

Queering *La Familia*: Charting Chican@ Consciousness in Cultural Politics

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the role of family in Chicana/o/@ cultural production and representational politics. Working from a woman of color feminist and queer of color perspective, I analyze different ways family is imagined in Chicana/o cultural production from 1957 to 2014 by exploring works of fiction, Chicano manifesto, Chicana Feminist essays, and music videos of two queer Chicana/o performance artists. My project contextualizes family as a space in which normative culture is transmitted and opposed, a space in which an individual's relationship to intersectional identity and to power can be negotiated to perpetuate normativity or to create forms of oppositional consciousness. Put more simply, I argue that *la familia* is the space from which a complex and Chicana/o/@ oppositional form of consciousness emerges to reimagine identity and the relationship of Chicana/o/@ subjects to power.

The project begins with José Antonio Villarreal's 1957 proto-Chicano novel *Pocho* which frames the conflicts associated with Chicano and Mexicano identity in the early part of the 20th century. It then explores three Chicano Nationalist manifestos from the 1970s, each of which imagine the family in Chicano Nationalist terms and explore its relationship to a culturally revolutionary political consciousness. My project then turns to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga and their own approach to reimagining the family from a woman of color feminist perspective as they critique both

Chicano and American culture. My final chapter looks at ways of reimagining Chicano identity and intimacy from a Queer Chican@ perspective and explores music videos by two Chican@ artists, A. B. Soto and Adore Delano.

At the heart of my project is an attempt to explore how the limits of family can be expanded for cultural-political ends to challenge oppressive and normative forms of power by paying particular attention to the limits of power and non-normative individuals who challenge and disidentify with those limits. Articulated within my project are methods of world building for those alienated by normativity and a Chicana/o/@ epistemology of radical cultural-political consciousness.

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Introduction: Imagining a *Familia* on our Terms

Helena Maria Viramontes's short story "The Cariboo Café" was published in her 1995 collection *The Moths and Other Stories*. "The Cariboo Café" is a powerful story about four characters who cross paths in a city after each, in their own way, has been alienated or separated from their families. The story articulates the centrality of family to Chicano and Mexican-American identity and cultural politics while at the same time exploring the intersectional and transnational identities that come together in major U.S. cities, rendering them a borderlands where intersectionality must strive with dominant U.S. cultural politics and logics of normativity, a term I define later in this introduction and which plays a significant role in my project.

At the start of "The Cariboo Café" We first meet Sonya and her younger brother Macky, two young and undocumented children who have been locked out of their home and are unable to find their father. Fearful that he has been deported and fearful of asking the police for help because father has told them that the police were "La Migra in disguise," the two try to make their way to the home of a family friend but become lost trying to navigate the city streets and find their way to the partly lit sign of a diner, the titular Cariboo Café. The narrative then shifts to a new narrator, the current owner and inheritor of the café. He reflects on his distrust of the police who think that the Cariboo Café is a hangout for drug dealers and on his wife who has left him and who he misses because she understood better how to deal with the complexities of the world and with customers. While going about the café he mentions his son who died in the Vietnam War and later his surrogate son who died from a drug overdose while avoiding the police. Angry at his situation and the family he has lost, he reflects that he no longer feels the need to stick his neck out for anyone, no matter who they might be. Finally, we are introduced to the third main character, a woman who has immigrated to the U.S. from Nicaragua after her son was taken and likely killed by soldiers fighting the Contras. Echoing the well-known story of *la Llorona*, the weeping woman and spiritual descendent of *La Malinche*, the woman spends the rest of her

days in something of a confused haze, always hopeful that she will be reunited with her dead and missing son.

The group of individuals looking for family and lacking their own meets at the Cariboo Café after the woman has misidentified Macky as her own son, Geraldo. The owner of the café also is reminded of his two dead sons when he sees Macky. The disparate characters are there in the café, all in need of a family, all in reach of other family members who need family, and all unable to see the possibility of family in front of them. That is, with the exception of the woman from Nicaragua who's belief that Macky is her son is characterized as madness.

