

Not Just Laborers

Latina/o Claims of Belonging in the U.S. Heartland

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Since the 1990s, Latina/o populations have increasingly settled into a range of "new gateways." In the rural Midwest, recruitment by employers in meatpacking and other food processing industries has been a key factor leading to a growing Latina/o presence.¹ Other contributing factors include the militarization of the United States–Mexico border, the passage of restrictive policies (such as Proposition 187 in California) along with growing anti-immigrant sentiment in "old" gateways, social networks, lower cost of living and availability of affordable housing in new gateway communities, the desire to move away from areas of high crime and gang activity, the desire to live and raise kids in areas with better schools, and generally the desire for greater tranquility.²

In this chapter, I draw from ethnographic and interview data to examine how Latinas/os articulate the meanings of nationhood and of their own presence in a new gateway in the rural Midwest. My focus is on the discourses of Latinas/os who live and work in Perry, Iowa, a small town that had few Latinas/os prior to 1990, in a region that can be characterized as emblematic of white America. I ask, how are stories of the U.S. nation reproduced or interrupted by diverse Latina/o populations who have settled in Perry? How do Latinas/os in this small town make claims to community and nation? To what extent are they able to develop a sense of belonging? I argue that Perry, and new gateways in general, constitute a sort of last socio-spatial frontier of immigrant incorporation in the United States; they are the spaces in which the new border politics are embodied and enacted, where the sociopolitical boundaries of culture and nation are played out in and through everyday interactions.

Latinas/os in Dominant Representations of the United States

While Latinas/os arrive in the United States from many different countries in the vast regions of Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, and while they have varied cultures and diverse languages, U.S. institutions and mainstream cultural outlets often racialize and represent them as one monolithic group, with a single "Hispanic" culture. Furthermore, while Latinas/os have been part of U.S. history and integral to the nation's development since the mid-1800s, and while most Latinas/os—63 percent, according to the 2010 U.S. Census—are, in fact, Americans by birth, dominant representations and discourses frequently portray them as foreigners and recent arrivals.³ As Suzanne Oboler notes, "the ongoing exclusion of . . . historical minorities from the historical memory of the American imagined community means that Puerto Ricans and many second and later generations of Mexican Americans/Chicanos continue to be treated as second-class citizens when they are not perceived as newly arrived immigrants."⁴

This routine construction of Latinas/os as foreigners within U.S. public discourse is anchored on multiple elements, which include, notably, language, specifically the assumption that Latinas/os do not speak English, and also the belief that Latinas/os are unassimilable and forever foreign.⁵ These elements permeate the discourses through which, on a quotidian basis, individuals, the media, conservative politicians, a growing number of anti-immigrant groups, and even some scholars, place Latinas/os irremediably outside the boundaries of the United States. In so doing, the imagined unity of the United States is reaffirmed, and U.S. history and national space are mythologized as white-Anglo America. As Paul Allatson argues, "the U.S.A.'s imaginability is unique because of the particular ways by which hegemonic rhetoric disclaims certain sectors as non-, un-, or even anti-American. Such sectors provide the internal loci of disavowal required for the U.S.A. to be mythologized as a community. . . . Pivotal in this regard are the ways in which Latino populations have been selectively included in or excluded from, or imaginatively fixed as peripheral in or even disruptive to, an array of U.S. national myths and an associated conglomerate of longstanding official or governing cultural logics."⁶

Racialized and outright racist constructions of Latinas/os as not just different from "Americans" (i.e., White Americans) but alas, also inferior, have even cropped up packaged as research findings, as in the case of Jason Richwine's 2009 dissertation for Harvard University. In a column published by the Huffington Post, Jason Ward notes that Richwine's dissertation claimed to demonstrate that "Hispanic immigrants have substantially lower IQs than do Whites." Ward quotes

Richwine's dissertation: "No one knows whether Hispanics will ever reach IQ parity with whites, but the prediction that new Hispanic immigrants will have low-IQ children and grandchildren is difficult to argue against. From the perspective of Americans alive today, the low average IQ of Hispanics is effectively permanent."⁷ Richwine's arguments were anchored partly in old-fashioned biological racism: lower IQs among Hispanics in the United States are caused partly, he claimed, by genetics, though "the extent of [genetic] impact is hard to determine." There was also an element of "culture of poverty"⁸ in Richwine's arguments. He characterized "the growing Hispanic underclass" as "a socially isolated group of people for whom crime, welfare, labor force dropout, and illegitimacy are normal aspects of life." Assimilation into U.S. culture and values is, according to Richwine, the only thing that will save some Hispanics in later generations—specifically those who will go to U.S. schools, learn English, and in sum, abandon all things non-U.S.

