Snow Tha Product playfully contests this logic by proudly incorporating her bilingualism into her music and exploring the ways in which linguistic hybridity, through her experience as a Chicana, has influenced the ways she expresses herself.

Her masterful invocations of hybridity and dual identification within her lyrics is also present within her line "ni de aquí ni de allá, a mí me gustan los dos,". Not only is she referring to the common phrase used by many Latines to express the transnational nature of their identity, but the latter portion of the line, "a mí me gustan los dos," is not only referring to her international identifications but more poignantly pointing to the bilateral nature of her sexual preferences. Her sexuality is also explored through the clever use of language in her verses through syllabic

emphasis. By the emphasized diction of “Bi-lingual”, Snow Tha Product highlights not only her linguistic hybridity but her sexual orientation. Additionally, the recurring motif of “lengua” in not only this verse, but throughout the song can be understood as an homage to three things: culinary cultural identity, the Spanish language, and perhaps even a double entendre that subtly reiterates the themes of sexuality present in her music. Snow Tha Product is a contemporary example of the way in which Latina feminists continue to carve space for themselves in not just academic circles, but within popular culture. The lyrical exploration of her intersectional identity is an act of resistance against hetero-patriarchal and white supremacist institutions that continue to exist within systems of oppression.

Whether as an academic publication or lyrical expression within music, Latina feminist ideology continues to challenge and shape epistemological conceptions of racial, national, gender and sexual identity. Consistent throughout each of the ways in which these intersectional identities are explored is the centering of individual experience. The exploration of the self is Latina feminism’s most powerful tool of resistance. Thus, the creation and presentation of personal narrative is an important way in which Latina Feminism’s powerful ideological tools are put into practice.

Praxis of Latina Feminisms

The groundbreaking theoretical configurations of Latina Feminism have been translated into material interventions through the creation of counterhegemonic *testimonio* to centralize, amplify and visibilize voices of resistance. Within a western pedagogical tradition in which I was raised to never include a first-person “I” or plural “we”, *testimonio* offers us a much-needed intervention in redefining epistemology as not a positivist and unbiased set of “facts”, but a truth situated in an embodiment of lived experience and a critical lens that situates personal narratives within a larger context of structural violence. By writing and publishing narratives situating lived experiences within the broader web of social and political structures, Latina Feminist *testimonio* is a groundbreaking intervention on how we conceptualize knowledge production.

Testimonios can be defined as personal narratives that are a “critical reflection of... personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities... [which works to] simultaneously engage the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices, silences, and ultimately identities,” (Bernal 2017, 364). The adoption of *testimonios* as a form of political intervention by Latina feminists can “be attributed to the ways in which *testimonios* align with a strong feminista tradition of theorizing from the brown female body, breaking silences, and bearing witness to both injustice and social change,” (Bernal 2017, 364). The creation of personal narrative through the practice of providing *testimonio* visibilizes an intimate and honest perspective about what it means to occupy the bodies that we do. Latina Feminist *testimonio* subverts the positivist nature of western epistemology which often works to remove the personal, the emotional and ultimately the human from the way we view knowledge production.

Testimonio as a Latina feminist intervention is not only of vital importance as a counterhegemonic force that contests structural violence through visibility but is also a deeply personal and oftentimes healing form of resistance. In a “sterilized” western epistemological tradition where, “emotion is often feminized, primordialized and made irrational,” which results in the “frequent dismissal as not objective” (Urrieta 2003, 147,153), *testimonio* is a Latina feminist intervention that centers personal experience as a material product of not just the personal, but also the structural. *Testimonio* in this sense is not only a *product* that visibilizes the intricacies of personal identity and situates lived experience within larger structures of violence to move towards social transformation, but it is also a liberating internal *process* that can act as a tool of centering and healing for the author.

In viewing *testimonio* as both a product and a process, it can best be understood as not only a necessary act of resistance to external oppressive forces such as the sanitized western epistemological tradition, but as also a process of internal reflection and healing. *Testimonio* is not just a tool of pedagogy that “focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world—allowing for the perception and exposure of perceived social and political contradictions—to become concretized in our classrooms,” but also as an intimate personal journey of

healing, understanding, and resisting (Bernal 2017, 369). The popularization of marginalized voices regarding the material effects of systemic racism and sexism, through personal narrative, illustrate important stories that are made intentionally invisible through the ways these structural violences operate. However powerful visibilization may be within this context, what is equally if not more liberating is the process of self-examination, reflection, and healing through the situation of one's own lived experiences within the larger context of what it means to exist within these systems of oppressions. It can be through understanding and relating the micro to the macro, or the individual to the structural in which we begin to understand how the two interact. While we may be able understand individual acts of violence, discrimination, or oppression within the immediate context in which they occur, reflecting on why that violence, discrimination or oppression occurs in the first place is a starting point in dismantling the systems that enable it.

Queer Migrations: Reconfiguring the Tools of Latina Feminisms

Within an evolving, globalizing and increasingly neoliberal context, Latina Feminism's blueprint for social movement constructions has helped reconfigure epistemology and facilitate new ways of organizing within the United States. Immigration justice organizing around the rights of global refugees is one movement where we see narrative building, *testimonio*, and visibility weaponized against oppressive institutions to bring power to those who have been made vulnerable, much as we saw power cultivated within Latina feminist circles. Within reconfigured system of racism, xenophobia becomes the operating ideology in exclusionary practices in which the foreign "other" is viewed as the new threat to the preservation of heteronormative white supremacy. White supremacy in this context is thus upheld through border enforcement as a form of racial policing in the United States. In a Westphalian world where national borders govern citizenship regimes, transnational migrations are scrutinized with a lens informed by power structures that have historically valued heteronormativity, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Within this context, essentialist identity constructions have been

instrumental in informing the creation of metaphorical boundaries through nation state borders.

In the United States, the policing of the border is not only justified by means of “national security” but is heavily informed by the normative constructions of gender, race and sexuality that have been historically imposed through legal codification (e.g., antimiscegenation laws) to preserve systems of white supremacy. For example, racially mixed children have often been viewed as the single greatest threat to the “preservation” of the white race as racism in the United States has employed the “trope of sexual desire as racial betrayal”, to regulate sexual agency and child rearing (Sen 2007, 75). In a post-civil rights movement era where the codified racism illustrated through antimiscegenation law is no longer a formal part of U.S law, the country remains far from the realities of a “post-race/post-racist” society. Themes of “racial preservation” have morphed into calls for the protection of the integrity of national cultural identity. As author Etienne Balibar, as cited in Chang, notes, “It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but “only” the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions,” (Chang 1999, 29). Much like racial mixing was seen as a threat to the integrity of white supremacist institutions in the United States, migration is perceived as an attack on the ability to uphold the power of whiteness in the nation. Thus paradoxically, the same country that is characterized within its own national mythology as the land of opportunity and tolerance is the same one that measures the desirability of migrants upon their likeness to the white supremacist, heteronormative “ideals” of a U.S citizen.

By stepping outside of these essentialist categorization and geographic borders that govern not only citizenship regimes but identity markers that differentiate “us” from “them” within white supremacist constructions, migration can be seen as an act of resistance. Immigrants, “represent the fearsome prospect of choice and movement, of shattering our geographic, sexual, and identarian boundaries,” (Sen 2007, 80). Whereas the popularized ideal of the U.S as a “melting

pot” requires assimilation, acts of migration that contest this white supremacist prescription for the “good immigrant” is an act of resistance against the racist immigration system.

One case study of this resistance is The Central American Trans-Gay Caravan (Arcoiris 17). The Arcoiris 17 is a group of seventeen trans women and gay men from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico who fled gender and sexuality-based persecution in their home countries and traveled together to the U.S- Mexico border to “gain political asylum in the United States, and draw attention to the violence that structures their everyday lives,” (Zecena 2019, 99). By reconfiguring the idea of *testimonio* as employed by Latina Feminists activist, the Trans-Gay Caravan utilizes this narrative building strategy as a survival technique through the process of countervisibility of their intersectional coalition. Countervisibility, as it is utilized by the Arcoiris 17 is centered upon the creation of an intersectional network of solidarity that has reconfigured the tool of *testimonio* to ensure that the violence they have confronted will no longer be invisibilized. Queer resistance through countervisibility is important to the organizing of the Arcoiris 17 as they have found power in numbers as they are linked through the similarities of the discrimination, violence and structural oppressions they have experienced.

Central American and Mexican LGBTQ+ folks experience life threatening violence at extraordinarily high levels of intensity. Between 2009 and 2017, for example, the NGO Cattrachas documented 264 murders of LGBT people in Honduras alone. “In most cases,” Vicky Baker notes, “those responsible were never brought to justice,” (2019). People who embody nonnormative forms of gender and sexual expression in Latin America experience compounded violence. Intersecting forms of violence exerted upon the bodies of trans, and gay folks is illustrated in Jerson’s *testimonio*, one member of the Arcoiris 17. Jerson is a gay man from Honduras who lost his job after revealing his sexuality as a gay man to his doctor. After being outed by his doctor, Jerson feared an escalation of violence based on his sexuality from a gang that had already killed his dad and brother (2019). Jerson was one member of the Arcoiris 17 who decided to make the dangerous migration from

Honduras to claim asylum in the United States and was ultimately granted refugee status and now resides in New York City.

Countervisibility is a central tool by which the Arcoiris 17 protects one another. When the Trans Gay Caravan reached Nogales, prior to crossing the border, the Arcoiris 17 held a press conference that began “with *testimonios* from some of the members, where they discuss their desire to live free of violence and explain their reasons for migration,” (Zecena 2019, 105). Reporter Vicky Baker explains this strategy further.

The caravan wanted to be seen. They knew that when they crossed the border, they would become a nine-digit number in a detention center and the treatment would be tough. They wanted to put themselves on the NGOs' radars, so people would check in on them,” (2019).

It is not only the content of the stories being shared, but also the “performative political intervention” of queendom that utilizes “spectacles of excessive femininity or ‘fabulousness’” to embody counter hegemonic identity (Zecena 2019, 100). Thus, “With tiaras, heels, and colorful banners, queens deliberately challenge the individuating violence of migration regimes and illuminate the glimmer, hope, and allure of fierce relationalities,” (Zecena 2019, 101). The fierce and fabulous countervisibility that is employed here through the queendom and *testimonio* of the Arcoiris 17 is used to draw attention to and humanize folks entering into a dehumanizing immigration system that policies the bodies of vulnerabilized global citizens through the lens of white supremacist, patriarchal, and heteronormative ideas of national identity.

The caravan’s approach of coalition building through the expression and embodiment of shared experiences of structural violence is a contemporary iteration of the similar methods of political interventions used by Latina Feminists in the configuration of a third-wave feminism that contests their specific iteration of a matrix of domination. *Testimonio* in the case of the Arcoiris 17 takes on the new purpose of countervisibility. Countervisibility is crucial to the Arcoiris 17’s strategy because within the constraints of heteronormative patriarchy, non-normative gender and sexual expression is forced into a violent closet that invisibilized the lived

experiences of gay men and trans women and thus provides an amnesty for perpetrators of violence in their home countries. On the border, the performative embodiment of queendom and visibility demanded before crossing the border act to fly above the radar to draw attention to themselves in the case of violent mistreatment during detention or at any point during their process of claiming asylum.

Conclusion

This article has sought to historicize Latina Feminisms as rejections of monocausally-orientated 20th century ethnicity-based social movements and second-wave feminist spaces. The creation of a unique space for Latina Feminists to organize within this context was carried out through an analysis of a complex subject positionality that was and continues to be explored through concepts of intersectionality, transnationality and queer identity. This exploration has been both facilitated and visibilized through the process of *testimonio*, which I argue is a central form of praxis within Latina Feminist organizing.

The act of *testimoniar* as a form of resistance has also been employed by more contemporary immigration justice movements like the Central American Trans-Gay caravan that employed this tactic as a form of survival in a sociopolitical environment that has contributed to systems of structural violence that put migrating queer bodies of color in danger of great harm. However, the way in that Latina Feminist epistemological intervention prioritizes and validates lived experience as a valuable form of knowledge production is not insignificant in the way in which it impacts the individual. As a young academic growing and learning in predominantly white spaces, navigating white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal institutions left me to grapple with the invisible kinds of violences and microaggressions that permeated my consciousness in harmful ways. Latina Feminist authors, scholars and colleagues provided a space by which to analyze and contextualize my experiences of systemic and interpersonal racism that have affected me deeply. It is through these spaces of learning and reflection, that I found education to be my form of liberation. And thus, in a greater sense, Latina

Feminisms are not just an epistemological intervention to be confined within the sphere of academia, but a powerful tool of healing through reflection facilitated through networks of compassion and understanding. On the micro and the macro, Latina Feminisms have altered the epistemological landscape in which we engage, one in which we move towards a consciousness of respect, understanding, and resistance to the normative.

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¹ *La Raza Cosmica*, or in English, the cosmic race, is the philosophical brainchild of Mexican intellectual Jose Vasconcelos who believed that in a post-revolutionary Mexico, the way to further the nation building project, was to base the idea of a Mexican nationality within a mestizo racial identity. Through the project of "mestizaje" or the racial mixing of Spanish and Indigenous people of Mexico, Vasconcelos believed that the country would become a more peaceful and harmonious society (Vasconcelos 1997, 43). Vasconcelos linkage of national identity with a racial mixing is problematic in the way that it emphasized indigenous erasure and subordination within a perceived racial hierarchy through the elevation of the "mestizo" as the national ideal, while completely ignoring, and thus erasing Afro-Mexicans from the nation building project.

² I use the concept of transnationality here to speak on the presence of a diasporic or immigrant identity within Latina Feminism. Many Latine's in the United States are first, second, third, (etc) generation immigrants from Latin America, and through processes of immigration and racialization have identified within an international framework. However, it is important to note that through U.S imperial projects like the Mexican Cession and the acquisition of U.S colonies (territories), the all too limiting Westphalian definitions of borders and national sovereignty in conversations with the racialization of brown bodies work to other latines in a way that make them feel like foreigners on soil upon which they were born citizens.

³ I use the term colony here rather than territory to highlight the imperial nature of the United States' relationship with Puerto Rico which is rooted in an extensive history of unequal power dynamics fueled by racist motivations.

Dismantling the House of Clinical Psychology

Joshua Carl Chung

“For the master’s tools,” Audre Lorde reminds us, “will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 2018). Her famous words remind us of the need to transform psychological knowledge, practice, and research by adopting a social justice framework. If we want to eradicate structural and institutional forms of racism, we need effective public policy, and psychology is uniquely positioned to inform anti-racist policy through research and practice. First, however, the discipline must get its own house in order. This means coming to terms with the ways that structural racism has shaped the dissemination of psychological knowledge and psychological theory, and how psychology produces and maintain whiteness.

Before examining macro-level racism, it is necessary to define terms and outline the various levels on which racism operates. At the micro-level, interpersonal or symbolic racism can be defined as the conjunction of traditional values and a negative affect towards people of color (Wood, 1994). Under a symbolic or ideological construct, racism is defined as a set of beliefs that are often regarded as having the potential to lead individuals to develop prejudice; consequently, “...prejudicial attitudes may induce actions or discriminations against people of color” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 466). Symbolic racism may be a consciously held ideology, but it also underlies many people’s sense of history.

