

The Latino Imaginary

MEANINGS OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY



Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Chicago (c. 1995)

(Photo by Mariba Alicea, courtesy *Diálogo* magazine)

Is that Hispanic or Latino? What's in a name? A bewildered public puzzles over alternative signifiers, and even over who is being so designated, and how. "What do we call them? What do they want to be called? What do they call themselves?" Or, as the title of a thoughtful article on just this problem of megalabels has it, "What's the Problem with 'Hispanic'? Just Ask a 'Latino.'"¹

The broadest identifying term, of course, long used as shorthand even by many Latinos themselves, has been "Spanish," as in Spanish restaurant or Spanish television, where the idea of a unifying language culture conspires with the suggestion of Iberian origins and characteristics. The ideological undertones of that label, which are of course retained in slight variation in both "Hispanic" and "Latino," go unquestioned, as does the reality that many of those so designated do not even speak Spanish as a first language, or at all. The need for elastic and flexible usages stretches the field of reference so far that Spaniards, and even Italians and French, sometimes find their place under that hopelessly porous umbrella. The signifying net is cast so wide that what would seem the defining experiences, migration and resettlement, become of secondary importance, and all of Latin America is swept conveniently into the "Hispanic" bin. Or, to complicate the picture beyond recognition, there is even the suggestion that "Latinos" be used "to refer to those citizens from the Spanish-speaking world living in the United States" and "Hispanics" to "those living elsewhere."²

With all the slippages and evident arbitrariness, though, what would seem a terminological free-for-all actually does mark off limits and contexts, and pressing issues of power. "Where I come from, in New Mexico,

nobody uses Latino, most people never even heard the term. We're Mexicanos, Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Raza, Hispanic, but never Latino. Anyone who comes around talking about Latino this or Latino that is obviously an outsider." Or, from a contrary perspective, it is "Hispanic" that raises the red flag: "Hispanic? For me, a Hispanic is basically a sellout, *un vendido*. Anyone who calls himself Hispanic, or refers to our community as Hispanic, just wants to be an American and forget about our roots."

Bits of conversation like these point up the range of contention over the choice of words to name a people, a culture, a community.³ Behind the war of words, of course, there lurks the real battle, which has to do with attitudes, interpretations, and positions. In the dismissive indifference of many Americans there is often that undertone of annoyance which, when probed a little further, only turns out to be a cover for other, submerged emotions like ignorance, fear, and of course disdain. The gaps among Latinos or Hispanics themselves can be as polarized as they appear here, with one usage thoroughly discrediting the other. But usually the options are more flexible, operational, and mediated by a whole span of qualifying terms, tones, and situations. And over against those who use the words at all, there are many Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Cubans, or Dominicans who have no use for any such catchall phrases and would rather stick to distinct national designations.⁴

Yet this disparity over nomenclature, sharp as it is in the case of Latinos, should not be mistaken for a total lack of consensus or collective identity, nor as proof that any identification of the group or "community" is no more than a label imposed from outside, and above. Regardless of what anyone chooses to name it, the Latino or Hispanic community exists because for much of the history of the hemisphere, and multiplying exponentially the closer we approach the present, people have moved from Latin America to the United States, while portions of Latin America have been incorporated into what has become the United States. Along with their increase in numbers there has also been a deepening of their impact, real and potential, on the doings, and the destiny, of this country.

It is becoming clear that any discussion of an "American community" must be inclusive of Latinos and cognizant of the existence of a "Latino community" intrinsic to historical discourses about U.S. culture. The real challenge, though, is that the Latino presence makes it necessary to recognize that the very meaning of the word, the concept of *community* itself, is relative according to the perspective or position of the group in question:

there is both a "Latino community" and a "community" in the Latino sense of the word.

Comunidad: the Spanish word, even more clearly than the English, calls to mind two of the key terms—*común* and *unidad*—in the conceptualization of this notoriously elusive idea. What do we have in "common," and what "unites" us, what are our commonalities and what makes for our unity? It is important to note that though the two terms point in the same semantic direction they are not synonymous, and their apparent coupling in the same word, *comunidad*, is not a redundancy. For while *común* refers to sharing—that is, those aspects in the cultures of the various constitutive groups that overlap—the sense of *unidad* is that which bonds the groups above and beyond the diverse particular commonalities. The point of this admittedly rather willful deconstruction is, once again, that the Latino "experience," the group's demonstrable reality and existence, includes but is not coterminous with its self-consciousness: *común* stands for the community *in* itself, while *unidad* refers to the community *for* itself, the way that it thinks, conceives of, imagines itself.