Sloppy as Richwine's arguments are, even when they clearly reflect the same faulty and discredited thinking that characterized scientific racism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Richwine's dissertation was still supervised *and approved* by a scholarly committee at Harvard University, earning him a doctorate in public policy. Furthermore, Richwine's arguments were spread and ventilated as valid "research findings" in national media outlets. For example, on September 11, 2009, the *New York Times* cited Richwine's work in an "Idea of the Day" column focusing on Robert Putnam's controversial finding that "ethnic diversity isn't an unqualified good." As the credibility of Richwine's work, and other "reports" and proposals for immigration restriction informed by it, came under growing scrutiny, some, including ultraconservative pundit Rush Limbaugh, defended Richwine and his research. Limbaugh declared on his radio program: "So, now it's trash the messenger time. . . . You're not supposed to bring that kind of stuff up. You're not supposed to talk about it. It's not politically correct, even if it's true. You're not supposed to bring it up."⁹

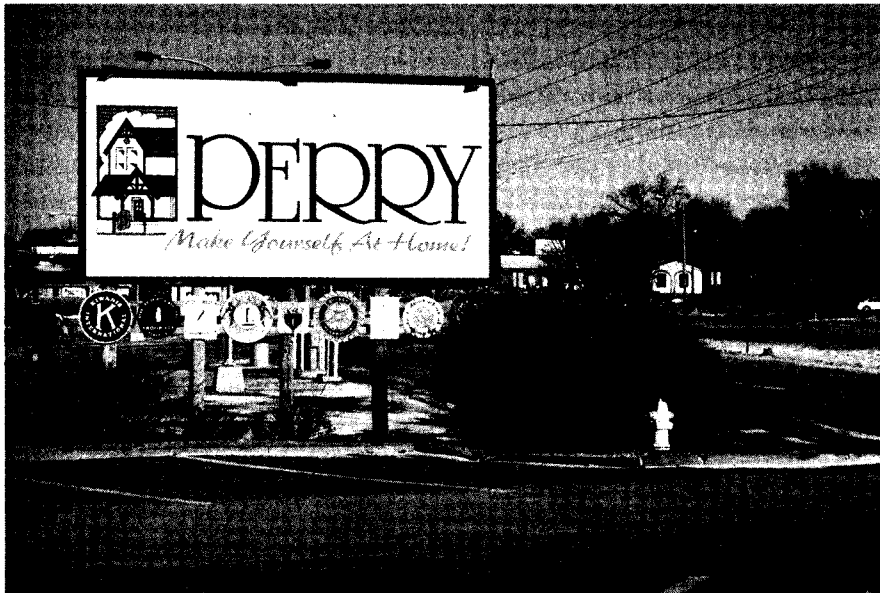
Others have similarly fanned the flames of anti-Latina/o sentiment using overtly racist claims.¹⁰ As a result, a climate of "Hispanophobia" has become entrenched throughout the nation.¹¹ This entrenchment is especially visible in the context of the Department of Homeland Security state, which has not only militarized the United States–Mexico border but has extended border politics to the heartland and beyond, through heightened immigration controls and practices such as massive raids in worksites and communities, and the deputizing of local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws.¹² As the Latina/o presence reaches new gateways throughout the nation and continues to grow, and as more Latinas/os face such dominant discourses and their consequences in community contexts, their responses will help alter the national character of the United States

through the renegotiation of the material and symbolic boundaries of culture and nation. How Latinas/os respond, how they speak back, has the potential to not only challenge “Hispanophobia” but also to interrogate and transform the social and political content of U.S. categories of race or ethnicity, class, nation, and citizenship.

The Study Site

Perry is a small meatpacking town of 7,702 residents located along the North Raccoon River, northwest of the city of Des Moines, in Central Iowa.¹³ There were few, if any, Latinas/os living in Perry prior to 1990. Census data show that the town had forty-seven Latina/o residents in 1990. After just two decades, Latinas/os have come to constitute 35 percent of the town’s total population. The “Latinization” of Perry is even more drastic and apparent if one looks at the younger segments of the town’s population. As of 2016, 50.1 percent of Perry’s elementary school students were Latino (National Center for Education Statistics).¹⁴

The demographic shift experienced in Perry has been driven to a great extent by restructuring of meatpacking and, more specifically, by the changes that such restructuring set forth in the local meatpacking plant. The plant first opened in



2.3.1 A welcome sign at the entrance of town invites visitors to “make themselves at home” in Perry, Iowa. Photo by Marta María Maldonado.