Further “upstream”, structural racism is generally defined as the systems, social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact at the macro level to produce and maintain inequities among racial and ethnic groups (Powell, 2008). Structural mechanisms do not require the actions or intent of individuals, and they include examples such as social segregation, historical trauma, and public policy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Gee & Ford, 2011). Structural racism manifests in racialized social systems, which refers to “...societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial

categories or races” (Bonilla-Silva 469). In the United States, the concept of whiteness has emerged as an exclusive category that includes the systemic rules, norms, and discourses that produce and maintain the dominance of those socially racialized as white (DiAngelo, 2018).

What “master’s tools” has psychology used to maintain white supremacy? What is being taught? Are psychologists doing the uncomfortable self-reflection necessary to orient themselves towards anti-racism? These are the questions that guided my search for research sources. One tool that maintains the status quo in clinical psychology is the avoidance of intersectionality theory in graduate curricula. Buchanan and Wiklund (2020) describe how intersectionality theory requires considering the various social groups that individuals belong to and the ways in which multiple identities interact within systems of power and oppression. The clinical application of this theory forms the core of culturally affirming, respectful interventions that promote social justice. Clinicians that are well versed in intersectionality are “...better posed to ask essential questions of clients, form relevant case conceptualizations, and improve their therapeutic alliances with clients” (Case, 2015; Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020, 315). Furthermore, all the aforementioned points are essential to building cultural humility. Flynn et al. (2020) found that Latina women showed less medical avoidance when they perceived a health professional as having cultural humility and competence due to a reduced level of shame and embarrassment. Reframing intersectionality as a core competence and necessary part of nationwide curricula could build a generation of clinicians who recognize the concept’s importance and who demand changes in their education. Education and professional training, then, are meso-level processes that can bring about macro-level and institutional change.

Unfortunately, most programs fail to integrate feminist, critical race, and social justice theories and practices (of which are central to intersectional competence) into their training (Buchanon & Wiklund, 2020). There are also significant barriers to paradigmatic changes in the field codified in the policies of the American Psychological Association (APA) itself. The APA implicitly addresses intersectionality in its 2017 APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and

Code of Conduct and the APA Multicultural Guidelines (APA, 2017a; APA, 2017b). Still, neither document explicitly mandates attention to intersectionality nor social justice (Buchanon & Wiklund, 2020, pg. 321). Buchanan and Wiklund (2020) assert that clinical psychology lags behind such related disciplines as counseling psychology, marriage and family therapy, and social work in establishing institutional policies that address and redress white supremacy. One explanation lies in ethical principles and values, which vary across professions. For example, the National Association of Social Workers' code of ethics includes a principle of "challenging social injustice", which includes concentrated efforts to combat issues of "poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice" (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). Meanwhile, the APA lists "justice" as one of the field's five core ethical principles and maintains that psychologists "exercise reasonable judgment" and "ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices (APA, 2017a, General Principles, Principle D). Stronger mandates addressing social justice encourage clear guidelines for ethical social justice work and are long overdue in the realm of clinical psychology (Hailes et al., 2020).

Western psychological healing and explanations of distress often assume there is something wrong with the individual (Koç and Kafa, 2019). Several psychology paradigms, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), put the burden of healing on individual clients, and assume that healing primarily comes from recognizing and changing "maladaptive" thought patterns. In critiquing this Western view, Teo notes that if "mental health issues are embedded in inequality, which is a social and structural category, not a psychological category, then it is ignorance-producing to suggest that one can solve mental health issues on an individual, psychological level" (2019, 40). This viewpoint suggests that mainstream psychological theory such as CBT maintains the status quo (whiteness as dominance) by neglecting the root causes of human suffering experienced by people of color and members of marginalized groups. Cosgrove and Herrawi (2021) voice similar concerns, acknowledging the danger in diagnosing responses to

sexism, discrimination, and institutional racism as mental disorders. Zooming out, Rose et al. (2020) look further “upstream” and examine the systemic factors contributing to mental health disparities. They advise suspicion toward “responses to wide-scale human suffering that only focus on therapeutic interventions” (pg. 2) and advocate wider-reaching efforts for preventative macro-level changes. Cosgrove and Herrawi (2021) agree with Rose et al., adding that it is time for psychologists to “stop exalting individual-level interventions” (339) and recognize the effectiveness of community-based programs, such as housing-first programs, that are in many ways more successful than psychological interventions. Perhaps, then, paradigmatic changes in how we treat and view mental illness will serve as structural mechanisms that change historically white, individualistic discourses of psychotherapy.

As a discipline, psychology needs more clinicians, supervisors, researchers, and policymakers who understand the ways in which implicit bias and guild interests structurally uphold whiteness. Mandating intersectionality theory in graduate-level programs and increasing focus on communal, less individualistic interventions are necessary first steps. A future avenue of analysis includes whiteness in research, with guiding questions such as “how is data collected and interpreted?”, “what kinds of questions are asked?”, and “who does research serve?” The road ahead is long, but there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of psychology. For example, the APA is now systematically examining and charting a path forward to address their role in racism for the first time. A resolution to this effect, which the body published in late October of 2021, is a great first step. The question, however, is whether psychology will follow through on its commitment and take concrete steps to dismantling “the master’s house.”

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Latinas and COVID-19: Caught in the Whirlwind

Kenia Servin

Just as a new year was beginning, the world was struck by a virus that spread like wildfire and turned the world upside-down. The COVID-19 pandemic brought illness and death to our front doors, yet many people overlook its aftermath in many minority communities. In addition to having to care for their families and follow CDC safety regulations, minority communities faced socioeconomic disparities that the pandemic was widening. Latinas in the USA were especially finding themselves caught in a whirlwind as they struggled to make ends meet, care for their ill family members, and secure reliable healthcare for their loved ones. Even though Latinas number some 30 million and are essential to the workforce and national economy, they face official neglect, not to mention an additional stressor: mental health. Here, we shall examine the heightened challenges Latinas have faced since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to economic instability and immigration status. Additionally, we will examine possible solutions to the socioeconomic disparities faced by the community and discuss programs and practices that Latine physicians take part in.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, it was expected that the economy would face unprecedented shocks, but few anticipated the ways that the pandemic would amplify the economic disparities already bearing down on the Latine population. Unfortunately, the pandemic has had a particularly devastating impact on Latinas who were already working low-income jobs and receiving little to no financial assistance. In fact, Latinas today earn 55 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men, even though they make up approximately 30% of the population working frontline jobs

(AAUW, 2021a, p.1). To no surprise, this is exactly why Latinas had the highest unemployment rate of any community of men or women. AAUW also notes that 21% of Latinas lost their jobs during the pandemic as a result of working in sectors such as hospitality and general service (AAUW, 2021a, p.3). This brings up the obvious point that because many Latinas worked essential frontline jobs, they were unable to work remotely and were forced to endanger the health of their families and their own. More than many other groups, Latinas were forced to choose between prioritizing their own health or providing for their families. Unsurprisingly, many women chose the latter, which led them to suffer a 3.1 times higher rate of hospitalization and 2.3 times higher death rate than the population at large (AAUW 2021a, p.1).

These numbers are striking, but what do they mean without the voice of the women who are living this predicament and have been forced to swallow the false promises of the nation? The American Association of University Women (AAUW) sought answers, publishing a report in which Latina interviewees voice their concerns and discuss their individual experiences. Many Latinas reported how even after the CDC discussed the dangers of this virus, employers refused to provide a safe working space or follow the sanitary and preventative measures being mandated. Women were forced to work without masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment in high-risk areas such as hospitals, schools, and factories (AAUW, 2021b, p.4). The women working frontline jobs also describe the struggle to find work and the shortening of their hours which led to the inability to pay for their living expenses (AAUW, 2021b, p.4). One woman reports that she and her husband had lost their home during the 2008 recession and although they managed to buy another house at the beginning of 2020, they faced

losing it as well (AAUW, 2021b, p.4). Unfortunately, the loss of income and continued school closures resulted in many Latina mothers leaving the workforce due to increased childcare responsibilities (AAUW, 2021b, p.6). These anecdotes highlight the individual tragedies and frustrations behind the numbers.

On a similar note, with the struggle to find employment and reach financial stability, Latinas were often unable to acquire healthcare coverage and pay for medical expenses. It is gut-wrenching to know these women were living through a global health pandemic without any form of healthcare coverage and medical assistance. A woman interviewed by AAUW discussed how applying for medical assistance prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was stressful because many benefits were income-based and oftentimes, families like hers would find themselves being denied due to “earning too much,” even while facing severe economic hardship (AAUW, 2021b, p.8). As a result, many had to resort to community non-profit COVID relief programs to help pay for their medical expenses, yet the approval processes often took far too long. In general, lower-income Latinas are the least likely to have health insurance or can access healthcare, which is why only about 76% of Latinas between the age of 18-64 report having some form of health insurance (AAUW, 2021b, p.8). Consequently, when medical care was needed, many were forced to pay out-of-pocket and put themselves in a worse economic state. For some, the only alternatives seemed to be home remedies, prayer, and assistance from friends and family. Furthermore, there was one health problem that neither remedies nor prayer could fix, depression. There is no doubt that the pandemic raised rates of anxiety and depression. In this area, as in the economic arenas, Latinas were left vulnerable. Paola, an AAUW interviewee, stated that she spent an entire month on the

bed living off of \$225 a month from unemployment; yet had to rely on her psychologist friend from Mexico to help overcome the most severe stages of her depression (AAUW, 2021b, p.9). Maria, another interviewee, reported being unable to afford mental health services for her daughter who was refusing to do schoolwork and on the verge of withdrawing from school (AAUW, 2021b, p.9).

As if economic and health struggles were not enough, undocumented status also contributed to the pandemic's disparate effects on Latinas. Although politicians have debated immigration reform for years, they have either blocked such reforms or failed to support them. During the COVID-19, these failures led Latinas who were undocumented to face additional hardships. First off, undocumented Latinas constitute a great percentage of frontline workers, but are excluded from many if not all Coronavirus Relief programs (AAUW, 2021b, p.7). To make matters worse, AAUW, states that although undocumented workers pay equal taxes towards funding these programs, they are barred from receiving the fruits of their labor (AAUW, 2021b, p.2). Nonetheless, if it is not already clear that the government actively discriminates against undocumented workers, AAUW discussed the unfairness mixed-status families face as well. For example, an undocumented person who files joint taxes with a partner who is a citizen or legal resident forfeits the entire family's ability to receive financial assistance through Federal relief programs (AAUW, 2021a, p.1). Even in the case of documented children with undocumented parents, the CARES Act of 2020 excluded children from receiving benefits as a result (AAUW, 2021b, p.7). The only program that allowed for mixed-status children to receive aid was the American Rescue Plan of 2021, but as AAUW's study elucidates, mixed-status families face the stress of only getting support for part of the

family, while the rest are left to fend for themselves. Furthermore, undocumented workers are ineligible to receive income-based government healthcare coverage and are not allowed to purchase healthcare coverage. That helps to explain why Latinas had the lowest rate of healthcare coverage of all groups. Programs such as the Affordable Care Act forbade undocumented Latinas from purchasing health insurance even if they could afford it (AAUW, 2021b, p.8). The only federal assistance the government provides to undocumented people during this pandemic is access to the COVID-19 vaccines, regardless of immigration status. The relationship between immigration status and healthcare is still a very problematic issue that continues to be debated. It may appear to some that the government, rather than helping Latinas of diverse backgrounds, has created further harm for these communities.

Other social factors add to the ill effects of this official neglect, but medical practitioners can mitigate these problems. In a conference hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, Dr. Patricia Téllez-Girón elaborated that many Latine immigrants suffer the consequences of insufficient medical education and/or unfamiliarity with the U.S. healthcare system. This, in turn, exacerbates the mental health crisis for many and creates a heightened sense of despair (Téllez-Girón & Suárez, 2021). Despite this harsh reality, there are still things that can be done to assist Latinas living under the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Téllez-Girón emphasized that having physicians trained and educated on treating this population of women can save lives (Téllez-Girón & Suárez, 2021). Moreover, she explicitly stated that having a welcoming medical facility invalidates many of the negative stereotypes Latinas face such as being thought of as careless and ignorant. Dr. Téllez-Girón explains that

welcoming medical facilities helps the Latine community trust the healthcare system and offers better health education. Facilities should also focus on offering other services such as mental health and financial aid counseling for the community. Throughout the pandemic, local facilities and community programs were forced to cover medical costs and assist patients throughout their recovery.

Dr. Patricia Téllez-Girón has not been alone in her efforts to improve health care for Latinas during the pandemic. Resident Dr. Giovanni Rodriguez and pediatrician Dr. Carlos Torres, both of whom work in emergency medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, shared their insights in interviews with me on the changes that need to take place to help Latinas living through this pandemic. They also described their own efforts to aid the community. Dr. Rodriguez, for her part explained that the pandemic was something that transformed her first year as a resident. Immediately upon graduating from medical school, she relocated to Boston to start her residency and found herself facing the astronomically increasing COVID infection and death rates. Working around the clock, Dr. Rodriguez noticed the disparities that existed in the system and saw how the pandemic was amplifying them. She noticed differences with patient admissions, when she would see Latinas being treated in the halls, while non-Hispanic white women would receive a private room regardless of capacity. She also noted how often she, as a native Spanish speaker, would be taken away from her medical duties to assist other coworkers as an interpreter. Dr. Rodriguez emphasizes the need for social workers and interpreters in hospitals because she affirms that by making the effort to speak to patients in their native language and being mindful of their circumstances, a physician harvests a connection and earns the trust of patients. The lack of such trust in many minority

communities, caused by histories of neglect, leads many minoritized people to refuse vaccination. For this reason, Dr. Rodriguez, like Dr. Téllez-Girón, highlights the importance of education and creating a space to address patient concerns. By educating and comforting Latinas, practitioners can reduce their stress and increase their trust in the vaccine and other COVID preventative measures.

As for Dr. Carlos Torres, the initiatives he took upon being hit by the pandemic were revolutionary. In an interview, he discussed how pediatricians were seeing fewer patients than before the pandemic, so he, along with 62 Spanish-speaking physicians, joined the Spanish-Language Care Group to facilitate communication between patients and staff (Massachusetts General Hospital, 2021). They even went a step further by creating and broadcasting public service announcements to provide Spanish-speaking patients with accurate information regarding COVID-19. Dr. Torres's efforts did not stop there. Later in the interview, he described helping to start a program in the Spring of 2020 called Helping Us Grow Stronger (HUGS/Abrazos), which is a community-based effort that provides emergency relief, patient navigation, and direct behavioral health support to mitigate the negative stressors of COVID-19 on pregnant Latina women and families with children six years or younger. As a pediatrician, he has seen how the lack of paid maternity leave and inaccessible childcare has amplified the level of stress COVID has placed on Latinas in single-parent households. Luckily, through this program, they were able to provide care packages and immediate food assistance for families.