The "Latino community" is an "imagined community"—to summon Benedict Anderson's well-worn though useful phrase—a compelling present-day example of a social group being etched and composed out of a larger, impinging geopolitical landscape.⁵ The role of the social imagination and the imaginary in the self-conception of nationally, ethnically, and "racially" kindred groups is of course central, but must always be assessed with a view toward *how* they are being imagined (i.e., from "within" or "without") and to what ends and outcomes. Distinguishing between interior and exterior perspectives is thus a necessary step, and given that in the case of Latinos the outside representation is the dominant one, any instance of cultural expression by Latinos themselves may serve as a healthy corrective to the ceaseless barrage of stereotypes that go to define what is "Latino" in the public mind.

But the marking off of "us" and "them," though the foundational exercise in "imagining" communities, has its own limits, as it becomes evident that there is from both angles as much blurring involved as clear and meaningful bounding. Vexing questions like who's Latino and who isn't, and what kind of Latina(o)(s) we are talking about, quickly press in on any too facile dichotomy. Beyond the issue of names and labels, and even who is using them, there are differing levels or modes of meaning simultaneously at work in the very act of apprehending and conceptualizing the

"community" and "identity" in question. "Latino" or "Hispanic" not only mean different things to different people; they also "mean" in different ways and refer to different dimensions of collective social experience.

I would suggest that by distinguishing between a *demographic*, an *analytic*, and an *imaginary* approach to Latino unity and diversity it is possible effectively to complicate and deepen our understanding of cultural expression, identity, and politics without becoming paralyzed by the sheer complexity and contradictoriness of it all. Whether Latinos or Hispanics are thought of as an enumerated aggregate of people, an analytically differentiated set of constituent groups, or a historically imagined cultural "community" or "ethnoscape," is at the core of ongoing debates and confusions.⁶ Not that these diverse conceptualizations are mutually exclusive, nor are they to be considered in any mechanically sequential or hierarchical way. On the contrary, as I seek to describe them it will be obvious that all three are necessary, and that they are complementary. That is, they are really different methodological and epistemological emphases rather than discrete forms of explanation. But scrutinizing them in hypothetical discreteness not only helps understand their interrelation but may also enhance our analysis and appreciation of the voices and images of Latino art.⁷

The demographic conception of Latinos, or of a "Latino community," refers to an aggregate of people whose existence is established on the basis of numerical presence: count them, therefore they are. Here Latinos—or more commonly at this level, Hispanics—comprise not so much a community as a "population," a quantified slice of the social whole. As limited as such a means of identification may seem, it is nevertheless the dominant one, serving as it does both government bureaucracies and corporate researchers in setting public taste and policy. This definition of the Hispanic community by official measurement is thus inherently instrumental, since the immediate goal is really to identify, not so much social groups or lines of cultural unity and diversity, but voting blocs and consumer markets. From this angle, Latinos appear as a homogeneous, passive mass, a "target" public, with any concern for internal differentiation or possible social agency itself geared toward those same pragmatic goals of electoral or commercial utility.⁸

But it is not only campaign managers and admen for whom Latinos are, first of all, numbers. The labels and tallies they arrive at for their convenience—be it Hispanic or Latino, at whatever percentile—are made visible, credible, "real," by means of a whole sensorium of images, sounds, and fla-

vors. The demographic label thus aims not only to buy the Hispanic package but to sell it; it targets not only potential customers but merchandise, or even movers of merchandise. Whatever the particular purpose, though, the means and result are usually the same—stereotyped images offering up distorted, usually offensive, and in any case, superficial portrayals of Latino people.⁹ And these are the only images of Latinos that many people in the United States, and around the world, are ever exposed to, which makes it difficult for the public to gauge their accuracy. It is important to recognize these images as products not just of opportunist politicians or greedy marketers but also of the demographic mentality itself. Numbers call forth labels, which in turn engender generic, homogenized representations—stereotypes. According to the same logic, holding economic and political power relies on the work of both the census-taker and the cameraman.

