

Gay Latino Studies • A Critical Reader

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For our families

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sions." Through his financial support, Rafael's family in Mexico was "forced to accept [his] . . . queerness. Rafael is an undocumented immigrant, which places social as well as economic constraints on his lifestyle as a gay man."

It is true that Rafael's immigrant status, economic obligations, class background, and social location in the United States all require that he "maintain a balance between his individual needs and a sense of respect for the family." But to argue that his entire social world and identity as a Mexican gay man is essentially the product and function of a "political economy of identity" seems incomplete. While there may be important structural constraints that impinge on Rafael's life as a Mexican gay man in the United States, his situation seems to reflect the importance of the "cultural constructs" that impact on his life.

It is after all the entire Mexican Catholic world that he was raised in, and that his family continues to fervently embrace, that appears to be at the crux of the issues he continues to negotiate with his family, his mother in particular. It is this religious worldview that accounts for the silences between them about his homosexuality and the dreaded damnation that his family believes will result from his new sexual identity and lifestyle. Both Rafael and his family ultimately believe that if God permits, all will be well. This divine approval would enable him to live without blame and the ultimate shame that befalls someone not comporting himself according to traditional constructions of Mexican manhood. It is his devoutly Catholic mother who communicates to Rafael that "God doesn't permit [his] lifestyle," not the structural dislocations of advanced capitalism in all its globalizing permutations.

The main point I want to make is rather straightforward. We need to listen very closely to the men we interview in order to learn more about the complex social worlds in which they live. Social theory is indeed useful in this regard, but not when it distorts our informant's voices and we lose sight of the complex way that both material and cultural worlds structure the intimate lives of Latino gay men.

NOTES

1. Almaguer, "Chicano Men"; Carrier, *De los Otros*; Lancaster, *Life Is Hard*; Murray, *Latin American Male Homosexualities*.

2. Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*.

3. Alfaro, Araiza, and Palacios, "Deep in the Crotch of My Latino Psyche."

4. Gagnon and Simon, *Sexual Conduct*.

Gay Latino Cultural Citizenship:

Predicaments of Identity and Visibility in San Francisco in the 1990s

Horacio N. Roque Ramírez

It's about freedom!

—Official jingle of San Francisco Gay Pride 2000

The sweetest things are always Latin!

—Jingle for iAzucar!, a gay dance club with a Latino theme,
summer 2000

In her exploration of queer Latino activism, the law, and cyberspace, Juana María Rodríguez makes an important conceptual shift in relation to identity. Rather than ask, "What is identity?," she looks at three particular case studies that turn this question into "What is identity for?"¹ With this move Rodríguez is able to explode essentialist characters of this key term for understanding political and cultural visibilities for LGBT and queer Latinas and Latinos, permitting a critical appreciation of the multiple possible uses of identity for generating more grounded visions of health, freedom from repression, and desire. Unlike the vague San Francisco Gay Pride slogan on behalf of freedom, or the exoticizing, consumerist queer jingles widely used to sell things Latin, Rodríguez's "What is identity for?" compels us to interrogate how and why questions of identity circulate for queer women and men of color. Her work asks us to consider political and historical moments when narratives of identity are profoundly a necessity, and others when the exact same terms may become overused, reductionist, and essentialist representations of complex social life.

Queer multiracial cultural and political formations have been the reality in the San Francisco Bay Area since at least the 1950s.² Third-world movements, women's movements, civil rights and nationalist struggles, and gay and lesbian liberations—these and other social movements in the Bay Area have compelled people of color to claim identity, visibility, space, and rights. And yet in San Francisco, that queerest of world Meccas, the representation of a "universal

citizen" remains white and male. Whether in the romantic, pastoral writings of Herb Caen in decades past, or the cultural representations of queerness since the 1990s in the likes of Armistead Maupin, whiteness remains discursively central in the imagining of the city.³ There have always been "others" in this geography, including queer ones, but even then, the hegemonic gay subject remains the same: seemingly wealthy, white, and male. The queer differences among white subjects in this imagination exist largely on the horizontally conceived realm of sexual difference (as opposed to a vertical plane of stratification and inequality); the white male subject, though queer, still lives, eats, works out, dances, drinks, gets high, and eroticizes in the city. Gas prices may rise, home costs may increase, and demographics may shift, but there will still be enough resources and opportunities for pleasure for his (queer) class, or at least the semblance of such abundance.

In such contexts of cultural exclusion, to rise to the podium of cultural identity (individually and collectively) can have profound results. Latina and Latino scholars have found theoretical and political use in the concept of cultural citizenship. This concept, Renato Rosaldo first proposed, addresses notions of belonging and equal representation in a democratic society without losing respect for individual and group differences. "The term cultural citizenship is a deliberate oxymoron," Rosaldo explains,

a pair of words that do not go together comfortably. Cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense. It claims that, in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens, even when such differences as race, religion, class, gender, or sexual orientation potentially could be used to make certain people less equal or inferior to others. The notion of belonging means full membership in a group and the ability to influence one's destiny by having a significant voice in basic decisions.⁴

To claim identity, space, and rights based on lived differences—to struggle for cultural citizenship actively in a society structured through cultural domination, inequality, and marginalization—holds particular queer racial promise: to activate these differences in order to situate ourselves as entitled, legitimate members of the body politic where heteronormativity and whiteness rule. In the era of AIDS, when queer identities and subjectivities are central in our prospects for health and life, the right to be different honestly, legitimately, and publicly matters. As Rosaldo suggests, group-based, structural oppression in turn re-

quires that we consider how organizing as groups based on sharing these group differences can serve as a creative antidote to structural forms of exclusion.

But identities and other forms of visibility based on difference can be slippery epistemic paradigms, which not only the disenfranchised can use. As tactical terms that can neutralize if not co-opt oppositions to structures of marginalization, identity may work against social groups' goals in the hands of power elites invoking the exact same terms for inclusion, but for quite different objectives (to garner the Latino vote, for example, or using Latino images of the family). In consumer capitalism identity can also be used for the goal of economic profit (e.g., to sell authentic frozen Mexican food). In both of these cases, identity and visibility through claims of shared group experiences become residual, secondary dimensions. The politician gets elected, multinational corporations reap profits, and the communities whose essentialized collective identities make it possible remain (at best) structurally unchanged in a position of subordination.

My discussion of gay Latino cultural citizenship in San Francisco in the 1990s speaks to both the necessity of cultural identities and what can be considered the capitalist commodification of gay Latino identity logic.⁵ I discuss a safer-sex ad campaign from the mid-1990s targeting married Latino "men who have sex with men," designed to reduce HIV infections among them and their wives. Bypassing gay and bisexual identities while acknowledging Latino men who engage in (unsafe) sex with other men, the ad was not well received by local health workers (though not all) trying to make sexual minority Latino subjectivity explicit in the context of HIV prevention. It was precisely the gay Latino invisibility that the ad structured publicly that was in contention for many HIV health educators. In concealing, disguising, or obscuring a gay Latino historical subject through the use of a public figure who did not self-identify as sexually gay, the ad disappeared a segment of the community that actively fought against its erasure. I also discuss the relationship between queer Latino visibility and commodity culture, specifically through the advertising of the Latin Stage during San Francisco's Queer Pride Festival in 2000. In this case I analyze how the literal and figurative selling and advertising of many things Latin during Gay Pride festivities depend on an extreme, essentializing project of cultural appropriation. Through these two projects for (dis)claiming gay Latino identity and visibility I investigate the challenges in using notions of identity, visibility, and rights under the rubric of cultural citizenship for queer Latinos in San Francisco. While gay and queer cultural citizenship can indeed function as a posi-

tion for group entitlement, belonging, and social membership to help negotiate desire, safety, and risk, once reduced to prototypical sounds and symbols of culture, racial and queer group differences can easily become conduits for profit-driven consumption.