In addition, Dr. Torres emphasizes the importance of healthcare facilities establishing a relationship with the community, especially those from underserved backgrounds. By doing this, Latinas and other community members can inform medical

providers on the services and resources they need. Overall, the efforts of Dr. Tellez-Giron, Dr. Giovanni Rodriguez, and Dr. Carlos Torres address the needs of the community and shows that there are actions to be taken to assist Latinas and their families living under the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of medical professionals and initiative programs, the healthcare system will, at last, be able to best serve minority communities during health crises and create more accessible assistance programs for those who find themselves caught in the whirlwind.

Acknowledgment:

The American Association of University Women seeks to highlight the progress of women in the United States. They have published hundreds of research reports that spread awareness regarding many socioeconomic disparities and discuss advocacy efforts that have driven the enactment of many laws. AAUW's Latina Initiative has not only magnified the impact Latinas have in the economy and politics (voting) in the U.S. but has also brought to light the disparities this group of women face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative was able to capture the specific stories of Latinas who faced financial, physical health, and behavioral health complications. Through their commitment to end discrimination against Latinas, AAUW remains a prominent association that has not only lifted Latina voices but has provided reports regarding the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and made it accessible for the community to access updates on their rights and resources.

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The Mexican American Perspective: Latino Youth, Undocumented Status & Mental Health

Natasha Pelossof

A. Introduction

In recent years, immigration policy has become one of the most controversial topics in politics, as policy makers struggle to reach an agreement on potential comprehensive immigration reforms. Today, immigrants comprise approximately 14% of the U.S population, being more than 44 million people, while the undocumented population numbers around 11 million (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020). According to the Pew Research center, more than half of undocumented immigrants have resided in the U.S for over a decade and nearly one third have U.S.-born children (García, 2019). In recent years, white supremacy and race subordination have overwhelmingly reinforced the unfortunate perception of Latinos as “dangerous criminal aliens,” as ICE continued to detain undocumented immigrants and deepened the threat of deportation (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020). As sociologist Julie Bettie notes, “brown is already a code for low economic status,” and physical and social characteristics like language, dress, style, and facial features identify these immigrants as a distinct ethnic group within the U.S social hierarchical system (Broder et al., 2007). The Surgeon General reports that discrimination contributes to adverse health outcomes for the undocumented. For this paper, I explored these issues through a qualitative interview with Dr. Mauricio Cifuentes, clinical social worker, which is transcribed after the literature review. His insights show how detrimental this isolation and exclusion is on his undocumented Latinx patients.

B. Literature Review

According to Angela S. Garcia, many unauthorized Mexicans living in the U.S internalize restrictive measures and disassociate themselves from Mexican culture in public as much as possible. In addition, the damaging effects of assimilation negatively impact undocumented families’ education, physical and mental well-being. In California, approximately 1 of 5 children live with at least one undocumented immigrant parent, and 30% indicate that they or a family member has

suffered from apparent anti-immigrant hostilities of restrictive states and cities in the last five years (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020). Unfortunately, these children learn that they will never be fully comfortable in a society that rejects and blames their family members (Kullgren, J. T. 2003). Previous research clarifies that children of undocumented Mexican migrants are 2.07 times more likely to internalize and externalize behavior problems than their counterparts with naturalized citizen parents (Rodriguez et al., 2014). While entho-racial studies on diversity and mental health indicate that in the United States Mexican American adults have a lower risk of depression than non-Latino and white adults, Mexican-origin children on the other hand have significantly higher risks of mood disorders and anxiety than their non-Latino peers (Saban, K. L, 2008).

These differences result from intergenerational shifts in the balance of risk and protective factors in everyday life. For example, because adult immigrants have a closer relationship to Mexico and strong ethnic identities, they are more likely to be insulated from negative consequences of socioeconomic risk factors (Gonzalez-Barrera et al., 2013). They typically evaluate their current lives in light of their familistic and collectivist values and pre-migration experience in Mexico. However, both children of undocumented parents and youth who are undocumented themselves have more exposure to socio-racial barriers engrained in American society, as they also experience the erosion of protective cultural factors (Wong et al., 2019). According to the American Psychological Association, undocumented youth suffer from severe mental health risk factors including overt and subtle acts of racism or discrimination ranging from verbal and physical attacks to systematic marginalization, disparities in academics, employment healthcare, and socially implemented barriers. Racial profiling by law enforcement, especially in primarily Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, cultivates feelings of anxiety, isolation and a compromised sense of identity among Mexican American youth (APA, 2012). Furthermore, Nancy S. Landale claims that public schools disproportionately place low-income and ethnic-minority children in low-ability groups from an early age, subjecting them to stigma by their “mainstream” peers. Institutional racism

continuously contributes negatively to social determinants of mental health including occupation, income, and access to quality education (Abrego, 2011).

Parental legal status is one of the most critical elements of Mexican American children's lives that affects both their immediate and long-term well-being (Capps, et al, 2007). While immigration scholars have made distinct progress in understanding migration patterns, subgroup characteristics and the challenges of assimilation, the role of legal status in shaping health outcomes remains poorly understood (Broder et al., 2015). Indeed, most large-scale surveys fail to measure documentation status, leading to inaccurate findings regarding nativity among minority populations. Approximately 70% of Mexican American children have undocumented immigrant parents in the U.S, living with the threat of deportation or marginalization and the adjustment to a new culture (Gonzales et al., 2013). These circumstances in turn generate high levels of stress and heightened vulnerabilities among immigrant parents and their children, in that legal status barriers guarantee disadvantaged outcomes (APA, 2012). In addition to external stressors, family routines and childhood development stages are often disrupted due to parental psychological distress. A 2009 California Health Interview Survey found that Mexican children with undocumented parents are significantly more likely to have higher levels of developmental risk which are linked to adverse outcomes such as depression, anxiety, poor school performance and illegal substance use (Cook B. et al., 2009). Ultimately, a vast literature stresses that a child's well-being is associated strongly with their family's structural position, showing that socioeconomic resources are critical to family routines. Therefore, when a family dynamic is disrupted within the home, this can negatively impact the children's overall functioning.

According to a 2005 study by Sullivan and Rebm, undocumented Mexican immigrants have a unique risk profile. Naturalized Mexican immigrants and their children generally retain health advantages regardless of vulnerabilities associated with poverty and low education since they tend to promote aspects of their origin country lifestyles such as strong family ties and active daily routines (Garcini et al, 2018). By contrast, undocumented families are less resilient to the risks associated with socioeconomic disadvantages, as they struggle to adjust in unfamiliar

communities and unstable household compensation (Winerip, 2011). Furthermore, parental psychological stress, acculturative difficulties and economic hardship create high levels of distress among children. Undocumented migrants also enjoy less access to ameliorative mental health care and other insured services, leaving parents depressed and anxious, with compromised parenting abilities (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020). Neighborhood and environmental characteristics can contribute to additional sources of risk or protection among Latino youth. According to child psychologist Sampson Morenoff, the activation of social ties or collective efficacy is a major dimension of neighborhoods that impacts children's behavior (Pérez et al., 2010). For example, positive child outcomes are enhanced by close intergenerational ties within a community as well as informal social control, or the presence of active adults in the neighborhood (Gonzalez et al., 2013). Aspects of collective efficacy vary by parental legal status. For example, undocumented migrants predominately live in areas with few material and social advantages and are less likely to have health insurance than any other group (García, 2019).

The health status of Undocumented Mexican Americans reflects their lack of health insurance and poor access to aid programs (Wong et al, 2019). Although epidemiological data suggests that they die from cancer and heart disease at comparable rates to the U.S born population, Mexican Americans suffer significantly more and have higher mortality rates from chronic liver disease, homicide, diabetes, and human immunodeficiency virus infection than the rest of the population (Gonzales et al., 2013). Even so, it is estimated that foreign born Latinos have better overall health than their US counterparts as well as lower rates of psychiatric disorders than US born Mexican Americans (APA, 2012). Furthermore, the more acculturated they become, the greater risk of negative health outcomes, mainly due to the stress associated with the process of integration into U.S society. For undocumented youth especially, cultural barriers to mental health services include stigma and differences in illness perception as well as somatization of psychiatric distress. There exist specific themes that essentially shape the mental health status of Undocumented Mexican youth: *Failure to succeed in the Country of Origin,*

Dangerous border crossings, Limited resources, Restricted morbidity, Fear-based behaviors and Isolation.

The tragic stories of Joaquin Luna and Yanelli Hernandez illustrate these dynamics. As a six-month-old, Joaquin Luna Jr. migrated to the U.S from Mexico with his parents and grew up in a small town of Mission, Texas. Eighteen-year-old Joaquin claimed that being surrounded by his high achieving American peers, he hoped to be the first in his family to pursue a college degree. Sadly, on November 25, 2011, Joaquin took his own life due to the confusing and conflicting experiences of inclusion and exclusion on his emotional and mental health (Gonzalez et al., 2013, p. 1174). His suicide perpetuated a firestorm of media recognition regarding undocumented youth living in the U.S, urging people to refocus awareness on potential immigration reform, specifically for the “DREAMer” generation. Months later, 22-year-old Yanelli Hernandez, a Mexican immigrant living in Ohio since childhood was deported after being charged with a DUI. While in the immigrant detention center, she attempted suicide at least three times from extreme stress and anxiety (1182). Like Joaquin, Yanelli grew up having to work from a young age, while at the same time living in the shadows due to the constant threat of apprehension and deportation. They and millions of other undocumented Latino youths’ circumstances require special attention, as they grow up through contradictory experiences of hopelessness and despair. As it is, the transition from childhood to adolescence is a challenging one. The extra stressor of feeling like you do not belong with the inability to vote, legally work, receive financial aid, nor drive in most states, make their dreams feel unattainable. While their peers move through traditional and important rites of passage, unauthorized Mexican American youth lack the ability to join them. School tells them that all dreams are attainable, but a dark reality hits when they discover what it really means to be undocumented.

Acculturative stress, anxiety related to job insecurity, the strains of low-wage work, lack of access, and perceptions of discrimination negatively shape their self-image. Interestingly, those who have higher proficiency English skills, are more likely to have high stress (Arbona et al., 2010). Also, past ethnographic studies have found that undocumented Mexican immigrants seek medical assistance much less

than their documented counterparts. Undocumented immigrant children tend to live in crowded housing, without healthcare and have trouble affording sustainable food (Capps et al., 2007). According to the Pew Research Center, the average income of families with at least one undocumented member is 40% lower than that of legal immigrant and native-born families. Parents in these families often work unstable jobs for long periods of time, and as result two-thirds of undocumented children under 18 are low-income. As they grow older, legal options decrease while their responsibilities increase, because they must provide financial assistance to their households.

Research on undocumented Mexican immigrant families suggests that a majority of adolescent and adult children of immigrants do not receive financial assistance for higher education from their families. Abrego and Gonzales stress that while undocumented adults live manifesting fear, youth that are socialized into a school environment suffer more from stigmatization and shame. Stigma functions as a “secondary border” that serves to re-emphasize legal exclusion (Abrego and Gonzales, 2010). Anonymous surveys indicate that most undocumented students keep their legal status a secret from their peers, teachers, and sometimes even romantic partners, disengaging themselves from important support networks (García, 2019). Unfortunately, in the hostile political climate of anti-immigrant racism that has prevailed over the last decade, targeted hate-crimes against Latinos rose by 21% nationwide, according to a 2018 FBI report. College and high school immigrant students are swept up in this dangerous backlash due to the absence of comprehensive federal reforms. In addition, some local laws ban undocumented youth from 2- and 4-year public institutions. These trends have only heightened the anxiety throughout Latino communities and especially take an emotional toll on youths under unimaginable pressure to contribute to their families. At the same time, they come to terms with their stigmatized identities and their inability to participate as full members of society.

Despite these unfavorable circumstances, past research has revealed that when given the opportunity of mentorship and financial assistance, undocumented students perform just as well as their legal peers. Legislation regarding in-state tuition has

overwhelmingly boosted these students' potentials in the academic world, allowing them to make the most of their lives here in the U.S. Because most Mexican youth immigrants are undocumented, they lack the ability to use their political voice for voting purposes. Instead, they can express themselves through other forces that will ultimately guarantee meaningful representation. Their resilience is further exemplified in civic engagement, protesting and advocacy on behalf of their communities. For example, the Latino Immigrant National Election study (LINES) findings accentuate that civic stresses led directly to participation, especially among younger immigrants, as one in three young adult respondents claimed to have joined a protest from 2016 to 2017 (McCann & Jones-Correa, 2020, 22).

Today's Mexican immigrant population comes from diverse origins. While some arrived in the U.S with degrees, visas and stable jobs, a majority come with minimal levels of educational attainment, and only find work in low-wage labor markets. The children, who are brought along by their parents, often suffer from the mental implications of living in society's shadow and struggle to find their true identities. Because this population is still relatively young, they have received limited scholarly attention. As they navigate between two distinct cultural systems, they are pressured to integrate drastically different worldviews into one plural identity. Adolescence is a transitional period in which one is much more psychologically vulnerable. Scholars indicate that during this stage, Hispanic immigrants have exhibited significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety and substance use disorders than other racial groups (Grant et al., 2004; Vega et al., 2004). Clinicians around the nation ranging from psychiatrists to social workers have begun to direct attention to undocumented adolescents, especially in predominantly impoverished areas.

With more qualitative findings on this issue, we can hopefully work to become a more welcoming nation. To this end, I decided to consult with Dr. Mauricio Cifuentes, Clinical Director at Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero. Dr. Mauricio works predominantly with Latinx families providing psychotherapy to clients of diverse social identities. Prior to pursuing social work, he obtained a J.D. from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota, Colombia, his country of origin. He

then taught and practiced labor law for about 20 years and switched to social work in 2001, and as a result moved to the U.S in 2003 and received his MSW from Loyola University Chicago. After graduating he worked at the community level for Saint Anthony Hospital in Chicago and there he designed and implemented a mental health program for Latino immigrants. After receiving his Ph.D. in 2010, Dr. Mauricio moved to Minneapolis and secured a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor at Augsburg University. In 2013, Dr. Mauricio decided to work for Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES) in the Twin Cities. In 2017, after serving as the organization's Senior Director of Health and Wellness, he left CLUES for Loyola University in Chicago (LUC). A Clinical Assistant Professor, he coordinated the first online, bilingual MSW program in the US. He and became associated with the Center for Immigrant and Refugee Accompaniment at LUC. In October 2020, he dedicated his time to working directly with the Latinx community as Clinical Director at Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero.

C. An edited transcript of the interview

Natasha: Do you think that legal status plays a critical role in determining mental health among Mexican American youth? And if they are legal does the documentation status of their parents burden their emotional well-being?

Dr. Mauricio: It is a fundamental role because it is about pretty much your sense of belonging in the world or not. It is the most fundamental sense of being or not being safe. If you don't have legal status or documentation allowing you to be here it is like always being afraid that at any given time you can be sent back to wherever you came from. When I say whenever you came from, I'm not referring exclusively to a geographic place but to previous circumstances and that can be terrifying for people.

Natasha: Yes, that definitely makes a lot of sense, especially because a majority of them come here seeking asylum from dangerous environments in their origin countries.

