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# Latina Multidimensionality and LatCrit Possibilities: Culture, Gender, and Sex<sup>©</sup>

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This essay explores the multiple margins that Latinas<sup>1</sup> inhabit both within majority society and their *comunidad Latina* because of their

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\* Professor of Law, St. John's University School of Law. This essay is an adaptation of a talk presented at the LatCrit III Conference in Miami Florida during the "Between/Beyond Colors: Outsiders Within Latina/o Communities." *Muchísimas gracias* to the organizers of the conference, Frank Valdes and Lisa Iglesias for their indefatigable organizing. I am deeply grateful for the invitation to share some time and thoughts with an amazing group of conference participants and to practice the LatCrit challenge of building community and forging coalitions. I am *eternamente agradecida especialmente* a Elvia Rosales Arriola, Frank Valdes, David Cruz, and Keith Aoki for their valuable comments on an earlier draft. They are colleagues and friends whose support, involvement, and dedication are the performative of community and coalition building. Last, but by no means least, special thanks to my wonderful (former) research assistant Christina Gleason (SJU '98) whose valuable work on this project has lasted even past her graduation. I wish to express my appreciation for the research support provided by the St. John's University, School of Law Summer Research Program.

1. This work uses the term Latina to refer to the women citizens of the outsider community known or referred to as the Latina/o (or "Hispanic") community. See Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges-Latinas and Latinos at the Crossroads: Realities, Rhetoric, and Replacement*, 25 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 369, nn. 1, 2 (1994) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges*] (explaining preference for use of term Latina/o). However, the boundaries, limits, and understandings of such a varied and diverse community are far from fixed or easily explained. See *id.* Rather, they are contested sites, subject to and deserving of necessary interrogation, particularly within the LatCrit movement and project. Far from being a classification easily identifiable, we can not simply know it when we see it. See *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 184, 197 (1964) (Stewart, J., concurring) (defining pornography by the "I know it when I see it" standard). Luz Guerra has articulately posed the challenge to LatCrit to engage in the critical interrogation of our own namings and colonizations. She has directly confronted the erasures effected by placing indigenous peoples' issues on the agenda without first "critically examin[ing] the term Latino[a] for its relationship to Native history." Luz Guerra, *LatCrit y la Des-colonización Nuestra: Taking Colón Out*, 19 U.C.L.A. CHICANO/[A]-LATINO/[A] L. REV. 351 (1998) (suggesting that LatCrit can not put indigenous peoples on the agenda without examining the term and its relationship to First Peoples' history; examining Spanish as the colonizing language of Native peoples and its effects on negating their languages, cultures, identities, and customs). To this challenge I add the need to interrogate our African roots and our simultaneous participations in and subjections to the practice of slavery *outside* the U.S. borders but within *our* places of origins such as the Caribbean. See Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges*, *supra*, at 424, n.283 (noting that slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico and Cuba later than it was in the U.S.). Recognizing the challenges posed by Latinas'/os' mestizaje, this piece uses the term Latina/o to refer to a class of persons of diverse and mixed racial origins whose nationalities or ancestral background is in countries with Latin/Hispanic cultures and who within the U.S. borderlands are collapsed into one classification due to such roots. See Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges*, *supra*, at 429; Francisco Valdes, *Foreword — Poised at the Cusp: LatCrit Theory, Outsider Jurisprudence, and Latina/o Self-Empowerment*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 1, n.1 (1997) [hereinafter Valdes, *Foreword*]; Max Castro, *Making "Pan Latino"*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 179 (1997).

compounded outsider status in *all* their possible communities. Exploring the concept and theme of “Between/Beyond Colors: Outsiders Within Latina/o Communities” elucidates both the challenges and the possibilities the young LatCrit movement presents for Latinas.<sup>2</sup>

From its inception, LatCrit has broadened and sought to reconstruct the race discourse beyond the normalized binary black/white paradigm<sup>3</sup> — an underinclusive model that effects the erasure of the Latina/o, Native, and Asian experiences as well as the realities of other racial and ethnic groups in this country. Primarily because of Latina/o panethnicity<sup>4</sup> and diversity, the LatCrit challenge should not, and can not, stop with the black/white racial binary. LatCrit’s interrogation of the black/white paradigm, dating to the movement’s beginnings, has invited us to contest other sites of normativity such as the socially constructed categories of foreignness, proper sex/gender roles, and sexuality — both within the majority culture and our *cultura Latina*.<sup>5</sup>

This essay thus addresses those insights that LatCrit theorizing offers to the Latina experience looking through the lenses of *cultura*, (en)gendered *fronteras*, and sexuality. This *cuento* of the multifacetedness and complexity of the Latina experience reveals how such site is an essential counter-narrative to the either/or formulae that colonize so much scholarly and jurisprudential discourses. The *cuento normativo* obscures and denies the multidimensional, intersectional, multiplicities and interconnectivities of Latinas/os’ real lives.<sup>6</sup>

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2. See Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities: Culture Clashes, Confused Constructs and Reality Checks*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 199, 200-05 (1997) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities*]; Francisco Valdes, *Foreword-Latina/o Ethnicities, Critical Race Theory, and Post-Identity Politics in Postmodern Legal Culture: From Practices to Possibilities*, 9 LA RAZA L. J. 1, 7 & n. 28 (1996) [hereinafter Valdes, *Possibilities*].

3. See Juan Perea, *Five Axioms in Search of Equality*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 231 (1997); see also Leonard Baynes, *Who is Black Enough for You? An Analysis of Northwestern University Law School’s Struggle Over Minority Faculty Hiring*, 2 MICH. J. RACE & L. 205 (1997); Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Las Olvidadas-Gendered in Justice/Gendered Injustice: Latinas Fronteras and the Law*, 2 J. GENDER, RACE & JUST. 353 (1998) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Las Olvidadas*].

4. See Angelo Falcón, *Through the Latin Lens: Latinos Still Need the Voting Rights Act*, NEWSDAY, Sept. 3, 1992, at 106 (noting that Latina/o panethnicity is sourced in “the pan Latino/a] consciousness emerging in this country” while recognizing and accepting both Latina/o diversities and the reality that within the U.S., “more brings [the amalgam of persons referred to as Latinas/os] together than separates them within the political process”). See also Valdes, *Possibilities*, *supra* note 2, at \_\_\_\_, n. 32, nn. 99-118.

5. See generally Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered: Normativities, Latinas, and a LatCrit Paradigm*, 72 N.Y.U. L. REV. 882 (1997) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*].