After the owner has realized that the children sitting with the woman in the booth are the same ones he saw had been reported as abducted on the news, he desisted to call the police, despite his distrust of them as he asserts to himself that "families gotta be together." The owner's decision to call the police is a significant one in which the state is asked to intervene in the interests of family despite having played a role in destroying the families of those in the café, either through war as with the owner's son, deportation as likely has happened to the children's father, or imperialist and exploitive practices in the U.S. as abroad which Norma Alarcón has tied to the representation of the woman and her son.¹ The police arrive in a show of brutal force swarming on the woman and children with guns drawn. The confrontation with the police leads the woman, who still believes Macky to be her son, to stand up to fight the men with guns who in her mind have come to take her son from her yet again. The narration abruptly shifts from third person to first as the woman clutches Macky close to herself. As the woman is gunned down by the police, seemingly to reunite the children with their father before they are all deported, the woman's internal monologue directed at the police narrates her reasons for her actions and the imperative she feels to defend the family she imagines to have found.

¹ Norma Alarcón, "Making Familia from Scratch: Split Subjectivities in the World of Helena Maria Viramontes and Cherrie Moraga," in *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: New Frontiers in American Literature* (University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 220–31.

I will fight you for my son until I have no hands left to hold a knife... they should know by now that I will never let my son go. And then I hear something crunching like broken glass against my forehead and I am blinded by the liquid darkness. But I hold onto his hand. That I can feel, you see, I'll never let go. Because we are going home. My son and I (Viramontes 79).

The story is a tragic one considering its implication that there in that café were all the parts of a family which should have been able to defend its members from the police or demand the privilege of family from the authorities, a situation in which they could have characterized the woman's misidentification of Macky as a private matter and not for the police and the state to worry about. But that is not the full tragedy of the story. "The Cariboo Café" not about a family torn by violence; these individuals are already fragments of families who have long been torn by the oppression of imperialism, capitalism, and nationalism when the story begins. The tragedy I see when I read this is that they are all the parts of a group who could be a family, and even are in need of a family, yet they resist the possibility of making themselves into that family they need in favor of definitions of family that, for them, can never be again. While the story raises the question of what family might look like if it is defined among individuals who need family and coalitions for support rather than by the state or other formation of power, it does not answer such questions. Instead, the story ends with the would-be family torn apart before it can take shape by the police acting on behalf of state power and authority.

This story has been discussed by several scholars over the years but most prominently by Norma Alarcón who argues that the story articulates a need to "make familia from scratch," or make family based on the needs of the individuals in the group and outside of more normative models of family formation, an argument I echo here.² Sonya Saldívar-Hull has also written about "The Cariboo Café" noting its efforts to reclaim *La Malinche* and *La Llorona* as feminist figures rather than betrayers of race and family reading the woman who defends Macky as the defender of her family against powerful

² Norma Alarcón 229

government and cultural forces.³ Yet, while I agree with these readings I have always bothered that scholars had not paid more attention to the violence deployed by police and the state against the woman. The violence of the final scene had always seemed to me to be too specific and logical in its brutality to be nothing more than actions carried out not in defense of the young brown boy held by a delusional woman. It seems attached to something larger. As the woman from Nicaragua fought for who she thought was her son, the police seemed to be fighting something more dangerous, at least to them, than a confused Latina immigrant. While I was never able to put my finger on exactly what happened in that last moment I knew that it had something to do with family and their role in Chicana/o/@ cultural politics.

Viramontes' short story raises some important questions about what family is, what it does, and who it serves. To put a finer point on that statement, "The Cariboo Café" considers the possibility and even the need that marginalized and intersectional individuals to create family in their own unique ways, outside of the parameters of kinship or legally defined family relationships. These are some of the same questions that motivate my project as I consider how family might relate to identity, subjectivity, citizenship, and personhood. Moreover, the story suggests that locating family's limit where biological kinship ends has some alienating and even violent consequences.