Dr. Mauricio: Exactly. And another thing that is important to note is that from the legal perspective you know that there are protected categories which allow people to apply for asylum but there are some other things that are not part of those protected circumstances but are extremely traumatic. For example, extreme poverty is now

recognized in the literature as a traumatic event and its technical name is fiscal trauma, so what happens with many of these individuals: children youth and adults that are coming, if they live in extreme poverty, you find that lately more and more from Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua in particular feel that they need to come here to survive. For example, some that I've talked to claimed extreme hunger caused them to have such unbearable stomach cramps. Their only remedy to ease pain and survive was tying a pillow extremely tight on their stomachs. The uncertainty and the fear of reexperiencing the pain of waking up and not having food is now recognized by the literature as a cause for PTSD, but that is not a protected category legally. So, people like this cannot apply for asylum.

Natasha: So, do you think when unauthorized immigrants are seeking healthcare, or any sort of physical care are they worried about being deported. Do they come for help in fear?

Dr. Mauricio: Well two things: one thing is that they're terrified so they do not usually look for any kind of help, because it is like you are living in Nazi Germany and you are a Jew. What you try is to be under the radar all the time. You don't want to be seen, because as long as you are invisible your risk is lower. They want to be unknown, so they're not deported or sent to prison. The other piece is also that when you are in a totally foreign land or culture. You have no clue about the systems of health. So, if I'm in Rwanda, and let's say they speak their native language which I am not proficient in, I may see a hospital but what else do I know about how to access that hospital. That is an additional issue which is even more clear for mental health rather than for physical health. Many of these individuals that come don't have even a clue of the concept of mental health. In some of their languages they don't even have a word for therapy.

Natasha: Wow. Is there also a stigma in the community do you think?

Dr. Mauricio: There is no stigma because there is ignorance so how can you stigmatize something that you don't know exists? It is like natives from Alaska use sixteen different words for snow. Me or you are not aware of all those words, so I don't know if they have a negative or positive connotation. So yes, there is stigma in

the Latinx culture and in many other cultures associated with mental health but in many cases, there is no stigma because it doesn't really exist.

Natasha: How do you think we could sort of ease their fears as a society or as clinicians and make them feel more comfortable seeking mental health care or physical care of any kind?

Dr. Mauricio: Well, I think that it is a complex point because if the policies are not friendly from the get-go you know that you are in enemy territory. At the policy level, if policies don't change it is extremely difficult for people to feel welcome or more confident. The second thing is not only the policy but the implementation of the policy. So even if the current administration tries to change some policy you cannot replace all the border patrol, agents You cannot replace all the people that are interacting on a daily basis with those undocumented individuals. So even if the policies change, if the people implementing the policies have hatred in their hearts, people are not going to feel comfortable. At a more meso-level you need to think about local governments or things like that. For example, in Minneapolis—and this is an example of how things can be done and improved—when I was working for CLUES the city of Minneapolis hired us to do a training for all the city workers to help them understand immigrant trauma, so they city could be a more welcoming one for immigrants or refugees. So even those who were behind the desk doing driver license paperwork, received that training, which had a tremendous impact on the city. However, if you have a racist person who is stuck in their ways and forced to attend the training, they will probably not change their mentality in five short hours. But you are planting seeds, and those things may help. The other thing is how the mental health work force is trained in cultural responsiveness and specific issues on immigrants and refugees. Many people in mainstream agencies who are not so used to dealing with undocumented immigrants on a regular basis, sometimes try to help but expect those clients to behave as their other clients. Usually, regular clients after you try really hard to help them and you succeed would be very expressive and grateful but that is not the case many times with undocumented people because they have been so traumatized that it's impossible for them to be trusting of others who aren't

their family. Raising our own awareness about how to provide services to those communities are very critical.

Natasha: It's hard because even if a therapy session helps once a week, then they're still going back to the reality of being scared to do everyday tasks.

Dr. Mauricio: There is also a very significant component that every clinician has to consider when working with any population, but it is particularly relevant when working with Latinx undocumented immigrants which is to raise our self-awareness and to become aware of our real thoughts and feelings around undocumented immigrants because there are arguments that are very important to consider. There are people that state that they already have scarce resources here in the U.S and we have a very large population of people that are below the poverty line, how can we help others or prioritize others who are coming from the outside? Our government should be taking care of those who were born here living in poverty they say. That is one of the main arguments that some of the Trump supporters who are white feel. They are confused as to why other groups of people coming into the country have more financial help than their families and in turn begin to resent immigrants. These are significant arguments that we can't ignore because they can react and be violent then we judge them. I think we are doing a poor job thinking about these realities. Clinicians need to understand that they themselves may have ambivalent feelings when serving immigrants. Language is very important for shaping thoughts and feelings.

Natasha: When I was reading some literature on this, I saw that those who are more acculturated in American society actually have worse mental health effects than those who come more recently. I wanted further clarification on this phenomenon.

Dr. Mauricio: Yes, it's very contradictory. It's called the "Immigrant paradox" and what happens it seems is when you are still very attached to the cultural origin you have all the protective factors of the culture of origin. On the other hand, when you become more acculturated you start acculturating to some elements but not to others. For example, there is an interesting study comparing suicide rates of two towns on each side of the border, one in Mexico and one in the U.S. What happened was that the rate of suicide among Latinos on the U.S side was about 3 or 4 times higher than

those on the Mexican side. So, the researchers tried to find out what had happened. They gathered secondary data from other studies and presented a hypothesis that those in Mexico even if they were religious or not, they had internalized the cultural fear that if you kill yourself you will go to hell for the eternity. That fear was a protective factor, preventing them from committing suicide. Those who came to the U.S and became more acculturated, in the acculturated process, became more skeptical and dismissive of what they thought were the “stupid Latino cultural values” attached to religion. They no longer believed in hell or heaven and so they didn’t have that fear to protect them. In the acculturation process you can throw away some of these traditional thoughts.

Natasha: So, even some of these close-knit family values or traditions, I know doing things with the family, meals or exercising are less prominent here than they are on the other side of the border?

Dr. Mauricio: Again, that depends and when you look at the statistics and so on for example a person like me because of social class or whatever, I can behave in some ways in terms of healthy eating and exercising and so on like a middle-class white person. But that wouldn’t be the case for many other immigrants. I’m going to use an example to further explain this paradox. Some people like me providing psychotherapy started noticing that second and third generation of Latinx youth coming from pretty stable families got involved with gangs, and that was shocking. We started talking with other Latinx clinicians, and we couldn’t understand what was going on, because the traditional view was that the gang replaces the family when for whatever reason the youth doesn’t feel like they have a sense of belonging to their families of origin. That was the explanation that we always had in our minds, so this was a confusing phenomenon since these adolescents were coming from relatively healthy families. However current studies hypothesize that these youth were acculturated within the U.S school system, and that system is teaching them that this is an egalitarian democratic society, that we are all equal, that we all have the same opportunities, and this really was not the case. They looked around and saw their parents and realized that this is B.S. That is the source of this rage, and many times this manifested rage can even be unconscious. Joining a gang is a way to act out and

express rage. The motivation or rationale is not that they need to replace their family but it's that they need to do something against the system.

Natasha: So, not as much with first generation Latinx immigrants, right?

Dr. Mauricio: Well sometimes they join a gang for traditional reasons of not having a family etc., but we are starting to see a growing trend of other who come from loving parents joining gangs solely to go against the unfair socio-racial system.

Natasha: Do you think there is ever a conflict of interest between the first-generation parents and their children. Do the parents not understand why their children are acting out like this?

Dr. Mauricio: I think it is very difficult for parents to understand, because in the Latino culture that form of rebelliousness is unacceptable, because in the culture we are more about compliance and being grateful. The narrative of most Latinx families is to be grateful to this country. You see how many Latinx immigrants on their cars or outside their houses have the U.S flag. They really love the country, because when they were in Mexico, they didn't have money to buy shoes and never even dreamed about even affording McDonalds. Now they can go and have three pairs of shoes and go to McDonalds once a week. The reality of the parents is totally different because they can compare. I help a couple that came from Mexico. The mother was living in a ranch in a very rural area of Mexico, and she would go twice, maybe three times a year to the big town close by, and she remembers the neon sign of McDonalds in that town and she remembers passing by and not being able to afford it. For her coming to the U.S was associated with being able to go to McDonalds. So, for her the American dream was fulfilled when she was able to go to McDonalds and that was the case for the husband. Their kids on the other hand, don't think anything of it, since they don't have this type of association that the parents have. It is hard for parents to understand why their kids don't value what they value so deeply, and this is part of the tension for the parents. They want their kids to fulfill the American dream, pursue an education. But at the same time, it is like a horror movie for them, because they associate their kids going to college as losing them to a perverted U.S culture. Social identities and intersectionality are critical to include in any analysis of this.

Natasha: What is the most effective method to mentor Latino youth or clinicians dealing with Latino youth? I know you said before that people have to be more culturally aware, but how do you tell these clients to go about their day when they have all these fears?

Dr. Mauricio: I think that becoming culturally responsive is not an intellectual exercise. It may have intellectual components, but we can achieve better outcomes with experiential learning. I'm going to share with you another study that was done in a college in the Midwest in the U.S and the goal was to discover ways to decrease homophobia among college students. What they did was divided students in three different groups: one group was receiving very good classes through lecture style. Another group was receiving only experiential things like for example today you are going to be walking around campus holding hands with someone who's of the same sex and gender expression as you. You are going to write down and reflect on that experience. The third group was exposed to both, some training in the classroom and some experiential learning. When I started reading the study I thought "Oh my Gosh those who got the combined method of intervention would have the best outcomes." However, the most significant group was the one doing only experiential. They showed the highest decrease in levels of homophobia. I think that is exactly the same way we need to help people form cultural awareness and sensitivity. In that sense, if you are in Chicago for example, going to the local villages and walking through 26th street talking to people, trying to make friends who are immigrants and refugees are types of experiential learning that would produce successful outcomes. They are real people who can share their firsthand experiences. The closer to experiential learning, the higher the probability that you will foster real change in the person receiving it.

D. An analysis of the interview

I was extremely pleased with my interview experience and am so grateful to have met Dr. Mauricio. He really helped me put everything I've learned about into perspective with incredibly logical analogies and analysis. He not only spoke about the experience of undocumented Latino youths in an emotional engaging way, but he also managed to give me an in-depth psychological analysis about their relationship with parents and their Mexican roots. Also, when we spoke about the widespread

discrimination toward minority communities in the U.S today, Dr. Mauricio stressed that when dealing with this issue we need to consider a variety of viewpoints. We cannot generalize or assume all in a specific group are identical in nature, and even if we don't agree with certain types of people, we need to better understand their feelings in order to create a more compatible and inclusive society. First, I want to acknowledge Dr. Mauricio's credibility, as he has been a practicing clinical social worker for over 20 years in predominantly Latino areas. He himself has a fascinating story, growing up in Colombia with a notable infectious disease researcher as a father and a clinical psychologist as a mother. Dr. Mauricio made it clear that he was always exposed to global health, mental health and economic disparities. He told me that he identifies as part of the LGBTQ community and provided me with fascinating insight on undocumented Latino youths who are part of the community and how they come to terms with sexuality. As many settle into adult life, they seek to minimize frustration by holding onto tangible aspects of their lives such as relationships and hobbies. Although identity formation is considered an individual processes it's ultimately part of a larger social structure in which undocumented status has a pervasive impact.

Throughout the interview, Dr. Mauricio seemed open, direct, and passionate about his goals and dedication to spreading knowledge about Latinx mental health. He is a very reasonable, approachable, and genuine person, as he was both informative and truthful in explaining his journey in the field. In relation to the literature I researched, he stressed that there is a lack of scholarly work or theoretical models on healthy identity formation among undocumented youth. Dr. Mauricio claimed that many of colleagues complain that their undocumented clients seem unsatisfied after psychotherapy. This is the case because mental health workers often disregard the fact that they're dealing with a unique population. Evidence-based approaches are crucial in dealing with minority communities, he maintained. Furthermore, he argued that the only way to make effective progress and obtain better outcomes is through experiential studies and basing methods off immigrants' first-hand experiences. I loved the example that Dr. Mauricio used to explain how effective experiential learning can be. He describes a study on homophobia across

college campuses and indicates that those who showed the largest decrease in levels of homophobia were in the experimental group. When it comes to creating a more inclusive society regarding immigration, we need nonimmigrants to have first-hand experiences with undocumented immigrants, where they become familiar with their backgrounds, origin and stories. I think future government officials, policy makers, and social workers should value these findings and incorporate experiential learning in future social justice initiatives.

In regard to my question on why acculturated Latino youth suffer more severely from mental illness than first generation immigrants, Dr. Mauricio carefully explained that when people become more acculturated to U.S society they lose those protective factors from their origin country. He gave me a great example of a study that measured suicide rates among Latino youth in Mexico and on the other side of the border in the U.S. The results further proved this phenomenon that those who came to the U.S and became more acculturated, in the acculturated process, became more skeptical and dismissive of what they thought were the “stupid Latino cultural values” attached to religion. The Latinos on the U.S side surprisingly were 3 to 4 times more likely to commit suicide because they lacked ties to traditional Mexican cultural values. This explanation was consistent with the literature, in that undocumented adolescents find difficulty in achieving a sense of continuity and coherence due to the internalization of negative messages from media and the American public. Whereas older generations are less likely to internalize this prominent discrimination, Latino youth feel intense anxiety, confusion, and frustration. In the scholarly article *No Place to Belong*, Leticia, an undocumented teen from Eastern Washington stated, “I don’t know why but I was afraid of being seen as an immigrant. I told my mom that I needed new clothes. She couldn’t understand. I didn’t know how to explain it, but I started doubting myself a lot” (Massey & Sánchez, 2010). She indicated that her mother didn’t understand these self-doubts or why she scrutinized the clothes she wore.

Dr. Mauricio used a great analogy to further explain this conflict between first generation parents and their children. The U.S school system is designed so that students believe they are part of an egalitarian democratic society, that they are all

equal, and have the same opportunities. Children are taught to speak up and seek help from guidance counselors when they have mental health concerns. However, in the Latinx community and in many other minority communities “mental health” or “therapy” are not frequently spoken about. I asked Dr. Mauricio if there was a stigma in the community and he claimed that “there cannot be a stigma when there’s ignorance.” He told me that in Alaska, natives have over 16 words for “snow.” Because neither he or I speak this native language, we have no idea which word has a negative or positive connotation. He used this analogy to emphasize that many Latino first generation parents don’t understand why their children are unhappy or rebellious. I loved the personal story that Dr. Mauricio shared about a family he works with and his analysis of the parents v the children. While the mother is ecstatic every time she passes a McDonalds because she can finally afford it here in the U.S, she complains that her children are not as grateful or phased by the opportunities they have in this country. First-generation parents have certain aspects of life that they associate with the American dream, where on the other hand because their children were so young coming to the U.S they aren’t able to make these types of comparisons to their origin country.

