Editorial

Contested racialized identities

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“Latino” continues to be a generative category, encompassing people from numerous national groups, multiple racial categories, recent migrations and long-term residence in the United States. As a social construction and a site of contestation, Latino identity is multidimensional and dynamic, its meaning transformed across particular historical, social, and political contexts. Latinos have been racialized in myriad ways according to factors such as skin color, language and national identity. Interpretations of Latino identity include not only how Latinos see themselves but also how others categorize them. One thread that runs through the articles in this volume is the negotiation of dimensions of Latino identities across different spheres and historical moments. This issue offers illuminating perspectives on the ways that identities are interpreted and the ideologies and social hierarchies that structure Latino lives. The articles explore the racialization of identities in the music industry, the world of relationships, and multiple sites of indigenous and Mexican immigration.

Our first article discusses how artists may racialize themselves in contrast to how they are read by others in the music industry. Paloma Martinez-Cruz considers the dynamics that influence the construction of the self within existent racial/ethnic hierarchies. She discusses the careers of Andy Russell and Don Tosti, Mexican American singers who have been framed as passing as White or Black, but who, this paper argues, actually embraced a Latino identity. According to Martinez-Cruz, through their use of bilingualism and other cultural tropes, these postwar-era artists could be read as engaging a “sonic Latinidad” that emphasizes rather than disguises their Mexican American cultural origins. Despite market force pressures to assimilate to industry expectations, they chose to accentuate their Latino identity, language and culture within the context of competing ethnoracial categories.

Turning to another context of contested identities, Jazmín Muro and Lisa Martinez study relationship preferences in an era of increasing rates of interracial couplings. Since more people are marrying outside of their racial or ethnic group than ever before, this theoretically suggests an expanding tolerance of and openness toward racial and ethnic difference. Muro and Martinez focus on the dating preferences of Latina college students in primarily White institutions.

The authors examine how culture and ethnic identity figure into Latinas' envisioning of their romantic partners. Latina respondents expressed a strong preference for dating within the Latino community even if this meant dating Latinos with less education. Exoticised or rendered invisible on their mostly white campuses, even second and third generation Latinas sought partners from within their culture given the discrimination and hostility they face in a racialized context.

Two articles unpack multi-layered meanings of Indigenous identities. When Indigenous people are subsumed under the Latino identity marker, the multiethnic nature of contemporary Latina/o migration is ignored. Saskias Casanova, Brendan O'Connor and Vanessa Anthony-Stevens examine how indigeneity is (mis)represented in Latinidad. Through an "ecologies of adaptation" approach, the authors consider the myriad factors influencing the incorporation of Indigenous migrants in the United States. Given globalization, these migrants become a transnational community struggling to survive on both sides of the border. Indigenous people work within their communities to make ends meet and keep their cultural and linguistic traditions alive. Any consideration of Indigenous life in the United States must grapple with the linguistic barriers migrants face since indigenous languages are even more marginalized than Spanish is in this country. The authors provide a useful approach for challenging the marginalization of Mexican Indigenous im/migrants within the field of Latino studies.

Next, Kristy Ulibarri's essay considers how Sesshu Foster's *Atomik Aztex* (2005) and other related literary and filmic texts interrupt idealistic readings of indigeneity. Ulibarri demonstrates how *Atomik Aztex* employs indigeneity in an unconventional manner through use of a "premodern" Indigenous figure that spans two different eras. She looks at how the premodern Indigenous subject operates in Chicana/o narratives where it is often used to imagine utopian possibilities for Latinos; however, in the texts that Ulibarri discusses, the device of premodern indigeneity makes visible the economic forces that condition Chicana/o and Latina/o bodies and precludes imaginings of any reality outside of an exploitative free-market system.

The final article analyzes southern millennials' discourse about Latinos to unearth current strategies of racialization. Cristina Alcalde disrupts narratives that claim young people are more tolerant and less racist than previous generations. In her study of racial attitudes of young people in Kentucky, a state that has experienced a rapid growth of Latinos, she shows that while young people conceive of themselves as more progressive and open minded than their parents, their discourse promotes a color-blind philosophy that constructs Latino identity as foreign and illegal. In this era when we are experiencing a particularly virulent demonization of immigrants, millennials hold disparaging views of Latino newcomers to Kentucky, as they tend to naturalize the association of Latino and illegality. Alcalde brings to the surface the glaring contradictions between the students' stated commitment to an idealized color-blind ideology and their actual narrow-minded views of racial difference.

Each of the articles deepens our understanding of the complexities of racialized Latino identities. Following these articles are three timely *Vivencias* essays. One takes us to Turkey to consider the internationalization of Latino studies, another engages author and filmmaker Josefina López in a discussion about Latinas in the arts and in popular culture, and the last offers a moving introduction to the challenges faced by Latinos in Montana. Enjoy!

Lourdes Torres
DePaul University, Chicago, IL
E-mail: latstu@depaul.edu