Perry in the 1920s, becoming a lead employer in subsequent decades.¹⁵ In the early decades of the plant's operations, its workforce consisted predominantly of local residents, the vast majority of whom were whites of European ancestry. In the 1980s, industry restructuring resulted in a change in the conditions associated with meatpacking jobs, as well as changes in who constituted the labor force. As a strategy to reduce labor costs, employers moved away from unionized labor and began aggressively recruiting Latina/o (and also some Asian) workers. Employers recruited Latinas/os from established gateways such as California and Texas. As the first Latinas/os began to take jobs in the plant, informal recruitment practices and social networks continued to replenish the workforce and enabled recruitment of other Latinas/os, including some who came to Perry directly from their countries of origin. Latinas/os have since become the primary low-wage labor force in this meatpacking town.¹⁶

Perry is an ideal site for exploring how ethnicity, nation, and identity are discursively articulated and experienced, and how narratives of community and nation are reproduced and/or interrupted by Latinas/os. For one, new gateways such as Perry constitute a sort of last geographical and sociocultural frontier of immigrant (and more broadly, of Latina/o) incorporation. Given the newness of the Latina/o presence in these spaces, long-term residents often experience demographic change as a "shock" and as a threat to community identity and quality of life.¹⁷ Additionally, in recent years, the rural Midwest and Iowa in particular have received much national media attention as the site of the most massive and visible anti-immigrant raid in U.S. history. As Étienne Balibar has noted, the border is everywhere. The geographic, sociopolitical, and cultural boundaries of the United States are enacted and contested in communities across the nation, with new gateways such as the rural Midwest being among the newest sites of heated border politics. Borders are not simply geopolitical—they are also embodied.¹⁸ In Perry, Latina/o bodies and accents stand out by virtue of being different from what is assumed to be the ethno-racial norm in "the heart of America." As more and more Latinas/os circulate in community spaces, the community landscape has been and continues to be reconfigured. Local supermarkets have incorporated products aimed at Latina/o consumers. Latina/o business establishments have opened up. Some non-Latina/o-owned businesses have begun incorporating Latina/o (or at least Spanish-speaking) personnel. The presence of Latina/o iconographies (use of Spanish in signs, newspapers, and in materials produced by schools and other local institutions), and of generally recognizable sights of Latina/o cultures also attest to the Latinization of the town. In this chapter I explore how Latinas/os who live and/or work in Perry make sense of this unfolding transformation, whether and how they make connections to place, and develop a sense of belonging.

Space and Senses of (Un)Belonging

Latina/o sense(s) of place, their sense of belonging in the U.S. communities where they live and labor, offer a useful vantage point from which to explore Latina/o articulations of the United States, and the meanings they afford to their own presence on U.S. soil. Most Latinas/os I interviewed characterized Perry as "a tranquil place" and highlighted similar factors when describing what attracted them there. The most recurrent attractive dimensions of Perry reported by Latinas/os include jobs, the availability of affordable housing, and the importance of being able to raise children away from the crime, violence, and gang activity that tends to characterize urban areas of established Latina/o settlement. However, the stories told by Latinas/os reveal differences among segments of the Latina/o population in their ability to make connections to place, and to develop a sense of belonging. Some who had lived in Perry for a relatively long time (since the early 1990s), and some who were second generation (who grew up in Perry), described their relationship with neighbors as cordial, spoke about Perry as their home, and reported feeling free to circulate through community spaces and to interact with community institutions. These participants were typically bilingual or had at least some English fluency. They were either U.S. citizens by birth or had legal resident status.

The majority of Latinas/os interviewed, however, spoke of Perry as a place where quality of life and the ability to live peacefully and "without trouble," require a kind of tiptoeing around community space, so as not to bother or cause discomfort to "Americanos," their White American neighbors. Indeed, one recurrent theme throughout the interviews entailed a range of day-to-day practices Latinas/os undertake to remain mostly invisible and unheard, in order to avoid trouble with neighbors and local authorities, and to defy discourses of immigrants as problems.¹⁹ Some rationalized this need to stay "below the radar" by noting that they are not in *their* country, but "in Americans' country." When one is in someone else's home, they explained, one should behave well. Benito's comments illustrate this position: "Sometimes we (Latinas/os) bring [to the United States], we could say, misbehaving, lack of respect for others, and this implies annoying the neighbor, the American community. . . . We are in their house and we don't know how to behave. [Interviewer: Do you feel that it is your house too?]. . . . It's more theirs . . . I feel like I'm a visitor, and as such, I should behave well. This is their country and you're not going to come here to cause them discomfort."²⁰