A major idea that Dr. Mauricio talked about but did not specifically define is “self-stigma” which was mentioned heavily in academic literature I came across. The discovery of undocumented status leads many young Latino immigrants to isolate themselves and avoid public places, and activities with members outside their community. This unhealthy sense of hyperawareness makes it difficult for them to trust their friends and sometimes even prevents them from maintaining meaningful connections. Not only do they deal with external boundaries of not being able to drive, work or go to school without fear, but they also suffer from internal boundaries which have deep implications for their emotional well-being. They consider themselves “illegal” and therefore this stigmatized perception of themselves becomes assimilated into their core identity. One respondent from a previous 2010 study named Jessica (19) stated, “Nothing was the same anymore. Everything I thought I was going to be, everything I did, totally different. It was like I was living some other person’s life. But it wasn’t. This was me. It was my life” (Gonzales et al., 2013,

1186). Jessica, like many other coming-of-age unauthorized Mexican immigrants, is unfortunately coming to terms with the fact that her future will be very different from what she dreamed of as a child. This particular grief and realization that they will continue living life in fear comes with symptoms, described by Dr. Mauricio, such as changes in appetite, trouble sleeping, anxiety, aggressiveness, anger, lack of desire, and decreased physical health including gastrointestinal symptoms and hair loss. Also, long periods of stress are linked to significantly reduced functionality, a decrease in cognitive performance and impulse control and a decrease in short-term working memory. For some this unresolved grief led them to fall into a dangerous pattern of externalizing their behaviors by drinking to excess, experimenting with drugs, and seeking out arguments with peers, or people of authority. Dr. Mauricio described this type of rebellion as a way for undocumented teens to express themselves and go against the unfair system. He pointed out that adolescent Latino youth join gangs for the purpose of acting out and making their rage known. Dr. Mauricio stressed that his Latino clients often complained that they were not understood by their teachers who perceived them as lazy and unmotivated. They however don't feel comfortable enough being truthful about their chronic sadness, stress and anxiety, in fear that their documentation status will be exposed. Instead, they often keep these feelings to themselves and "turn their distress inward," as Dr. Mauricio said. Participants in the academic literature discuss exacerbation of chronic diseases like high blood pressure, chronic headaches, toothaches, and bodily pain that have been proclaimed to be experienced by highly acculturated immigrants (Bui, Doescher, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2011; Hacker et al., 2011; Viruell-Fuentes, 2007). Others harmed themselves and attempted suicide as a last resort to try to end their unescapable situations. I think Dr. Mauricio really helped me expand on the literature I analyzed, in that he provided me with personal stories and studies to further show evidence of how documentation status takes a major toll on Latino youth's health. He also gave me insight on the "immigrant paradox" or the reason as to why acculturated immigrants tend to suffer more mentally than their first-generation parents. His work in CLUES is extremely inspiring, and it is vital that voices like his inform policymaking. Dr. Mauricio understands his Latinx clients, only because he takes the

time and effort to hear about their experiences first-hand through really engaging with their local communities. I think the major lesson here is that as a nation we need to make the effort to accept people and their differences. Rather than making assumptions from a distance, we need to consider people's feelings, past struggles, and admire this remarkably resilient population, as they maintain hope in the face of hopelessness.

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“Code-switching”: un gran catalizador en la música de rock

Tori Haanstad

La feminista y teórica chicana Gloria Anzaldúa, en respuesta a los implacables ataques lingüísticos perpetrados contra su identidad y lengua fronteriza, declaró con fuerza que tenía su “serpent’s tongue”. Una serpiente que, particularmente en su cultura, es sexual; es audaz y orgullosa. Cada cultura –y quizás cada persona– tiene una serpiente interna, una parte de su identidad que protege íntimamente y reclama a pesar de las fuerzas sociales que puedan existir para destruirla. La cultura y la identidad de la música del rock, a lo largo de la historia, han sido un testimonio de este espíritu e impulso de serpiente del que hizo eco Anzaldúa. Esta serpiente aparece encarnada en la creación sonora y simbólica de Jimi Hendrix, en la mezcla innovadora de estilos de Café Tacuba, y en las poderosas y variables exhibiciones de género a medida que las mujeres comenzaron a ocupar espacios en la escena del rock. En efecto, la implicación de Anzaldúa de *codeswitching*, un fenómeno típicamente pertinente a la lingüística persiste y permea la música y la cultura del rock. El *codeswitching* sirve como un “lugar de negociación”, donde no solo el idioma, sino también los sonidos, los estilos y los medios de presentación se convierten en las “subunidades”, la “moneda” de la experimentación y el intercambio cultural.

Jimi Hendrix sirve como un ejemplo pertinente de cómo la experimentación con el sonido y la interpretación a través del *codeswitching* funciona para mostrar temas socioculturales de interés e importancia. El ejemplo más poderoso de esta noción está presente en su experimentación con el himno nacional estadounidense. En su interpretación en Woodstock de 1969, usando solo su guitarra, Hendrix realizó una interpretación que se componía de sonidos que imitaban bombas, jets, etc., de la guerra. El canalizó su experiencia personal como veterano de la guerra de Vietnam – y en consecuencia, como activista contra la guerra– en una alteración impactante del himno. Como consecuencia, cuenta una historia completa de guerra

y dolor, sin el uso de ninguna palabra, sino con un acto de *codeswitching* con sonidos íntimos.

En otra de sus interpretaciones del himno nacional en 1970 en Berkeley, producía esta misma calidad de sonido de manera inquietante. En momentos, era como si se estuviera escuchando uñas en el encerado o incluso gritos, sonidos que me incomodaban. Sin embargo, ese fue un efecto deliberado y significativo del *codeswitching* del himno. Ya que transforma el evento de ser una celebración alegre a una inspección crítica de una América rota en muchos sentidos. Su *codeswitching* casi obliga al público a escuchar estos gritos, este caos de Estados Unidos. Nosotros, como audiencia, nos convertimos en consumidores de este intercambio musical y sociopolítico que realmente crea una forma resonante de resiliencia y rebelión (como la serpiente de Anzaldúa) ante la destrucción y el dolor. Es particularmente relevante entender a Jimi Hendrix como el mismo tipo de “individuo fronterizo” que Anzaldúa, quizás no en el mismo sentido geográfico, sino en el sentido de que Hendrix era un estadounidense negro, sujeto y testigo de un sistema de derechos civiles quebrantado. Su acto musical es tan intrigante como la práctica de *code switching* a través de disciplinas, y a menudo se convierte en el lenguaje (ya sea de forma literal o simbólica) de los marginados, del “otro” en la sociedad. Al igual que el *codeswitching* del idioma no produce un idioma que esté “contaminado”, el *codeswitching* de sonido realizado por Hendrix no produjo una versión del himno nacional que fuera menos verdadera o estadounidense que las versiones más normativas.

En muchos aspectos, la banda Café Tacuba de la Ciudad de México es el epítome del uso de *code switching* como vehículo para el intercambio y la experimentación sociocultural. Mientras que Jimi Hendrix lo hizo con una sola guitarra, Café Tacuba ha hecho uso de un complejo “shifting web” de instrumentos y sonidos, donde “traditional soundings are neither silenced nor overemphasized, but reconfigured and reimagined in new relationships and new settings,” permitiendo que ‘folk culture’ coexista con ‘mass culture’ y por lo tanto “calling into question the very line that once pretended to keep them apart” (Kun 216). Café

Tacuba esencialmente está reconstruyendo la narrativa de la identidad fronteriza; a través del *code switching* entre los diferentes estilos y culturas, Café Tacuba está desmantelando y desdibujando las líneas donde comienza y termina la cultura fronteriza, la “línea” que se esfuerza por mantener la periferia separada del centro. La forma en que Café Tacuba experimenta con la tradición y la modernidad y con diferentes géneros, en efecto desafía las divisiones temporales y culturales para forjar una nueva identidad empoderada—una, por cierto, arraigada no en un lugar singular o marcado por un sonido singular, sino de una multitud de gente compleja. Café Tacuba es un testimonio de cómo, “...tradition is in transition, and articulated to modern processes” (Kun 218). Me recuerda la cita poderosa de Anzaldúa que escuché una vez y que se refiere a la frontera, y a la cultura fronteriza, como una “herida abierta.” Este sentimiento reconoce un tipo de dolor histórico, de una verdadera herida que ocupa una región o una identidad fronteriza, y que persiste en las vivencias y culturas de los que se identifican con ella. Siempre me ha encantado y he apreciado esta frase y creo que hace eco del propósito y éxito de Café Tacuba: En su música, la herida, o sea, la "tradición" siempre estará presente pero ahí la herida también facilita la oportunidad. En cierto modo, su música es una forma de curar esa herida. Su práctica de *code switching* conduce a una forma de catarsis.

Code Switching ha demostrado funcionar como un elemento fundamental de la representación de género, como se observa en la gran variedad de decisiones de vestuario femenino. Histórica y culturalmente, “costuming has long been tied to the specific musical genre... Thus helping to create a homology or correspondence with the values associated with a particular type of music” (Kearney 170). Sin embargo, esta premisa se ve complicada y desafiada por el papel muy variable y ambiguo del género en la escena del rock. Es verdad que se puede observar una presencia crecientemente más masculina (los pantalones, la ropa informal) en el vestuario entre las mujeres rockeras, por lo que se resisten a los rígidos roles de género de la belleza y la vestimenta tradicionales. No obstante, algunas mujeres rockeras han optado por utilizar sus actuaciones como sitios más explícitos de negociación y exploración. Lynne Breedlove ejemplificó esto cuando actuó “topless” y con un “dildo” que luego fue castrado como parte de su actuación y

como un medio para, “embracing and reconfiguring masculinity” (Kearney 170). El estilo de vestuario de “kinderwhore” en la década de 1990 creó un extraño choque de ropa infantil y “bleached-blond hair”/ “red lipstick” para ilustrar un comentario impactante sobre la industria de la belleza y la hipersexualización de las jóvenes. Y, sin embargo, Celeste Kearney llama la atención sobre el hecho de que hay otro sector importante de mujeres rockeras hoy en día que están a favor de exhibir sus cuerpos y alinearse con la apariencia "femenina" de sexualidad porque es un acto de orgullo, agencia y liberación para ellas (Kearney 175).

La variabilidad en la perspectiva feminista y sus manifestaciones performativas es profunda. Sin embargo, el fenómeno subyacente es el mismo: las artistas femeninas toman decisiones deliberadas sobre el vestuario, a veces con un choque confuso, contradictorio pero *cautivador*, para canalizar declaraciones culturales sobre la libertad o la opresión. Al igual que el *codeswitching* de sonidos de Jimi Hendrix y el consiguiente significado del himno nacional, las roqueras a menudo se involucran en un *codeswitching* de interpretación de género y la consiguiente identidad dentro de la escena de rock. La *experimentación* conduce a una *exhibición* de valores culturalmente ricos y audaces. Sin embargo, es importante tener en cuenta que este *codeswitching* de la ropa, aunque a menudo es una búsqueda creativa y de empoderamiento, también puede ser una carga para las rockeras que están obligadas a negociar y navegar su espacio musical de maneras que los hombres no lo tienen que hacer. Es muy fascinante que, de esta manera, el *codeswitching* puede ser un acto de orgullo en el proceso de formación de identidad pero también una inmensa lucha.

Jimi Hendrix, Café Tacuba y la variada actuación de género sirven como magníficos microcosmos de *codeswitching* en la escena del rock. El *codeswitching* juega con el concepto de periferia y centro de una cultura, y por fin, le da a los “otros” en la sociedad una nueva plataforma para el propósito y el poder

sociocultural. La práctica ha demostrado ser no solo una herramienta exitosa en el rock, sino un verdadero gran catalizador.

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La versatilidad de la sexualidad en *I Like it Like That*

Parnika Shukla

En la película, *I Like it Like That* (1994), dirigida por Darnell Martin, los elementos del sexo y la sexualidad llaman la atención inmediata del espectador. Desde el principio hasta el final de la película, las escenas sexuales se presentan constantemente, destacando así varios significados e implicaciones en términos de su trama. Y aunque estas escenas parecen existir sólo con el propósito de entretenimiento y valor de impacto, en *I Like it Like That*, el sexo y la sexualidad ocupan un papel más importante. De hecho, la película, como veremos, considera el tema de la sexualidad en varios niveles, destacando la hipermasculinidad, los papeles de género, la dialéctica madre/puta latina, y el sexo como una forma de empoderamiento e identidad. La directora Darnell Martin redefine el significado multifacético de la sexualidad en su película.

La escena inicial y un poco extensa de esta película es literalmente una escena de sexualidad conyugal. Muestra a Lisette y Chino, la pareja protagonista de la película, teniendo relaciones íntimas mientras sus hijos gritan afuera de la puerta y preguntan sobre lo que están haciendo sus padres en el cuarto. Chino, en su machismo, está tratando de batir su tiempo récord para alcanzar un orgasmo. No hay nada más masculino que esta actitud y acción del personaje. Según Alvina Quintana en su artículo, “*Race, Class, and Gender in Darnell Martin’s I Like It Like That*”, “Chino is mesmerized by a masculine narrative—timing his prolonged vigor and physical competence confirms male endurance and physical superiority” (30). Mientras Lisette y Chino están en el cuarto, los vecinos pueden escuchar todos los ruidos que provienen de su apartamento. Los hombres del barrio también escuchan estos sonidos desde la calle y gritan “Go Chino, Go Chino, Go Chino!” La escena demuestra el tema de la hipermasculinidad definida por el ambiente de los hombres en esta película, tanto por Chino como los amigos en la calle. Incluso el hijo de Chino, Li'l Chino, experimenta esto cuando afirma más tarde en la película que quiere ser el hombre de la casa y su padre le dice cómo lograrlo. Hay una epidemia obvia de hipermasculinidad en la comunidad que se muestra en la

película. El papel de Chino como macho está determinado por la comunidad que lo rodea, mientras que lo mismo se aplica a Lisette.

La vida sexual de Lisette también se ve afectada por la comunidad. Pero mientras Chino recibe alabanzas por su comportamiento, a ella se le dice que no es lo suficientemente sexual, debido a sus experiencias desagradables con la sexualidad. Además, el ambiente también afecta a Lisette y a su sexualidad, pero de una manera muy diferente a la de Chino. En vez de animarse o tomar iniciativa, ella se siente más reservada sobre su sexualidad, especialmente en esta primera escena, junto con el conocimiento de que los vecinos pueden oír todo y que sus hijos están afuera de la puerta de la habitación. Quintana afirma al respecto que, “Lisette, restrained by a counter-female narrative, is inhibited by the knowledge that her mother-in-law and clamoring children are waiting impatiently on the other side of the bedroom door, that the neighbor downstairs, fully aware of her private activities, is advancing a boisterous protest, and that her personal life, is in fact, overdetermined by the community that surrounds her” (Alvina Quintana, 1996, 30). En general, en este contexto las mujeres se desalientan de participar en actividades sexuales y esto es muy real en *I Like it Like That*.. El ambiente social al que se enfrenta esta joven pareja es bastante invasivo de sus vidas personales; y esto demuestra perfectamente a través del tema omnipresente de la sexualidad en la película.

Al explorar más este tema, es claro que las sexualidades de los personajes de esta película definen los roles de género. Por ejemplo, el machismo y la hipermasculinidad de Chino lo obligan a sentirse como el principal sostén de la casa. Él cree que un hombre debe ocupar un papel patriarcal más tradicional en la familia y se molesta cuando Lisette considera una oferta de trabajo, incluso cuando él está en la cárcel. Él cree esto por dos razones: “(1) He does not want other men staring at her, and (2) her place as a Puerto Rican woman is in the home taking care of the kids. After all, he is the man of the house, and it is his duty to ‘bring home the bacon’.” (Antrop-Gonzalez, 2002). En cierto modo, la personalidad de Chino aparece considerada como el hombre latino ideal porque sus amigos lo alaban y

mujeres como la madre soltera, Magdalena, lo quieren presente en sus vidas. Los ideales que la comunidad y Chino tienen para sí mismos son demasiado tradicionales y al final lo perjudican.