It is no radical statement to note that family is a central figure and key concept in Chicano representation, culture, and epistemology. Many Chicana/o authors articulate a relationship between subjectivity, identity, the family, and citizenship. Authors from the 1960s and 70s have offered analysis of the role *la familia* plays in Chicano Nationalism.⁴ Chicano feminists have historically offered analysis of *la familia* and its relationship to heteropatriarchy and cultural normativity's, an intellectual tradition that I find to be most productive in articulating the larger role that family can play amid a multiplicity of

³ Sonya Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border : Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

⁴ I address several of these text I my second chapter.

discourses of power as I situate it in this project. Rosaura Sanchez articulates the role that the family plays in perpetuating ideological discourses in culture.⁵ Norma Alarcón echoes her analysis of the family and considers ways that Chicana/o literature reproduces such discourses and at times disrupts them.⁶ Sonya Saldívar-Hull touches on the significance of the family to Chicana feminism in her 2000 work *Feminism on the Border* which considers how feminism and feminist consciences is represented and rearticulated in Chicana feminist literature. Rosa Linda Fregoso later builds on this analysis of family's relationship to Chicana feminist cultural-politics as she considers the possibility of a Chicana feminist civil society.⁷

Fregoso notes an insistence and embrace of what she calls "right-wing ideology on family" which embraces U.S. nationalism, white supremacy, homophobia, and patriarchy.⁸ Fregoso notes several problems with the masculinist and nationalist discourses that run historically define family in Chicano cultural production but bases her analysis on a more recent archive of popular films from the mid 1990s to early 2000s, making the point that the ways of imagining the Chicano family, so familiar in the 1970s, have progressed into a later and different cultural-political moment and brought their problematic masculinist logics with them. She characterizes the family within such discourses as a means of producing disciplined subjects within a white, patriarchal U.S. cultural-political field and calls for representations of family that embrace less normative identities and which reimagine what she calls the Chicano family romance, again articulating conversations about citizenship, identity, and subjectivity. Fregoso and Saldívar-Hull both make use of Frantz Fanon's writings on the consciousness and psyche of the colonial subject in his 1952 book *Black Skin/White Masks* articulating his critique of

⁵ Rosaura Sanchez. "Ideological Discourses in Arturo Islas's *The Rain God*," in *Criticism in the Borderlands* (Duke U.P., 1991), 114–26.

⁶ Norma Alarcón (1996)

⁷ Rosa Linda Fregoso, *meXicana encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*, University of California Press (2003) 71.

⁸ IBID

colonialism and assimilation with her approach to Chicana feminism, recognizing that Chicanas must meet the standards of both patriarchy and the colonizer. These authors articulate an intersection of identity, subjectivity, and family which Chicana sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn addresses in several of her works critiquing family practices in the U.S. and among Chicanos as socially constructed, politically manipulated, and expletively oppressive toward women.⁹

These works, primarily by Chicana feminist, are of significant importance to my project because they not only explore the role of family in Chicana/o cultural politics but its role in organizing cultural logics and world making discourses, especially the work of Fregoso. I am proud to join with this tradition of scholars and so my project here takes it cute from my fellow queer Chicano, Richard T. Rodríguez and his 2009 work *Next of Kin: Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics* which also assets the importance of family to Chicana/o cultural politics and emerges out of a Chicana and woman of color feminist genealogy. Rodríguez explores representations of Chicano families and the family as a signifier in Chicana/o cultural politics and cultural production. Rodríguez' work is unique in that it addresses work by Chicano men from the 1960s and 70s, "emphasizing masculinity *as a* problem, tracing the damage it does to both women and gay men under the cultural and historical sign 'Chicano.'"¹⁰ *Next of Kin* offers a genealogy of Chicano male writing on *la familia* that places such articulations of family in conversations with what Rodríguez calls "successive shifts contingent upon changing kinship discourses and formations," reading the shifts in Chicano family representation and genealogy as shifts inspired by a larger cultural-political field of discourse in the U.S.¹¹ Rodríguez constructs his genealogy from a Chicana feminist and queer of color perspective, allowing the edifice of hetero-patriarchy and patriarchal authority to be exposed as an insistence upon masculine authority inspired by both patriarchal Mexican-

⁹ Maxine Baca Zinn, "Political Familism: Toward Sex Role Equality in Chicano Families," *Aztlán* 6.1 (Spring 1975.) and *Diversity in Families*, Allyn and Becon Publishing, (1985).