RISKY IDENTITIES: GAY AND BISEXUAL (IN)VISIBILITY IN AIDS

Questions over gay identity became quite contentious in the 1980s with the emergence of AIDS and the increasingly unavoidable debates over which segments of the Latino community were most at risk and thus required more focused attention. The early naming of the syndrome as GRID (Gay-related Immunodeficiency Disease) literally offered an identity-based social category of membership that conveniently distanced many men (including Latinos) from considering themselves at risk; not identifying as gay, they believed the new disease had little to do with them and their (homo)sexuality. For Latinos who did identify as gay or bisexual, the representations of the disease (either as GRID or as the less identity-based AIDS) primarily as a white gay men's disease offered yet another level of convenient denial of the stigma associated with the disease and these men.⁶ But once the discourses of AIDS and HIV prevention shifted to include both identities and behaviors, including the more generic and ambiguous "men who have sex with men" (MSM), Latino men engaging in sex with other men, whether they identified as gay or bisexual or not, could not as easily distance themselves either from the possibility of risk or from health workers and HIV agencies targeting them.⁷ Indeed the existence of the former funded the existence of the latter.

This matrix of identity, sexuality, and invisibility presented several challenges for HIV health programming for reaching men having sex with other men without consistently using condoms. In the historically Latino Mission District of San Francisco, HIV health agencies and community projects such as Proyecto Contraseña Por Vida (or simply Proyecto), Gente Latina de Ambiente, Instituto Familiar de la Raza, AGUILAS' El Ambiente, and the Mission Neighborhood Health Center devised advertising and outreach efforts to make these men more conscious about their sexual practices. These community efforts engaged the large numbers of Latino men who forthrightly claimed public queer identities, as gays, as maricones, as homosexuals, as culeros, as jotos, as queers, and, less so though not uncommon, as bisexuals.⁸ Yet a significant amount of their educational campaigns also targeted Latino MSMs, who made up a large proportion of new cases of HIV infection in the 1990s. Accordingly the images used

in the prevention campaigns did not acknowledge same-sex desire among men with a social identity or name; in fact the point has been precisely to avoid them. This deliberate non-naming strategy is what is at stake through the images and text: to suggest as much as possible same-sex desire or practice among men without offending or scaring away a potential viewer or consumer of the ad by overly inferring an identity with which he is not comfortable or that he may entirely reject.

In targeting this prototypical Latino man, however, who engages in homosexual without adopting a nonheteronormative social label, an image and narrative of the MSM has made impossible a closer engagement with this population. At the same time gay and bisexual Latino men who indeed have felt part of a community openly as gay or bisexual Latinos have been left out of the picture—literally—in these advertising campaigns. Part of the justification for not publicly naming these men within a social category of membership has involved the belief that a great number of MSMs continuously engage in sex with men while married or involved in primarily heterosexual couplings. To encourage MSMs to practice safer sex and reduce the risk of infecting their women partners, the argument goes, images and text need to suggest the sexual behavior, but not a social identity other than the implied heterosexual one. Yet one of the consequences of such a strategy is to make Latino men who do identify as gay less visible. In addition, in the process of having to choose or negotiate the rigid oppositional binary between gay and MSM, men adhering to a bisexual identity find less support and less visibility.

One popular example of health advertising campaigns aimed at MSMs took place in 1995 inside San Francisco's public buses. Highly visible in the ever-crowded bus lines 14 and 49 that run along Van Ness and Market streets, respectively, and jointly along Mission Street, the longest street in the city, this ad was one of the most noticeable advocating condom use and targeting Latino men having sex with other men. Immediately below the black-and-white photograph of a handsome Latino, smiling provocatively while firmly holding an unused wrapped condom in his hand, text in Spanish declared, "En mi familia nadie sabe que yo tengo sexo con hombres. Por eso los protejo." (In my family no one knows that I have sex with men. That's why I protect them.) Suggesting no distinct emotion but a decisive stance, the masculine figure and the accompanying narrative communicated an assured, calculated decision, a man capable of considering his heteronormative responsibilities in relation to his (covert) sexual practices. In this presumably rational paradigm for negotiating risk, safety, family, and responsibility one possible analytical equation might be translated

as follows: "Given condition A (silence), I practice B (condom use)." The first part of the equation, the description of fatherly silence around his homosexuality (or bisexuality), was presented simply as that: a quick description or acknowledgment of a condition that simply is, unalterable and natural. Given this situation that simply "is," the second part of the equation is presented as a corrective for a silence that has the potential for negative consequences: having unprotected (anal? oral?) sex with men in cultural silence and (also in silence) bringing the disease of AIDS to the home. The dynamics invoked by the ad are not questions of pride (in behaving safely, for example) or of cultural shame (for having sex with men or for maintaining silence), but of manly responsibility, perhaps cultural propriety.

Community health workers I interviewed for my queer community history project and who commented on the usefulness of this ad campaign had a range of interpretations. Several found it problematic on three distinct levels: its assumptions about men's ability to be honest with themselves and act accordingly in terms of making choices during sexual play; the ideological complicity of the message for leaving intact a heteronormative, patriarchal family organization, with the man being the responsible member of the family to protect it from outside disease; and the simplistic or uncomplicated way the ad's narrative suggests that the decision to use a condom is rather easy and logical. The ad was particularly troubling, if not useless, for health workers invested in de-stigmatizing queer sexualities and practices in the Latino community. The staff and volunteers at Proyecto, for example, working under a model of "sex-positive" notions of open queer sexualities, sought to acknowledge and celebrate queer sex for Latinas and Latinos. For these front-line AIDS educators and the sex-positive goals of the agency, weakly suggesting same-sex behaviors was counterproductive to a more open community dialogue around queer sexualities, identities, and AIDS.

One Proyecto staff member critical of the ad was Diane Felix. A well-known butch Chicana activist who had socialized among straight, gay, and bisexual men since her teens and who for years had also socialized on a bar strip where queer and straight Latinos gathered, Felix was skeptical of men's ability to act as the ad claimed. When asked about the ad's efficacy for reducing HIV and AIDS in the Latino community, she was sarcastic and unconvinced. Her comments were not simply quick, uncritical responses to the ad. Living in San Francisco since the mid-1970s she had been part of the historical growth of cultural and political gay Latino organizations, such as the Gay Latino Alliance (from 1976 to 1983), her own women's dance club, *COLORS* (since 1986), and the

first grassroots community response to the AIDS crisis (as part of *Comunidad Unida en Respuesta al AIDS/SIDA*, Community United in Response to AIDS/SIDA, since the mid-1980s until its collapse around 1992). At the forefront of building cultural citizenship for gay and lesbian Latinos and Latinas since the 1970s Felix had also been part of the cadre of caretakers and friends burying dozens of community members dying from AIDS. In relation to an ad purposefully working for hidden homo- and bisexual practices, she expressed mistrust in MSMs' ability to change not only their sexual behavior but also the conscious decisions these men made in relation to their wives and children:

I think it's a dream [laughter]. I don't think that it's real. . . . I don't think the majority of Latino men think like that. Because when I hung out at [the gay Latino bars] *La India Bonita* and *Los Portales*, I would see those men there at night, carrying on all night. And then I would go to Twenty-fourth Street in the morning to buy my *fruta* [fruit], and I would see them with their wife, with their children. And they'd look at me and they knew that I knew who they were. And they would just like turn their head and try to get out of there as soon as possible. And then when I would see them again at the bar I would say, "Oye [Hey], I saw you. I didn't know you were married. What are you doing to protect her?" "Oh, no, no. Yeah, you see me here, but I'm not having sex with them [men]. I'm not having sex with these guys, I know you've seen me, but I'm not . . . that's my wife, you know."⁹

