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Introduction

“Latinos are hot, and we are not the only ones to think so. Everyone wants to jump on the bandwagon, and why not? We have the greatest art, music, and literature. It’s time we tell our stories.” With these words, actor Antonio Banderas welcomed all to the first advertising “Up-Front” presentation by the Spanish TV network Telemundo. Summoning advertisers to “jump on the bandwagon,” he echoed a promise that is repeatedly heard in corporate headquarters and at advertising conventions alike: that Latinos are the hottest new market and that those who target them will not regret it. That Latinos are hot is not at all surprising. It is becoming increasingly common to see aspects of Latino culture popularized in mainstream culture, with salsa outselling ketchup and taking over dance floors, and a growing number of corporate sponsors interested in Latinos as a target market. That a famous Spaniard like Antonio Banderas should become the spokesman of U.S. Latino culture, which is overwhelmingly Mexican, Puerto Rican, Hispanic Caribbean, and Central American, is also not surprising. Although Latino social movements in the 1960s defined themselves against anything Spanish, such distinctions have since been countered by the growing consolidation of a common Latino/Hispanic identity that encompasses anyone from a Spanish/Latin American background in the United States.

Central to this development is Hispanic marketing and advertising. Long before the current popularization of Latin culture, this industry first advanced the idea of a common “Hispanic market” by selling and pro-

moting generalized ideas about “Hispanics” to be readily marketed by corporate America. Thirty years later, the existence and profitability of this culture-specific market feeds one of the fastest growing sectors of the marketing industry in the United States. Over eighty Hispanic advertising agencies and branches of transnational advertising conglomerates spread across cities with sizable Hispanic populations now sell consumer products by shaping and projecting images of and for Latinos.

This book examines the Hispanic marketing industry and its role in the making and marketing of contemporary definitions of *Latinidad*. I explore Hispanic marketing as a self-identified arena of Latino self-representation which, dominated by corporate intellectuals of Latin American background in the United States and directly tied to the structures of the U.S. economy, serves as a fruitful entry point into an analysis of the complex interests that are currently involved in the public representation of this emerging identity. I start from the premise that the reconstitution of individuals into consumers and populations into markets are central fields of cultural production that reverberate within public understanding of people’s place, and hence of their rights and entitlements, in a given society. Looking at Hispanic marketing is therefore particularly revealing of the relationship between culture, corporate sponsorship, and politics, and moreover can illuminate how commercial representations may shape people’s cultural identities as well as affect notions of belonging and cultural citizenship in public life. In particular, I point to the greater importance of these processes among Latinos and other U.S. minorities. Although these populations have historically lacked access to public venues of self-representation, it is in the market and through marketing discourse that they are increasingly debating their social identities and public standing. These issues are consequently reduced and correlated with their “advertising worthiness and marketability,” cautioning us against the facile celebration of Latinos’ commercial popularity as an infallible sign of their “coming of age” and political standing.

The growth and popularization of a single ethnic category for peoples of Latin American background in the United States, such as “Hispanic” or “Latino,” is a relatively new development.¹ First generalized by federal agencies in the 1970s, a common identity for the diversity of “Latino” populations has since been nourished through census categories, state policies, and the media, prompting questions about the political implications of this development and the ways in which people reject or embrace the identification of “Latino” or “Hispanic” in everyday life.² One of the most influential forces behind this identity, however, the His-

panic marketing and advertising industry, remains largely unexamined.³ On and on, Latinos' marketing popularity is uncritically treated as a sign of their "coming of age" in U.S. society or else, equally uncritically, condemned as a sign of their commodification; but seldom have studies looked at marketing as constitutive of U.S. Latinidad. Similarly, most studies on Latinos and the media have tended to focus on the mainstream media, such as Hollywood films and network TV, repeatedly reminding us that Latinos/Hispanics are too often excluded, and that when they are portrayed, narrow and simplistic stereotypes are inevitably employed. What research has seldom noted is marketing's influence on the public projection of U.S. Latinos and the complex processes and multiple contradictions behind the production of these representations, such as the involvement of "natives"—that is, of "Hispanics"—in their very production.

As part of their struggle for political enfranchisement since the 1960s, Latino populations have become increasingly concerned with their own representation and involvement in all types of media (Rodríguez 1997; Noriega 2000). In this context, the development of culturally specific marketing has been generally regarded as a viable means to correct the former stereotypical commercial portrayal of Latinos. We need only to contrast Latinos' earlier commercial representation as thieves, as in Frito Lay's controversial Frito Bandido character, or as stinky bandidos, as in the Arrid deodorant ads in the 1960s and 1970s, with contemporary Hispanic-generated ads to note their pride-worthy images of beautiful, upscale, affluent, and successful Latinos.⁴ Hispanic marketers have even gained praise from media scholars for providing corrective and valuable alternatives to Anglo-generated images (Peñaloza 1997),⁵ and they themselves have adopted this "politically correct" outlook by marketing themselves and their productions as more aware, informed, and sensitive than those generated by their mainstream counterparts.

However, behind such lavish portrayal of Latinos lies a complex industry that stands at the forefront of contemporary Latino cultural politics and that points to the complex dynamics affecting both their public recognition and continued invisibility in U.S. society. Throughout, I suggest that this industry's political economy, history, and composition are directly implicated in the global processes and transnational bases that sustain commonplace understandings of Latinos as a "people" and a "culture." The production of Latinos as easily digestible and marketable within the larger structures of corporate America is therefore revealing of the global bases of contemporary processes of identity formation and

of how notions of place, nation, and race that are at play in the United States and in Latin America come to bear on these representations.