Los papeles de género de Lisette y de algunos otros personajes femeninos también se definen por sus sexualidades. Al principio de la película, Lisette no parece interesarse en las relaciones sexuales con Chino, ya que se enfoca más en conseguir un estéreo. Ella también tiene ambiciones en la vida y quiere buscar trabajo, pero con el machismo de su marido, batalla por lograr esta meta. Su vida no sólo se ve afectada por la sexualidad de su marido, sino también por el interés de las personas de su barrio en su sexualidad y vida privada. Cuando Lisette finalmente recibe una oferta de trabajo y regresa a casa en un auto deportivo y convertible con un hombre blanco que parece rico, los vecinos asumen que ella ha tenido relaciones sexuales con ese hombre. Y esto resulta escandaloso, ya que toda la comunidad tiene expectativas sobre el papel de Lisette como esposa y madre latina. Otro personaje cuyo papel también se define por su sexualidad es Magdalena. Debido a su elección de tener relaciones sexuales pre-maritales y quedar embarazada, es ahora una madre soltera. En un deseo de satisfacer las expectativas de género de su padre y del resto de la sociedad, Magdalena intenta seducir a Chino, para que de este modo él pueda convertirse en el “padre” de su hijo. Esto es así porque la sociedad que vemos en la película no aprueba a las madres solteras. Magdalena y Lisette se definen por sus sexualidades y por tanto se ven obligadas a vivir en los papeles de género que espera su comunidad puertorriqueña en Nueva York.

Sin duda esto revela otro tema relacionado de la película que es la idea de una “Chinguadalupe,” un término propuesto por Roger Batra en *The Cage of Melancholy* (1992). Este término es una combinación de dos figuras históricas importantes en la cultura latina (especialmente la cultura mexicana): La Malinche o La Chingada y la virgen Guadalupe. Esto se refiere a una fusión entre una madre y una puta en la cultura mexicana. Mientras que La Malinche representa el empoderamiento y el control de su propio destino como mujer, la virgen de Guadalupe representa para las mujeres mexicanas los ideales de sacrificio y lealtad

a sus familias y a los hombres (Samaniego, 1997). En *I Like it Like That*, Lisette es una versión de la idea de un Chingualupe. Ella se da cuenta de que necesita ganar dinero para que ella y sus hijos sobrevivan y decide trabajar a pesar de la desaprobación de su marido. Esto demuestra una forma de su empoderamiento, pero a la vez es una deslealtad hacia el sistema patriarcal. Esta falta de lealtad a las normas tradicionales representa una conducta perfecta de la chingada. Pero al mismo tiempo, ella se mantiene leal a su esposo mientras él está en prisión, siguiendo el ideal femenino de la virgen Guadalupe. Esta dicotomía que existe dentro de Lisette es obvia después de un análisis de su carácter. Mientras Lisette parece obsesionada sexualmente en la escena inicial y con el hecho de que ella tenía tres hijos a una edad temprana, ella también demuestra cualidades de una buena madre; tiene por ejemplo una interacción cariñosa con su hijo Li'l Chino y encuentra un trabajo para mantener a su familia.

La idea de Lisette de ser una versión de La Malinche, demuestra el papel de la sexualidad como una forma de empoderamiento. Como se mencionó anteriormente, esta idea de poder es clara con Chino cuando él define su superioridad masculina en su prolongado orgasmo. Lisette también descubre una forma en que puede usar la sexualidad como una forma de empoderamiento. Ella hace esto cuando tiene relaciones sexuales con su jefe y luego le muestra el envoltorio del condón a Chino como prueba de su acto. En este acto, ella se siente independiente de las restricciones que Chino tenía sobre ella. Para ella esto es también un acto de poder, porque ella demuestra que puede comportarse como Chino, quien le ha sido infiel, pues como se observa en la película, Chino tuvo relaciones sexuales con Magdalena durante su matrimonio con Lisette. Para Lisette, este acto de deslealtad demuestra que ella puede ser tan poderosa como un hombre en su comunidad latina. En estas comunidades, como sugiere la película, los hombres suelen tener todo el poder, pero debido a la independencia financiera y sexual de Lisette, ella casi posee ese mismo poder.

Por último, una evidencia singular sobre el sexo y la sexualidad en la película es el personaje de Alexis, quien propiamente define su identidad por su

sexualidad. Alexis es un personaje que forma parte de la comunidad LGBTQ o más específicamente, es transgénero. Afirmar su identidad es una gran lucha para Alexis a lo largo de la película. Debido a la falta de apoyo de sus padres y su necesidad de ahorrar dinero para una cirugía de reasignación de género, todo lo que Alexis dice y hace está relacionado con su identidad sexual. Ella es un personaje que es difícil de ignorar debido a su representación particular que rara vez se ve en Hollywood. Ella demuestra que el sexo y la sexualidad pueden definir, y casi de manera completa, la propia identidad de una persona. Por supuesto, Alexis tiene más que su sexualidad; ella tiene buen sentido de humor y un corazón solidario y amable con otros, pero al mismo tiempo, hay una cosa que ella desea sobre todo y es llegar a sentir su verdadero yo de mujer a través de la transición de género. El sexo y la sexualidad es un elemento que afecta a casi todos los personajes de esta película, pero nadie está más definido por éstos que Alexis.

I Like it Like That es una película que demuestra de modo interesante la versatilidad de la sexualidad. No sólo aparece la sexualidad y escenas sexuales en la película por valor de entretenimiento, sino también para demostrar y enviar mensajes sobre cuestiones sociales e identidades de género. De estas escenas, los espectadores aprenden sobre las expectativas de género en la comunidad latina de Nueva York, la violencia que encuentran las personas transgénero, el empoderamiento femenino, los impactos de la hipersexualización y otros temas relacionados como la crianza de los hijos. La sexualidad no sólo es un acto, o simplemente una parte de la película, sino que es vital para toda la trama de ella. Define el ambiente de la película y el ambiente que llega a sentir el público. De hecho, nos hace sentir incómodos al ver las escenas sexuales desde que la película comienza, pero también nos deja intrigados. Sin las escenas sexuales y el tratamiento de la sexualidad, *I Like it Like That* sería una película diferente. Martin utiliza la sexualidad como una herramienta para hacer una crítica sobre los estereotipos culturales de género. Aunque es provocativa, y se aconseja discreción al espectador, es una forma muy inteligente de enviar un mensaje. Ella combina el factor de impacto visual con importantes problemas sociales, y esto obliga a la audiencia a pensar más profundamente sobre ciertas ideas que se promueven en la

sociedad. Esta elección artística singular es el núcleo de muchas escenas de esta película y solo después de un poco de análisis y comprensión, se pueden apreciar y entender sus significados.

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**Between Chicanismo and a Queer Place:
Mario as Borderland in Cherríe Moraga's *Heroes and Saints***

Dan Van Note

In Cherríe Moraga's *Heroes and Saints*, Mario personifies the unviability of queer Chicano manhood in the 1980's, his humanity devolving as he straddles the unlivable border between his desire to maintain familial allegiance and his desire realize himself as an autonomous, sexual individual. In this way, his character functions as a borderland embodied, a site of perpetual conflict and disintegration. Mario's potential fulfillment of both desires is contingent upon his willingness to segregate and reject essential parts of himself, and in doing so, both options present themselves as sites of intense violence. His mother, though invested in him as a means of continuing the familial legacy, also shames him for his insufficient masculinity. The gay community, though invested in him as an erotic subject, also objectifies him to the point of dehumanization. Neither site, therefore, functions as a space in which Mario can express an integrated, complex, and authentic self. Rather, he is forced to accept his life as one in a state of perpetual abjectness, a fate made only more devastating by the prospect of how many real-life queer Chicano men his story represents in the 1980s and beyond.

Heroes and Saints, which premiered on April 4, 1992 at El Teatro Misión in San Francisco, is a play set in 1988 about a small, fictional town called McLaughlin, off Highway 99 in California's San Joaquin Valley. A working-class farming community, the land and its faithful Chicano residents have been consistently exploited and devastated by pesticides. Cancer is ravaging the population's children. The vast expanse of grape vineyards and pecan tree orchards are a constant background to the play, punctuated by the highway that divides the more developed region from the rural area in which the play takes place. The open fields become an oppressive symbol of the depths of social immobility for McLaughlin's Chicano families, surrounding every scene in which they discuss the extent of their abject state. The highway, conversely, functions as Mario's only lifeline, a symbol of his potential to escape. Such an exodus becomes

impossible, however, as he is continually stuck in a state of in-betweenness, negotiating his incompatible identities as a Chicano and a gay man.

In the Chicano movement, the border serves as both a physical and political site. Gloria Anzaldúa, one of Moraga's most essential interlocutors, opens her 1987 book *Borderlands* by giving a history of the United States' persistent violence against Mexico, and poetically offering the personal tole it has taken on her, provocatively writing, "This is my home, this thin edge of barbwire" (25). She repeats the sentiment at the conclusion of her chapter as well, only with "her" replacing "my," alluding to the painful reality of every Chicana woman. What is so striking about this sentiment is that, of course, no one can exist living on a thin edge of barbwire. It is an unbearable place, one that draws blood, one that causes pain and infections, and one that leaves scars. Much of Anzaldúa and Moraga's work aims at recouping a sense of agency amidst and in spite of this oppressive status, carving narratives that might allow for collective liberation. Cherríe Moraga writes in *This Bridge Called My Back*, a vanguard feminist anthology co-edited with Anzaldúa, "The woman of color life *is* the crossroad" (xxii). The precarity of this positionality cannot be overstated. For many Chicana women, their intersecting roles as wives, mothers, caregivers, and workers are life sentences. Moraga's identity as a lesbian woman adds yet another complex layer to this schema. This conception of Latinx identity-making in the precarious, liminal space of the figurative and literal border is persistent throughout a great deal of contemporary Latinx theatre and literature.

I posit, however, that Mario's character is doing theoretical work *himself* in the way of a distinctly Chicano/Latinx queerness, one that treats the border not as an external encumbrance but rather as an internal conflict inherent in his personhood, exacerbated by the incompatibility of his familial demands and sexual orientation. As José Esteban Muñoz writes in his essay "Queer Theatre, Queer Theory," "Struggles between theory and praxis are central to the question of queer theater's (or any mode of queer practice's) relationship to this enterprise called theory" (245). In this vein, I want to approach the question of Mario's character not as a strictly theatrical role, but as an embodiment of

theoretical concepts that might illuminate the unviability of queer manhood in a Chicano context.

These themes and this approach are not unprecedented. Muñoz includes, in the same essay, a poem from queer Latinx playwright Luis Alfaro that echoes this sentiment of not belonging:

With one foot
on each side
of the border
not the border
between Mexico and the United States
but the border between
Nationality and Sexuality
I search for a home in both
yet neither one believes
that I exist. (243)

Here we might collapse nationality and familial relation into one, considering their entanglement in Chicano identity. Indeed, Moraga herself proclaims in “Art in America, Con Acento.” that “the history of Chicano theater was built on a system of ‘familia’ (158). In the above poem, Alfaro illustrates his own life as a state of conflict between his cultural legacy and his sexual orientation, a conflict so irreconcilable that it threatens his very being. Finally, Muñoz continues, “[Luis Alfaro’s] focus on production of hybrid selves and space, is in and of itself a mode of queer theory making that also functions as social theory” (245). I intend to apply this same logic to the character of Mario, a man who fictitiously represents a very real state of destitution that Alfaro and Muñoz’s work so poignantly articulate.

To further think through and with Mario’s character, I will also employ the work of queer theorist Lee Edelman in his seminal text *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. In it, he details the organizational logic of heteronormative society as being predicated on the ability to procreate, and that, as queer people run fundamentally counter to this narrative, they are in a perpetual state of marginality. The protection of the child,

Edelman argues, becomes the symbol of a viable and good life par excellence. That children feature so prominently as the primary symbols of martyrdom in *Heroes and Saints* will therefore also be interrogated. Furthermore, Edelman writes, “for queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one” (17). This disturbance of identity is one to which Mario is constantly and involuntarily subjected. With neither his queerness nor his Chicanismo providing hooks on which to hang his metaphorical hat of the self, Mario exists in disturbance of the already shattered social landscape of McLaughlin.

This project is important because the existing scholarship regarding Mario as a figure in *Heroes and Saints* too shallowly considers the weight of his character’s implications. Much of the literature has focused on Cerezita Valle, the bodyless head that transforms into a vision of La Virgen de Guadalupe at the play’s conclusion, on the plight of the farmworkers’ children who so tragically die from cancers caused by pesticide use; and on the efforts of community activists to protest sustained poor treatment. Although these elements are important, the particular injustices that Mario endures as a gay Chicano man deserve greater attention and analytical engagement than they have received. For example, Katarína Havranová, in “The Memory of Land in Cherríe Moraga’s *Heroes and Saints*,” simply writes, “Dolores’s son Mario is homosexual, which makes him leave McLaughlin” (4). This statement carelessly overlooks the multiple layers of oppression that drive Mario to make such a move, casting his own disposition as the primary reason for the action. Instead of acknowledging the rejection from his mother, the lack of viable partners for him in McLaughlin, or the nonexistence of economic opportunity, Havranová pegs Mario’s queerness as the point of contention rather than the systems in which it is not welcomed. This is made all the more ironic by Havranová’s later statement in the same piece, that Mario’s “sexual orientation *departs* from the community’s cultural expectations” (8; emphasis added). In searching for a suitable verb for how Mario’s queerness relates to his Chicano community, “departs” fits

all too well. How else, we might ask, is Mario to exist in relation to McLaughlin, if not to leave?

Havranová is not the only scholar who pays insufficient consideration to Mario. Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano first astutely writes in her chapter of *The Wounded Heart: Writing on Cherríe Moraga*, “*Heroes* explores the ways families both constrain and empower” (67). However, later in her chapter she claims, “Filled with shame after the incident with Cere, Juan flees, driving north along Mario’s highway. Like Mario, Juan deserts his people in their time of need” (72). What we see again is a demonizing of Mario as a self-centered, individualistic man who sees his own needs as surpassing those of “his people.” The embracing of a perceived narcissistic role as a subversive act against heteronormativity is curiously enough a central pillar of Edelman’s work in *No Future*. But what this again omits is an understanding that while Mario’s mother Dolores, and perhaps all the Chicano people McLaughlin, see him as one of “theirs,” it is impossible for him to be so; for he does not even belong to himself. Thinking again with Luis Alfaro, to be a queer Chicano is to exist in the in-between. In reference to these shallow considerations of Mario, we must caution against reproducing some of the same social injustices we claim to criticize in our work as scholars.