Felix's frustration often grew to the point of confronting Latinos, getting involved in their personal life in public, and reminding them that as careful as they thought they were in trying to hide their sexual play with men, she suspected otherwise. That non-gay-identified men had sexual relations with male-to-female transgender women and gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men was a very likely scenario given the multigender character of the first gay Latino bar strip in the Mission District since 1979, Sixteenth Street or simply "16" or "*la dieciséis*." Since its beginning *la dieciséis* became the central hub for queer Latino men, especially Spanish-speaking immigrants seeking same-sex social and sexual space. The gay Latino immigrant strip remained a local and regional Latino destination in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁰

Felix's critique suggests a level of hypocrisy among men asked to "protect" their wives and their families through condom use while not addressing the overall social patterns heterosexual male privilege affords them. If these men could easily party, drink, and be with either queens or other men on the gay Latino strip or elsewhere in the Mission, what could their incentive or motiva-

tion be, she argued, to think of their wives' and their kids' health during such intense moments of unrestrained pleasure?

I wished men thought like that. "How do I protect her?" Well, you wouldn't be in a cantina [bar] with a bunch of *hombres* [men] if you were really that in love with her, or cared about her, right? I mean, would you? It makes me laugh how when I go down Twenty-fourth Street or even that bar across the street from Proyecto on the corner, Capp and Sixteenth—they're all straight men and you walk in and you look and they got each other's ass in their hand, they're hugging each other, they kiss, they're drunk kissing, they're fighting. These are all straight men, and they're just all over each other. They can't even go home to their wife and kids; they'd rather be there with them. How straight is that? [laughter]. But, if you really cared about your woman, and you really cared about your children, I don't think that you would be there.

As an advocate for sex-positive education and a staff member of Proyecto, Felix was adamant about the need to be more explicit in discussing sex and sexuality. She believed the behaviors putting these men at risk for contracting HIV needed to be spelled out more honestly to reflect the place of desire and satisfaction in their practices. While recognizing that the men and behaviors such ads target exist (even across the street from Proyecto's offices), Felix challenged an educational approach that assumes men's ability to change their behavior largely on the premise of presumed care for the heterosexual family unit.

Related to Felix's doubts about the ad's ability to impact men's sexual decision making based on the cultural ideal of protecting the heterosexual family unit, Ricardo A. Bracho argued that the ad strengthened patriarchal ideology. As the coordinator of one of Proyecto's health education components, Colegio Contraseña, and one of the founding members of the agency, Bracho further critiqued the ad's evasion of, or rather complicit relation to homophobic cultural practices. By focusing only on closeted sex acts and tacitly validating the dimension of denial or hiding ("My family doesn't know"), the ad, Bracho believed, continued a series of problems in AIDS education generally:

That whole thing about "My family doesn't know I do, but I try to keep them safe." What it does is [point to] this patriarchal protection of the family. It's like, "Oh, yet I still provide and I am not infecting them." . . . So let that man decide if he really wants to be in that . . . in a position of privilege, because that's what he has. Let's talk about homophobia and masculinity. I hate this whole, like, "men who sleep with men" shit. And that's really big

in the AIDS economy, like men who are not gay-identified. Well, make them gay-identified. That's a problem. They should become gay-identified. They do not need to stay in their lives, fucking men, and not talking about it, and not being able to be happy with it.¹¹

In his analysis the discourse and politics of homophobia allow for the possibility and acknowledgment of same-sex behavior but stop short of recognizing a gay or queer subjectivity. The investment the ad makes in maintaining heteromascularity through the central visual image of the decisive (male) Latino figure continues a pattern of homophobia prevalent in many advertising campaigns targeting MSMs. By popularizing such images of male masculinity the ads not only bypass but actually make invisible gay-identified Latinos of various genders, many of them still identifying as men but who also forthrightly take on gay or queer subjectivity. In disagreement with a long-held argument that Chicano and Latino men are unable to take on a gay sexual identity openly, Bracho argues that ads like these make dialogue about this assumed inability more difficult.¹² The ads not only play on this nonidentification, but also preempt an analysis of why many men indeed play sexually with other men without interrogating their place in heterosexual privilege. Neither Felix's nor Bracho's critique suggests replacing the MSM position with another fixed, essentialist subject position or, as Rodríguez argues about Proyecto's subtle strategies, "mak[ing] representation and identity equivalent."¹³ What they do argue, however, is that the definite textual and visual markers in the ad foreclose queer possibilities for these men practicing homosexuality.

Not all narrators addressing the ad found it ineffective. The late Gustavo Martín Cravioto (1965–2006), for example, working with both gay- and straight-identified Latino men's populations on la dieciséis and elsewhere in the city, supported the ad's rather direct, uncomplicated approach to raise awareness of condom use. Working for the Latino AIDS Project at the Instituto Familiar de la Raza in the capacity of street outreach worker, Cravioto argued that, as a health worker, his primary interest was not so much with men's identification as with their use of condoms:

For us as health educators or as people who work with the problem of AIDS, we do not take [gay identification] into consideration so much; it does not matter to us. It does not matter to us that people remain inside their closet or remain inside their denial. Or that they do not accept themselves as bisexual or as gay. What matters to us is that they protect themselves. In other words, the most important thing about this is that people learn to protect

themselves, be that they are openly gay or openly bisexual or openly whatever you want. . . . We have to consider that there is an incredible amount of different ways of knowing, of being, of thinking.¹⁴

In Cravioto's analysis the ad's lack of discussion of identity reflects the different types of thinking and being of men who have sex with other men who never connect their pleasure with a socially constructed category. Working for a Latino agency that did not place as great a priority in the visibility afforded to gay or queer Latino men (when compared to Proyecto) as in promoting safer sex among Latinos generally, Cravioto took a position emphasizing behavioral change. As an immigrant himself working mostly with immigrant Latinos, he took into account the many "ways of thinking" and "ways of being" represented in several generations and countries of immigrant Latinos in San Francisco. In San Francisco's demographic profile of Latinos there are widely varying groups of men artificially grouped through their sharing of the city's borders: Salvadoran men who recently migrated from rural sectors with little access to a sexual literacy beyond heterosexuality, gay Mexican immigrants from urban centers like Mexico City and Guadalajara with long histories of gay liberation, and second-generation Nicaraguan men born in San Francisco who may not have much in common with the former two in terms of their shared sexual cultures. However (in)visible these men's sexual subjectivities may be in the context of queerness in the city, Gustavo had no qualms de-emphasizing questions of the closet in his work for HIV prevention. In Proyecto's educational programming, gay and queer visibility for Latinos was as much a part of the equation as was risk reduction. For Felix and Bracho this visibility had everything to do with an ad's target population. Because the ad reflected a segment of Latinos that Cravioto believed never cared about or wanted to identify as anything other than straight, he believed the ad had an important role in reaching out to men who placed themselves and all their sexual partners (including women partners) at risk whenever they did not use condoms.¹⁵

The Latino MSM ad spoke to the tensions around visibility, identity, and sexual behavior for (gay) Latino men in the Bay Area. While it drew attention to many Latino men's high risk of contracting HIV and spreading it to women, it was also a site for political struggle over identity and visibility. For educators and activists wanting to ensure that gay and queer Latinos had social membership and space through identity, the ad was complicit in not wanting to acknowledge male privilege and heteronormative ideology, while at the same time using it to reach out to MSMs. Others saw the ad as simply an honest and

direct reflection of pervasive and risky behavior among men in the community. The gulf between the social and sexual worlds in these interpretations of the ad was not necessarily large. Where gay-identified and straight-identified begins or ends has always been in flux, whether in a more gay Latino strip (where non-gay-identified Latinos regularly socialize) or in the straight bars and nightclubs of the Mission District (where gays and queers too venture). But in the ad, and importantly in relation to cultural citizenship, one point was clear: the MSM remained a member, a named yet anonymous sexual citizen, a member of the community and of the family, whereas the gay- or bisexually identified Latino did not.