6. See, e.g., Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*, 43 STAN. L. REV. 1241 (1991) (intersectionality); Angela P. Harris, *Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory*, 42 STAN. L. REV. 581 (1990) (multiplicity); Francisco Valdes, *Sex and Race in Queer Legal Culture: Ruminations on Identities*

LatCrit's reinterpretation and repositioning of discourses, eschewing the atomizing either/or approach to embrace an inclusive and realistic both/and perspective, will not only reflect the multidimensionality and multicultural roots of Latinas/os and other diverse groups but will empower *all* marginalized communities.<sup>7</sup> This endeavor is complex and painful, even within the friendly intellectual communities of crits — race crits, fem crits, race/fem crits, and queer crits.<sup>8</sup> These communities, notwithstanding their useful, emancipatory, and beneficial foundations, proved to be “insufficiently attentive” to those, like Latinas/os, who exist at the margins of crit borderlands of race, sex, gender, sexuality, color, language, and culture.<sup>9</sup>

Pursuant to rigorous interrogation of “the interplay of patriarchy and white supremacy in the shaping of race and racialized power relations” critical theorists have made some inroads into addressing issues of the intersection of race, sex, and class.<sup>10</sup> One example is the serious examination of the black/white paradigm. Yet, this questioning of race alone, or in isolation from other identity components, does not, and cannot, explain or craft the setting for the inquiry into the interaction of sex and race to effect gendered inequalities.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, much work remains to be done in the areas of intersections of race, sex, and class with culture, language, and sexuality.

LatCrit itself, however much it has struggled for inclusiveness, and as diverse, inclusive, involved, and proactive as the coalition has been, has the potential for deep fault-lines based upon cultural clashes. One example of unexplored territory is the potential (and unavoidable) conflict that can confront a predominantly Catholic group in being asked to embrace sexual minorities or to accept certain population-control based solutions to hunger and poverty.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, such explorations will

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*and Inter-connectivities*, 5 S. CAL. REV. L. & WOMEN'S STUD. 25, 49 (1995) [hereinafter Valdes, *Sex and Race*] (interconnectivity concept used as complement to multiplicity, multidimensionality and intersectionality).

7. See, e.g., Francisco Valdes, *Foreword: Under Construction - LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory*, 85 CALIF. L. REV. 1087 (1997) [hereinafter Valdes, *Under Construction*].

8. See Francisco Valdes, *Theorizing About Theory: Comparative Notes and Post-Subordination Vision as Jurisprudential Method* [hereinafter Valdes, *Theorizing*], in CRITICAL RACE THEORY: HISTORIES, CROSSROADS, DIRECTIONS (Jerome McCristal Culp, Jr. et al. eds.) (forthcoming 1998) (comparing the RaceCrit, LatCrit and QueerCrit experiences).

9. See Valdes, *Possibilities*, *supra* note 2, at 3-7.

10. See Valdes, *Possibilities*, *supra* note 2, at 5.

11. See Elvia R. Arriola, *Gendered Inequality: Lesbians, Gay Men, and Feminist Legal Theory*, 9 BERKELEY WOMEN'S L.J. 103 (1994).

12. See Scott D. Weiner, *Recent Publication: Created Equal: Why Gay Rights Matter to America*. Michael Nava and Robert Dawidoff, 30 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 267 (1995) (discussing the influence of the Catholic church in the Latina/o community and the church's position on homosexuality).

implicate the position of Latinas both within society at large and within the *comunidad Latina*.

Thus, in the course of writing about Latinas/os, I have discovered (and LatCrit discourse has unveiled and underscored) that critical theorizing is stressful, simultaneously liberating and restraining, confining, coercive. For me, there is one great irony in the endeavor to include Latinas/os in the discourses about law and justice, participation and cooperation, citizenship and foreignness. One of the major schisms I need to bridge in writing about multifaceted Latinas in a world that imprints homogeneity as normal, is the necessary use of an alien tongue — English — to communicate practice, theory, and insight based on the personal, real life journeys that I travel in Spanish.<sup>13</sup> This task forces me to translate untranslatables, like feelings.

I have unearthed in the course of all this critical intellectual inquiry that I feel in Spanish. My English expression is intellectual, cerebral, analytical, cold; my Spanish yarn is emotional, visceral, experiential, passionate. My own narratives often may have different meanings depending upon the voice. Foreign languaged stories may be incomplete and sometimes incoherent translations, at best silhouettes of my lived reality. Any necessary exportation of my personal knowledges to English bridles, constrains, and suppresses them; it distorts their reality, location, time and space. Spanish realities are performed as foreign fables.

Latinas are in a constant state of translations, existing in the interstices of languages, genders, races, cultures, and ethnicities.<sup>14</sup> For them, the distortions effected in engaging normative discourse are multifaceted. Their location as multiple aliens in majority communities is by virtue of many degrees of separation from the *normativo*: sex, ethnicity, culture, language. Within their own *cultura Latina*, Latinas are foreign simply because of their sex or, even more distancing, their sexuality. Such multiple barriers existing both within and outside group *fronteras* are definitional in the formation of, access to, and expression of Latinas' identities. The complicated amalgam of pressures that emanates from both outside and inside — the majority culture and *la cultura Latina* — result in Latina invisibility, marginalization and subordination in all their communities.<sup>15</sup> It is at this place of interconnectivity of outsiderness that a liberation project must focus for it is only when those at

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13. See also Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities*, *supra* note 2, at 200-03.

14. See Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges*, *supra* note 1, at 376-96 (discussing the demographic multidimensionality of identity in Latina/o contexts).

15. See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5 (addressing the subordination of Latinas).

the margin of the margins are embraced that freedom is a true possibility.

This essay explores the potential of LatCrit for demarginalizing Latinas by exposing another *frontera*: sexuality. First, and briefly, the piece suggests various issues of culture that confront Latinas and next, it focuses on the gendered borderlands in which Latinas travel within their culture spaces. Third, this work presents sexuality as a location where Latinas experience multiple oppressions from both outside communities and the *comunidad Latina*. It then confronts the everyday complexities, tensions, and struggles faced by Latinas who are sexual minorities within their *comunidad Latina*. This analysis serves both to elucidate the very material problem of alienation and marginalization of Latina lesbians because of their multiple outsiderhood as well as to enliven and problematize the reality of multidimensionality.

Finally, I conclude by reiterating the need for a paradigm that recognizes, embraces, and articulates the multiplicity of all of our identities and rejects any possibility of atomization of our multilocal citizenships. In this regard, the international human rights model which integrates as foundational the concepts of interdependence and indivisibility of rights, is a valuable tool to enhance the possibilities of our critical, community-oriented work.