¹⁰ Richard T. Rodríguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*. Duke U.P. (2009) 15.

¹¹ Rodríguez, 3.

American heritage and U.S. cultural political discourse and arguing that the construction of family to be based as much on cultural-political discourse as it is on kinship. In his "Afterword" Rodríguez looks at the possibilities of expanding family beyond the confines of normativity and kinship to create the possibility of queer citizenship for queer Chicanos, raising the question of what role family plays in discourse of citizenship but also in the construction of subjectivity.

Scholars such as Alarcón and Fregoso have explored the family as the product of overlapping discourses of cultural and political power which contributes to the construction and discipline of a normative subject who knows their place in heteropatriarchal and white supremacist narratives of U.S. power. Rodríguez's project develops a genealogy of masculinist representations of family that expose a history of oppression deployed against women and queers in Chicano cultural politics. My project develops on a similar genealogical method however my aim is to trace the emergence of a changing Chicana/o/a consciousness associated with intersectional and particularized identity that resists and opposes oppressive discourses of power by articulating its own discourses of identity, subjectivity, and intimacy. Put more simply, *la familia* is the space from which a complex and Chicana/o/a oppositional form of consciousness emerges to reimagine identity and the relationship of Chicana/o/a subjects to power.

Approaching family in this way also means that one must consider the politics of subject formation and the relationship between Chicanos, the family, and power. Carlos Gallego's 2011 publication *Chicano Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity: Between Recognition and Revolution* argues that Chicano subjectivity is influenced by the Hegelian dialectic of recognition which plagues Chicano subjectivity with the task of reconciling its racial and ethnic difference with what Gallego articulates as a liberal-humanist universality. He builds on Fanon's critiques of colonialism to suggest that Chicano

subjectivity has been articulated within a dominant white liberal U.S. discourse, rendering it always inadequate at worst and appropriate for assimilation at best.¹²

I find Gallego's intervention useful for thinking about how western and dominant epistemologies have impacted Chicano subject formation, especially as he works from a Chicana feminist approach that recognizes intersectionality as I do. But once again my project's consideration of subjectivity departs from his by emphasizing the role of Chicana/o/@ consciousness as a force that pushes back against dominant culture and normative power to define Chicana/o/@ subjectivity from the margins where as Gallego's analysis suggests that Chicano subjectivity is the result of outside and dominant cultural oppression. Because I associate consciousness with subject formation I turn to the work of Chela Sandoval and her 2000 book *Methodology of the Oppressed* in which she articulates difference with cultural-political consciousness. Sandoval argues that subjectivity is reshaped by oppositional consciousness which allows subjects to navigate a multiplicity of oppressive and dominant cultural discourses and to interellate themselves on their own terms. Her work considers the cultural-political power gained by individuals who are able to "identify in difference," as Norma Alarcón has suggested, or to embrace their difference as the key to their identity and communal belonging rather than relying on a sameness that places their differences under erasure.¹³ Working from a model of difference within women of color feminist thinking, Sandoval associates oppositional consciousness with emerging and revolutionary forms of identity and subjectivity which can be embraced by intersectional individuals strategically to challenge and undermine normative power and create counter narrative of identity that oppose coloniality, heteropatriarchy, and the state.

¹² Gallego's work offers a genealogy of Chicano subjectivity reaching from the late 1960s forward into the early 1990s and raises the suggestion of an endpoint in conversations of non-identity. Gallego's model, like other critical approaches to Chicano family I've noted tracks shifts in Chicano subject-forming discourses across dominant western cultural-political shifts and ends speculating on the possibility of non-identity, not making an argument for it but suggesting that non-identity can be a useful method in considering the construction of racial subjectivities.

¹³ Norma Alarcón, "Conjugating Subjects: The Heteroglossia of Essence and Resistance," *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands*, ed. Alfred Arteaga, Durham: Duke University Press, (1994) 125–38.