Not all those interviewed, however, shared this sense of "estando en casa ajena," or living "in someone else's home." Some expressed resentment of the discourses, practices, and contexts that make them feel that they do not belong in Perry or in the United States. Interviewees expressed such resentment in response to the

ways immigrants are often criminalized or represented as problems, and they contextualized this in relation to Latinas/os' role in the economic vitality of Perry and the larger U.S. economy. Recalling an anti-immigrant radio talk show discussion in which the caller argued that immigrants only come to take away jobs, Maria said, "they give us the jobs they don't want to do because they don't like to work as much as we do. They need our labor, and that is something good that one brings. If no Latinos were here in Perry, I don't believe IBP [Iowa Beef Processors] or what is now Tyson would be here. The same is true for construction work. . . . Hispanics are always the ones who do the hardest labor and I believe that in one way or another, we always contribute more to this community." Likewise, Jorge noted, "the Latino has helped the economy of this town. For example, the store Hy-Vee was small and they made it big. There's another one too called Fareway."²¹

Latina/o stories display an awareness of the ways in which dominant discourses as well as *the American gaze* render them not just raced, but also classed (a marginalized class), with consequences for everyday life in the community. Many expressed resistance to a range of practices and discourses that produce Latinas/os as always only laborers. This was evident in their discussions about being "more than just laborers," about a desire to be accepted and engaged by the community beyond their capacity as workers. Berta stated Latinas/os need Americans "to see us . . . not like we're invading this country, not like strangers, but like neighbors, like people who have just arrived but are not foreign to this country or to the community . . . and maybe for both cultures [Americans and Latinas/os] to get more involved with each other. . . . I would like to see more minorities working in different types of businesses—not just low-end businesses—I would like to see, more [Latina/o] teachers and administrators."²²

The narratives of Latinas/os in Perry display an awareness of what Alexandra Dobrowolsky has referred to as "instrumentalization." Instrumentalization can be defined as the social processes by which we come to think of and treat certain populations as instruments or tools. Dobrowolsky notes that instrumentalization entails a parallel process of "invisibilization." States, localities, and businesses call on certain labor practices, such as the massive recruitment of immigrant populations—especially those who are most vulnerable economically and politically by virtue of being undocumented—while simultaneously producing and maintaining conditions for the continued "invisibilization" of the laboring immigrant population.²³ The threat of deportability forces the undocumented, and those to whom they are connected by kin, to remain in the shadows, unable to denounce abuses or mistreatment, and without legal recourse or protection by the state.²⁴ Put differently, immigrants are at once wanted in particular contexts (as laborers), and unwanted and even rejected in other contexts, lacking realistic opportunities to live and work in the United States legally, being shrouded with a stigma of illegality and criminality by the media, and facing hostility in everyday encounters.

Across the United States, Latinas/os are incorporated into rural communities such as Perry as laborers first and foremost, always in a position of economic marginality, and mostly as an underclass.²⁵ The narratives of many Latinas/os in Perry suggest a keen awareness that they are recruited into tough, low-wage jobs and are accepted in Perry strictly as laborers, but that they are otherwise not accepted as full members of the community. Many Latinas/os expressed resentment because they saw themselves and other Latinas/os as contributors to the economic well-being of Perry and of the United States, but felt they were not regarded as neighbors and equals in community contexts. Several young men specifically related their sense of unbelonging in Perry to an awareness of instrumentalization. They felt pressured to conform to expectations of Latinas/os as always only laborers. Manny, who was nearing high school graduation, mentioned that he wanted to leave Perry because there are no attractive jobs, or at least no work he wanted to pursue. "There are just, like, two main jobs here in Perry, which is picking corn and Tyson." Similarly, Luisa, a mother, explained that her eldest son refused to get a job through the subcontracting job agency that many Latinas/os use when they first arrive in Perry. "He doesn't want to work there or at Tyson—he says that only when he has his papers [he will work]." Luisa noted that "he wants to go to college. . . . He says 'I'm not going to work at Tyson . . . I'm going to be able to look for work elsewhere.' He has his ideas, his dream is to become a police officer, but he doesn't have papers. He graduated [high school], and he can't continue his studies because we don't have the means to pay, so he can go on to college."²⁶ These young Latinos actively resist and reject instrumentalization and the pigeonholing of Latino males as manual laborers. They demand a different type of belonging, one in which Latina/o youths do not simply fill an underclass, but where they have full access to resources and opportunity.