The most loudly proclaimed finding of this aggregative endeavor, by now a demographic truism of our times, is that Hispanics are the nation's "fastest-growing minority," on course to become the "largest" minority at some (variously defined) point early in the coming century. Whether greeted by alarmist jitters or triumphalist joy, this momentous news item rests on an abiding confidence in the validity of the count, and an unquestioned consensus that like social units are being summed and demarcated from unlike, incompatible ones. The often unspoken allusion, of course, is to African Americans, who are thus cast as the main rival in the numbers race and the main instance, among "minorities," of the non-Hispanic other. Asian Americans, too, are in the running, with all lines of historical interaction and congruency again erased from the calculation. In both cases, it is clear how tools of advertent inclusion and conjunction may at the same time serve as wedges between and among groups whose social placement and experience in the United States could just as well, given a different political agenda, point to commonalities as to differences. The tactics of divide and conquer are still prominent in the arsenal of power, and nowhere more so in the contemporary equation than in the talk of Hispanics as undifferentiated numeraries.

The process of adding up is accompanied by the need to break down, to identify not the sum total but the constituent parts. The analytical approach—the business, above all, of positivist social science—is bent on de-aggregation; it presumes to move closer to Latino "reality" by recognizing and tabulating the evident diversity of Latino groups and experiences. Such varying factors as country of origin, time in the United States (generation),

region or place of settlement, occupation and socioeconomic status, educational background, and the like, move into focus as the only meaningful units or vantages of analysis, with any cohesion among Latinos referred to only in the plural: typically, there are only Latino "populations," groups, or at best "communities."

This analytical account of Latino multiplicity is indeed often helpful in counteracting stereotypes and monolithic categories, and the elaborate discussion of "modes of incorporation" certainly allows for a sense of the dynamic relation among a too hastily posited aggregate of structurally differentiated social experiences.¹⁰ But resting as it overwhelmingly does on socially constructed statistical evidence and an objectification of collective historical actors, it is still close kin to the demographic approach. Even the census evidences an increasing official need to break the composite down, with "Hispanics" now grouped into Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban-origin, Central and South American origin, and "Other Hispanic," subcategories which then serve as the basis for much quantitative research. Commercially geared demographics are also far along in their analytical enterprise, having persuasively charted both a "pan-Hispanic" as well as regionally differentiated Los Angeles, Miami, and New York centered markets, along with countless other target-specific variables.

To this extent, and in many social scientific studies, the pluralizing "analysis" of Latino reality is still dealing with a community "in itself," constructed in terms of relatively inert categories with their appropriate labels and generic representations. The focus on "labor market experience" as the "key factor in the structuring of [Hispanic] ethnicity," for example, while an invaluable starting point for differentiating social positions among the groups and subgroups in question, leaves unaddressed what would seem the crucial issue of "the complexities of the interaction between social and ethnic identities," that is, the "interdependency between socioeconomic placement and cultural (self-) identification."¹¹

Ultimately, the limitation of analytical methodologies of this kind is not the act of differentiation itself, but a failure to differentiate among differences, and among kinds and levels of difference. For example, the vast research on Latinos as part of immigration studies, perhaps the most prevalent paradigm for treating Latino social experience, tends to stumble in the face of the glaring fact that the majority of Latinos, comprising the largest national groups within the composite, are not even "immigrants" in any quantifiable or recognized sense: because of their citizenship status, Puerto

Ricans are not counted among the nation's immigrant populations, and a large share of the Mexican Americans are here not because they crossed the border, but because "the border crossed them." Characteristically, this most severe and telling divide among the Latino pan-ethnicity, the difference between immigrant and "resident minority" Latinos having much to do with issues of colonial status and class, tends to elude even the most thorough and cautious scrutiny of Latino realities, which as a result arrive at misleading conclusions. Even historically informed and critically "balanced" accounts of Latino immigration and communities, such as those of Roberto Suro and Rubén G. Rumbaut among others, lose interpretive cogency because of this overly "objectivist" method and inattention to such structurally larger but less readily quantifiable dimensions of contrastive analysis, and lead to continual equivocation and inconsistency—like that of Rumbaut—as to the validity of any unifying concept at all, or, in the case of Suro's *Strangers Among Us* (1998), to an inadequately critical relation to "culture of poverty" and "underclass" theory in speaking of "Puerto Rican-like poverty," a central message of his book being that "the entire nation will suffer if the the Puerto Rican fate is repeated" by "today's Latino newcomers."¹²