It is these critical conversations about consciousness and difference that shape my own inquiry into the role of family in Chicana/o/@ intellectual history and situate my project within Chicana feminist and queer of color critique. From this position, I argue that Chicano identity and subjectivity constitute an oppositional consciousness that emerges as a result of oppressive U.S. cultural-political practices perpetuated on marginalized, intersectional, non-normative, and under-privileged subjects, specifically, Chicanos, people of color, women, the poor, and queer individuals. Further I argue that this ever-emerging oppositional consciousness can reimagine family and intimate relationships between individuals and across difference to reshape cultural-political discourses and to disrupt systems of oppression in dominant culture perpetuated by discourses of normativity. As such, Chicana/o/@ identity and subjectivity can be understood as always emerging intersectional formations, that is, formations emerging from and constitutive of *la familia* that are ever conscious, critical, and oppositional to oppressive forms of power that target Chicanos of all varieties for their cultural, gender, sexual, and class difference.

Across four chapters treating early Chicano fiction, Chicano Nationalist manifestos, personal essays by Chicana feminists critiquing the family in Chicano and U.S. culture, and two music videos by two Chicana performance artists, my project traces emerging forms of Chicana/o/@ oppositional consciousness, its interaction with the family, and its influence in shaping Chicana/o/@ subjectivity as an always emerging subjectivity. This emerging subjectivity or subject-in-process, a term I borrow from Alarcón, is defined by its opposition to and its ability to critique and reshape the patriarchy and normativity associated with Chicano and U.S. culture.¹⁴

In this project I use the formation Chicana/o/@ to refer to the multiplicity of intersectional identities and subjectivities associated with Chicanismo. When I invoke the term “Chicano” itself it is most often in reference to a male Chicano subject or in reference to the highly masculinist politics of the

¹⁴ IBID

Chicano Nationalists about whom I write in my second chapter. I use the term “Chicana” in reference to Chicana women and feminine identified Chicana subjects but also to refer to the intellectual and political interventions of Chicana feminists. Finally, I from time to time borrow Sandra K. Soto’s term “Chican@” which she argues is more than a simple blending of Chicana and Chicano but an articulation of the identity and subjectivity that is always ambiguous and refuses to be stabilized along heteronormative lines and articulates a queer aspect to Chicanismo.¹⁵ I do not use the term “Chicanx” or “Latinx” in this project but I want to be clear that I do not resist such terms because I disagree with them, what they signify, or what they imply. While I think that the use of the x to refuse the gendered “Chicano/Chicana” is useful it does not offer the specificity in terms of intellectual history and oppositional intervention that I find the other terms useful for in my project. I read “Chicanx” as a consolidation of those terms and my project seeks, at least in part, to explore how those terms emerged in their particularity. My discussion begins with José Antonio Villarreal’s 1957 novel *Pocho* which imagines a Mexican-American family headed by an aging Mexican revolutionary who Americo Paredes might have called a “*corrido* warrior.” The family is organized within a cultural imaginary that embraces patriarchy and machismo which I’ve termed the “*corrido* imaginary” which in turn gives rise to an oppositional feminist consciousness voiced by the patriarch’s daughter. Voiced, that is, and very quickly banished for its opposition to patriarchal authority and cultural logic. My second chapter explores why the patriarchal politics of the early Chicano Nationalist Movement felt the need to continue, silence, and banish an emergent feminist consciousness as the Nationalists movement worked to define *la familia* in Chicano terms in the 1970s while the dominant cultural politics of the period fought to impose a more normative and white cultural model of family, resulting in the articulation of a spectrum of cultural-political identities within Chicana/o politics.

¹⁵ Sandra K. Soto, *Reading Chican@ like a Queer: The De-Mastery of Desire*, University of Texas Press, 2010.

Here my project turns from critiquing the work of Chicano authors to an analysis of cultural production by those on the margins even within Chicanismo. My third chapter explores some of the writing by Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa on family. I trace the emergence of a Chicana feminist critique of *la familia* which calls for alternative ways of defining family and intimacy as it challenges discourses of dominant culture and Chicano nationalism. These authors suggest that family can be reimagined for create a decolonial and oppositional cultural-political discourses but stops short of actually defining what that reimagined *familia* might look like. The final chapter of my project explores the possibilities of *familia* when family is defined by queer Chican@s who refuse normativity, moving intimacy from an expression confined to the family to a politicized intimacy that claims public space for those who chose to identify in difference. This I explore through an analysis of two music video by two different Chican@ artists: A. B. Soto's "Cha-Cha, Bitch" and Adore Delano's "D.T.F." As my project moves from *Pocho* to "D.T.F.", from *corrido* warrior to Chican@ drag queen I pay particular attention to Chicana feminist consciousness which emerges first within *la familia* and is banished to confinement by heteropatriarchal practices associated with dominant U.S. cultural politics but also with Chicano Nationalism, eventually articulating its own critique and vision of the limits of family leading to representations of intimacy by queer Chican@s with cultural-political impacts that reclaim bodies and spaces from dominant culture.