Ethnographic observation also reveals the existence of "parallel worlds" in Perry.²⁷ Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os in Perry live, for the most part, segregated lives, with little opportunity for sustained interaction across ethno-racial lines. There are few everyday contexts where there is considerable interaction between Latina/o and those who Latinas/os refer to as "Americanos." Church communities are separated by language, and Latinas/os and "Americanos" work at different jobs and tend to practice civic engagement in different ways. In these ways, different ethno-racial segments of community, with their unique concerns, needs, and experiences as well as their ways of contributing to the community, remain invisible to each other. In fact, when I asked Latinas/os in Perry about their connections to community, they often appeared to interpret this to mean their connections to other Latinas/os in Perry, as if Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os belonged to separate and different communities.²⁸

One specific instance of parallel worlds takes the form of segregated labor practices that are spatialized and configured around ethnicity and immigrant status.

These segregated labor practices were consistently described by interviewees who worked at the local meat processing plant. Latina/o descriptions of that workplace reveal that whites occupy most, if not all, management positions. Several Latinas/os suggested that a given job's level of risk and strenuousness correlates with who performs that job. The most dangerous jobs, for instance, are undertaken during the night shift and are often performed by those without papers (unauthorized immigrants).²⁹ Segregated labor practices are one example of how the day-to-day production of parallel Latina/o and non-Latina/o worlds hinges, in part, on different timing for daily activities and circulation through community spaces. Further evidence of the existence of parallel worlds in Perry is apparent in Latinas/os' descriptions of their leisure activities. Latinas/os (especially immigrants, but also those who have family members who are undocumented) spoke of going fishing or picnicking in isolated places, where they were not likely to encounter other people, and where they were not likely to call attention to themselves and get in trouble.³⁰

Altogether, Latina/o descriptions of their lives in Perry show how they see themselves as contributors to the material well-being of the United States, and how, on that basis, they make claims to community space. They allude to work as a key nation-building process in which they are full and vital participants, as they not only work hard, but often tackle the toughest jobs that are unwanted by most Americans. However, Latinas/os in Perry reject characterizations and sociocultural scripts that confine them to low-wage work and include them in the United States solely as a marginalized class of manual laborers. They call for full inclusion in all spheres and ranks of economic, social, and political life ("I would like to see more [Latinas/os and minorities] working in different types of businesses—not just low-end businesses—I would like to see, more teachers and administrators"). In the following section, I examine how Latinas/os also interrogate and reject dominant visions of the United States as a monocultural, monolingual nation.

Talking Back, *en español*

Nativist politics in the post-1970s era of U.S. immigration have accorded a great deal of attention to the issue of language. An insistence on monolingualism and the privileging of the English language have been key concerns within the nativist agenda of recent decades in the United States. At the broader systemic level, language itself has been racialized, much in the same way as have been those who speak it. Dominant cultural politics have entailed the devaluing—sometimes even the demonizing—of the Spanish language. The use of Spanish, the mixing of Spanish and English into the hybrid Spanglish, and Latina/o accents have all been racialized as inferior within the U.S. sonic and linguistic landscapes. U.S.

institutions, including schools, the media, and scholars in a variety of disciplines have often assigned negative characteristics to Spanish usage, and frequently invoke perceptions of Spanish language dominance among Latinos as explanation for their marginalized position in U.S. society.³¹ As Ofelia García argues, "the Spanish language and bilingualism have become markers of being non-white, of being 'out of place,' thus minoritizing the position of U.S. Latinos and excluding them. . . . No longer viewed as the language of original settlers, or even of the conquered and colonized who might be entitled to language and civil rights, but characterized as the language of foreign immigrants, often undocumented, and blamed for the poverty and the low level of education of U.S. Latinos, Spanish is held in contempt in political and educational circles."³²

At the micro level of day-to-day interactions between individuals, and at the level of institutional practices, the regulating and policing of linguistic landscapes and boundaries is a central aspect of community and nation building. The state of Iowa has formalized English-only as a purportedly unifying force. In 2002, the Iowa General Assembly passed the Iowa English Language Reaffirmation Act (IELRA), mandating English as the state's "official" language. Representative Dwayne Alons, of Hull, who led the language initiative in the Iowa House, compared the state to a salad: "When you put together your salad, the one item that really brings it together is a dressing. For Iowa, I believe English is that one ingredient for us."³³ The law mandates English-only in the printing of all government documents and forms, except for driver's education materials, trade and tourism documents, and documents discussing the rights of victims of crimes, criminal defendants, and constitutional issues. In Perry, demographic change has entailed the remapping of the linguistic, and more broadly, sonic landscape.³⁴ The sights and sounds of Spanish are often coded negatively and managed through practices of linguistic surveillance in the dominant cultural context. There is a spatialized everyday policing of language boundaries. Latinas/os who speak Spanish in some community spaces, specifically in those spaces in which conversations in Spanish enter the radar of "Americans," such as schools and hospitals, report being reproached for speaking Spanish and instructed to speak English. For example, Doris noted that speaking Spanish made her feel vulnerable to the constant gaze of her "American" neighbors. "Wherever we went," Doris noted, "I was a bit scared of not knowing English because the Americans would laugh at us, and when you'd go someplace to eat they'd keep staring at you, and that would make me mad. . . . They'd be staring at me while I ate, and if I went to the store they'd keep staring."³⁵