Yet Latinos are also social agents and not just passive objects in this analyzing process, nor do they tend to sidestep the task of "telling Hispanics apart." Consciously and intuitively, personally and collectively, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans, and each of the other groups most often project their own respective national backgrounds as a first and primary axis of identity and on that basis, fully mindful of differences and distances, negotiate their relation to some more embracing "Latino" or "Hispanic" composite. Here the force of analysis, rather than an extension of demographic aggregation and labeling, stands in direct opposition to it, an instinctive reaction against instrumental measuring and its pernicious consequences. Of course, there are interests involved here too, but in this case they are the interests of the "object" of analysis itself, the Latino peoples and communities.

From a Latino perspective understood in this way, analysis is guided above all by lived experience and historical memory, factors that tend to be relegated by prevailing sociological approaches as either inaccessible or inconsequential. Rather than as slices or cross-sections, the various groups and their association may be seen in dynamic, relational terms, with traditions and continuities weighing off subtly against changes and reconfigu-

rations. At this level of conceptualization, differences are drawn among and within the groups not so as to divide or categorize for the sake of more efficient manipulation, but to assure that social identities, actions, and alliances are adequately grounded in the specific historical experiences and cultural practices that people recognize as their own, with appropriate attention to the sometimes sharp class and racial cleavages that always cross-cut any too hasty presumption of equivalence. The logic is that solidarity can only be posited when the lines of social differentiation are fully in view, but the goal, nevertheless, is solidarity.

It is this critical, historically based approach to diverse and changing Latino realities that underlies and sustains what I refer to as the "Latino imaginary," another sense or conceptual space of pan-group aggregation that is too often and too easily confused with the official, demographic version. Not that calculation is itself foreign to an "imagined" Latino community; in fact it is at this epistemological level that the very act and authority of counting and measuring become issues of vital social contestation. The "imaginary" in this sense does not signify the "not real," some make-believe realm oblivious to the facts, but a projection beyond the "real" as the immediately present and rationally discernible. It is the "community" represented "for itself," a unity fashioned creatively on the basis of shared memory and desire, congruent histories of misery and struggle, and intertwining utopias.

The Latino historical imaginary refers, first of all, to home countries in Latin America, the landscapes, life-ways, and social struggles familiar, if not personally, at least to one's family and people, and in any case indispensable to Latinos in situating themselves in U.S. society. Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba are very different points of imaginative reference, to be sure, and again, it is always through their particular national optics that Latinos tend to envision some generic Latin American or Latino "We." But the features of José Martí's "nuestra América" do stand out in the Latino historical unconscious in that long narrative of Spanish and North American colonial conquest, the enslavement and subjugation of indigenous and African peoples, the troubled consolidation of nations under the thumb of international power, and the constant migratory movement of peoples, cultures, and things which has been attendant to all aspects of the Latino saga. For Latinos in the United States, the passage to, and from, "el Norte" assumes such prominence in the social imaginary that migration is often confounded with life itself, and any fixity of the referential home-

land gives way to an image of departure and arrival, the abandoned and the reencountered.

This nomadic, migratory dimension of the Latino imaginary is anchored in the historical reasons for coming here, and in the placement assigned most Latinos in U.S. society. Unlike earlier waves of European immigrants, Latinos typically move to this country as a direct result of the economic and political relationship of their homelands, and home region, to the United States. However much Cuba, Mexico, and Puerto Rico may vary in status and social arrangement—and if we add the Dominican Republic and Colombia the range could hardly be wider in present-day geopolitics—huge portions of their respective populations have come to live in the United States because of the gravitational pull of metropolitan power and dependency at work in each and all of their histories. Since World War II, its economy on a course of shrinkage and transition rather than unbridled expansion, the United States has been tapping its colonial reserves to fill in its lower ranks, and its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors have proven to be the closest and most abundant sources at hand.