That Felix could walk from her apartment to buy her produce and run into seemingly straight or bisexual Latinos she had seen in the local gay bar just the night before speaks to the varied sexual geography for (queer) Latinos in the city. This intimate geography points out the competing publics and cultures made visible or invisible through seemingly innocuous HIV education ads. Felix's comments about her seeing these men also indicate a dialectic in the realm of cultural citizenship: it is not only where individuals choose to go or place themselves that makes them visible; viewers or "witnesses" seeing such individuals, regardless of the former's choice of claiming or occupying a space, invest that visibility with meaning. Queer Latina and Latino cultural citizenship does not always depend on the literal sense of visibility (what we see) either. Because neither sexuality nor desire is always a given or publicly seen by all, making Latino bodies queerly visible may require additional knowledge to which not all are privy. Felix identified and interacted with men not wanting to be associated in public with a gay space or community; they had little choice over whether she chose to identify them with a gay public sphere. In a sense, as a health worker and community member Felix took it upon herself (perhaps problematically for some) to invest Latino MSMs with the visibility the ad and its designers worked to deny.

SELLING IDENTITIES: QUEER LATINO BODIES, DIVERSITY, AND THE BUSINESS OF FREEDOM

By the time gay and queer pride came again to San Francisco in June 2000, the Bay Area could count on a handful of weekly and monthly venues catering to a large queer Latino and Latina population. Amid music and dance these social spaces (bars and nightclubs, overwhelmingly but not solely for men) were bene-

fitting from regular, sizable crowds seeking fun and pleasure as lesbians and gays and as Latinas and Latinos. The role of identity was key for their success: in order to continue attracting this crowd of consumers the clubs had to produce the visual, textual, and auditory discourses suggesting all things Latino. Multicolored flyers and phone recordings on club hotlines were the most common means for bringing the crowds in. The spaces themselves and the mood they created were ultimately responsible for keeping those who arrived and ensuring that others would eventually visit. It would not be an exaggeration to declare that, through the business of the club, queer Latino cultural citizenship has been going strong in the Bay Area for at least two decades.¹⁶

The year 2000, however, was the first time a gay Latin Stage became known far and wide throughout the region via radio broadcasts. While word of mouth and flyers have spread the knowledge of special events targeting the community, advertising a queer Latino event on this scale was something new. And yet, while it was a new local phenomenon on a grander scale, the selling of the Latin Stage fit nicely into a (trans)national circuit of queer consumption predicated on the lofty goals of cultural diversity, of queer multiculturalism. Before discussing this local San Francisco event in relationship to the mass promotion of a cultural space, it is worth considering how the event fit into a larger context of queer cultural citizenship's dependence on the sale and discourse of diversity, on commodity culture in late capitalism.

The year 1999 marked the first time San Francisco had an official magazine for June Pride celebrations. Continuing in 2000 these glossy magazines offered abundant opportunities to address the relationship between commodity culture, queer identity, and visibility. The edition of the magazine in 2000, more than three hundred pages in size and available for free to tens of thousands of residents and tourists, offered several striking points. That year the magazine went nationally homogeneous. As its editor Peter McQuaid explained, *Pride 00* became the "official Gay Pride Magazine for Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C." "The whole experience," he continued, "renewed my faith in what we can accomplish together."¹⁷ Regionally, specific content sought to balance the national queer homogeneity of *Pride 00*. While hundreds of ads fixed the main body of all four editions of the magazine, each city's edition also had its own distinct section showcasing local officials, agencies, and events. National gayness, in a sense, could be fixed to a consistent homogeneous corporate look, while local queer flavor could try to make up for the redundancy of the homogeneous queer spine of the magazine.

The most used and abused term in *Pride 00*'s nonadvertising content and the

ads themselves was the catchy *diversity*. Amid the pages selling everything from perfumes to antiretroviral medicine, President Bill Clinton set the tone: "Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. As Americans, we can be proud of our diversity. Striving together, people of different ethnicities, backgrounds, races, beliefs, and sexual orientation have contributed to the success of our nation, reflecting the profound truth that this rich diversity is one of our greatest strengths. . . . I commend all those who are striving to create a society that celebrates our diversity." Strategically positioned immediately after Clinton's message in this, the year of his failed run for the presidency, Vice President Al Gore's letter similarly observed, "At the beginning of this millennium, I hope that all Americans will join in recognizing that the diversity of our people is the source of our strength."¹⁸

The circuit of consumer culture and Gay Pride marketed through *Pride 00* also had a transnational dimension. On several of its pages the magazine observed World Pride in Rome, which replaced that year's Europride. Global celebrations were summarized on one page as "Queer, There and Everywhere. The Millennium Pride Calendar." In a classic colonialist discourse of "othering," this calendar included two columns listing Pride celebrations: the left column, the longer one, was for the United States; the right column was for "Everywhere Else." This exoticizing transnational tourist culture within capitalist consumption was even more present in the ads and articles promising pleasure in "far-away" destinations (Hawaii, Cape Town, Puerto Vallarta). Even when an "exotic" destination did not have the reputation and history of being explicitly accommodating to gay tourism (as Costa Rica did), the magazine spoke to the hope and desire for new lands "to explore."¹⁹

The Latin Stage was one of the goods sold through *Pride 00*, an exotic translocal destination. The San Francisco Latin Stage for Gay Pride 2000 thus was rather consistent with a trend to commodify queer identities globally through the joint discourses of visibility and diversity. This process was by no means a one-way, top-down co-optation or use of an identity. Queer Latinos answering the call to attend the advertised event experienced forms of collective membership; what they made of this social experience with others is certainly beyond the scope of this analysis, but we can at least surmise that individuals attending the event had the potential to create meanings, projects, and visions of their own.

This link between collective consciousness and the effect of creating and identifying along membership vectors is an important one. Some of the critics of the MSM ad targeting Latino men who do not identify with any queer cate-

gory understood the potential of queer social membership. For Latinos embracing a gay identity could create opportunities for reflection as racial and sexual beings and for evaluating that identity's potential for developing a consciousness around HIV and AIDS. Cultural and racial identities, of course, can be powerful tools for organizing grassroots community struggles. As Mary Pardo has demonstrated in her work on Mexican American women activists, the social space of ethnic identity can be a powerful, transformative means for engaging the state apparatus.²⁰ But in advanced capitalism, as *Pride* so displayed most colorfully, identity can easily turn into a commodity, a good to be sold and consumed in the marketplace. Several recent analyses of the relationship between commodity culture and citizenship have found that commodity citizenship is well equipped to handle and profit from the creation of new identities, racial, sexual, and otherwise.²¹

The predicament of visibility for queer Latinos is particularly vexing in relation to commodity culture's astute utilization of both Latino and queer or gay identities. As more and more companies target and sell products to gays and lesbians typically under the marketing guise of offering access to a chic lifestyle, the economic basis and labor for this culture of visibility is made invisible. While commodity capitalism targets the queer dollar by creating the image (literal and figurative) of community formation through shopping, visibility remains in the realm of marketing. With queer visibility and identity thus fetishized through consumption capitalism, reduced to a lifestyle for sale, only those interested shoppers financially capable of accessing such a community of shoppers remain members of the group.²²

As members of this community of shoppers queer Latinos too have access to the lifestyle, albeit generally in smaller proportions corresponding to their place in the political economy. Queer Latino men certainly serve as a potential lucrative pool of shoppers for whose attention bus signs, billboards, television programming, and radio ads tactically vie. Once the group of potential shoppers has been identified and targeted the interplay between identity and visibility—two key features of the notion of cultural citizenship—get to work. Through advertising and shopping, a form of (consumer) cultural citizenship is at work.