In effect, Latinas/os who were primary speakers of Spanish articulated being scolded by "Americans" for speaking Spanish across community and employment contexts in Perry, and they explained experiencing Perry as an English-only context. The practices they described constitute not only a kind of linguistic boundary surveillance, but also a type of everyday violence that seeks to render immigrants silent

and invisible. Interestingly, discussions about such policing of language practices were frequently contextualized by Latinas/os in relation to the sense of instrumentalization described earlier. Several Latinas who worked at a health clinic reported being yelled at and admonished for speaking Spanish. These women specifically expressed resentment about how Americans silence Latinas/os and deny them a right to speak Spanish, while also actively seeking out and recruiting Latinas/os for the most labor-intensive and lowest-skilled jobs. Latina/o interviewees consistently expressed an understanding that their labor was valued while their presence was devalued, an experience that had implications for their sense of belonging. For example, Jacinta explained that “in both of the places where I’ve worked here there was a lot of racism. . . . In the free classes [training] that were offered most of us were Hispanic, and [the personnel] didn’t want us there, they forbade us from speaking Spanish [when we were] working, and also in class we were not allowed to speak Spanish. . . . One person was scolded for speaking Spanish.” Jacinta experienced linguistic discrimination, even in a context where Latinas/os constituted the majority.³⁶ Similarly, Doris, pointed to the speaking of Spanish as something that resulted in a kind of hypervisibility for her and other Spanish-speaking Latinas/os.



2.3.2 A Salvadoran restaurant on Second Street, next to a Spanish Learning Center. Photo by Marta María Maldonado.

She emphasized how the comfort with which she circulated as a "Spanish-speaking immigrant" in California, where she had lived before, has turned into discomfort and even fear in Perry. She noted a great deal of fear associated with being the object of unwanted attention due to her lack of English skills. Notably, she connected the unwanted attention for speaking Spanish that is directed at her in Perry to a continual surveillance of her presence at restaurants and stores.³⁷

The interviews with Latinas/os show that linguistic practices are enacted within a broader sonic or auditory community landscape. In their daily lives in Perry, Latinas/os routinely pay attention to Americans' perceptions of music and "noise." Some spoke of practicing a kind of noise regulation, or even muteness, at home, in their cars, and in public spaces, as a way to live peacefully and not get into trouble with "Americanos." For example, Josefina noted, "I've lived next door to Americans, and I've never had problems with them because . . . everyone lives their life. . . . This is their country and you're not gonna come here to make them uncomfortable with all that music, and all of that stuff that makes them uncomfortable." Similarly, Maria spoke about how she tries to be a good neighbor, "you just have to not mess with them, simply don't be playing music. . . . It's true, each one is in their property, but you're not going to make other people who don't like your music uncomfortable. And more as a Hispanic, where we play music so loud that . . . it's deafening. (*Laughs*)." ³⁸

Other interviews were less concerned with disrupting their white American neighbors. For example, Hector noted that "if we're neighbors and you don't like loud music, sorry, this is who we are, if you don't like it, move elsewhere—And they are moving elsewhere!" Likewise, Luisa commented, "40 percent of Anglos don't know us very well and they prefer to keep their distance. . . . Many don't like noise, but for us it's not noise: it's happiness." Benjamin also pointed to the contest over sonic landscapes as an area of tension between Latinos and non-Latinas/os in Perry. "The American is jealous in the sense that they say we take away from them," Benjamin explained. "For example, they're mad because we took away their radio [station]. What's now the Spanish radio [station] used to be an Anglo radio station, and it got bought [by Latinas/os] and taken to Des Moines, and they're mad about that." ³⁹

Benjamin's remarks are a reminder that the contest over soundscape also has institutional and political dimensions. The emergence of Latina/o media in Perry, in particular, a radio station, has relevance beyond the strictly cultural. Latinos alluded to "the Spanish station" as a source of information that allows them to ascertain and navigate locally the threat of deportability, and through which they learn about community resources relevant to their needs. Petra shared the following.

The majority [of Latinos] live with fear and without information. But we have the radio, which is an excellent means of communication. . . . We have it playing all day long, it keeps us informed about raids, and above all else, about everything that is happening with immigration. There was an attorney that came to Des Moines every Monday for an hour and a half, taking calls, answering any question one had.⁴⁰

Pedro told a similar story.