Colonial relations of hemispheric inequality underlie not only the historical logic of Latino migration but also the position and conditions of Latinos here in this society. Differential treatment is of course rampant, as has been dramatically evident in recent years in the contrasting fates of Cubans and Haitians arriving on the same rafts from their beleaguered home islands. Yet today even many Cuban Americans, recent arrivals and long-standing citizens alike, are finding the red carpets and gold-paved streets illusory at best, and are coming to resent being cited as the exception to the rule of Latino disadvantage. For the Latino imaginary, even when the relatively "privileged" Cuban Americans are reckoned in, rests on the recognition of ongoing oppression and discrimination, racism and exploitation, closed doors and patrolled borders. Whether sanguine or enraged, this recognition structures the negotiated relations among Latinos, between Latinos and the dominant culture, and with other groups such as African Americans and Native Americans.

Memory fuels desire: the past as imagined from a Latino perspective awakens an anticipatory sense of what is, or might be, in store. The alarmist hysteria over the prospect of "America's fastest-growing minority" overrunning the society is directed not only at Latino people themselves but at the ground shift in power relations implied in that new calculus. For the desire that these demographic trends awaken in Latinos is directed first

of all toward recognition and justice in this society, but wider, hemispheric changes always figure somewhere on the agenda. The Latino imaginary infuses the clamor for civil rights with a claim to sovereignty on an international scale; retribution involves reversing the history of conquest and subordination, including its inherent migratory imperative. A full century after its initial pronouncement, Martí's profile of "nuestra América" still looms like a grid over the map of the entire continent, with the northern co-optation of the name America demanding special scrutiny and revision.

But Latino memory and desire, though standing as a challenge to prevailing structures of power, are not just reactive. The imaginary articulates more than a reflexive response to negative conditions and unfavorably weighted relations which, though oppositional, is as a response still ultimately mimetic and confined to extrinsically set terms. It is important to recognize that the Latino imaginary, like that of other oppressed groups, harbors the elements of an alternative ethos, an ensemble of cultural values and practices created in its own right and to its own ends. Latinos listen to their own kinds of music, eat their own kinds of food, dream their dreams and snap their photos not just to express their difference from, or opposition to, the way the "gringos" do it. These choices and preferences, though arrived at under circumstances of dependency and imposition, also attest to a deep sense of autonomy and self-referentiality. Latino identity is imagined not as the negation of the non-Latino, but as the affirmation of cultural and social realities, myths and possibilities, as they are inscribed in their own human trajectory.

The conditions for the emergence of a Latino cultural ethos were set around midcentury, as it began to become clear that these "new immigrants" filing in from the southern backyard make for a different kind of social presence than that constituted by European arrivals of earlier years. Of course, the histories of each of the major U.S. Latino groups extend much further back than that: Cubans and Puerto Ricans to the mid- to later nineteenth century, when colonies of artisans and political exiles formed in New York and Florida, while today's "Chicanos" were "here" all along, for centuries before the fateful year 1848 when the northern third of their nation was rudely moved in on and annexed by the bearers of Manifest Destiny. In fact, in the long historical view, the literary and cultural presence of Spanish-speaking people in the territory now called the United States actually precedes that of the English. And if we add to that the Indian American and Afro-American dimensions of "nuestra América," a full-scale re-

vision, or inversion, of the national history results, with the supposed "core," Anglo-Saxon culture appearing as the real intruder, the original illegal alien.

It is a serious fallacy, therefore, to think of Latinos in the United States as "recent arrivals," as is often the tendency in their treatment in scholarly research on immigration.¹³ But despite their long-standing, constitutive role in North American history, sheer demographic growth and diversification point to a markedly new structural positioning and cultural dynamic for Latinos in the second half of the twentieth century. Now more than ever, in the present, "postcolonial" era, many Latinos are here as colonial migrants, whose very locations and movements are defined by the status of their "home" countries within the system of transnational economic power. Rather than an ethnic, minority, or immigrant group, those trusty old concepts of cultural pluralism, Latinos may now be more accurately described as a diasporic community or, more suggestively in view of the intensified transnational linkages, as an "ethnoscape" or "world tribe." But a still more satisfactory neologism to characterize the social and cultural space occupied by Latinos is that of the "delocalized transnation," of whom it is also said that they "become doubly loyal to their nations of origin and thus ambivalent about their loyalties to America."¹⁴ Precisely because of the persisting hierarchies of transnational power, if convergences among today's Latinos involve the formation of a "Hispanic nation," it promises to be decidedly less an "American" nation, less a "step toward joining America," than commentators like Geoffrey Fox might propose.¹⁵