#### CULTURE

It is not an easy task to talk about culture when the group being scrutinized is one as diverse as Latinas/os.<sup>16</sup> This is a group with internally distinct and assorted languages, migrations, education, emancipation, and political histories. Roots within the territory now known as the United States are varied, the language of home is not easily predictable, racial composition is best described as *mestizaje* — and within the U.S. borderlands Latinas/os cannot be white *because they are Latina/o*.

Yet, while recognizing the diversities that exist between and among the panethnic groups collectively catalogued under the umbrella of the Latina/o label, it is inescapable that the group indeed shares many cultural commonalities. Many of these converge around the importance of family and firm notions about appropriate sex and gender roles — two interconnected foundations of cultural oppression for Latinas.<sup>17</sup>

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16. See, e.g., Kevin R. Johnson, *Race, Ethnicity & Nationhood: "Melting Pot" or "Ring of Fire"?: Assimilation and the Mexican-American Experience*, 85 CAL. L. REV. 1259 (1997); Note, *Into the Mouths of Babies: La Familia Latina & Federally Funded Child Welfare*, 105 HARV. L. REV. 1319 (1992) [hereinafter *La Familia Latina*].

17. See, e.g., GLORIA BONILLA-SANTIAGO, *BREAKING GROUND & BARRIERS: HISPANIC WOMEN DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP* 11 (1992) (discussing traditional cultural expectations that Latinas be "sentimental, gentle, impulsive, docile, submissive, dependent, and

*La familia* is of sacrosanct importance in the *cultura Latina*.<sup>18</sup> It also is the site initially and continuously responsible for the creation, construction, and constitution of gendered identities.<sup>19</sup>

Our families operate on the extended family model in which *abuelas y abuelos* are respected and revered, *tías y tíos* are effectively second sets of parents, and *primas/os* are like additional *hermanas/os*. This big tent is where we first learn about appropriate and proper conduct, including sex roles, from several generations. These generationally unchanging molds in turn become proof of the correctness of the point, about our proper and befitting places; what conduct is suitable and acceptable; and what comportments and performances constitute *cosas feas* (ugly things).

Inevitably bridging the diversities among Latinas/os, these learnings and knowledges about fitting demeanor are universally and uniformly gendered and sexualized.<sup>20</sup> *La cultura Latina* rigorously and authoritatively defines, delineates, and enforces gender identities. These *fronteras* are then used as a tool of oppression and pressure to marginalize those *mujeres* (and *hombres*) who do not conform to culturally accepted (and acceptable) designations of gender and sex roles and norms.

As I have confessed previously, I rebelled against some of the little messages imbued with meanings with respect to the definitions of the parameters for proper conduct for (proper) girls.<sup>21</sup> For example, I refused to make my bed; my *hermano* never had to. Yet, I guess it is generally appropriate for beds to be made and the simple solution to my rebellion itself also confirmed the proper gender roles regarding bedtquette — *abuela* took on the task.

I also recall that while I was expected to excel at school — be a go-getter, the best, like *papi* — at home I was supposed not to argue, to be demure, and to defer. Some meanings of my parents' expressions did not escape me — “why couldn't I be more like *mami*” was a phrase I frequently overheard *papi* utter, while shaking his head in what I interpreted as disappointment, my failure.

Yet while their intent in such messages may have been wholly clear to them, and while I understood the undercurrent of disappointment, the

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timid.”); Jenny Rivera, *Domestic Violence Against Latinas by Latino Males: An Analysis of Race, National Origin, and Gender Differentials*, 14 B.C. THIRD WORLD L.J. 231, 233 (1994).

18. See, e.g., IAN LUMSDEN, MACHOS, MARICONES, AND GAYS — CUBA & HOMOSEXUALITY 55 (1996) (“The family was typically the most important institution in pre-revolutionary Cuba.”).

19. See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5; *La Familia Latina*, *supra* note 16, at 1324.

20. See LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 55; *La Familia Latina*, *supra* note 16, at 1324.

21. See, e.g., Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities*, *supra* note 2.

gendered meaning to me was rather garbled, unintelligible. *Mami* was a practicing attorney, a diplomat in Cuba before our exile. I remember her all dressed up, briefcase in hand, being picked up by the State car every morning. Though I confess I never heard either of my parents argue, and remember them both always being courteous, I also never saw *mami* be submissive or deferential. I suppose my little-child eyes just did not see her as anything but strong and warm. I never as a child understood exactly how I needed to be more like *mami*. So much for messages about gender roles.

Some coded messages that I only understood much later also served to imprint the normativity, indeed the mandate, of heterosexuality in our *cultura Latina*. I remember one day, I must have been 12 or 13, maybe even 14 or 15, I was watching television at home in Puerto Rico. We — *mami y papi* and a friend from the neighborhood — were in the living room. I was lying down on the couch, my friend was sitting on the floor, the folks were on chairs or something. At one point, my friend leaned up against the couch and leaned her head back on my outstretched arm. Next thing I remember is my mom calling me into the kitchen “*psst, Bertica ven acá,*” (psst, Bertica come here) and telling me not to do that — not to let her lean on me. “*Eso es feo,*” (that is ugly) my mom said. Frankly, I was clueless then, I get it now, the words still resonate.

While a more exhaustive analysis of culture is impossible in this essay, these examples should provide ample flavor of the gendered and narrow-sex-role environment that constitutes normal in *comunidades Latinas*.<sup>22</sup> *It is pervasive and uniform. And for women, as the next section shows, there is little room for dissent.*

#### BORDERS ENGENDERED

In his work *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, Octavio Paz captured the Latinos' image of woman:

An instrument, sometimes of masculine desires, sometimes of the ends assigned to her by morality, society and the law. . . In a world made in man's image, woman is only a reflection of masculine will and desire. When passive, she becomes goddess, a beloved one, a being who embodies the ancient, stable elements of the universe: the earth, motherhood, virginity. When active, she is always function and means, a receptacle/a vessel, a channel. Womanhood, unlike

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22. See, e.g., Oliva M. Espín, *Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexuality in Hispanic/Latin Women: Implications for Psychotherapy* [hereinafter Espín, *Sexuality*], in PLEASURE AND DANGER: EXPLORING FEMALE SEXUALITY 149 (Carole S. Vance ed., 1984); LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18.



manhood, is never an end in itself.<sup>23</sup>

As the Paz passage depicts, the Latina is defined by the Latino from his dominant situation in family, church and state. The Latina did not participate in or consent to the definition that determines who she is or what she does. She is fabricated and sculpted in the image, desire, and fantasy of the Latino.