These processes are evidenced in the discourses of authenticity engendered by this industry to defend the existence and profitability of Hispanics as an authentic and thus commercially valuable market. Primary among such discourses is the promotion of Latinos as a “nation within a nation,” with a uniquely distinct culture, ethos, and language. Such ideas, as I will show, are fed and maintained by sources as varied as the precepts of contemporary U.S. multiculturalism, nineteenth-century ideas of *Latinidad* developed by Latin American nationalist ideologies, and Anglo-held beliefs about “Hispanics” evidencing the varied sources that are strategically put into service in the commercial representation of *Latinidad* as forever needy of culturally specific marketing. In these constructions the Spanish language is built as the paramount basis of U.S. *Latinidad*, as is evident in the industry’s common designation of “Hispanic marketing” and “Hispanic-driven media.” Its premise and rationale for existence are not only that there are basic differences between Latinos and other consumers that need to be addressed through culture- and language-specific marketing, but also that there is a continuous influx to the United States of Spanish-speaking populations that would not be reached by advertising were it not for this type of marketing. Latinos are also repackaged into images that render them pleasing to corporate clients, such as in the garb of the traditional and extremely family-oriented and stubbornly brand-loyal consumer, which I suggest responds more to mainstream society’s management of ethnic others than to any intrinsic cultural attribute of the Latino consumer. Through such strategies, I show that Latinos are continually recast as authentic and marketable, but ultimately as a foreign rather than intrinsic component of U.S. society, culture, and history, suggesting that the growing visibility of Latino populations parallels an expansion of the technologies that render them exotic and invisible.

At the same time, my analysis recognizes the importance of Hispanic marketing in the development of U.S. Hispanic media as an ethnic- and culture-specific nexus for the creation and sustenance of alternative “public spheres,” or modes of representations, as well as for “desegregating the dollar” by promoting more equitable commercial investments in minority populations (Weems 1998). These issues are actively debated by contemporary scholars in relation to the increasing commercialization and privatization of public life, which require us to examine advertising and marketing as central to the constitution and imagining of contem-

porary identities. As the following discussion will make apparent, however, I reject the simple categories of ethnic and culturally specific media, and advance instead the need for more nuanced analysis that uncovers the power structures in which such media are also embedded. Categories such as ethnic or Hispanic media have tended to exempt any other medium with “Hispanic” or “Latin” as part of its appellation from critical scrutiny, thereby reproducing simplistic oppressor/oppressed dichotomies that veil complicity and alliances, as well as differences in backgrounds, political stances, and subject positions, among and across members of what is supposedly “the same group.” Accordingly, Latino stereotypes are seen as the product of some faceless “corporate America,” with more appropriate images of Hispanics resulting from the involvement of Hispanics themselves at all levels of production.⁶ In contrast, my goal is to analyze Hispanic marketing in relation to rather than in isolation from wider dynamics in order to suggest that such representations are in fact produced in conversation and often in complicity with—rather than as a response or challenge to—dominant hierarchies of race, culture, and nationality.

To this end, my examination is an ethnographic one: a momentary look upward to the circles where these images are shaped. I thus place little emphasis on the finished images and texts generated to represent “Hispanics” and focus instead on the political-economic interests and processes involved in their production, along with their consumption by the people to whom they are geared. It is these active processes of production and consumption that I consider most revealing of the dilemmas affecting the conceptualization of Latinos as a distinct group and the wider social and political implications of such representations, since they elucidate the role that commercial representations play in the social imagining of populations.

MEDIATING IDENTITIES

The media’s role in the construction of identities is currently at the forefront of contemporary cultural studies as part of a growing interest in the new vectors through which people assert and communicate national and social identities in an increasingly mass mediated and transnational world (Ginsburg et al. 2001). Recent research turns our attention to the historical specificity of the media in cross-cultural settings, their involvement in local politics, and the multiple ways in which publics interpret and negotiate media messages (Abu-Lughod 1993, 1999; Foster

1999; Mankekar 1999). This research has similarly pointed us to the multiple ways in which media texts communicate categories of identity and serve to incorporate or mediate people's relationships within any given group or society, such as by establishing public spheres of debate or facilitating the maintenance of alternative identities. Anthropological research on the media, in particular, has addressed these issues through ethnographic examinations that underscore the complexities involved in the production, circulation, and consumption not only of media texts, but of audiences, messages, and meanings.⁷

This work intersects with recent ethnographic work on the media, albeit my focus is primarily on U.S. commercial media, an area generally neglected by anthropologists and seldom examined ethnographically in the cultural studies literature. Studies of commercial media and advertising in the United States, as well as its impact on U.S. minorities, are abundant (Cashmore 1997; Frank 1997; Gray 1995; Salem Manganaro 1996), yet anthropologists have largely overlooked the U.S. media, even when it constitutes the largest advertising and media market worldwide, and hence a determinant influence in the global rendering of marketable identities.⁸ Such an emphasis is of course not surprising, considering that it is the dominance of Western media that fueled the widespread use of the media as a tool for asserting cultural and national identities, as well as the very growth of the anthropology of the media and of anthropologists' growing interest in its use as a tool of social activism and cultural assertion (Ginsburg 1991; Ginsburg et al. 2001; Turner 1992). At the same time, however, the contradictory processes of globalization and the local repercussions of the commodification and commercialization of culture in contemporary U.S. society have received considerably less attention than have similar processes in "foreign" contexts (Howes 1996; Marcus and Myers 1996). A growing ethnographic interest in global cultural industries, such as advertising, has pointed to the central place of culture and ethnicity in the workings and operations of these industries and to patterns in the commodification of culture for mass consumption (Foster 1999; Moeran 1996; Miller 1995; Mazzarella 2000). Nonetheless, we lack detailed ethnographic examinations of how these processes operate in the context of U.S. daily life, affecting the commodification of U.S. racial and ethnic minorities.