The social consciousness and cultural expression of this new geopolitical reality burst forth in the late 1960s and early 1970s, surely the watershed years in the construction of a new language of Latino identity. Inspired by the Civil Rights movement, the opposition to the war against Vietnam, and the Cuban Revolution, countless movements, causes, and organizations rallied thousands of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans to the cries of "¡Viva la Raza!" and "¡Despierta Boricua!" The political horizon of the Latino imaginary was set in those spirited movements and found vibrant artistic expression in such diverse forms as wall murals, bilingual poetry and street theater, and hybrid music and dance styles like boogaloo, Chicano rock, Latin soul, and salsa. *Talleres* (workshops) and *conjuntos* (musical groups), readings and *actos* (dramatic sketches) proliferated, lending voice and vision to the fervent political struggles of Latino and Latin American peoples and often attesting to close cultural affinities and political solidar-

ities with other, non-Latino groups, notably African Americans and American Indians.

By our time, in the 1990s, that heyday is long past, hardly even a living memory for many young Latinos; all too frequently in the burgeoning scholarly and journalistic literature on Latinos of recent years, the importance of that foundational period in the story of Latino identity-formation is minimized or erased. But the Brown Berets and the Young Lords Party, the Chicano Moratorium and the Lincoln Hospital takeover, the causes of the farmworkers and Puerto Rican independence, along with many other manifestations of cultural and political activism, are still an inspiration and a model of militancy and righteous defiance for the present generation of Latinos of all nationalities as they sharpen their social awareness. For although the immediacy, intensity, and cultural effervescence has no doubt waned in the intervening decades, Latinos in the United States have just as assuredly continued to grow as a social movement to be reckoned with, nationally and internationally, in the years ahead. This is true demographically in the striking (for some startling) multiplication in their numbers, and analytically in the equally sharp diversification of their places of origin and settlement. As contrasted with earlier stages, the Latino concept is today a far more differentiated site of intersecting social identities, especially along sexual, racial, and class lines.

But the persistence and expansion of the Latino social movements are most prominent as a cultural imaginary, a still emergent space or "community" of memory and desire. In the present generation, Latino youth from many backgrounds have played a formative role in the creation of hip-hop and its inflection toward Latino expression and experience; though not always explicitly political in intention, the Latino contribution to contemporary popular music, dance, performance, and visual imaging has accompanied important signs of social organization and self-identification among young Latinos in many parts of the country. The emergence of "Latino literature," though in important ways a marketing and canonizing category having the effect of concealing distinctions necessary for purposes of literary history and criticism, has also involved expanded horizons and greater intercultural exchange than had been true in the previous, Nuyorican and Chicano generation. In the case of the "casitas" in the New York barrios—another richly suggestive and often-cited example from recent Latino experience—entire neighborhoods across generational and many other lines are drawn together by way of sharing in the enact-

ment of collective cultural memory.¹⁶ Present-day considerations and representations of Latino life which would do justice to that complex reality find it necessary to incorporate such instances of cultural innovation and "invented traditions" by way of complementing their reliance on social scientific insights.¹⁷

Hispanic? Latino? Settling on a name never comes easy, and when it comes to an all-embracing term for Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, Salvadorans, Panamanians, and an array of other Latin American and Caribbean peoples in the United States, consensus does not seem to be near at hand. But the search for a name, more than an act of classification, is actually a process of historical imagination and a struggle over social meaning at diverse levels of interpretation. Rigorous demographic and social science analysis is no doubt essential to the task of circumscribing that process, and especially for identifying structural variations in the placement of the different national groups relative to hierarchies of power and attendant histories of racialization. But only a fully interdisciplinary approach, guided by an attention to cultural expression and identity claims and transcending the bounds set by positivist analysis, allows for an integral understanding of Latino experience. In that sense the search for Latino identity and community, the ongoing articulation of a pan-ethnic and transnational imaginary, is also a search for a new map, a new ethos, a new *América*.

34. Rodríguez, in Hernández, ed., *Puerto Rican Voices in English*, 140. Subsequent page numbers are cited in the text.
35. For further details and analysis, see "Pan-Latino/Trans-Latino: Puerto Ricans in the 'New Nueva York,'" ch. 7 of the present volume.
36. See Tato Laviera, *American* (Houston: Arte Público, 1985).
37. María Fernández, "Ode to the Diasporican," in *AHA! Hispanic Arts News* (February–March 1998): 14.
38. Rodríguez, in Hernández, ed., *Puerto Rican Voices in English*, 140.