The cultural expectations/interpretations of Latinas, simply because of their sex, by the *cultura Latina* tracks the dominant paradigm's construction of sex. Man is the norm, woman in his image, an afterthought — lesser in every sense: strength, stature, ability.<sup>24</sup>

The gendered imprinting occurs starting at birth. Baby girls are dressed in pink, treated demurely, and adorned with jewels — *dormilonas* (literally “sleepers”), small posts in gold that decorate their tiny ears — starting their designated route to femininity. Little girls continue to be socialized to be feminine, prepared to be mothers and wives. Their most important aspiration and achievement, is to get married, have children, and serve their families.<sup>25</sup> Should the family needs demand the Latina to work outside of the home, employment is viewed as a means of continuing to serve the family. Since Latinas work for the family rather than for personal satisfaction or gain, they pursue positions that replicate their “appropriate” conduct—those “feminine” low-respect, arduous, thankless occupations as caretakers: nannies, cooks, maids, jobs at the bottom of the pay scale (probably *because* they so well replicate their “natural” role as wife, mother, housewife).<sup>26</sup>

The *cultura Latina*, reflecting and incorporating its predominantly Catholic religious foundation, fixates the idea of womanhood on the image of the Virgin Mary — the paradoxical virgin mother.<sup>27</sup> Latinas

23. OCTAVIO PAZ, *THE LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE* 35-36 (Lysander Kemp trans., Grove Press 1985).

24. See RUTH BURGOS-SASSCER & FRANCIS HERNÁNDEZ GILES, *LA MUJER MARGINADA: POR LA HISTORIA: GUIA DE ESTUDO* 23 (1978). For a broader discussion of the cultural subordination of women, see, e.g., SANDRA LIPSZITS-BEM, *THE LENSES OF GENDER* (1993); Rhoda E. Howard, *Dignity, Community, & Human Rights*, in *HUMAN RIGHTS IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES* 88 (Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'Im ed. 1992).

25. See BURGOS-SASSCER & GILES, *supra* note 24, at 55 (noting that a Latina's most important goal is to marry and serve her family).

26. See M. Patricia Fernandez Kelly, *Delicate Transactions: Gender, Home, and Employment Among Hispanic Women*, in *UNCERTAIN TERMS: NEGOTIATING GENDER IN AMERICAN CULTURE* 183, 194 (Faye Ginsburg & Anna L. Tsing eds., 1990) (finding that the “search for paid employment [by Latinas] is most often the consequence of severe economic need; it expresses vulnerability not strength within their homes and in the marketplace.”); BONILLA-SANTIAGO, *supra* note 17, at 8 (“Many [Latinas] still tend to pursue the more feminine occupations as a way to enter the work setting because they do not understand the organizational cultures.”).

27. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Haciendo Caras, una entrada*, in *MAKING SOUL/HACIENDO CARAS* xv-xxvi (Gloria Anzaldúa ed., 1990). Anzaldúa calls for the development of new theories which incorporate race, class, ethnicity, and sexual difference:

are glorified by the *marianista* paradigm as “strong, long-suffering women who have endured and kept *la cultura Latina* and the family intact.”<sup>28</sup> This model requires that women dispense care and pleasure, but not receive the same; that they live in the shadows of and be deferential to all the men in their lives: father, brother, son, husband, boyfriend.<sup>29</sup> Perfection for a Latina is submission.

Language and family are cultural constants throughout most of Latinas’ travels that unconsciously sometimes, subconsciously sometimes, and instinctively sometimes define navigations and destinations, transitions and translations.<sup>30</sup> For Latinas these clear and rigid delineations of the borderlands of proper conduct embed a male vision of culture, sex, and gender identity.<sup>31</sup> This epistemology privileges the Latino master narrative and predefines and preordains the content of and context for Latinas’ journeys. Thus family, society at large, community, church, and state collude to limit and frustrate the daily travels that iden-

In our literature, social issues such as race, class and sexual difference are intertwined with the narrative and poetic elements of a text, elements in which theory is embedded. In our *mestizaje* theories we create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of the existing ones.

*Id.*; see also BONILLA-SANTIAGO, *supra* note 17, at 21, 24, 44 (noting shortcomings in current social science and feminist research with regard to race and class, and calling on Latina women to develop independent movement and critical theory).

In a study conducted from 1989 - 1991 with women from a barrio in New York City, the researchers found that class and gender position were the issues of greatest concern to women “with education as a potentially empowering strategy.” Rina Benmayor et al., *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, Responses to Poverty Among Puerto Rican Women Identity, Community, and Cultural Citizenship* 10 (1992).

28. See BONILLA-SANTIAGO, *supra* note 17, at 11 (noting ways in which Latinas are taught they are inferior to Latinos); Mary Becker, *Strength in Diversity: Feminist Theoretical Approaches to Child Custody and Same-Sex Relationships*, 23 STETSON L. REV. 701 (1994) (discussing “dominance feminism” and its assessment that women’s work in private sphere is systematically devalued); see also CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, FEMINISM UNMODIFIED 55 (1987) (“We notice in language as well as in life that the male occupies both the neutral and the male position . . . whereas women occupy the marked, the gendered, the different, the forever-female position.”); Lucinda M. Finley, *Breaking Women’s Silence in Law: The Dilemma of the Gendered Nature of Legal Reasoning*, in FEMINIST LEGAL THEORY 571-79 (D. Kelly Weisberg ed., 1993) (arguing that legal language and reasoning reflect male-based perspective, and discussing limitations of this perspective in various areas of law).

29. See Anzaldúa, *supra* note 27, at 19-20 (noting that lesbians of color make “ultimate rebellion” against native culture and often fear rejection by family and culture); BONILLA-SANTIAGO, *supra* note 17, at 31-32 (citing Latino’s homophobia and unilateral focus on race as sole oppression facing Latinas).

30. For a more thorough discussion of the gendered nature of the Spanish language, see Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5, at 918-20; Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities*, *supra* note 2, at 211-12.

31. For an example of the continued perpetuation of this cultural vision, see ROSA MARÍA GIL & CARMEN INOA VÁSQUEZ, THE MARÍA PARADOX 5 (1996). *But see* Hernández-Truyol, *Las Olvidadas*, *supra* note 3, at 376-79 (criticizing THE MARÍA PARADOX as furthering stereotypes concerning the proper roles and behavior for Latinas).

tify, define, and design the extent and parameters of the *vijera's* tours. These cultural perspectives on proper sex/gender roles design Latinas' lives and deeply affect their existence.