We know, however, that the increasing specialization of the U.S. media—part and parcel of a global advertising trend to tap into the culture-specific characteristics of a given market, be it along gender, race, lifestyle, ethnic, or national lines—is helping to feed and maintain par-

ticularized social and cultural identities (Chin 2001; O'Barr 1994; Halter 2000). In this vein, some have argued that target marketing is contributing to the "breakdown of America" by fragmenting its constituent segments and limiting the spaces for mutual recognition and debate (Turow 1997), while others, including media activists, have conversely seen in this trend the creation of incipient "public spheres" that can become vehicles for alternative interests or lead to more just forms of participatory democracy.⁹ In this way, Hispanic marketers' interest in creating a self-contained market can help us apprehend some of the localized repercussions of global trends in advertising, particularly what Miller (1997) has called the "revolt of the local," involving the appeal to the supposed intrinsic differences of particular populations, as individuals are turned into consumers and populations into markets. Such appeals to authenticity corroborate the ubiquity of particular racial and nationalist ideologies and even of global hierarchies of culture and place in the commercial imagining of populations, prompting us to analyze how they come to bear on or are purposefully deployed by the many interests that coalesce in the marketing of difference. Anthropologists have long noted how particular nationalist ideologies are necessarily implicated in the production of a range of media texts (Mankekar 1999; Abu-Lughod 1993; Naficy 1993; Rofel 1994), yet advertising additionally reveals how dominant discourses of identity, race, or nationality come to bear on these representations, given the advertisers' dual and direct attachments and obligations to different interests and constituencies. These dual engagements, we shall see, turn Hispanic creatives and advertising professionals into brokers and mediators of preexisting hierarchies of representation as they seek to shape definitions of "Hispanics" that meet both the expectations of their corporate clients and those of their prospective audience of consumers. By focusing on one segment of the U.S. advertising industry—a division of ethnic and targeted marketing—I intend first to provide a more complex basis for theorizing the political and social potential of the advertising industry for members of the growing "Latino" community, as well as for other ethnic populations in the United States. Second, I mean to assess the local ramifications of global trends in the advertising industry, which increasingly affect not only the growing U.S. Latino community, but also other segments of U.S. society, as well as global markets worldwide. Following these global trends in segmented and targeted marketing, one finds that they too are increasingly subject to similar strategies of containment and representation, leading to analogous processes to those described in the following pages.

What is uniquely interesting about Hispanic marketing is its present status as one of the few unified marketing segments in relation to the so-called U.S. general market and the pivotal role played by “culture” in its construction. In fact, the same trends that are fragmenting the so-called general market in the United States along the lines of lifestyles, gender, or race—over and above the actual increase of Hispanic populations—are fueling the importance of Hispanics as a unified marketing segment. This fragmentation has dwindled the size of other U.S. demographic and marketing segments, rendering “Hispanics” one of the last identifiable and sizable market niches. For, in contrast to “women” or “teenagers,” who are simultaneously segmented according to lifestyles, age, tastes, or race, “Hispanics” remain a protected segment by their mere definition as a homogeneously bounded, “culturally defined” niche. It is this definition, which makes all “Latinos” part of the same undifferentiated “market”—whether they live in El Barrio or in an upscale New York high-rise, or whether they watch Fraser or only Mexican *novelas*, or love Ricky Martin or consider him a sellout—that is foremost behind the apparently greater representation of “Hispanics” within the spheres of corporate America.

The equation of marketing with Latino representation or, as stated by Banderas, the idea that Latinos’ marketing popularity marks the time “to tell our stories,” is another primary concern of this study. Analysts of consumer society have long noted the relationship between consumption and identity and the use of this relationship to sell products by presenting them as ways to achieve self-fulfillment or lay claim to particular statuses or social identities (Friedman 1994; Ewen 1988; Halter 2000). The same has been documented for ethnic and racial identities, which advertising has associated with or embodied in a number of products and commodities as a means of interpellating people as ethnic, raced, or national consumers (Chin 2001; Kondo 1997; Wilk 1993, 1994). However, as the current context of U.S. multiculturalism continues to heighten the political importance of the idiom of culture and of cultural identities for contemporary cultural politics, the cooptation and promotion of identities by marketers demand consideration, especially regarding their implications for wider issues of representativity and social rights (Gordon and Newfield 1996; Fusco 1995; Hall 1991a, 1991b). The homogenization of a heterogeneous population into a single “Latino” market, for instance, while increasing the visibility of Latino populations, coincides with larger processes of partial containment and recognition of ethnic differences that are at play in other spheres of contemporary

U.S. society, such as at the level of politics and social and cultural policies; in fact, it is an intrinsic component of such processes. In analyzing the social implications of culturally specific marketing, we therefore need to begin by looking at the multipurpose and dual nature of these initiatives, at the level of both production and reception. That is, we must examine culturally specific marketing as a site that simultaneously serves the multiple interests of those who profit from difference as well as the interests of those subordinate populations whose attainment of representation is essential to contemporary politics. As such, these initiatives can be experienced in contradictory ways as a medium of marginalization or, alternatively, as a repository of language, culture, and traditions by its target publics. Exposing these nuanced dynamics is a primary goal of this work.