Consumption for Latinos generally, but for queer Latinos specifically, involves at least two often related facets in the relationship between identity and consumer capitalism. First, Latino bodies act as consumers, that is, as those doing the consumption of queer services and goods: going to the Latin Stage, purchasing subscriptions to queer-themed magazines (mainstream and Latino),

viewing gay-themed television comedy series and the commercials sponsoring these, or attending music, theater, and other performances seemingly sexually neutral but clearly with a strong queer following. Like other queers, Latinos also participate actively in these forms of socioeconomic activity, many of them investing a good proportion of their attention and financial resources therein.

Second, the bodies of queer Latinos are themselves consumed in the transnational webs of commodity culture. Others (nonqueer Latinos) consume queer Latino images and identities through the production of advertising materials and the actual selling of products and services. Consumption on these levels, with Latinos as sellers and as objects for sale, makes up a network of cultural and social relations of desire, profit, and visibility. Given the inability to control the circulation and interpretation of materials, events, and services designed for queer Latinos, becoming visible for questions of pride, identity, and community formation can have other (un)intended consequences.

When June 2000 *Pride* festivities arrived in the Bay Area one of the most popular FM radio stations in the region, Wild 94.9, broadcast to hundreds of thousands of its listeners news about the Latin Stage. Pulling Latina and Latino listeners, their friends, and "their admirers" to the city's famed weekend extravaganza of street and house parties, Wild 94.9's ads went for an essence of identity. Calling for Latinos or *latinidad* in the larger Gay *Pride* weekend, the carefully produced, rhythmic mixed-music ads spoke to and for gay Latino presence and fun: simultaneously gay and Latino. Calling for bodies and their disposable income to the stage, such careful marketing of intersecting membership for the promise of fun to thousands of Bay Area residents meant profits for those involved in its production. It was not only the producers of the Latin Stage who profited from this venture; local businesses promoted clothing, magazines, and related queer Latino goods—the stuff of a lifestyle.

The fact that some of the profits made from the Latin Stage went to support Proyecto further complicates this discussion. However meager and largely symbolic this financial gesture of community reciprocity became, that Proyecto received any gain from the sale of the Latin Stage brought it into the interdependent network of consumption, profit, and queer Latino citizenship. We can certainly appreciate these connections between commodification and a cultural apparatus for making identity visible (via Wild 94.9's airwaves, for example) and an intimate relationship between queer Latino cultural citizenship and public health. With the additional presence of a nonprofit queer Latino HIV-prevention agency in this nexus of profit and visibility, capitalist consumption became an ally of local HIV prevention with queer Latinos, simply part of the



1. Gay, male-to-female transgender, and cross-dressing members of Instituto Familiar de la Raza's contingent during the San Francisco LGBT Pride Parade along Market Street in 1995. That year's theme was "A World without Borders." Collection of the author.



2. Staff, volunteers, and attendees at Proyecto CONTRASIDA Por Vida's booth during the San Francisco LGBT Pride Festival at Civic Center in 1995. Collection of the author.

larger AIDS economy that includes pharmaceuticals, advertising companies, condom and lubricant manufacturers, and the like.

The dynamics present in the sales pitch for the Latin Stage in June 2000 were not new either for Latinos or for queers. What is different and useful to consider, though, in the selling of an event and space constituted on at least several vectors of identity (racial and ethnic, gender, sexual) is the possibility for successful sales. Although the ads clearly pointed out particular sexual and erotic and racial, ethnic, and cultural markers, there was no checkpoint at the gates of entry to ensure that only those possessing such markers could enjoy the event. Women and men of all sexual, erotic, and cultural persuasions and tastes could enter—and they did—to enjoy the sun-soaked afternoon. They juggled dance, drinks, and dialogue—the consummation of desires in their many possibilities. Not all were queer, not all were Latinas or Latinos, and of course not all were a particular manifestation of the two. This openness is precisely the beauty and the effectiveness of commodity culture: it provides a seemingly equal opportunity to all wanting and able to purchase the commodity for sale. For whatever desires they had in mind, those present at San Francisco's 2000 Pride Latin Stage were equal consumers that afternoon. Of course they were not all equally consumed in return as commodities in display.

As examples such as the Latin Stage demonstrate, queer Latinos find themselves in the middle of intense commercial battles for their attention and resources. As part of a queer market they are not much different from other queers watching television, reading magazines, and listening to radio ads appealing to their senses linked to discourses of communities of belonging. This ever-growing capitalist commodity culture has its own regional, national, and transnational specificities, but one basic factor remains consistent: the culture exists and thrives to the extent that it reaps profits from its consumers. Identifying the contours of this queer culture of commodification has become more complicated, as the Latin Stage case reveals, given Latinos' closer and closer affiliation with projects claiming queer identities, visibilities, and space as a community, such as Proyecto. This intimacy between cultural citizenship and capitalist consumer culture has entered larger fields of global engagement with civic society through the close relationship between profit, tourism travel, and queer pleasures.

To make queer Latinos an exception in the larger motions of queer visibility and commodification would be an exaggeration. As the clearest example of a broad queer population's attempt to remain visible and make cultural and political claims in San Francisco, the annual June Gay Pride Parade and re-

lated events have increasingly sought the financial sponsorship of companies willing to fund the festivities. Since 1999 "the official magazine for San Francisco pride" has been virtually indistinguishable from large department stores' catalogues or high-fashion magazines, complete with sample perfume cards and colorful ads for companies selling queers coveted lifestyle goods: alcohol, cologne, cable programming, antiretroviral drug therapy, clothing, and travel. The growing dependence on corporate sponsorship of Pride events seems to be a given, considering their scope and the costs for producing them. San Francisco's 2000 Pride Festival was no exception. City and County Supervisor Leslie Katz observed, "It would be great if we could [produce Pride events] without corporate sponsorship, but we can't."²³ As with any other annual convention or sporting event, city governments jump on the opportunity to host a large Gay Pride event; queer pride not only sells, but can be quite profitable.

In San Francisco this overreliance on corporate endorsements has shifted the meaning of the congregation of hundreds of thousands marching in the streets to the less politically charged and corporate-friendly parade and festival. As expected, the sale of queer diversity has brought some criticism. The high visibility of "rainbow capitalism" (reducible to the hegemonic rainbow flag) and its overly simplified claims for inclusion have brought conflict to local and national organizing efforts. Not everyone pushing for national anti-gay discrimination legislation, for example, accepts the strong presence of corporations in queer politics. While these critics are also interested in the passage of such national legislation, they are just as, if not more, interested in concentrating their grassroots energies at the local level, and certainly not in having their efforts directed at the production of glossy magazines marketing Pride nationally, even globally. Taking into consideration proportionally higher rates of HIV infection and household displacement through gentrification for Latinos in San Francisco, the marketing of the Latin Stage was a rather odd project for understanding cultural citizenship; while local non-Latino (typically) and Latino entrepreneurs alike want consumers seeking exotic and erotic frolic to believe that indeed "the sweetest things are always Latin," the majority of (queer) Latinos have not been getting the sweetest consumerist deals to ensure their livelihood in the city. Even without access to the financial records of profit for these private ventures selling "the queer Latin," we can surmise they are large enough to support recurring theme parties, increasingly larger in size and expanding beyond the Bay Area region, with long postal and electronic mailing lists and multicolor ads in queer magazines in English and Spanish. Again, just as Proyecto received some funding support from the Latin Stage in

2000, despite these typically non-Latino-owned "Latin" ventures supporting a project or two in the local community, these are but symbolic gestures of limited reciprocity, with communities providing the human, psychic, and financial resources making private gain possible.