This constitutive power of accepted narratives makes me question why womanhood requires that I be submissive when I'm supposed to be revered (in the image of the Virgin Mary); why I should love boys and see all men as superior if they are not trustworthy; and why I should be deferential, servile, and subservient to men at home when I am supposed to be their equal or better at work. Those of us who question or challenge the norm risk alienation from and marginalization by our *comunidad Latina* rendering us outsiders even within the outsider *comunidad Latina*. As the last portion of this essay addresses in the following section, sexuality is central to the Latina subordinate position within family and community.

#### SEXUALITY — LA ÚLTIMA FRONTERA

Beyond sex, sexuality is another location where Latinas experience multiple oppressions from outside as well as from within *la cultura Latina*. Significantly, "sexuality and sex-roles within a culture tend to remain the last bastion of tradition"<sup>32</sup> thus making "sexual behavior (perhaps more than religion) . . . the most highly symbolic activity of any society."<sup>33</sup> The mores, rules and mandates on sexuality that fall on women, as aptly captured by Paz's definition of woman as repository of cultural values that are defined for her, are used as

"proof" of the moral fiber or decay of social groups or nations. In most societies, women's sexual behavior and their conformity to traditional gender roles signifies the family's value system. Thus in many societies a lesbian daughter, like a heterosexual daughter who does not conform to traditional morality, can be seen as proof of the lax morals of a family.<sup>34</sup>

The honor of *la familia* is inextricably intertwined with the sexual purity of its women.<sup>35</sup>

Beyond defining the parameters of "tradition," women's sex roles, as defined by men, serve to preserve men's dominant status in all

32. Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 160.

33. Oliva M. Espín, *Crossing Borders and Boundaries* [hereinafter Espín, *Boundaries*], in *ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AMONG LESBIANS AND GAY MEN* 194 (Beverly Greene ed., 1997).

34. Oliva M. Espín, *Leaving the Nation and Joining the Tribe: Lesbian Immigrants Crossing Geographical and Identity Borders*, 19(4) *WOMEN & THERAPY* 99, 103 (1996) [hereinafter Espín, *Borders*] (noting that girls and women are forced to embody cultural continuity).

35. Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 154.

spheres of life.<sup>36</sup> For Latinas, the expectations of and demands for appropriate women's sexual roles and conduct, sourced in church, state, and family, are constant and consistent, repressive and oppressive.<sup>37</sup>

For example, the teachings of the Catholic church, the predominant faith of Latinas/os,<sup>38</sup> while prohibiting any and all sexual contact that is not within holy matrimony and for the purpose of procreation, emphasize the importance of virginity *for all women*.<sup>39</sup> The church further insists that women remain virgins until marriage and "that all men be responsible to women whose honor they have 'stained'."<sup>40</sup> This apparently generous suggestion of responsibility only thinly veils differentiations concerning the distinct expectations regarding men's and women's adherence to the sexual norm. Plainly, religion is more freely accepting of men's deviations from church teaching: there is no suggestion that men's honor is "stained" by deviation from the purity norm. Moreover, by instructing male responsibility to the women they "stain" it colludes with and confirms societal gendered hierarchies. Thus even religion, while purporting to have a uniform sexual norm (virginity) for men and women alike, accepts gendered inequalities.<sup>41</sup>

Originally, the religious tenet of sexual purity was church-inspired. The cultural norm that has emerged is fully embedded in the master narrative of the *comunidad Latina* and serves to dictate and ascertain the location of women in society.

Given these cultural sexual mores, there are three readily ascertainable tenets of Latina sexuality. The first is that sex is taboo *for women*.

36. See, e.g., MacKinnon, *supra* note 28, at 36 ("[V]irtually every quality that distinguishes men from women is already affirmatively compensated in this society. Men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career patterns, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other — their wars and rulerships — defines history, their image defines god, and their genitals define sex.").

37. See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5, at 915.

38. Approximately 85% of Latinas identify themselves as Catholics and many hold socio-political views based on or strongly influenced by the church's teachings. See Bonilla-Santiago, *supra* note 17, at 15.

39. Cf. Antonia M. Villarruel, *Cultural Influences on the Sexual Attitudes, Beliefs, & Norms of Young Latina Adolescents*, J. SOC'Y PEDIATRIC NURSES, Apr. 15, 1998, at 69 (examining correlations between religious beliefs/church attendance and sexual attitudes in young Latinas).

40. Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 151; see also See Ana Castillo, *La Macha: Toward a Beautiful Whole Self* [hereinafter *Macha*], in CHICANA LESBIANS: THE GIRLS OUR MOTHERS WARNED US ABOUT 32-22 (Carla Trujillo ed., 1991) (discussing one author's view of the impact of religion on women's sexuality).

41. See generally Elizabeth M. Igesias, *Rape, Race, & Representation: The Power of Discourse, Discourses of Power, & the Reconstruction of Heterosexuality*, 49 VAND. L. REV. 868 (discussing the sexual power structure promulgated and enforced by Latinos against Latinas).

For Latinas, virginity translates to and symbolizes purity, cleanliness, honorability, desirability, and propriety. This is the template for the *marianista buena mujer* (good woman), a standard to which women must adhere lest they lose status in the community, the family, and the church. The cultural script for *la buena mujer* dictates that she must always reject sexual advances which, incidentally, are mandatory for the men to make, if only to confirm the nature and character of the women in their company.

The worst thing, well, almost the worst thing as we will see shortly, that could happen to a woman is to receive the label of *puta* — whore — a *mujer mala* (bad/evil woman). Should a woman consent to sex, everyone, including the man with whom she had consensual adult even missionary sex will say SHE is a *puta*, she lacks virtue.<sup>42</sup> The man, of course, simply adds a notch to his belt.

To be sure the requirement of virginity for women but not for men and the language used to describe the loss of virginity for women but not for men, depict the strong cultural double sexual standard. Women's loss of virginity is a "deflowering" a "stain". On the other hand, culture supports, if not encourages and celebrates men's manly worth as grounded on sexual, really heterosexual conquests — pre- and extra-marital alike.<sup>43</sup>

Aside from being taboo, contemporary studies confirm that the traditional mores also dictate that sex, for women, is something to be endured, never to be enjoyed. In the *cultura Latina* "to shun sexual pleasure and to regard sexual pleasure as an unwelcome obligation toward her husband and a necessary evil in order to have children may be seen as a manifestation of virtue. In fact, some women even express pride at their own lack of sexual pleasure or desire."<sup>44</sup>

For Latinas the cultural significance of virginity as well as the mandated undesirability of sex, results in a third rule concerning sexual conduct: modesty.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, this modesty mandate does not end with marriage. As one fictional character puts it: "take me and Alberto. We

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42. Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 157.