Finally, in one of the theatre reviews of *Heroes and Saints*, Sid Smith writes in the *Chicago Tribune* that, “unfortunately, playwright Moraga crams in too much in addition to Cerezita’s poignant plight. Infant mortality, AIDS, media complicity and even priestly celibacy all make their way into this tale” (2004). This unfortunate refrain of pinning the AIDS epidemic, alongside other oppressive social phenomena, as simply “too much” to fit into a single play serves to re-marginalize the importance of such issues. They are included in Moraga’s play because *all of them were happening*. Mario, too often dismissed as simply the sexually deviant character who simply “deserts” McLaughlin or contracts HIV, deserves an analysis that is as deep and complex as the countless men he represents in the Chicano community. To do anything less would be to dismiss the

intricate implications of privilege and morality to which he awakes us in terms of the damaging pervasiveness of heteronormativity in Chicano culture.

This normative culture is one with which Moraga herself is quite familiar. As she writes in “Art in America,” “As a Chicana lesbian, I know the heart of the taboo resides in the subject of Mexican female sexuality. In my most recent play, *Heroes and Saints*, the main character is a young Chicana who has no body” (159). This quote strikingly equates Chicana lesbianism with the rejection of bodily agency, a certain invisibility and immobility that is fundamentally confining. On the other hand, Mario’s gayness in *Heroes* seems to still permit him said bodily agency, giving him the ability to actually leave. Cerezita sympathizes with Mario toward this end, admitting, “I don’t blame Mario for leaving. I’d leave if I could” (125). Mario’s leaving, of course, also coincides with his relinquishing of family support and contracting of AIDS. This paradoxical dynamic of a queer manhood that is at once a source of liberation and a death sentence is at the heart of my analysis of Mario as a borderland embodied. In unfolding this paradox, I will move through Mario’s trajectory as Moraga writes it in *Heroes and Saints*, pausing to point out key aspects of his personhood that illustrate the broader social theories to which his character so clearly attests.

Mario is identified in the cast list as “the sometimes-student brother.” This designation is striking for two reasons. First, it adds a layer of temporality to Mario’s person. He is not one solid, cohesive identity; only “sometimes” is he a student. Meanwhile, every other character is given a relatively stable identity: the news reporter, the mother, the hairdresser sister, etc. This implies that Mario’s character has the capacity to change. But rather than emphasize his individual agency, it underscores the precarity of his identity in the story. Second, Moraga designates him as a “brother” and not a “son.” This gives a subtle indication that his relationship with his mother may be secondary, or at least contingent upon his continued relationship with his sister Yolanda. These are minor details, of course, but they point to the insidiousness of Mario’s conditional positionality. He is just like everyone else, but with a catch. He is a brother, but only perhaps a son. He is a student, but not all the time. We are left with little narrative grounding for his character. Another character that is given a similarly deviant

treatment is Father Juan, who is defined as “the ‘half-breed’ leftist priest.” This inclusion of “breed” indicates an implicit emphasis on lineage and patriarchy, a dynamic we see play out between Mario’s strained relationship with his mother Dolores regarding his absentee father. Juan and Mario’s shared identity as sexual “others” is a dynamic that will return in a pivotal conversation later in the play.

Before the play even begins, in the script Moraga includes a quote: “Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops . . .” *For Aztlán's Children* (87). Referring to the symbolic homeland and site of salvation for Chicanos, Aztlán, Moraga emphasizes traditional values of reproduction, lineage, and both the literal and metaphorical “fruits” of labor. Indeed, Act I opens with a group of children in fields of the grape vineyard wearing calavera masks, mourning the loss of a fellow child who has been crucified. While this immediately tugs at the heartstrings, it also establishes children as the involuntary martyrs for this community. While this is hardly objectionable, given the very real prevalence of childhood cancer caused by pesticide use during this time, it does further position Mario as outside of the community’s central motivations. As Edelman provocatively writes in *No Future*, “The Child, that is, marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity: an erotically charged investment in the sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism” (21). That is to say, the child himself is both a literal and figurative representation of the continued viability of a people. Mario, as a gay man, is fundamentally positioned on the margins of such a system. It is a subtle yet profound setting of the scene for Mario’s narrative of abjection.

The first time we see Mario, he is shirtless and draped in a towel, described as “well built, endearingly macho in his manner.” His sister Yolanda refers to him as “purty boy” (95). He seems to feel comfortable in his body and irreverence. When Father Juan enters the house, Mario greets him with interest. It is immediately established that Mario is a deviant erotic figure, one distinct from his (clothed, more reserved) female relatives. While Mario could have just as well been reading a book, or writing in his journal, Moraga chooses instead to center Mario’s more liberated sense of sexuality as his defining character trait. Indeed, the only academic text Mario seems to have is an old

anatomy book (112). His sexuality also proves to be the source of his central internal conflict, existing amidst the conflict between family and queerness.

Before this conflict is fully articulated, however, we get a glimpse into Mario's aspirations as he sits on a park bench with Juan, gazing into the distance.

MARIO: When I was in high school, I used to sit out there in those fields, smoking, watching the cars go by on 99. I'd think about the driver, having somewhere to go. His foot pressed to the floorboard, cruisin'. He was always a gringo. And he'd have one arm draped over the steering wheel and the other around the back of the seat and it'd never occur to him that anybody lived there between those big checkerboard plots of tomatoes, strawberries, artichokes, brussels sprouts, and . . .

JUAN: Grapes.

MARIO: Hundreds of miles of grapes. He'd be headed home to his woman and TV set and sleeping kids tucked into clean sheets and he'd have a wad of bills in his pocket and he'd think he'd live forever. But I'm twenty-five and stuck here in this valley and I know I won't. (114)

This section of dialogue illuminates many of the reasons why Mario believes that a comfortable, prosperous future is not possible for him. First, freedom is closely associated with whiteness (the “gringo” to which Mario refers). The free man, par excellence, is the white man. Whiteness, therefore, extends itself beyond simply an identity and instead functions as currency that allows one upper mobility, security, and belonging. Mario's mention of a partner, television, and children all seem to echo popular media representations of the “American dream.” But included in his fantasy is also clean sheets, a symbol of comfort and rest that Mario feels hopeless to find no matter where he goes. In a nation that valorizes whiteness, Mario's brown skin becomes abject. This abjection is inescapable; it is a borderland than he cannot run from nor eliminate. Even though a queer community may live in the city further down the literal and metaphorical lifeline of the highway, Mario also seems to understand that even if he was able to get out, discrimination for his brownness will forever follow him. As Muñoz notes, “since the queer community is a white normative one,” than does the queer of color, who “is often also cutting ties with his or her ethnicity and/or race” (241). This phenomenon makes leaving McLaughlin not just an expression Mario's own ambitions, but an active

rejection of the family and community that raised him. It is understandable that a choice that carries such implications would be the source of such severe turmoil.

This compulsory cultural loyalty is a constraint with which Mario must grapple. In no relationship is Mario's internal borderland more apparent than that with his mother, Dolores. Mario's father has abandoned the family (a function of his own poor choices and not simply "because of his sexuality," as Mario has been accused). What remains in his wake is Dolores' clear projection of dislocated anger onto her son and an unjustified defense of Mario's father's actions. In Act I Dolores clearly understands that Mario's impending departure from McLaughlin is not just for academic reasons. While smoking a cigarette on the porch as fog rolls in, Mario ambiguously offers, "I want a future, 'amá" (123). The resonance this image has with Muñoz's queer theory in his seminal text, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, is uncanny. Muñoz writes, "we can feel [queerness] as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality...Queerness is a longing that propels us onward" (1). Mario is literally embodying this sense of aspirational freedom as he gazes beyond the fields of McLaughlin, his hope powered by a fully realized queerness that is always elusive, always in the distance.

This mode of desire does not compute for Dolores, however, as she cannot imagine a future that might not center the proliferation of the family, echoing Edelman's theory. At once they begin a tense exchange about the "problem" of Mario's queerness, and Dolores yells, "God made you a man and you throw it away, you lower yourself into half a man" (124). Here we see a confluence of ideas between sexuality, gender, and the pervasive conservatism within the heteronormative Chicano community. There is no room for Mario to be both fully man and fully gay, and furthermore, it is his fault for choosing such a low status. The magnitude of blame, shame, and guilt cast upon Mario for his desire for something different makes one understand McLaughlin as a toxic

environment not only with pesticides, but with homophobia. Mario discusses his feelings of being trapped:

MARIO (pulling his hands away): Who loves me, 'ama?

DOLORES: Tienes familia.

MARIO: Family you don't take to bed.

DOLORES: You think those men who put their arms around you in the night are going to be there to take care of you in the morning?

MARIO: No.

DOLORES: Necesitas familia, hijo. (123)

While momentarily comforting, Dolores' insistence on the love Mario's family has for him is never cast as unconditional. Muñoz states that "while for queers of color, family can often be a place of conflict and potential violence, it is also one where ethnicity and cultural difference are produced and nurtured" (241). This exchange encapsulates the tension that Muñoz names. Mario wants to find both the fulfilment of desire and the comfort of safety in a world that is not built for him to have either. Amidst this bleak outlook is a quiet understanding that family might actually be his only source of belonging in an otherwise unlivable world.

Nevertheless, Mario does indeed leave McLaughlin. We do not see him again until Scene Seven of Act II, when Juan happens to meet him on a park bench on the literal margins of the community. Juan has just committed sodomy with Cerezita and is now wallowing in self-disappointment. The two of them constitute the sexual "others," those who have tried and failed to find belonging in their respective aspirational homes. They sit together, overlooking the highway that Mario has learned doesn't necessarily lead to a better life. He knows that he is infected with AIDS, but that is only the beginning of his existential dread.

MARIO: The city's no different. Raza's dying everywhere. Doesn't matter if it's crack or...pesticides, AIDS, it's all the same shit. (141)

Here Mario points to the ambiguity around the many sources of his potential demise. In a state in which death faces him in every direction, he is forced to accept his fate that the social forces of the world are, in fact, lethal. Pesticides ravage his McLoughlin

community, causing uncontrollable cancers. AIDS is rampant in the gay community, where infection is nearly certain due to the lack of adequate public health information and active non-response by the U.S. government. A state of abjection is Mario's perpetual state of being. It makes Juan's following question almost irrelevant, suggesting that Mario's existence could be anything else.

JUAN: Do you regret going, Mario?

MARIO: No. (*Pause.*) I've always loved sex. Father, always felt that what ever I had crippled or bent up inside me that somehow sex could cure it, that sex could straighten twisted limbs, like...the laying on of hands. (141)

One can't help but sympathize with Mario's brave claiming of the one act that allows him to feel human in a world that insists upon denying his humanity. It should not go unnoticed, as well, that Moraga deploys the term, "crippled" here. As Mario shares a particular bond with his sister Cerezita, the disabled character, "crippled" may well serve as a subtle identification with those perpetually outcast from normative society. That sex may be a place of liberation for Mario is both inspiring in its poetry and devastating in its consequences, as intimate contact is also the way AIDS spread throughout Mario's queer "family," as he states to Juan.

JUAN: Like tongues of fire.

MARIO: Yeah. Even holy like that...with the right person. (*Pause.*) And when you love your own sex, and they got your own hungry dark eyes staring back at you, well you're convinced that you could even cure death. And so you jus' keep kissing that same purple mouth, deeper and harder, and you keep whispering, "I'm gonna wipe all that sickness outta you, cousin." And then weeks and months and maybe even a year or two go by, and suddenly you realize you didn't cure nothing and that your family's dissolving right there inside of your hands. (141)

Mario's fantasy of sex being able to "cure death" is not all hyperbole. Renowned relationship therapist Esther Perel wrote in the introduction to her bestselling book, *Mating in Captivity*, that eroticism is, essentially, an antidote to death (xviii). Erotic is the force that connects humans to their vitality, vibrancy, and sense of autonomy. It is an essential mode of self-expression and connection. The erotic contains within it our

deepest desires to be seen, felt, and heard. Mario (or Moraga, perhaps) poignantly points to this fact in his short monologue.

The other distinctive moment in this section is Mario's reference to his sexual partners as having the same eyes as him, referring to them as "cousin," and ultimately as family. Far from an insinuation of incest, these terms mark the queer Chicano community as Mario's new chosen family. He is able to experience a level of expression and intimacy with them not allowed by those in his blood line in McLaughlin. That is the final subject Juan brings up to him on the bench.

JUAN (*pause*): And your blood family, Mario? . . .

MARIO: I've had to choose, Father. I can't come home. I'm not strong enough. I'm not a woman. I'm not suited for despair. I'm not suited to carry a burden greater than the weight of my own balls. (*He picks up his knapsack.*) (141-2).

In this exchange, we see Moraga's own particular positing of the problematics she sees in terms of privilege within the queer Chicano community. In her essay "Queer Aztlán," she writes, "On some level, our brothers – gay and straight – have got to give up being 'men.' [...] Chicano gay men have been reluctant to recognize and acknowledge that their freedom is intricately connected to the freedom of women" (233-4). Moraga is a trailblazing activist, and one cannot doubt the validity of her observation. Mario's statement, however, seems to downplay the immense odds against which he is positioned. To say that his greatest bearable burden is his testicles is to negate the social pressures and material burdens which he also must weather. To relegate him to the common category of "problematic man" here, at his most desperate point, no less, reads as a deductive reinscribing of gay male immorality.

One can see how Mario's hope to find a community that might accept all of him, both his Chicano background and his gay orientation, is a proposition already foreclosed. Furthermore, we never actually see any members of the gay community from which he is returning. This suggests queerness as an abstract, dehumanized concept within Chicano culture. We are left with only Mario's depleted body and troubled judgements,

underscoring the invisibility of a viable queer subjectivity, and instead reinforcing queerness as only a source of intense personal disappointment.

The most radical moment of Chicano resistance in *Heroes and Saints* occurs in the play's conclusion. Mario appears after long last, embracing his mother. Juan and Cerezita (in the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe), lead a final protest in honor of yet another dead child of McLoughlin. Walking out into the vast fields, to certain death by gunfire from helicopters above, they persist. This dramatic scene scares the people of the village, but just as they drop to the ground, Mario rises with his raised fist and commands them all to burn the fields. They collectively sprint into the vast expanse, setting it ablaze, and the play concludes in this fiery image (149). After a play in which Mario has perpetually existed on the margins, the poetic justice of his having the final word brings a complicated sense of resolution. It is complicated, of course, because his final act is to lead the community to its own ultimate and collective death. However, I seek to offer a reading of this conclusion as one that honors the dignity and agency Mario leverages in his final act, a brave recuperation of the ultimate power of his queer subjectivity to liberate others.

Lee Edelman writes in *No Future* that “the death drive names what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability” (9). It must not be ignored that the primary queer character of *Heroes and Saints* is also the one who ultimately compels the town to destroy the vineyards, acknowledging their abject state and taking advantage of their last form of power available: the power to actively disown the prospect of a viable future. The burning of the literal fruit crops is a powerful metaphor for their ultimate relinquishment of a heteronormative system that emphasizes procreation and lineage. Mario, as a borderland in and of himself, is relinquished in this final moment of freedom, a moment that brings him to death but alongside a community that ultimately chooses to cross the other side with him.