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1. David González, "What's the Problem with 'Hispanic'? Just Ask a 'Latino,'" *New York Times*, November 15, 1992, sec. 4, p. 6.
2. Ilan Stavans, *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 27. Another such unusual, and in my view confusing, usage of the terms may be found in William Luis, *Dance Between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997), x–xi; here "Latino" refers to those of Latin American background born and raised in the United States, while "Hispanic" is taken to refer to those "born and raised in their parents' home country." Though the terminological distinction is questionable and remote from common parlance, Luis is accurate in calling for distinctions in group denomination when he states that "it would be incongruous to group Hispanics from privileged families who have superior educational backgrounds, traveling to the United States to pursue a post-secondary education, with Latinos living in the ghettos of East Harlem or East Los Angeles, attending inferior schools and lacking the economic support necessary to overcome the limitations of their existence" (xi). For an example of the overemphasis on language and an excessively expansive sense of "Latino" and "Hispanic," see Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol, 1996).
3. The opening citations are renderings of statements I have encountered during the course of conversations and interviews, or in newspaper accounts. Examples of the abundant published discussion of the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* may be found in Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995); Earl Shorris, *Latinos: A Biography of the People* (New York: Norton, 1992); and *Latin American Perspectives* 19.4 (Fall 1992). See also my essay, "Pan-Latino/Trans-Latino: Puerto Ricans in the 'New Nueva York,'" ch. 7 of the present volume.
4. Documentation of this widespread preference for national designations may be found in Rodolfo O. de la Garza et al., "Latino National Political Survey," as published in de la Garza, ed., *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Perspectives on American Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992). For a response, see Luis Fraga et al., *Still Looking for America: Beyond the Latino National Political Survey* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1994).

5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). As useful as Anderson's coinage may be for characterizing the cultural convergences among Latinos, to posit the idea of a "Hispanic nation," as in Geoffrey Fox's book of that title, would seem premature at best, and misleading in taking Anderson's analysis too literally (see Fox, *Hispanic Nation*, esp. 1–18).
6. The range of theoretical approaches from strictly quantitative to comparative to ideological is evident in the growing published literature on "Hispanics" or "Latinos," as cited in note 2 above (this chapter). See in addition, for example, Marta Tienda and Vilma Ortiz, "Hispanicity and the 1980 Census," *Social Science Quarterly* 67 (1986): 3–20; Félix Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1985); Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla, eds., *Latinos in a Changing U.S. Economy* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993). The concept of "ethnoscape" is set forth by Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), esp. 27–65.
7. The present essay was originally intended as a general theoretical introduction to the projected catalogue of "Latino Voices," the first international festival of Latino photography, which opened in Houston in November 1994. The idea of conceptualizing and circumscribing a "Latino imaginary" arose while pre-viewing slides of images by Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban photographers included in that historic exhibition, and deciding how best to present their theoretical and cultural significance to a broad United States audience of the 1990s. Although the catalogue did not materialize, I have presented the paper in a variety of settings across the country, incorporating insights as I went along. I especially thank Wendy Watriss, Frances Aparicio, and Marvette Pérez for their critical responses, though they are in no way to be held responsible for the arguments of the essay as it stands.
8. The most extended discussion of these instrumental uses of the "Hispanic" label may be found in Oboler's *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives*, though I also find of some interest the exchange between Fernando Treviño and David Hayes-Bautista in the *American Journal of Public Health* 77.1 (January 1987): 61–71.
9. For examples of "Hispanics" in advertisements and other commercial uses, see Flores and George Yúdice, "Living Borders/Buscando América: Languages of Latino Self-Formation," *Social Text* 24 (1990): 57–84. That essay also appeared in my book *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (Houston: Arte Público, 1993), 199–224. See also Arlene Dávila, "The Othered Nation: The Marketing and Making of U.S. Latinidad" (unpublished manuscript, 1999).
10. On the vast research on "modes of incorporation," see especially Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2d ed., 1996).