43. For a discussion on the double standard see Claudia Colindres, *A Letter to My Mother*, in *THE SEXUALITY OF LATINAS* 9 (Norma Alarcón et al. eds., 1993); Erlinda González-Berry, *Conversaciones con Sergio (Excerpts from Paletitas de guayaba)*, in *THE SEXUALITY OF LATINAS*, *supra*, at 80 (noting the notion of "cornudo" (having horns put on one) exists only with respect to unfaithful wives and that no female form of *cornudo* exists, but rather, to the contrary, men who have affairs are deemed manly).

44. Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 156.

45. See LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 31, n. 5 (defining *pudor* as an uniquely Spanish notion which is a combination of shame and modesty).

lived together for 18 years and never once did he see me naked.”<sup>46</sup> So sexuality is a big deal for Latinas.

There are other aspects of sexuality that cast a long shadow on some Latinas' existence. A few paragraphs earlier I noted that being a *puta* was almost the worst thing that a Latina could be called. As the popular adage *mejor puta que pata* — better whore than dyke — reveals, there is a worse cultural/sexual outlaw in the *comunidad Latina* than the whore: the lesbian.

The social and religious factors and influences that render sex taboo for *mujeres* in the *cultura Latina* are intensified, magnified, and sensationalized when imagining lesbian sexuality. In addition to the majority community's secular and religious reasons for othering and rejecting sexual minorities — immorality, sinfulness, perversion, unnaturalness — Latina lesbians are further *persona non grata* because they are imputed with rejection of and failure to conform to cultural (and religious) as well as sexuality norms.<sup>47</sup> After all, what could a culture that views sex as taboo, intercourse as a duty, modesty as mandatory, and women as objects and not subjects of pleasure do with two women enjoying sex with each other?<sup>48</sup>

Latina lesbians have manifold “outsider” identities — cultural, racial, and religious — *vis à vis* the culture at large. They must grapple with and negotiate the consequences of their ethnicity *and* their lesbianism — conflated factors that magnify their marginalization and alienness within virtually every location occupied by the majority culture. Yet, for Latina lesbians their womanhood and their lesbianism are dual frontiers that invoke rejections and cause isolation within what other-

46. Elvia Alvarado, *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo*, in *THE SEXUALITY OF LATINAS*, 9, 50 (Norma Alarcón et al. eds., 1993).

47. It is important to note that, as with other themes concerning Latinas there is a dearth of information concerning Latina lesbians. See Hernández-Truyol, *Las Olvidadas*, *supra* note 3 (discussing the dearth of information concerning Latinas). As Oliva M. Espín, a well know professor of psychology who has extensively written on Latinas, including Latina lesbians, has stated, “the literature on Latina lesbians is scarce.” Oliva M. Espín, *Issues of Identity in the Psychology of Latina Lesbians* [hereinafter *Latina Psychology*], in *LESBIAN PSYCHOLOGIES: EXPLORATIONS & CHALLENGES* 35, 39 n.8-11 (Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective eds., 1987) (citing to only studies to the author's knowledge that “focus particularly on Latina lesbians or on the specific aspect of their identity development”).

48. This is not to say that Anglo/a culture is embracing of lesbianism. See, e.g., *Macha*, *supra* note 40, at 37 (describing lesbianism as “a state of being for which there is no social validation nor legal protection in the United States (nor in Mexico)”). Moreover, it is important not to essentialize Latina lesbians. Latina lesbians, indeed all lesbians, are diverse, multidimensional beings with differences in race, class, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, and gender identity to name a few. See, e.g., Migdalia Reyes, *Nosotras Que Nos Queremos Tanto*, in *COMPANERAS: LATINA LESBIANS* 248 (Juanita Ramos ed., 1994) (noting diversity within lesbian community, including Latina lesbian community).

wise could be considered the refuge of their *cultura Latina*.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, Latina lesbians are foreign in all their spaces.<sup>50</sup> They are derided sexual minorities the heterosexual *familia Latina*; they are queer in the very heterosexual *comunidad Latina*. They are colored in the predominantly white gay/lesbian family; they are colored and lesbian in the white and heterosexual majority. They are nowhere in the heterosexual black/white paradigm that excludes their brownness and in the gay/straight binary that fails to accommodate their womanness. Latina lesbians, as Latinas, are ethnic outsiders who “must be bicultural in American society” and as lesbians are cultural outsiders who must “be polycultural among her own people.”<sup>51</sup>

Latina lesbians enjoy (suffer) multi-layered deviations from the norm. Their subject position is one of alienness (alienation) everywhere. They embody the “fundamental interdependence of sexism, racism and homophobia in the construction and practice of social and legal subordination by, within and between various identity categories.”<sup>52</sup> Perhaps because of these multiple divergences from the normative, Latinas’ lesbianism is more difficult to accept than other “aberrations.” Within the *comunidad Latina* lesbianism triggers all ranges of cultural fears both in the cultural “traditionalists” and in the “cultural outlaws” themselves.

On the one hand, traditionalists fear the erosion of the culture and religious beliefs and mandates that could be effected by the sin of lesbianism. To be sure, lesbianism itself presents a challenge to and can constitute an outright rejection of patriarchal values and male superiority.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, Latinas’ own lesbianism arouses in them a different set of cultural fears. One salient concern of Latina lesbians is the fear of loss of the all-important family<sup>54</sup> — “the primary social unit and

49. See, e.g., Tiana Arruda, *How Can I Live a Life of Lies? (Oral History)*, in *COMPAÑERAS*, *supra* note 48, at 184.

50. See Hernández-Truyol, *Las Olvidadas*, *supra* note 3; Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5; Kevin Johnson, *Some Thoughts on the Future of Latino Legal Scholarship*, 2 *HARV. LATINO L. REV.* 101, 117-21 (1997).

51. *Macha*, *supra* note 40, at 35.

52. See Valdes, *Foreword*, *supra* note 1, at 5.

53. See Kenneth L. Schneyer, *Avoiding the Personal Pronoun: The Rhetoric of Display & Camouflage in the Law of Sexual Orientation*, 46 *RUTGERS L. REV.* 1313, 1322 (1994) (discussing the theory that lesbianism inherently undermines and rejects patriarchy).