ADVERTISING: THE PRIVILEGE OF COMMERCIAL DISCOURSE

Before examining the contemporary significance of Hispanic marketing, we need to consider advertising as a relatively privileged discourse of communication in light of consumption's present role for conveying identities and aspirations in a world fully implicated within the politics of signification (Leiss et al. 1997). The contemporary situation is one fully embedded in a "promotional culture," where we are told that the discourse of advertising and promotion has permeated every aspect of symbolic expression (Wernick 1991) and where what Sharon Zukin has termed "the symbolic economy" increasingly dominates the wider economy, prompting questions about the political importance of this commercial sector and the extent to which it shapes people's subjectivities and the terms of political debate.¹⁰ Among other issues, research now ponders the political implications of the commercial imagination of particular populations and the significance of the individuation of tastes, issues, debates, and desires for contemporary processes of identity creation. Has the market reconfigured the meaning and value of contemporary citizenship? Is it solely as "consumers," some ponder, that people are subjects of representation or their needs worthy of consideration? (Firat and Dholakia 1998; García-Canclini 1995).

These questions signal important developments in the way we conceive of politics and citizenship, as well as a reassessment of how our notions of belonging are communicated. This type of inquiry marks a shift from the formerly strict division in media studies between the rational

sphere of politics and the commercial sphere of entertainment, which must be carefully kept apart if some idea of an informed and “enlightened” participatory democracy is to exist. These precepts underlie most analyses of contemporary culture, from Habermas’s well-known denunciation of the commercial media as responsible for the demise of the bourgeois public sphere and rational debate, to most contemporary studies of popular and mass-mediated culture, which have also had to confront this legacy in order to vindicate commercial media as a realm worthy of study in relation to the norms of public debate and hence of politics. Guiding these concerns is the ongoing privatization of everyday life as a result of globalization, which, in its challenge to the centrality of production and the state as guarantor of services and social rights, is more than ever positioning consumption and all the mechanisms through which people are being addressed as consumers as central bastions of contemporary politics. In this new context, we are challenged to redefine what we mean by publics and political projects, as well as the relationship between citizenship and consumption, as a step toward exposing inequalities and injustice in the realms of consumption, such as in people’s access to the media and to other mechanisms of cultural interpellation and identity formation (Yúdice 2001; García-Canclini 1995). The challenge is thus not only to recognize the blurred nature of mass-mediated culture’s genres and messages and to point to their variable and unintended modes of public consumption, but to recognize that in a context where nothing escapes commodification, commercial culture cannot be easily reduced to sheer pleasure or commercial manipulation, but must be considered as constitutive of contemporary identities and notions of belonging and entitlement.¹¹ In fact, historians of mass culture have pointed to the equation of American citizenship with consumption and the illusions and promises of commercial culture since the outset of modern merchandising. As Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen (1992) note, merchandising played a key role in the integration and “Americanization” of new immigrants at the turn of the century through its linkage of democracy with the consumption of goods. Marketing was therefore always involved in the making of public identities, although this role is far more pervasive today, given its preeminence as a sector of communication, itself evidenced in the heightened growth of specialized ethnic and target marketing.

In this way, marketing strategies can help illuminate the ways in which public identities and cultural citizenship are constructed in the current transnational context in which individuals are vested not only with ju-

ridical competences, obligations, and entitlements (or the lack thereof) endowed by the state, but also with particular modes of belonging based on their “culture.” As the growing literature on transnationalism clearly illustrates, the new diversities ensuing from transnationalism and the flow of populations and cultural goods have not only opened possibilities for new pluralities and hybrid identities, but, most significantly, created new demands for establishing “belonging.” And two variables seem to be constant in these processes: culture, involving the existence of particular and lingering hierarchies of race/ethnicity/language/nationality that mediate people’s position within any given society; and consumption, insofar as—whether as exiles, citizens, permanent residents, or immigrants—individuals are consumers first and foremost.

Studying the production of commercial mass-mediated culture can therefore help us uncover some of the ways in which notions of belonging and citizenship as well as the hierarchies of culture, race, and nation in which they are based, are produced and negotiated in the demanding new context of transnationalism and displacement. For citizenship, far from the universal juridical category it is still often thought to be, is implicated in inequities of culture, race, and gender, which ultimately determine who is or is not part of a given nation and on what grounds (Alejandro 1993; Lowe 1996; Ong 1999; Williams 1989). It conveys normative ideals of culture, language, gender, and race, denoting lesser or greater degrees of belonging according to how closely individuals approximate such ideals within a given nation-state and its particular dominant confluences of these “identity” variables. These dynamics have been amply attested to by U.S. minorities’ contradictory experiences with the canons and promises of universal citizenship. Even as legal citizens, members of these groups have not reaped the benefits supposedly afforded by “citizenship,” while their cultural, racial, and linguistic difference renders them forever suspects and potential threats, bringing up the abiding concern of this book’s opening epigraph: “whether the United States will ever truly be one nation.” It is in this tenor that writers have advanced the concept of “cultural citizenship” to emphasize the intricate connections between cultural visibility, as the assertion of cultural difference from normative ideals, and political enfranchisement. According to Rosaldo and Flores (1997), for instance, cultural assertions are a medium through which Latinos and other subordinated groups in the United States may attain cultural citizenship and thus “claim space in society and eventually claim rights,” which may serve as a means of ex-

panding claims for political entitlements in the future. Yet cultural citizenship can be seen alternatively as an intrinsic component of how states organize and manage difference, a medium for normalization through the accommodation of difference (Dávila 1999a; Ong 1999). This leads us to consider claims of cultural citizenship not solely as a means to expand “entitlements,” but also as they may serve to reformulate the frameworks of recognition and debate. To what extent do ethnic commercial media affect normative citizenship ideals when establishing assertions of belonging on the basis of a different culture or language than those informing a particular nationalist ideology? Can such assertions have an impact on dominant structures of subordination, or do they simultaneously render such visibility into a venue of containment and subordination? And what can we learn from the making of the “Hispanic consumer” about Latinos/Hispanics and their status and sense of belonging in contemporary U.S. society?