On the radio we heard that there was a sheriff that used to stop Latinos [who were driving] between Perry and Des Moines, and he was found out—and we learned about it on the radio, that there were going to be some meetings that people who ever encountered problems with this guy should attend.⁴¹

These examples regarding Latinas/os' need to remain invisible in a context of negatively coded hypervisibility, and their concomitant reliance on radio broadcasts as an informational, culturally relevant, and culturally and legally transgressive tool, suggest that Dolores Inés Casillas is right when she argues that

it is the need to seek legal advice and documentation without being visually recognized that privileges (for Latinos) the medium of sound. . . .

U.S.-Spanish language radio is an acoustic tool for listeners, specifically its most legally vulnerable immigrant listeners, to navigate the U.S. immigration system during moments of political discrimination and heightened security. . . .

In the face of visual-based surveillance and legislative tactics, Spanish-language broadcasting offers a transgressive possibility to patrol *la migra* in both its physical and its bureaucratic manifestations.⁴²

The stories shared by Latinas/os challenge the imposition of English-only through various practices including linguistic and sonic surveillance. These discriminatory and silencing procedures are incongruent with the demographic reality of Perry and the United States, and further, are practices that deny Latinas/os the space to be themselves fully, in their cultural complexity and specificity within U.S. communities. While some Latinas/os monitor their use of Spanish and the emission, so to speak, of Latina/o sounds, as a strategy to survive and coexist in community, others make overt claims to space through what may be characterized as a sonic takeover of community.

Conclusions and Implications

The Perry example shows that, while there are differences among Latinas/os in the extent to which they see themselves as belonging in the rural Midwest and in the United States, many challenge dominant discourses and practices that welcome them as laborers and yet deny them full belonging as members and contributors

to community and nation. Overwhelmingly, Latinas/os in Perry described their lives as lives of work. In their accounts of daily activities, they recognize themselves as vital contributors to the material, economic foundation of Perry and indeed of the nation. There is a discernible sense of pride in Latina/o descriptions of their commitment to work in the United States. Significantly, several Latinas/os punctuated that the fact that Latinas/os are willing to tackle hard jobs (jobs that Americans often do not want) does not mean they are disinterested in or incapable of tackling better jobs, or that they are content simply being constricted to manual labor. As Berta, quoted above, noted, "I would like to see more (Latinas/os and) minorities working in different types of businesses—not just low-end businesses—I would like to see, more (Latina/o) teachers and administrators."⁴³ Young Latinas/os, including several who are Americans by birth, expressed their rejection of what they saw as a pervasive expectation in the community and in the overall society that they become workers in the local meatpacking plant, or low-wage laborers elsewhere. Young males especially relayed a keen awareness of such expectation, and their desire and intention to not fulfill it.

Further, Latinas/os in Perry, independently of age or length of residence in Perry or in the United States, often interrogated the incorporation of Latinas/os into the country strictly as a marginalized class of workers, while otherwise being denied their full humanity, with its particular cultural manifestations. From Latinas/os own accounts, this denial of full humanity takes multiple forms, ranging from a context of reception that makes them uncomfortable when they circulate throughout the community as Latina/o-looking, Latina/o-sounding bodies, to downright hostility, surveillance, and persecution associated with the extension of border politics to the heartland, and the racialization of Latinas/os as criminals and "illegals." To this point, Latinas/os spoke about wanting "Americans" to see them and engage them, not as strangers, but as neighbors.

I interpret these recurrent themes as a critique of the racialized class relations implicit within dominant visions of the nation as a whole, and as the starting point for an alternative vision of the United States and of rural America from a Latina/o perspective. Across industries, regions, and communities, the United States relies heavily on Latina/o labor for its everyday functioning and prosperity. Latinas/os take those jobs others do not want, jobs that would remain vacant, productivity that would be lost, were it not for Latina/o workers.⁴⁴ The discourses articulated and embodied by growing numbers of Latinas/os in Perry (and arguably, in other similar communities across the country) bring to the fore the question of how dynamic and contested relations of race, ethnicity, and class affect the structure and cultural content of the United States. They specifically point to the contradiction inherent in inviting and recruiting Latinas/os to perform jobs in the United States, while simultaneously and systematically precluding them from living and

participating fully in community. As discussed, most Latinas/os interviewed in Perry articulated a vision of the nation in which they are included as integral, not just to the economic vitality, but also to the sociocultural and political fabric of communities and the nation. The case of Perry also suggests that a community's sonic landscape is a key arena in which the cultural and linguistic boundaries of the nation are contested on a quotidian basis. Latinas/os spoke about choosing to regulate (or not) the volume and type of music and noise emerging from their homes and cars, and the sound of their interactions with others (volume of conversations, the language in which they speak), as a way to make claims to place and belonging in Perry. Several Latinas/os who were recently arrived described Perry as a site in which English is dominant and there is little room for linguistic diversity. In fact, they described an everyday policing of language boundaries in which they were reprimanded through hostile words or stares for speaking Spanish. They rejected the monoculturalist vision of the United States in which such policing practices are anchored. Further, they criticized these silencing practices as symptomatic of instrumentalization and of the dehumanizing of Latinas/os in the United States.