CONCLUSION

The Latino MSM ad campaign from the mid-1990s and the Latin Stage in San Francisco's 2000 Pride Festival engaged questions of identity and visibility for queer Latinos in the city. The ad served as a vehicle to interrogate who became visible in the local queer Latino body. Given the ad's cultural and political position in the context of the AIDS epidemic, the politics of its representations were fertile ground for analysis. While reflective of a segment of Latino men playing with one another with no interest in anything resembling cultural citizenship, the ad simultaneously made Latino queers (bisexual and gay) invisible; this invisibility was an irony for many (but not all) in the 1990s, given more than two decades of community organizing precisely to make queer Latino bodies visible. The Latin Stage, a project that could be considered at the other extreme of the visibility scale, highlighted the growing commodification of queer Latino identity and visibility. In this intensifying profit-through-identity period, more queer Latino subjects than ever entered the visual and sonic cultural field, hardly remaining invisible or inaudible, though for the purposes of individual financial gain. Ultimately, responding to such interests of local cultures of consumption may mean one thing; were the Latin Stage not a financial success in later years we would expect fewer corporate pitches and ads selling "Latin sweetness." In their efforts to keep gay Latinos "sweet and profitable," it is unlikely we will see a clear distinction between private businesses, gay Latino revelers, local health agencies, and city government. The gay Latino bed can indeed be quite an accommodating location.

To return to the original questions of cultural citizenship that Rosaldo proposed, San Francisco is hardly an open, egalitarian cultural space where queer Latinos can enter the house of visibility unscathed. In terms of the politics of representation in public health discourses of HIV prevention, this space has constituted one of the most common fields for representing Latino queerness. The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s forced cultural and political dialogues around community membership and belonging, about homophobia and racism, and the queer body and its representations. Less discussed but quite present in these discourses was the question of gender among queer Latinos,

and specifically the centrality of patriarchy in the representation of the community. Not working for a common, monolithic project, front-line health workers in particular disagreed about whom to showcase, how to create and strengthen public identities. These too were struggles for queer Latino cultural citizenship: the public space, discourses, and visibility that bus ads can powerfully call upon to invite or detract consumers of the cultural identity in question. The 2000 Latin Stage, on the other hand, hardly encountered any conflicts in representing queer latinidad. The Stage actually depended on this identity construct, fetishized primarily through the excessively masculinist Latino figure for the intent of capitalizing on the power of its suggested heteronormativity—ironically. We cannot ignore the fact that such stagings of gay male latinidad are predicated on hegemonic heteronormative constructions of the masculine body, one well consumed by the white and other non-Latino gaze.²⁴ What became contradictory in this project around the same constructs allowing for cultural citizenship is that while the Stage afforded the opportunity for queer Latinos to come together, they were not in a position to control its parameters, much less its future. Those of us rising to the (Latin) stage of queer excitement during Pride 2000 placed our bodies and desires in a circuit of pleasure and consumption much larger than we could imagine, with much less control.

NOTES

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1. J. M. Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad*, 6, my emphasis.

2. Useful analyses centering on people of color in queer history, culture, and politics of the San Francisco Bay Area are Aguirre and Robles, *iViva 161*; Cora, "Nuestras Auto-Definiciones"; Ordoná, "Coming Out Together"; J. M. Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad*; Roque Ramírez, "Communities of Desire"; Rosales, "Papis, Dykes, Daddies"; Mary Guzmán, *Mind If I Call You Sir?*

3. As a legal exception, on 13 November 2007 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 10–1 to issue municipal identification cards to city residents regardless of their legal status in the country.

4. Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship," 402, emphasis in original. For further elaborations and case studies on Latino cultural citizenship, see Flores and Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship*.

5. I focus specifically on gay Latino visibility, not directly or inherently that of lesbian Latinas. While the second section of this discussion on Gay Pride festivals offers related implications of visibility and citizenship for queer Latinas, I do not assume that they are the same, much less that they can be understood creatively and critically by an analysis of queer male cultures and politics. For closer examinations of queer Latina cultures, politics, and histories in the Bay Area, see Cora, "Nuestras Auto-Definiciones"; Ordoná, "Coming Out Together"; J. M. Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad*; Rosales, "Papis, Dykes, Daddies"; Mary Guzmán, *Mind If I Call You Sir?*

6. This form of denial by gay Latinos was false to the degree that they did have sexual relations with white and other men, a common practice (though culturally taboo to admit for some, especially within the gay nationalist politics of Chicanos and Latinos). Lying made tracking clearly demarcated racial directions of infection difficult, if not impossible. For a candid and critical autobiographical account of gay relations between Chicanos and whites in the context of AIDS, see the late Gil Cuadros's essay "My Aztlán: White Place," among others, in Cuadros, *City of God*, 53–58.

7. The most useful examination of the cultural politics of AIDS in relation to race and sexuality, which includes an assessment of the coining and limitations of the socio-behavioral category "men who have sex with men," is Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*. For an exploration of HIV risk focused on gay Latinos in San Francisco, see R. M. Díaz, *Gay Latino Men*.

8. The multiple Spanish terms describing queer sexualities and subjectivities are historically and geographically specific: *maricón* is the most common and most easily recognized throughout Latin America, and among Latino immigrants' *culero* is specific to Salvadorans; *joto* has a Chicano and Mexican specificity; *queer* is likely the least used given its Anglo-centric coinage. These differences in sexual and gender identities should be acknowledged when considering social membership for addressing sexual behavior.

9. Diane Felix, interview by author, audio tape recording, San Francisco, 19 and 27 April 1995. Unless otherwise noted, all oral history interviews were conducted in English.

10. See Aguirre and Robles, *iViva 161*.

11. Ricardo A. Bracho, interview by author, audio tape recording, San Francisco, 12 April 1995.

12. The most well-known and widely published essay arguing this position is Almaguer, "Chicano Men." While acknowledging queer racial, cultural, gendered, and sexual identities simultaneously is still not an easy feat for many Latinas and Latinos, many have done it for decades. I explore one cultural, social, and political organization born of these struggles among women and men in "That's My Place!" Some of Almaguer's arguments are based on Joseph Carrier's anthropological work on Mexican men in the

1970s and 1980s. An important critique of Carrier and other anthropological studies on Latin American male (homo)sexualities is Bustos-Aguilar, "Mister Don't Touch the Banana."

13. J. M. Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad*, 79.

14. Martín Gustavo Cravioto, interview by author, audio tape recording, San Francisco, 27 April and 22 May 1995. Translation from Spanish is mine.

15. Cravioto's de-emphasis of the need to claim gay Latino visibility in relation to HIV education does not mean that he does not appreciate gay-identity-based political, health advocacy, and cultural work. I explore some of his own contributions through politicized cultural work in Roque Ramírez, "Claiming Queer Cultural Citizenship."

16. There has been a wide variety of nightclubs, bars, and monthly or occasional queer Latina and Latino social gatherings in the Bay Area, most catering to men but a few to women as well, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. While each one of these has depended on profit typically based on alcohol sales and entrance fees, club owners and managers have varied in the way they give back (or not) to the local community that makes the business possible. I analyze one short-lived multigender queer Latina/o space in San Francisco in the mid-1990s in Roque Ramírez, "¡Mira, Yo Soy Boricua y Estoy Aquí!"