Particularly relevant for probing these issues is the range of technologies for quantifying and measuring the attitudes and cultural competences of particular populations in order to codify and establish “truths” about people as consumers (Miller 1998). Advertising is particularly relevant here, given its dependence on market research methods aimed at demarcating consumers and at packaging culture for mass consumption. To the extent that these involve generalizing conventions about people’s “culture,” we are summoned to inquire into how these concepts are produced and disseminated and into whether and how they converge with other discourses circulated in greater society to affect not only individuals’ ranking as potential consumers but also their cultural identities and their social and political standing in public life.

In particular, we need to analyze commercial media in conversation with other venues of signification, neither in opposition nor in collusion, but rather in relation to state-produced ideologies and other existing frameworks that may affect people’s belonging on the basis of race, culture, or nationality. Also important to consider is the relative “privilege” vested in these different domains of signification by the particular historical and structural specificities in which they operate within a given society.¹² Thus, I posit that the importance of marketing to Latinos and other minorities needs to be assessed in direct relationship to their peripheral status in U.S. society and, consequently, to their constrained access to mass-mediated forums that shape their public representation. For Hispanic marketing is certainly not the only sector that promotes definitions of *Latinidad* in public life. Since the 1980s, a number of social advo-

cacy, political, artistic, and scholarly organizations have either adopted or shifted to a pan-Latino position aiming to advocate for or be representative of, as the case may be, the totality of the U.S. Latino or Hispanic population.¹³ However, despite calls for Latin unity, the goal of pan-Latino political unity remains tenuous at best. Documented instances of inter-Latino political unity at the neighborhood level (Padilla 1985; Jones-Correa 1998) have not been paralleled by nationwide “Latino agendas” within the Hispanic advocacy and not-for-profit sectors, which not only suffer from budgetary constraints,¹⁴ but also lack the type of nationwide projection enjoyed by commercial media. Simply put, Latinos’ marketing power may be amply discussed in mainstream society, but their political power is yet to parallel the exuberant excitement they currently trigger among marketers. Consider for instance Flores and Yúdice’s (1993) discussion of the contradictory stances toward Spanish of marketing strategists and U.S. state and social institutions: the former embrace language difference, and the latter treat it as a threat to the U.S. national community, as evidenced by the passage of Proposition 227 ending bilingual education. Similar contradictions will be evident throughout this work. I would thus argue that no other field of cultural production matches Hispanic marketing in its historical role of promoting unified, uncomplicated, depoliticized, and hence readily marketable definitions of Hispanidad, leading to the influential status it currently enjoys in its public dissemination relative to other sectors. It is therefore not surprising that the recent front-cover article in *Newsweek* featuring the growth of U.S. Latinos interviewed not politicians, labor leaders, or scholars, but important Hispanic marketing personalities such as Chrissy Haubegger, editor of *Latina* magazine, or Nelly Galán, Telemundo’s programming director, or that it called young Latinos Generation Ñ, a term coined by Hispanic marketers, or that it drew its statistical information from Strategy Research and Arbitron, recognized marketing sources. The importance of Hispanic marketing as a site of Latino signification is also evident when we consider that Latinos are becoming increasingly invisible from the mainstream media as advertisers target Latinos through “Hispanic” media, furthering their exclusion from media airwaves. Of the twenty-six new TV shows premiering on the major broadcast networks for the fall 1999 season, not one included a minority person in a leading role, while minorities on secondary shows were also sparse. The TV landscape is still a “white, white world” (Braxton 1999). The results of these trends have been recently documented by Noriega’s study of Chicano cinema and Latino media activism: Latino employment and repre-

sentation at all levels of the media remain at persistently low rates and have, in fact, decreased relative to the growth of Latino populations, while U.S. Latino productions are persistently shunned by traditional venues of production and distribution (Noriega 2000). Meanwhile, the Hispanic networks have been largely closed to U.S.-based Latino producers and productions, having historically operated as “transnational” rather than ethnic media by importing cheaper Latin American programming into the U.S. market rather than producing new programs.¹⁵

This makes advertising images, as far-fetched as they may be—after all, advertising is about the world of aspiration and desires—uniquely interesting as products that are produced and shaped with the U.S. Hispanic market in mind, contrary to most of the images produced by the “Hispanic” TV network whose interest spans transcontinentally toward Latin America and beyond.¹⁶ In fact, Hispanic marketing stands in a parallel yet contradictory relation to most of Hispanic TV: rather than in direct alliance, it competes with Latin American advertising agencies, with its profitability more directly predicated on its ability to project itself as a representative venue for U.S. Hispanics rather than Latin American consumers.¹⁷