11. See Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, "The Structuring of Hispanic Ethnicity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," in Mary Romero, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Vilma Ortiz, eds., *Challenging Fronteras* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 7-29 (quotations from 26).
12. Roberto Suro, *Strangers Among Us: How Latino Immigration Is Transforming America* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 146-47. For Rumbaut, see the valuable essay, "The Americans: Latin American and Caribbean Peoples in the United States," in Alfred Stepan, ed., *Americas: New Interpretive Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 275-307; it is worth noting that while the author seems to have little difficulty speaking of "Latinos" as a group when contrasting them with African Americans, he otherwise voices skepticism as to the value of pan-ethnic, or what he terms "supranational," identities.
13. See, for example, Silvia Pedraza, "The Contribution of Latino Studies to Social Science Research on Immigration," JSRI Occasional Paper no. 36 (East Lansing: Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1998). Even broad historical overviews of Latino immigration may tend to abbreviate the duration of Latino presence in the United States; see, for example, Rubén G. Rumbaut, "The Americans," where preponderant attention goes to the post-1960s period.
14. See Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," *Modernity at Large*, 158-77.
15. See Fox, *Hispanic Nation*, esp. 237ff.
16. On Latino rap, see "Puerto Rocks: Rap, Roots, and Amnesia," ch. 6 of the present volume. For an interpretation of the casita phenomenon, see "Salvación Casita: Space, Performance, and Community," ch. 4 of the present volume.
17. See, for example, Peter Winn, "North of the Border," in *Americas: The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 550-600. This chapter, like the book as a whole, is intended as the accompaniment to the ten-part public television series on contemporary Latin America. "North of the Border," the final chapter and segment, is about U.S. Latinos and is based on the research of Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut; their social science findings are significantly amplified by extensive references to rap music, casitas, and other cultural phenomena. See also Fox, *Hispanic Nation*, esp. 223ff.

10. LATINO STUDIES: NEW CONTEXTS, NEW CONCEPTS

1. The events at City College are reported in the *New York Times*, March 19, 1996, B4, and in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 29, 1996, 18. Reporting on the strike at Columbia University appears in the *New York Times*, April 15, 1996, B1, B3.
2. The use of the term "globaloney" to refer to obfuscation of local, national, and regional realities and contradictions by imposing a "global" or "transnational" framework occurs in Robert Fitch, *The Assassination of New York* (London: Verso, 1993). See also "The Lite Colonial," ch. 2 of the present volume.
3. See Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres, eds., *The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).

4. Oscar Montero, "Coalitions/Collisions: Notes from a Latino Queer," in Robert Ji-Song Ku, ed., *Common Grounds: Charting Asian American Studies East of California*, East of California Network of the Association for Asian American Studies, Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference (New York: Hunter College/Columbia University, 1996), 45.
5. Angie Chabram, "'Chicana! Rican? No, Chicana-Riqueña!' Refashioning the Transnational Connection," in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 284.
6. *Ibid.*, 290, 292.
7. It is interesting that Darder and Torres, the editors of *The Latino Studies Reader*, assume a strong stand against postmodernist orientations, while at the same time adopting much of the vocabulary and many of the theoretical concerns of postmodernist discourse (see esp. 5ff).
8. See, for example, Kelvin Santiago, *"Subject People" and Colonial Discourses: Economic Transformation and Social Disorder in Puerto Rico, 1898-1947* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).
9. See, for example, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), esp. 1-13. See also Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
10. See Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff, eds., *The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses*, 3 vols. (New York: Praeger, 1986); Noam Chomsky, ed., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1997); and Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas, 1898-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
11. An account of the struggle for Chicano Studies, including the original "Plan de Santa Barbara," may be found in Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso, 1989). On Puerto Rican Studies, see María Sánchez and Antonio Stevens-Arroyo, eds., *Towards a Renaissance of Puerto Rican Studies: Ethnic and Area Studies in the University* (Highlands Lakes, N.J.: Social Science Monographs, 1987). See also Frank Bonilla, Ricardo Campos, and Juan Flores, "Puerto Rican Studies: Promptings for the Academy and the Left," in Ollman and Vernoff, eds., *The Left Academy* 3:67-102; and Pedro Cabán, "The New Synthesis of Latin American and Latin Studies," in Frank Bonilla, Edwin Meléndez, Rebecca Morales, and María de los Angeles Torres, eds., *Borderless Borders: U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Independence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 195-215.
12. Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Construction of Identity* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol, 1996).
13. On the term "ethnoscape" and other pertinent concepts of transnational cultural studies, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
14. Montero, "Coalitions/Collisions," 46.

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