17. Profile Pursuit, Pride 00, 22.

18. Profile Pursuit, Pride 00, 19, 20.

19. Profile Pursuit, Pride 00, 101, 211. Analyses of transnational relations between tourist consumption and gay organizing and political identity formation are Cortiñas, "Imperial Desire"; the special issue "Queer Tourism" in GLQ, edited by Jasbir Puar, including Cantú, "De Ambiente"; Alexander, "Imperial Desire."

20. Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*.

21. Useful studies on the relationship between queer citizenship or gay social membership and commodity culture are Chasin, *Selling Out*; Evans, *Sexual Citizenship*; Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*; Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure*; Sender, *Business, Not Politics*. For an analysis of the commodification of Latinos as a group and as an ethnic label, see Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.*

22. See the close analysis in Hennessy, "Queer Visibility."

23. Quoted in Jason P. Lorber, "And Now, a Word about Our Sponsors," in Profile Pursuit, Pride 00, 91. Lorber is described as "president of Aplomb Consulting, a national, San Francisco-based public relations and marketing firm helping organizations [corporations?] form mutually beneficial relationships with the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities" (94). According to a summary of costs and revenue generated for the 2000 San Francisco Pride celebration, the event cost \$2,080,082 and generated \$2,129,898 in revenues. "Corporate contributions" and "donated merchandise/advertising" accounted for 17 percent and 56 percent of total revenues, respectively, for a total of 73 percent. See "Financial Results, SF Pride 2000," in Profile Pursuit, Pride 01. Katz's statement in 2000 fits in the economic stage Urvashi Vaid described in the

mid-1990s as "the queer as consumer and its corollary, the selling of gayness" (*Virtual Equality*, 246). Vaid's analysis of this economic stage builds on Jeffrey Escoffier's economic history of lesbian and gay visibility and space in the United States, summarized in four stages and their respective periods: the closet economy, the liberation economy, the territorial economy, and the AIDS economy ("The Political Economy," 123-24). For a sociohistorical analysis of the shift of "lesbian and gay identity from a political to a lifestyle category," see Valocchi, "The Class-Inflected Nature of Gay Identity." For a critique of Vaid's reservations around race- or ethnicity-based queer organizing, see Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*, 222-24.

24. See bell hooks's useful elaboration in "Eating the Other" on the relationship between seduction and domination in the historical white consumption of the black body.

A Response to "Gay Latino Cultural Citizenship"

Ramón A. Gutiérrez

In "Gay Latino Cultural Citizenship" Horacio Roque Ramírez provocatively asks us to ponder: Is there a visible place for us?

Who precisely the "us" in this essay happens to be is a complicated question. That the invisible be made visible and, as the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo advocates, be given "the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense" through full membership and individual voice is an even harder imperative in the stratified world of queer and gay Latino identities.¹

Latino is hardly an unproblematic identity marker. As most Latinas will surely protest, Latino is not a gender-neutral term. It refers to males, pure and simple. Unknown as an identity in the United States much before the 1970s, its etymology, notes the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), is *latinoamericano*. While this dictionary entry cites a textual reference to Latinos as early as 1946—"Latinos are usually looked on as sinister specimens of an inferior race"—it was in the 1970s, in Black Panther Party publications, that America's racial structure was routinely described as composed of three groups: blacks, Latinos, and whites.

There is a story of recent and undoubtedly apocryphal origin that circulates in popular folklore along the Mexico-U.S. border that gets precisely at the newness and the American genesis of Latino as an identity. The story tells of a miscommunication, born of a mistranslation between a Mexican immigrant traveling north and an officer of the U.S. Border Patrol trying to stem that flow. The immigrant is a woman named Molly standing in line to cross to the American side. After waiting for hours her moment with the U.S. Border Patrol agent finally arrives. In a gruff and raspy voice, or so the tale goes, the officer asks, "Are you Latina?" "No, no, no señor," she replies. "Yo no soy la Tina. Yo soy la Molly. La Tina ya cruzó" (No, no, no sir. I am not Tina. I am Molly. Tina already crossed).

This story of miscommunication vividly illustrates two points. First, ethnic labels operant in one national space do not travel well and often make no sense when transported just a few miles away. Second, ethnic identities are learned relationally, in relationships of opposition between and among ethnic groups that are always in flux; thus the identities are constantly transformed.

What we know about the origins and popularization of Latino as an ethnic identity locates its birth in advertising agencies on Madison Avenue and in Miami's Little Havana. Here, seeking to eek out a living and to create a market niche for themselves, advertising agents who were refugees from Castro's Cuba in the years following the 1959 revolution began to covet a share of the advertising budgets of major American corporations. What they invented and what they sold these corporate giants was knowledge of a population. They packaged Latinos as a consumption market that was different and distinct from the American mainstream that General Foods, Sara Lee, Clorox, Coca-Cola, Ford, and Anheuser-Busch already knew. Hailing from Latin America in rapidly rising numbers after the U.S. Immigration and Reform Act of 1965, this new population was putatively white, Spanish-speaking, Catholic, family-centered, law-abiding, and profoundly invested in modernity's conveniences, with a strong work ethic and wallets full of cash. So were created a series of Latin-origin, minority-run and -owned advertising agencies committed to the creation of a pan-ethnic Latino marketing identity that putatively united tastes in South America, and thus in North America as well.²

When Horacio Roque Ramírez asks "What is identity for?" What function does it serve? Whose interests does it advance? he is clearly a participant in a conversation describing the corporate sponsorship of a distinctive Latino musical venue and stage at San Francisco's Pride Festival in 2000. "Identity can easily turn into a commodity, a good to be sold and consumed in the marketplace," he notes. Latino identity (read: male) is presented here as fixed, firm, and unambiguous. Corporations lusting for consumers and cash employ a host of sombrero-clad singers and scantily dressed dancers to mesmerize and motivate their Latino audience (read: male) in hopes that during the afternoon's festivities they will sip Cuervo Tequila margaritas, drink Miller Lite beer, and later want much more. Armed with their free samples of Wet Lube and Trojans galore the point is driven home, so to speak. What could be better than to ride a new Bronco or Mustang? What ecstasy might an American Airlines vacation to Costa Rica afford? Mission accomplished. The trap worked! From identity to desire to consumption, or so the model has it.

In the 1970s three major pan-ethnic identities emerged in the United States: Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. Pan-ethnic identities easily became symbolically salient at the level of marketing and consumption. But to become politically potent, to gain the cultural citizenship Ramírez loftily seeks, requires much more than seductive swiveling hips and maraca-brandishing performers at a Pride festival. For pan-ethnic identities like Latinos and Latinas

to mobilize women and men to collective political action and protest, members of different nationalities must share a common structural relationship to race, class, generation, and geography. If subethnicities have "looked alike" to dominant outsiders and have been the targets of racial discrimination, the chances that such a pan-ethnic political solidarity will develop is high. A shared class position, a high level of residential proximity, and several generations in the United States have led fractionalized ethnic groups to enhance their power through pan-ethnic alliance, hoping thus to more effectively press their claims before the state and its elites. Cultural factors such as a common language, an appreciation for the Latin beat in popular music, and a shared religion are certainly important factors too, but researchers have not yet found them to be determinative in spurring political alliances across Latin-origin national groups in the United States.³

Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans have not yet been able to forge an effective shared Latino identity as political actors with which to claim cultural citizenship because of their extreme racial diversity, their dispersion, and complex stratification by class and immigrant generation. Sixty percent of all Mexicans are geographically concentrated in California and the Southwest. The majority of Puerto Ricans on the mainland live in New York and New Jersey. Cubans reside primarily in Florida. Each of these groups has had very different political priorities. Cubans have focused their political muscle on overthrowing Fidel Castro and "liberating" Cuba. Given the long history of Mexican emigration to the United States under various levels of legality and as guest workers, they too are complexly stratified along nativity, region, generation, and degrees of acculturation and assimilation, as well as by U.S. immigration policies around a guest worker program, border interdiction techniques, and a path to citizenship of illegal immigrants. Some Puerto Ricans want statehood for the island, others independence, and still others have completely forgotten Puerto Rico, except as a remote place associated with the nostalgic yearning of musical chords. Indeed it is this generational distance from the homeland and any direct experiential knowledge of it that makes the commercial marketing of Latino so effective and its political deployment so difficult among more recent immigrants with well-established loyalties to other things.