Finally, the U.S. Hispanic marketing industry is also uniquely revealing of contemporary definitions and representations of *Latinidad*, given the structural and communicative demands of advertising. Their condensed format, and their need to empathize, charm, appeal, or shock a potential consumer in thirty to sixty seconds entail a great deal of simplification and typification (Leiss et al. 1997), which bring to the surface the tropes, images, and discourses that have become widespread as generalized representations of *Hispanidad*. Advertising thus exemplifies the processes through which, by addressing Latinos in culture-specific ways, marketers break new ground and disseminate old and new material for the conceptualization of a trans-Latino identity that spans class, race, and nationality. Of course, the outcomes of these processes are never reducible to mere impositions or fabrications. Advertising does not invent meaning for a commodity, but works by transferring to it meaning from the social world (Williamson 1978); and while its generic “mass-appeal” construction may make it a likely mirror for dominant values, it simultaneously depends on its partial incorporation of and engagement with popular interests (Hall 1981; Fiske 1996). Advertisements are thus complex texts that, as stereotypical or outlandish as they may be, are always entangled with the interests, desires, or imaginations of those whom they

seek to entice as consumers, and are always the result of negotiations in the process of depicting the consumer. As we shall see, in the case of Hispanic marketing these processes involve attempts to incorporate an audience spanning different nationalities, classes, and ethnicities, among other variables, as well as the always lingering expectations of Anglo corporate staff and their own preconceptions of Latinos, among other interests present in the making of generic commercial representations of Latinidad.

HISPANIC/LATINO

So far I have been using Hispanic/Latino interchangeably, as most people in the advertising/marketing industry do, and as I will, for the most part, continue to do throughout this book. Yet it is by the name “Hispanic marketing” that this industry is most commonly known, and this indicates its nature and scope. First, this terminology is undoubtedly due to the business preference for the officially census-sanctioned category of “Hispanic,” over “Latino,” a term of self-designation more connected to social struggles and activism (Noriega and López 1996). “Hispano” and its English translation “Hispanic” had been used as terms of self-designation by Spanish-origin populations in both the West and the East since the nineteenth century.¹⁸ In the West, in places like New Mexico, Mexican-origin elites self-identified as “Hispano” to mark their Spanish legacy and hence their class and racial superiority over most Mexicans, while in New York, which had a more diverse population of mostly Spaniards and Hispanic Caribbean people, “Hispanic” had been generalized as a pan-ethnic term (Laó 2001; Haslip-Viera and Baver 1996). By the 1960s and 1970s, however, the terms “Hispano” and “Hispanic” were seen to be contrary to the cultural nationalism that accompanied larger struggles for civil empowerment by both Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and thus as a denial of their identity and a rejection of their indigenous and colonized roots.¹⁹ Ironically, it was shortly after these cultural struggles that the U.S. government coined the official designation of “Hispanic” to designate anyone of Spanish background in the United States. This explains why Latino activists generally regard “Hispanic” as a more politically “sanitized” terminology than “Latino/a,” even though both terms are equally guilty of erasing differences while encompassing highly heterogeneous populations and can be as equally appropriated for a range of politics.

The industry’s official designation as “Hispanic,” however is not solely

due to the term's official status but is also meant to mark the importance given in this industry to the Spanish language as the key marker of Hispanic/Latino identity. Unlike "Latino," which could be potentially applied to any person of Latin American origin, "Hispanic" evokes Latin American populations' common origins in Spain. The exception is of course Brazil and Brazilians, whom Hispanic marketers generally exclude from their definition on the basis of their language.

At the same time, the dominant use of "Hispanic" in this industry does not imply its wholehearted acceptance by everyone involved. As a general rule, people in the industry use "Latino" and "Hispanic" interchangeably to refer to the target population, leaving "Hispanic" as the preferred appellation for the industry. "Latino" is also more common among the younger generation of marketers as opposed to "Hispanic" which is most commonly used by its founders and most established practitioners. "Latino" also enjoys more widespread acceptance as a politically correct term in contrast to "Hispanic," which is more evocative of Spanish conquest and colonization. Thus, while few of my informants were overtly critical of these terms, when they were, they were more likely to qualify their use of—and hence to be more critical of—"Hispanic" than "Latino." Overall, however, while both terms are used equally to sell, commodify, and market populations of Latin American background in the United States, all agencies used the official name "Hispanic" most frequently to present their work, themselves, and their target audience in their marketing presentations, printed materials, and brochures, suggesting the widespread adoption of dominant frameworks of representation within the industry at large.

Having said this, while I will be using these terms throughout this book, my intention is not to reify or take for granted this category but to go beyond contemporary studies on the growth and development of this seemingly common identity, which have tended to analyze it as a given, unitary, and unproblematized construct, whether it is called "Hispanic" or "Latino/a." By analyzing and documenting the inclusions or exclusions generated by the processes of Latinization, and the way in which discourses of pan-ethnicity intersect with dominant hierarchies of race, class, and gender, my purpose is to transcend the issue of terminology which has certainly not thwarted the commodification of peoples of Latin American backgrounds in this country.

From this perspective, I treat Latinization as the "out-of-many, one-people" process through which "Latinos" or "Hispanics" are conceived and represented as sharing one common identity. These processes are not

properly seen as a top-down development, resulting from the commodification and appropriation of Latino culture or from self-agency; rather, they stem from the contrary involvement of and negotiations between dominant, imposed, and self-generated interests, as will be evident in the discussion of Hispanic marketing. The ensuing enactments, definitions, and representations of Hispanic or Latino culture from such continuing processes are what I define as “Latinidad.”²⁰ Finally, though I am aware that “Anglo” is no less problematic than either “Hispanic” or “Latino” for erasing differences into a common category, I will nonetheless use “Anglo” as a general designation for the staff and representatives of “mainstream” and “general market” agencies as well as those at advertising corporations. Hispanic marketers use “gringos,” “Americanos,” and “Anglos” almost interchangeably to define those in the general market industry, but always as a function of the general assumption and awareness that this larger industry and its staff are white and that “general” and “mainstream” agencies serve largely as pseudonyms for “white non-ethnics.”²¹ By using “Anglo,” I thus seek to emphasize this white “Anglo-Protestant” ideal, devoid of blacks, Latinos, or any other “ethnics,” that provides the dominant reference against which Hispanic marketers produce their creations.