54. *Macha*, *supra* note 40, at 37-38 (noting regarding latina lesbians that “[a]bove all, I believe, they do not want to lose the love and sense of place they feel within their families and immediate communities”). The fiction writing also reflects this fear. For example, the lesbian daughter in *Marimacho* whose father questions what two women can do, when her lover asks her to run away with her responds: “Tu sabes bien que te quiero, ésa no es la cuestión. Que vamos a hacer dos mujeres, sin dinero, sin amigos, sin tierra? Nadie nos va a recoger, somos una cochinada.” (author’s translation: You know that I love you, that is not the issue. What are we

source of support” within the culture because of rejection due to their sexuality.<sup>55</sup> These are genuine and weighty preoccupations.

As in any culture, reactions to a family member’s lesbianism vary. One familiar approach is for the family to offer to pay for the necessary therapy to “cure” the lesbian.<sup>56</sup> Another popular response to a family member’s sexual “aberration,” one that fits well with the shame-based nature of the *cultura Latina*, is for the family to be embarrassed about the person’s lesbianism.<sup>57</sup> Families may address this discomfiture at the deviance of a family member in a number of ways, none particularly embracing of or healthy for the lesbian.

In one model the family alternately denies and conceals her lesbian identity. This often translates to the banishing gay/lesbian friends from the family home. Such approach causes stresses to the individual who is torn between her *familiares* (family members) and her *otra familia* (other “family”) — the one being rejected by the relatives.<sup>58</sup> Loss of

going to do as two women, without money, without friends, without land? Nobody will take us in, we are filthy/swine). Gloria Anzaldúa, *La Historia de una marimacho* [hereinafter *Marimacho*], in THE SEXUALITY OF LATINAS, *supra* note 43, at 65. Author’s note: “Cochinada” does not translate easily. The word *cochino* as an adjective, means very dirty, it also means, as a noun, a hog, a pig. Thus *cochinada* blends, exacerbates, and transcends both meanings.

It is interesting to observe that one Chicana author openly noted that while Chicanos “took issue with society as brown men, Catholic men, and poor working class men [ ] [t]hey entered into a confrontation with society from the privileged view of a dialogue amongst men.” Marta A. Navarro, *Interview with Ana Castillo*, in CHICANA LESBIANS, *supra* note 40, at 115, 124. On the other hand, Castillo observes that contrary to the men who were “not willing to look at themselves and say, ‘I am a horrible cabrón’ . . . [and] romanticize themselves, or . . . glorify themselves, or . . . objectify themselves, and their courage and their history, but none of them is ever willing to look into each other as an individual” the Chicana writers are “openly self-critical and abnegating at the same time. *Id.* at 116. Finally, the writer observes that she is beginning to see a “glimpse” of men writing about themselves as individuals from the gay male Chicano writers. *Id.*

55. Beverly Greene, *Ethnic Minority Lesbians & Gay Men*, in ETHNIC & CULTURAL DIVERSITY AMONG LESBIANS & GAY MEN 219 (Beverly Greene ed., 1997).

56. Arruda, *supra* note 49, at 183 (“My mother’s reaction was to tell me that she was willing to pay for me to go to therapy and straighten myself out. That was the same thing my aunt and uncle in Brazil told my cousin when they found out he was gay.”).

57. See Carla Trujillo, *Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community*, in CHICANA CRITICAL ISSUES 117 (Norma Alarcón et al. eds., 1993).

As lesbians, our sexuality becomes the focal issue of dissent. The majority of Chicanas, both lesbian and heterosexual, are taught that our sexuality must conform to certain modes of behavior. Our culture voices shame upon us if we go beyond the criteria of passivity and repression, or doubts in our virtue if we refuse. We, as women, are taught to suppress our sexual desires and needs by conceding all pleasure to the male. As Chicanas, we are commonly led to believe that even talking about our participation and satisfaction in sex is taboo.

*Id.* (citations omitted).

58. See Althea Smith, *Cultural Diversity and the Coming-Out Process* (hereinafter *Coming Out*), in ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AMONG LESBIANS & GAY MEN, *supra* note 55, at 294 (noting that “[m]embers of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community are often referred to, colloquially, as members of the family”).



family presents Latina lesbians with a difficult choice: loss of support from the one group where they were not “en el otro lado” (on the other side).<sup>59</sup>

Beyond relatives, lesbianism threatens Latinas with loss of community and friends. Even in times of political struggles and ethnic awareness, Latinas who are sexual “others” have been marginalized and rejected. *La comunidad Latina* has derided Latina lesbians “as an agent of the Anglos” and “as an aberration, someone who has unfortunately caught *his* [Anglo] disease.”<sup>60</sup>

Lesbianism thus alienates Latinas from the heterosexual majority in the *comunidad Latina* which has difficulty with and even irrational revulsion for homosexuality. Lesbians are exiled from the culture and community by placing the group “in a context of Anglo construction, a supposed *vendida* to the race.”<sup>61</sup>

While clearly unacceptable, the othering of Latina lesbians is the plainly explicable if one looks through the lens of those who are disturbed by differences. The challenge and tensions Latina Lesbians pose to culture is patent. In accepting and embracing their own outlaw sexuality, they effectively reclaim “what we’re told is bad, wrong, or taboo . . .”<sup>62</sup> Acceptance of the multidimensional self implicitly, if not concretely, rejects the sexism and homophobia of the patriarchal culture.

59. See Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, *The Other Side/Del Otro Lado* [hereinafter *Otro Lado*], in *COMPañERAS*, *supra* note 48, at 2-3.

60. Carla Trujillo, *Introduction*, in *CHICANA LESBIANS*, *supra* note 40, at ix (emphasis in original) (quoting N. Saporta Sternbach, *A Deep Memory of Love: The Chicana Feminism of Cherrie Moraga*, in *BREAKING BOUNDARIES* 48-61 (A. Horno-Delgado, et al. eds., 1989)); Espín, *Sexuality*, *supra* note 22, at 158-59 (telling of Latinas who view “lesbianism [as] a sickness we get from American women and American culture”); Espín, *Latina Psychology*, *supra* note 47, at 40 (quoting a participant at a meeting of Hispanic women in a major city in the U.S. in the early 80’s as saying that “lesbianism is a sickness we get from American women and American culture”).