Ramírez's second San Francisco case study focuses on the dismay among some Latino health care workers in 1995 provoked by the production and placement of a Spanish-language poster on the number 14 and 49 city buses advocating responsible condom use to curtail the spread of HIV infection. The poster

targeted Spanish-literate, working-class Latino men who depend on public transport to get to and from work and who also happened to have sex with other men in San Francisco's Mission District, a neighborhood densely populated by recent Mexican and Central American immigrants and shared with a much older Mexican-origin community. Most 49 buses that traverse the Mission District are double length, are usually packed to standing-room capacity at rush hours, and carry no fewer than thirty similar posters in the space above the bus windows, advertising products, services, and personnel in Chinese, Spanish, and English. Leaving aside the issue of how many bus-riding Latino men who have sex with other men would have seen, much less read the ad while exhausted and packed like sardines, at issue was the putative patriarchal privilege the poster endorsed and the pestilential response the campaign generated among Latino HIV-prevention counselors. "In my family no one knows that I have sex with men. That's why I protect them," announces a Latino stud in the contested poster, as he holds up his wrapped condom for spectators to see.

The crux of the controversy was that health officials were pragmatic in targeting unsafe behavior with this ad, not demanding of the poster's viewers a commitment to a specific erotic identity as bisexual or gay. Ramírez asserts that gay activists espoused "notions of open queer sexualities . . . and celebrate[d] queer sex for Latinas and Latinos," but their words and actions clearly reveal quite the opposite, that they imagined erotic identities as fixed, firm, dichotomous, and unambiguous. Ricardo A. Bracho, a worker at the Colegio Contraseña, amply demonstrated this when he announced, "I hate this whole . . . 'men who sleep with men' shit. . . . Make them gay-identified. That's a problem. They should become gay-identified." Diane Felix, a "well-known butch Chicana activist," was equally smug in her certitude that the poster's message would have no effect. She took it upon herself to publicly police erotic behavior between men in the Mission District, moralistically parroting the value of marriage, monogamy, and family to them.

What Ramírez appears to want us to conclude from these two examples about Latino ethnicity, desire, and sexual behavior is not entirely clear. At times he describes a host of sexual identities and erotic possibilities—*maricón*, *culero*, *joto*, gay, bisexual, queer—and at other times he reduces them to seemingly inseparable cognates of "gay and queer Latino." Such confabulation clouds the shape and dimension of cultural citizenship he believes is necessary to achieve both full membership and visibility in American society. The gay and lesbian movement at its birth in the 1970s used to announce at its protest marches, "Two, four, six, eight, smash the family, smash the state! Two, four, six, eight,

hell no, we won't assimilate!" In 2007 the organized remnants of the movement wanted as their principal goal state-sanctioned marriage and the full legal rights of spouses to hold and inherit property, to birth and to adopt, to acknowledge such unions as families—in short, to be normalized. Those lesbians and gays who have sought civil unions and marriages in a host of places are pretty visible. Why else the conservative backlash and the cynical exploitation of same-sex marriages as a wedge issue by the Republican Party?

What should become of Latino men who have sex with men? Should they be patrolled and moralistically condemned, as Diana Felix does, or should they be forced to become gay, as Ricardo A. Bracho demands? Should they be granted full citizenship and visibility only as consumers of Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Sprite at Pride, or is more required? Ramírez might want to answer his own questions by providing a thicker description of the sexual geography. Engaging the literature on lesbian identities and behaviors, specifically the work of Adrienne Rich and Barbara Ponce, would be a good place to start. Rich, in her now famous essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," noted that there were many ways that women had expressed their love of other women in the past, which a rigid hetero/lesbian dichotomy could not capture. She proposed that a lesbian continuum had long existed, a continuum of women's intimate, romantic, and erotic relationships with other women that went all the way from deep friendship to companionship, romantic partnership, and erotic love.

Barbara Ponce's work likewise considerably complicates our understanding of lesbian identities by proposing four distinct lesbian identities and activities: (1) lesbian identity with lesbian activity; (2) lesbian identity with celibate, heterosexual, or bisexual activity, including political lesbians and lesbians involved in heterosexual relations; (3) bisexual identity with lesbian activity; and (4) heterosexual identity with lesbian activity.⁴ According to Ponce, the folk wisdom of American society posits a principle of consistency among sex assignment, gender identity, gender roles, sexual object choice, and sexual identity. But in reality each of these varies considerably, by class, ethnicity, and point in the life course.

Such analytic distinctions would begin to provide a much grander and more complex picture of Latino and Latina sexual behaviors and identities. The anthropologist Matthew Gutmann recently noted that lower-class Mexican boys at young ages were very physical with each other, kissing, pinching, fondling, and holding hands. He reports hearing one group of working-class boys playfully taunting each other. One boy accused the other of being a maricón, to which the lad replied, "Yeah, well, you're a bisexual."⁵ Where twenty years ago boys of

that age might not have known much about sexual identities, now they knew that there were gays and bisexuals in their world, as well as the sexual object choices these identities signified.

We might begin the Latino continuum with boys' erotic play just described. When a society places a strong symbolic value on female virginity at marriage and segregates its females, the logical result, as Carlos Monsiváis attests, is that sex between young men ages sixteen to twenty-five is common and tolerated.⁶ From Richard Trexler's research we know that in colonial Mexico young boys were introduced to sex by older boys, the young practicing receptive sex, the older boys insertive. As they grew older the sexual object choices became more varied, eventually including both men and women. Most men eventually married and as they aged became more receptive sexually with other men.⁷ In adulthood one's sexual object choice could remain exclusively male; Joseph Carrier's and Tomas Almaguer's work certainly document this reality.⁸ Or it might lead to that panoply of sexual behaviors and identities that Clark Taylor, Rafael M. Díaz, and Héctor Carrillo have described.⁹ From research on male prostitutes, transvestites, and sex workers in Mexico and Latin America we know that the sexual practices of ostensibly married, heterosexual men, at least as described by these sex workers, defies easy classification by any lexical predilections of gay men, such as Ricardo Bracho, quoted above.¹⁰

Acknowledging such polymorphic realities first requires their naming. If the word *queer* is to mean anything politically, it must not forestall ambiguity and demand fixed erotic identities; it must acknowledge how desire changes over the life course and augurs for the liberation of desire, not its containment and repression.

NOTES

1. Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship," 402.
2. Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.*
3. D. López and Espiritu, "Panethnicity in the United States."
4. Ponce, *Identities in the Lesbian World.*
5. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 128.
6. Carlos Monsiváis as cited in Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho*, 126.
7. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest.*
8. Carrier, *De los Otros*; Almaguer, "Chicano Men."
9. Taylor, "El Ambiente"; R. M. Díaz, *Gay Latino Men*; Héctor Carrillo, *The Night Is Young.*
10. Schifter, *Lila's House*; Prieur, *Mama's House*; Aggleton, *Men Who Sell Sex to Other Men.*