FOLLOWING THE CORPORATE INTELLECTUAL: DOING FIELDWORK ON A FIELDLESS SITE

I have already established that my goals are simultaneously broad and minute in terms of my dual interest in the larger political and economic contexts affecting this industry and in the everyday processes by which Hispanic images are constructed. Hence readers may be wondering how a study of a nationwide industry can be conducted by one person and mostly within New York City, where I resided during my research. Such questions now typically arise with regard to any ethnographic study in the demanding, mass-mediated, and global context where the feasibility of ethnography as traditionally conceived (in terms of a long-term stay and actual observation in a specific location) is increasingly called into question (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Anthropologists have even called for multisited ethnographies (Marcus 1998; Bright 1995) or for collaborative research with which to meet the ethnographic challenges presented by global phenomena such as the mass media and global marketing (Foster 1999). Certainly, the concept of “ethnographic fieldwork” was always contentious—“the field” was always a social construction and never

as bounded as once thought.²² Current concerns about ethnography in an age of “globalization” are therefore primarily a call to rethink methodological possibilities, arising from the unavoidable reality of global cultural flows, in which phenomena like the mass media are always implicated. Because these processes are not always easily observable nor amenable to participant observation, ethnography as traditionally conceived can no longer be seen as the single and “royal road to holistic knowledge” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 37): we must consider it now in conjunction with the range of other knowledges concurrently produced by sources as varied as the media or an international convention. Hence my study draws primarily from research among New York Hispanic ad agencies, but it includes information gained from travel to national marketing conventions and from interviews with ad executives in San Antonio and Chicago. Easing my task is the fact that Hispanic marketing, though a complex industry that spans the United States and has important transnational origins and connections, has particular, localized dimensions. For example, it revolves around a small network of key players, people who not only know but have worked and competed with one another, and who largely attend the same conferences, meetings, conventions, and social events. Many pioneers of the industry even live in the same neighborhood in Miami, have forged fictive kinship relationships, and keep apartments in the same upscale buildings in New York City. They thus constitute a circle of corporate intellectuals, not solely according to the most fundamental definition of intellectuals as those involved in the creation and circulation of knowledge, but also in the sense of their belonging to common networks and occupying similar positions within corporate America.²³ After all, while they are successful entrepreneurs sharing a business and profit orientation, Hispanic marketers are in an ancillary position within the structures of corporate America, assisting in but never dominating the commodification and marketing of Latinos in this country, insofar as they ultimately lack direct control over their ad agencies, which are entirely or partly owned by global advertising chains, and their ads are always subject to the approval of their corporate clients.

The existence of a nationwide network among Hispanic marketers afforded me relatively easy access to different areas of the industry that put me in contact with several of its founders and allowed me to trace major changes in this industry as well as continuities in the representation of Latinos. The fact that I could present myself as a university professor who would be writing a book on this industry and am an edu-

cated, Spanish-speaking, light-skinned Latina, close to the ideal “Latin look” (discussed later), also facilitated my entry into their circles. This, along with a concerted effort to dress fashionably during interviews with my contacts, meant that I presented no threat to their normative ideal of *Latinidad*, while most of them thought that whatever I might write would help validate their industry—that any writing is publicity. Access to Hispanic marketing professionals was also facilitated by my location in New York City, the U.S. advertising capital and, as we shall learn later, the birthplace of the Hispanic advertising industry. While Los Angeles is the largest market in terms of the number of Latinos, and San Antonio and Miami are currently key sites for some of the largest and most important Hispanic agencies, I chose New York as the focus of my study because it is home not only to many of the largest Hispanic advertising agencies, but also to the Hispanic marketing industry’s original founders and to the headquarters of several nationwide advertising-related establishments. New York is also the second largest Hispanic/Latino market in the United States, as well as one of the most heterogeneous, thereby functioning as an important “homogenizing pot” of *Latinidad*. In contrast to Los Angeles and Miami, the first and third largest Hispanic markets, where Mexicans and Cubans are still more numerous than other Latino groups (Strategy Research Corporation 1998), New York has seen a growing diversification of its Latino population: Puerto Ricans, who made up 80 percent of the city’s Latino population in the 1960s, are now only 43 percent of all Latinos; whereas the number of Dominicans and Central Americans has been increasing rapidly.²⁴ Focusing on New York thus allowed me to identify regional and national trends in the marketing of Latinos in the United States, as evidenced in the development of nationwide advertising strategies by New York-based agencies, while maintaining contact with both advertisers and consumers in a local setting, in keeping with my goal of following their daily operations.

Among the obstacles that I encountered to my intended plan of research was the characteristically competitive and secretive nature of advertising, which deterred me from becoming a direct observer of many decision-making sessions and business pitches to clients. I had originally intended to carry out an internship in one of these agencies, but feeling that such a strict association with one agency would disqualify me as an objective outsider among other agencies and informants, I discontinued my internship and shifted instead to periodic visits to different advertising agencies and to being a participant-observer in meetings, national con-

ventions, and other important industry events. I did, however, spend three weeks at BBDO's Special Markets Division in New York City as part of an Advertising Educational Foundation–sponsored internship, an experience that serves as the backdrop for the final chapter. The book is thus based on interviews with different advertising staff at sixteen agencies, most of them in New York City, as well as on participant observations at industry events, meetings, and conventions carried out from the summer of 1997 to that of 1999.²⁵ This information was supplemented by content analysis of their advertising disseminated in both the print and broadcast media, and by monitoring major developments in the Hispanic/Latino-oriented and general market industry in trade magazines and ethnic-specific media. Except for chapter 1, which provides the bulk of the historical analysis, pseudonyms have been used for informants where necessary in order to protect their identity and abide by their clients' demands for confidentiality.