61. Trujillo, *Introduction*, *supra* note 60, at ix (citation omitted). Trujillo posits that the cultural rejection “more realistically is due to the fact that we do not align ourselves with the controlling forces of compulsory heterosexuality. Further, as Chicanas we grow up defined, and subsequently confined, in a male context: daddy’s girl, some guy’s sister, girlfriend, wife, or mother. By being lesbians, we refuse to *need* a man to form our won identities as women. This constitutes a ‘rebellion’ many Chicanas/os cannot handle.” *Id.* (emphasis in original); see also *Macha*, *supra* note 40, at 24 (“As a political activist from El Movimiento Chicano/Latino, I had come away from it with a great sense of despair as a woman. Inherent to my despair, I felt was my physiology that was demeaned, misunderstood, objectified, and excluded by the politic of those men with whom I had aligned myself on the basis of our mutual subjugation as Latinos/[as] in the United States.”); Trujillo, *Fear and Loathing*, *supra* note 57, at 187 (“Too often we internalize the homophobia and sexism of the larger society, as well as that of our own culture, which attempts to keep us from loving ourselves. . . . The effort to consciously reclaim our sexual selves forces Chicanas to either confront their own sexuality or, in refusing, castigate lesbians as *vendidas* to the race, blasphemers to the church, atrocities against nature, or some combination.”).

62. Trujillo, *Introduction*, *supra* note 60, at x (emphasis in original); *Macha*, *supra* note 41, at 44 (“We [Latinas] had been taught not to give those [sexual] feelings and fantasies names, much less to affirm their meanings.”).

Finally, it would be irresponsible in studying the subordination of women in the *cultura Latina* because of their sex, sexuality, and lesbianism, if one did not consider the feminization of the gay male as part of the project of emancipation from sex-based oppression.<sup>63</sup> Gay Latinos are feminized. The feminization of gay Latinos serves to show how femaleness, femininity, and womanhood are identity components that can be manipulated, distorted, and translated to reduce all women and gay men (who are viewed as women) to second-class citizenship status.

Literature is replete with examples of how gay Latinos are described with derision in precisely the same terms that are used to laud the "proper" women: docile, submissive, feminine.<sup>64</sup> Gay Latinos are called *pájaros* (birds),<sup>65</sup> *maricas* (faggots),<sup>66</sup> and *locas* (crazy females).<sup>67</sup> They are described with the same (mostly negative) words and behaviors used to portray or depict "normal" or sex/gender-appropriately behaving women: "hysterical, ludicrous, alternately sentimental and viper-tongued, coquettish with men she knows will likely end up beating her half to death when they are no longer satisfied with shouting insults at her at the same time that they are strangely attracted to the tattered eroticism that she can still manage to project."<sup>68</sup>

It is telling that characteristics not only valued in but demanded from "real" *mujeres* can so quickly be transmogrified into undesirable, immoral, sinister, corrupt traits when they appear in men who love men. Gay Latinos are reduced to stereotypical caricatures of debased, degenerate, vile woman-like men. The depravation of the revered attributes of femininity into derision if occurring in men reveals and underscores the tensions and stresses of world traveling by Latinas/os who are sexual others.

63. See LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 27, 51 ("Discrimination against homosexuals has also been bolstered by the *machista* devaluation of women."). Significantly, this power dynamic is sometimes replicated within some gay communities. See *id.* at 28-9 ("The right of masculine males to enjoy their sexuality as they see fit matches the power they have in society as a whole. . . . [In Cuba] before 1959 masculine ostensibly heterosexual males were able to satisfy some of their sexual needs with 'nonmasculine' males while simultaneously oppressing them in other ways. In this respect there was not much difference between how they treated homosexuals and how they treated women.").

64. DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER, *GAY & LESBIAN THEMES IN LATIN AMERICAN WRITING* 28 (1991) (quoting *Los Invertidos*).

65. *Id.* at 51 (writing about a book entitled *Pájaro de Mar por Tierra*).

66. *Id.* at 83 (referring to the *maricas* as the lowest class, the most grotesque, within homosexuality).

67. *Id.* at 91; see also LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 56 (explaining the imagery of the *loca* as "parod[ying] stereotypical female mannerisms").

68. Compare FOSTER, *supra* note 64, with LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 6 (referring to Cuba), and LUMSDEN, *supra* note 18, at 28 (noting that "there is a correlation between the oppression of women and the oppression of homosexuals").

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that *maricón* — faggot — the most common appellation for a homosexual male has multiple negative meanings. The word *maricón*, in common usage, is employed not only to refer to a gay man. It also is used to denote a wrongdoer, a reprobate, a weakling, a spineless actor. These multiple meanings elide and elude the translations of gender and sexual identity. The word for lesbian, *marimacha*, reveals similar discomfort with non-traditional and culture-affronting gender, sex, and sexual identity. The *marimacha*, a designation that plays with and preys on both the *marianista* and the *macho* proper roles, evokes wholly discordant cultural images.

### CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the powerful impact of sexuality on a Latina lesbian's location in all her societies, it is a theme at best sparsely considered, at worst, unabashedly ignored in the literature. Because of the multiple oppressions effected by sexuality on all Latinas, and the additional burdens of lesbianism, a confrontation of this *última frontera* has implications for all Latinas'/os' liberation.

One useful model is the indivisibility/interdependence framework of a critically adjusted international human rights model.<sup>69</sup> International norms protect both equality and difference, autonomy and interdependence, privacy and family life. These principles recognize that human beings are the totality of their identities, not an essentialized<sup>70</sup> or segmented portion of our selves.

As was plainly presented with respect to Latina lesbians, fragmentation of identity perpetuates privilege and entrenches subordination. Latina lesbians are displaced and erased in all their communities by virtue of their multiple outsidership in all locations. An approach that partitions identity within any community will simply replicate and compound power relations be they based on sex, race, ethnicity, sexuality or a combination of any or all of such identity components. All these spaces must provide Latina lesbians refuge from subordination, dislocation, and disempowerment, not create them.

For LatCrit's success, it is imperative that it adopt and promote a

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69. See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)gendered*, *supra* note 5; Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol & Kimberly A. Johns, *Global Rights, Local Wrongs, and Legal Fixes: An International Human Rights Critique of Immigration and Welfare "Reform,"* 71 S. CAL. L. REV. 547 (1998) (explaining how the human rights framework can be used to challenge recent immigration and welfare reform laws that have a negative impact on Latinas/os).

70. See Harris, *supra* note 6; Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges*, *supra* note 1; Valdes, *Sex and Race*, *supra* note 6, at 49.

multidimensional model — “a principal epistemic site”<sup>71</sup> that embraces rather than atomizes our multiple co-existing, indivisible identities. This means that we must enfold all, particularly those who are different from the norm, those who we would rather ignore because we learned about them as *cosas feas*.

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71. See Margaret E. Montoya, *Academic Mestizaje: Re/Producing Clinical Teaching and Re/Framing Wills as Latina Praxis*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 349, 370 (1997).