The lived experiences of Latinas/os in Perry illustrate that the content and meaning of the heartland and of the nation itself are neither fixed nor stable, but rather contested and always in flux. Community spaces across the United States are always contingent and becoming—a reflection of historically specific social relations and “stories so far.” As the “Latinization of America” continues to unfold, the stories embodied and told by Latinas/os bespeak a larger story about social relations of power and about sociocultural change as necessarily formative of community and nation. In the course of ongoing and rapid demographic change, dominant notions of community and national identity are likely to be challenged, complicated, resisted, and reshaped from the margins, in part through the everyday practices and from the perspectives of transcultural subjects.

Notes

1. Lourdes Gouveia and Donald Stull, “Dances with Cows: Beefpacking’s Impact on Garden City, Kansas, and Lexington, Nebraska,” in *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small-Town America*, ed. Donald D. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1995), 85–107; Nancy Naples, *Economic Restructuring and Racialization: Incorporation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the Rural Midwest*, Working Paper 7, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at UC San Diego, 2000; Mark Grey and Anne Woodrick, “Latinos Have Revitalized Our Community: Mexican Migration and Anglo Responses in Marshalltown, Iowa,” in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, ed. Victor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León (New York: Russell Sage, 2005), 133–54; and William Kandel and Emilio Parrado, “Restructuring of the US Meat Processing Industry and New Hispanic Migrant Destinations,” *Population and Development Review* 31, no. 3 (2005): 447–71.

2. See, for example, Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Chiara Capoferro, "The New Geography of Mexican Immigration," in Zúñiga and Hernández-León, *New Destinations*, 1–20; Rubén Hernández-León and Víctor Zúñiga, "Making Carpet by the Mile: The Emergence of a Mexican Immigrant Community in an Industrial Region of the U.S. Historic South," *Social Science Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2000): 49–66; Douglas S. Massey, ed., *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008); and Katherine Fennelly and Helga Leitner, *How the Food Processing Industry Is Diversifying Rural Minnesota*, Working Paper 59, Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 2002.

3. Rogelio Sáenz, "Latinos in America 2010," *Population Bulletin Update* (December 2010). An example of Latinas/os being characterized as "foreign" is that neither Mexican Americans nor Puerto Ricans have been fully accepted as U.S. citizens despite their history as laborers and property holders on land now under U.S. control. Mexicans have been on U.S. soil since 1848, when a large portion of Mexican land was made U.S. territory, and have been massively recruited as laborers since the beginning of the twentieth century. Similarly, large shares of the Puerto Rican population were incorporated as laborers for various industries across the United States immediately following U.S. intervention on the island in 1898.

4. Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 171.

5. Linda Martin Alcoff, "Latinos beyond the Binary," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 47, no. 2 (2009): 112–28; Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 289.

6. Paul Allatson, *Latino Dreams: Transcultural Traffic and the U.S. National Imaginary* (New York: Rodopi, 2002), 24.

7. Jon Ward, "Jason Richwine Dissertation on Low Hispanic IQ Puts Heritage on Defensive," *Huffington Post*, May 8, 2013.

8. The "culture of poverty" idea was first advanced by anthropologist Oscar Lewis based on his studies of poor Mexican and Puerto Rican communities. In a nutshell, the culture of poverty "theory" presumes that the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the poor are what leads them to and keeps them in poverty. Lewis argued the burdens of poverty lead to the formation of an autonomous subculture, as children are socialized into behaviors and attitudes that perpetuate their inability to escape the underclass. Lewis's ideas have long been widely critiqued and discredited by scholars from a variety of disciplines—see, for example, Jack Roach and Orville Gurslin, "An Evaluation of the Concept 'Culture of Poverty,'" *Social Forces* 45, no. 3 (1965): 383–92; Eleanor Burke Leacock, ed., *The Culture of Poverty: A Critique* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1971); Paul Gorski, "The Myth of the Culture of Poverty," *Poverty and Learning* 65, no. 7 (2008): 32–36.

9. *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, *Premiere Radio Networks*, broadcast May 9, 2013.

10. See, for example, Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Harper Perennial 1996); Patrick Buchanan, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).