Finally, aware that media analysis is incomplete without an analysis of the reception and consumption of these advertising strategies by the people to whom they are addressed, I kept close contact with media activists in New York City, such as members of the local chapter of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and conducted a series of focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews with self-identified Latino consumers. These discussions were aimed at documenting the nuanced processes by which people negotiate commercial messages and, in particular, at exploring what the public reception of images of Latino identity may reveal about the consolidation or rejection of dominant definitions of Latino identity that are disseminated in the media.

The outcome of this research is organized into six chapters. In chapter 1 I provide an overview of some of the general political and economic trends that have affected this industry from the outset, paying particular attention to the people and interests involved in marketing to Latinos, their background and motivations, and the greater social and economic context leading to the growth and development of culturally specific advertising. This chapter probes the political economy of cultural flows (Abu-Lughod 1993), that is, the larger political and economic processes and Latin American bases that sustain this industry's development and current scope. Here, I suggest that the commercial representation of U.S. Latinos has sustained particular hierarchies of representation that are indicative of wider dynamics affecting contemporary Latino cultural politics. These include disjunctions in class, race, and national background among, first, the mostly Latin American intellectuals

who have dominated this industry from its onset; second, the Anglo-dominated structures of corporate capitalism that hold ultimate power in the commercial representation of Latinos; and, third, the prospective audience of “Hispanic” consumers. As a direct outcome of these distinctions, the expertise of “Hispanic” creatives and of workers in the industry at large has been based less on their commonality with the average U.S. Hispanic consumer than on generalized conventions that are circulated in the industry as “knowledge” of this imagined consumer. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze the conglomerate of distinct nationalities, and the materials, images, and themes used to transform these dissimilar and intersecting identities into generic representations of Latinidad. Chapter 2 reviews the dominant ideas about the Hispanic consumer disseminated in the media by analyzing marketing reports and the publications on “how to market” to Latinos produced by the research marketing industry, a key agent in creating knowledge about this market through the identification of general cultural values that are supposedly characteristic of the “Hispanic” consumer. I examine the ideas used to present Hispanics as a “nation within a nation,” distinct and disparate from the wider U.S. society, and explore their origins in nineteenth-century Latin American nationalist discourse. Chapter 3 turns to the constituent components of the “Latin look” (Rodríguez 1997), by examining advertising texts and the elements that are emphasized or excluded in the public representation of a population whose members differ in class, race, nationality, time of arrival, and citizenship status, among other variables. This chapter also includes an examination of how dominant representations of Latinos may reflect and reproduce existing social hierarchies and power relations within contemporary U.S. society. I also trace how popular interests and materials generated by a diversity of Latino populations are inserted in media texts in ways that provide for their partial representation but also for the containment and accommodation of ethnic and cultural differences into normative notions of Latinidad. Chapter 4 documents some of the micropolitics and negotiations between corporate clients and agency directors involved in the production of commercial representation of Latinos, and analyzes what they suggest about the pervasive hierarchies of race, culture, and nationality in these representations. I then turn in chapter 5 to the changing media context in which Hispanic promotions are ultimately placed, by analyzing programmatic changes at the principal Spanish TV networks, Univision and Telemundo, during the length of my research. This analysis is particularly relevant today, given the rapid and dramatic changes in media forms, for-

mats, and programming in recent years that are likely to affect current definitions of who is Hispanic/Latino and what are the best venues to target this constituency. I will argue that despite a lack of real innovation, debates over programming and over the nature of its target constituency speak to the place of language in the construction of Latinidad, as well as to the specific realms, be it the U.S. or the greater Latin American context, against which this identity is and will continue to be defined in the future. Finally, chapter 6 analyzes the reception and consumption of these advertising strategies by the people who are their targets. Drawing on focus group discussions with self-identified Latino consumers, I document the nuanced processes of negotiating commercial messages through the appropriation and transformation of their meaning. I also look at what people communicate about themselves and their social realities through their consumption of the media and explore its impact on the public consolidation of U.S. Latinidad. As will be apparent from these discussions, for many U.S. Latinos, a common identity is far from based on a Spanish-centered notion of “Hispanidad,” or media-generated notions of Hispanic authenticity.

The conclusion probes the dominant portrayals of the Asian American and African American in relation to the Hispanic consumer to emphasize continuities and differences in the way they are rendered as culturally specific “markets.” I argue that it is to U.S. society’s fears about its “others” that ethnic marketing, not solely Hispanic marketing, responds and that in presenting such unrelenting images, ethnic marketing ends up responding to and reflecting the fears and anxiety of mainstream society, reiterating in this manner the demands for an idealized, good, all-American citizenship in the image of the “ethnic consumer.” Ethnic marketing hence becomes the interlocutor for these populations vis-à-vis mainstream America, the site that regulates and mediates its ethnics—the immigrant, the alien, the raced, and the underclass—into their respective places within U.S. racial and ethnic hierarchies, creating in the process myths of peoplehood for these populations where docility, family, and spirituality run triumphant.