This is not to valorize martyrdom, but rather to emphasize the devastating yet poetic nature of Mario's final vindication. This intimacy with pain, loss, and death holds

a distinct place in Chicano history. Suzanne Bost writes at length about Gloria Anzaldúa's ideas on pain as a productive space, and advocates for her "theory of permeable identity – one that includes pain, death, and contact with otherness" (23). Such is the theoretical work that Mario does for the audience. Finally, not just a son, nor a bother, nor a "sometimes-student," nor a gay man, Mario emerges as a leader in his community that seeks to put an end to the relentless systems of oppression under which they have all existed. Such an end does not erase his experience of abjection as a gay Chicano man. But if we are to take Anzaldúa's cue, that our identities are not limited to our physical bodies, perhaps we can imagine Mario's final act as an activation beyond the borderland of his own identity and into a more harmonious, utopic state. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz imagines just such a move as constitutive of queer subjectivity.

[T]o see queerness as horizon is to perceive it as a modality of ecstatic time in which the temporal stranglehold that I describe as straight time is interrupted or stepped out of...Seeing queerness as a horizon rescues and emboldens concepts such as freedom that have been withered by the touch of neoliberal thought and gay assimilationist politics (32).

Just as Mario would gaze towards the horizon beyond McLaughlin, so, too may we image a horizon in which the conflict between Chicanismo and queerness is no longer a borderland but rather a symbiotic nesting ground for solidarity and mutual aid. In 1980s California, the compounding forces of racism, homophobia, and class struggle combine to deny Mario, and countless other queer subjects, hope for a viable future. The final image of *Heroes and Saints*, the burning of the fields that economically sustained this unsustainable social order, invites us to dream anew. How might we honor the brave residents of this town? Do we dare imagine a world in which the queer Chicano need not wrestle with an internal borderland between familial belonging and self-actualization? Amidst the rubble, what futures will we choose to build?

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SECTION TWO: POETRY

LUMINISM

the light that is in us

for those who let fire out
of their 'fist' chest
raise heart to blue moon
and howl,

who bear children or not
who lost one or chose to because
we are all complicit
in breath and death
and in the lives of each other...

for holy planet, sun cycle
and golden seasons –
so light do we treat Her
thinking we are not *half blinks of history*

sand our ancestor
savannah our first base –
for the ones who escape
and sparkle in the black ink night
constellation like

with gold rings, blood diamonds
that drip cut the flesh
around the finger
hold, blind and bind
to remove
is to suggest separation

maybe maybe we are right
to fling hands up and dance the blues
and drink moonshine all night
telling how we could kick our nose
or play basketball all day long
bouncing the ball
wherever we walked

from the front stoop
to the playground
at Olbrich park
and back again
eyes ablaze from the heat
pleased sweaty kid smell
going home for supper
or not, maybe our dad

died when we were young,
too young and our mom
took to drink and valium,
despair destroying her kidneys –
bodies strewn on sidewalks
the way we treat ourselves
when we hurt really hurt...

this brilliant man,
his Father's first gift
canvas white plastic
shopping bags split –
stretched out
on his makeshift desk
in the pantry

his uncle Junebug
Mother's brother
a caricature
from what vision careens
through electric hand
to the page eye scapes
delicate oils, pastels
delineate a man supreme
hustler, emerald fashionista
gold ring
bullfight like
between nostrils
a spectacle
to behold
no matter

the planet
an uncle,
those lucky
with aunts and uncles aplenty
never want
for metaphors

pupil light pierces looker
the “no count”
hangs out
with royalty
in portrait galleries
gazes back at the hoity-toity.

Angie Trudell Vasquez (2022)

A poem based on Nathaniel Mary Quinn’s craft talk and his piece entitled, “Junebug.”
Italicized lines are hers, recycled from other poems, and not Nathaniel Mary Quinn. When *CLS Journal*
went to press, an image of the painting was available at <https://www.mmoca.org/?s=Junebug>.

THE DARKER SISTER SPEAKS

Sees herself in his eyes
whites bright
sun star shaped behind
each triangle seeks its own
corner of the universe
alabaster dove held light
in the laborer's hand.

Self portrait
artist at forty-three,
peers deep
hair stick straight
bangs against his temples
curtain his gaze
arrest me on the page.

Collar shirt white
speaks to the artist inside
who sells art to the rich –
pockets full he looks
back at his benefactor,
land knowing pockets
handy airy clothes weather
the storms the dirt
that rises when planting,
plowing to feed your family.

An unknown holy person bends
down at the end of their row
drives the pickup truck
picks up a pencil
makes an entry
etches a new map.

Angie Trudell Vasquez (2022)

IN THE DISCOUNT LOT

Outside the grocery store
laden with the sweat
of tanned field workers
we stand little girls in winter coats
our hands hold signs leaflets
our dark long hair waist length
one straight, one curly
we say to the people
who walk up to the glass door

*don't buy the lettuce here –
they aren't good to their workers*

I don't recall anyone
said anything back
or who stood with us
I remember my sister
next to me, us
in our Sunday velvet best
she beret and red plaid jacket
me white rabbit skin muff
little brown girls with picket signs
rosy cheeks, big black eyes
legions of ghosts
above behind
angels wing over us
ancestor feathers beat
in the invisible breeze
each time someone enters
or exits the building –
with a bag
full of groceries
oranges and eggs
celery and grapes.

Angie Trudell Vasquez

First published on *Poem-A-Day* November 18, 2021

TODO MUNDO SE PARECE A MÍ

Por dentro
el cansancio y el humo
de todo mundo se parece a mí:
sus intestinos
lloran en la noche de las horas.
Por dentro,
en los pasillos de la cava y la aorta,
se escucha la misma música,
un rumor amarillo de hojas.

Por dentro,
me llamas con el mismo nombre;
llevamos los mismos paisajes
en la cima de los pulmones
que sufren ciudades sonoras.

Por dentro
he dejado de respirar luz,
el frío cual herida ciega
se abre paso
entre mi pecho
y páncreas;
se cuele
en mi tráquea.

Tú y yo viajamos
en el mismo tiempo,
dentro de un auto que no tiene
ventanas hacia el futuro.

Moisés Villavicencio Barras
(De *Nieva cenizas / It Snows Ashes*, inédito)

LOS PÁJAROS REGRESAN

Los pájaros regresan
sin que tu memoria lo note,
son una espina
que el viento rompe
del aire de la noche.

En el suelo
los pájaros se alimentan
de los restos humanos
que dejó el invierno.

Nosotros
no volamos hacia el sur
ni conocemos sitios secretos
para escondernos de la muerte.

Levantamos el vuelo
cuando me reclamas
por la falta de sol,
por la ausencia de alas en tu voz
cuando despiertas con los pies
pisando espejos rotos.

Los pájaros regresan,
vienen a limpiar con sus picos
nuestra cabeza y memoria de asfalto.

Moisés Villavicencio Barras

(De Nieva cenizas / It Snows Ashes, inédito)

ORÍGENES

Si buscamos en la arena descubriremos
que el origen de los pies está en los caminos.

Los ojos son la invención del agua,
de la luz que tiembla en los racimos.
El mundo quiso ser visto.

Las manos, ocurrencia de la mirada ante el hambre,
golpearon la piedra
y la sangre descendió las escaleras.

Igual que la hiedra por toda nuestra casa
los brazos crecieron para el abrazo,
para los días junto a nuestros hijos.

La nariz es la invención del aire
de las cosas que desearon ser,
como la muerte de los cuervos.

Moisés Villavicencio Barras

(De *Nieva cenizas / It Snows Ashes*, inédito)

THE BOY THAT DIDN'T FIT ANYWHERE

My light skin and brown eyes guarantee me an advantage in society, or so I thought.
It has done nothing but provide me with a mistaken identity.

I lose my place in society, when people realize I come from parents struggling to obtain papeles.
I lose my place in society, when people hear me speak fluent english and not dress like your typical vaquero del rancho.

I lose my place in society, when people see me with my family and speak the language of my parents,
speak the language of my raza, eat rice and beans for dinner, and listen to corridos
and go to el pueblo where my parents were raised.

I lose my place in society, when I encounter and speak spanish to a latino and instead of continuing the
conversation I get a shocking “¿Habras español?” insinuating a “white” boy just talked their language.

Being born in the U.S. has been a blessing and a curse. Being able to be from and share two very diverse
cultures, being able to talk to my raza, my people is something i'll always be fortunate to have. Sadly,
there's conflicts where it makes me feel like I don't belong, “Ni aquí, ni allá” Makes me feel lost, it's
made me lose my sense of self, my identity.

Slowly with time I've been recovering this so-called identity and realized that I don't have to prove my
culture to you!

Tengo orgullo de donde soy, of where my parents are from. I wouldn't want it any other way. I don't
wanna belong just to one side, I belong equally to both. Mistake me all you want, but i'll make sure my
appearance and my last name confirm que tengo “the best of both worlds”.

Giovanni Zavala Ibarra (2022)

BOURGEOIS PENDEJA

I.

distain is a permanent plaster on her face
dripping in handmade jewelry which dangles her disgust
and makes a raucous noise.

She cuts through the less worthy people
Using her silver spoon to slide through us like pigs' grease.
Average, common, are dirty words
which she sputters out in every conversation
to convince herself and others
she is above them all.

II.

Privilege lines her pockets and her aging falling face
she moves
she shreds
she pulverizes
the poor
the wretched of the woods
and women near her.

III.

Mirror, mirror on the wall
Reflect my brilliance,
show me my superiority
in all its glory.

Remind me that the masses are not worthy of my spit.

A. T. Arenas (April 2019)

DE COLORES

Whiteness so bright
It cracks my bones
Whiteness so frigid
It penetrates me to the subatomic level.

I am sightless from Whiteness
Feet drag from the weight of Whiteness

The sounds of sharp and off-key White noise
funnel down my ears grabbing hold of me
from within.

Whiteness suffocates the heaven's celestial bodies
and blends them into one expansive mass of whiteness
choking out the soft dark corners of the universe.

Before time
when all was
as it was
there was the Darkness.

When the energy and mass of the billions of colors, hues, shades of color
we're gathering together in anticipation of the Big Bang
Darkness and all the other facets of the color spectrum
were in harmony for a non-moment,

a non-moment
where time did not exist
because the Darkness did not need it.

Darkness so reassuring
beautiful
tight
complete
that time could not squeeze in.

I live in this Darkness
along with others considered marginal.

I thrive in the sweet scent of Darkness
filling my nostrils
with wisp of ginger root.

I breath in slow deep waves, like the flapping of blankets on a clothesline
My toes dig into cool moist Darkness
I am grounded.

A. T. Arenas (June 5, 2014)

EL MUNDO AL INSTANTE*

Una mujer
de apenas
veintitrés años
salía de un cine
barato
en la ciudad
de los palacios
y caminaba
bajo la lluvia
nocturna
del último viernes
de agosto.
Tenía prisa
por atravesar
la ciudad
y llegar a su destino.
Parecía
que buscaba
el mar.

A esa misma hora
en Manhattan
Miles Davis y Juliette Greco
entraban por el lobby
del Waldorf Astoria
en la avenida Park
llamando la atención
de todos los presentes,
sorprendidos de ver a un negro
que no era un sirviente
en el hotel
mirando
hacia el otro lado
del mundo;

en otra ciudad
igualmente
tendida al mar atlántico
un joven delgado
y alto como un edificio
caminaba
por la Avenida 9 de julio
y pensaba

*Título de un noticiero que se pasaba entre películas en México y Latinoamérica durante los años 50 y 60.

en escribir una novela
que se leyera
hacia atrás & adelante
igual como recorren
las ciudades
los niños
y los nómadas;

en un café de Bucareli
Fidel sostenía su primera
conversación con el Che,
y tuvo la certeza
momentánea
de que la realidad
se repetía dos veces
pero que a él
no le tocaría
la parte
de la tragedia;

en un apartamentito
en San Francisco
el ciudadano K. llevaba
76 horas escribiendo
sin parar
y apenas tomaba un par
de minutos para abrir
otra botella de mezcal
y llenar el vasito
de plástico;

en una casa de seguridad
en Johannesburgo,
un grupo de sombras
llegaba a la conclusión
que no era factible
la teoría de un
partido único;

En la ciudad de México
la mujer que había
salido del cine
llegaba,
empapada por la lluvia
de agosto,
a un sanatorio en la calle

Gabriel Mancera.

Esa mujer, dos horas
después,
sería mi madre.

Rubén Medina

(De *Nation Nómada / Nomadic Nation.*)

TEMASCAL

Para Mara Larrosa

Desnudo
in the dark room
6 by 3
la curandera
me explica
in her Spanish
learned in the daily
interaction with Ladinos
what I must do.

Aviento agua
a las piedras ardientes,
I lie down bocarriba
and begin rubbing
my body
and mind
as one
with the medicine plants
we have
very patiently
gathered.

Las plantas
llevan la memoria
de la tierra
y del agua,
han sobrevivido
el despojo de tantos siglos,
conocen
los cambios
de las estaciones,
los relámpagos
y el color rojo.

I rub the plants
on my body,
en mis cicatrices
y el deseo
todavía sin nombre
por la compañera
al lado.

Hay que recibir
a los buenos espíritus
y alejar
a las vanas tentaciones,
según los antiguos.

Busco claridad,
wisdom.
Ser justo
and humble.
Saber
cuáles tradiciones
romper.

Aviento más agua
a las piedras ardientes.
Ssshhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
Sssshhhhhh. Ssshhhhhhhh.
Sssshhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.
Smoking mirror.

Tenemos la edad
de las montañas.

La respiración
frágil de los pájaros.

La vejez
del recién nacido.

Rubén Medina
(*De Nation Nómada / Nomadic Nation.*)

LATINX... WHAT?

This crazy, noisy
and arrogant people
who goes around
saying disparates
por aquí, por allá

que Los Angeles
is a Latin American City

que Guatemala
is already situated
between Texas and Coahuila

que el Che Guevara
and La Virgen of Guadalupe
are two of the Founding Fathers
of a new América

que su imagen
can be seen
por aquí, por allá

que la auténtica salsa
se baila en Nueva York

que el mole
tan auténtico como el de Puebla
se encuentra
en Echo Park
and Brooklyn

que el sur del continente
begins at the U.S.-Canadian
border

que el estado de California
is moving at fast paced
to the east coast
reversing the journey

of the poor, ambitious
and disoriented
European immigrants
del siglo XIX

que los niños y niñas
blancos are now
speaking spanglish
and walking through the streets
like they were dancing
a mambo

que Zacatecas is just
crossing the Chicago
Skyway Bridge

que hay una
larga lista
de peticiones
in public schools to learn
lakota, zapotec, quechua,
maya, navajo, mapuche,
and Arabic

This crazy, noisy
and arrogant people
who goes around
saying disparates,
por aquí y por allá

invading our freeways,
malls, universities,
streets, concerts

invading our libraries,
parks,
invading our
silences
and our
most

profound
secrets
and
unfulfilled
dreams.

Rubén Medina
(*De Ciudades de otros*)

Guidelines for Authors

Latinx Studies Journal, previously known as *Concientización*, is a student academic journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanxs/Latinxs in the United States. *Latinx Studies Journal* also gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

Latinx Studies Journal invites UW-Madison student authors to submit scholarship on topics concerning Chicanx & Latinx experience and thought that are thoughtful, substantive, and scholarly in nature:

- Research Study
- Scholarly Essay or Composition
- Book and Movie Reviews
- Art and Poetry

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