In order to trace this progression I turn to stories such as "The Cariboo Café" and *Pocho* to examine how texts negotiate various forms of oppositional consciousness where family intersects with dominant culture. I borrow the term "dominant culture" from various Chicana/o scholars but in particular from Rosaura Sanchez, who uses the term to describe white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and ongoing coloniality deployed against Chicanos in her analysis of ideological discourses

of identity in Chicano fiction.¹⁶ I associate dominant culture with the cultural-political practices and discourses of the state, that is, the cultural-political practices and attendant discourse of the United States. The term is also applied by Norma Alarcón to articulate the existence of an intersectional subject against whom such discursive forces might be deployed by “dominant culture.” Alarcón’s model emerges from a woman of color feminist tradition that recognized power to be a multiplicity of discourses deployed and articulated against intersectional subjects.¹⁷ Such a discourse of dominant culture is able to maintain influence within culture and institutions by “othering” and oppressing individuals based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and a multiplicity of other subjectifying differences. The term does not denote a singular or consolidated horizon of power but rather a multiplicity of powers which construct normativity and position difference within a hierarchy which offers more privileges to those atop the hierarchy and fewer, to the point of questioning the personhood of, to those lower in the social and cultural order. The term, therefore, has application beyond its association with state power and can articulate practices of patriarchy, homophobia, misogyny, racial prejudice, and other practices of othering that participate in the discourse of cultural normativity. As such, dominant culture may refer to practices of white U.S. normativity which oppress and exploit Chicanos from the perspective of a Chicano but may also refer to practices of patriarchy that occur both within state cultural-political discourses and within discourses of Chicano Nationalism from the perspective of a Chicana who wants to speak out against misogyny.

As this can be confusing I make an effort to distinguish how the term is applied and use it to center the perspective of the oppressed much as Chela Sandoval might suggest in her articulation of the differential subject who must be strategic in how she responds to oppressive cultural logics and

¹⁶ Rosaura Sanchez, (1997) 118. Sanchez discusses dominant ideological discourses here which she associates with cultural-political practices. A tact also taken by Norma Alarcón and Angie Chabram in their contributions to *Chicana Feminism: A Critical Reader* (2003) edited by Gabriela F. Arrendondo.

¹⁷ Alarcón “Making Familia from Scratch” (1996) 222.

practices.¹⁸Such oppressive practices associated with dominant culture target “difference” as Audre Lorde articulates it, that is, different from what she calls the “mythical norm” which she associates privilege, authority, or what she calls “the trappings of power.”¹⁹ Lorde frames the “mythical norm” as an imaginary subject position, that is a role within power and discourse that organizes how one relates the world. She writes:

Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a *mythical norm*, which each one of us within our hearts knows ‘that’s not me.’ In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is within this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society. Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practicing. (116)

Lorde’s analysis suggests that multiple discourses of power and identity overlap to constitute the imaginary subject position of the mythical norm and associate it with “the trappings of power,” that is, an association of privileges emerging from a multiplicity of discourses articulating a spectrum of identity categories (age, gender, sexuality, race, and class to name a few) organized in binary hierarchy constituting bad and good particularities in each. Lorde offers the example of “dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior” or grafted onto her definition, old/young, man/woman, heterosexual/queer, white/non-white, Christian/non-Christian, rich/poor; all of which can be encapsulated into a major binary of mythical norm/other. The chain of signifiers that Lorde invokes need not stop with the seven qualities she notes in the block quote above. Lorde is describing an imaginary position created by a series of binaries within normative cultural logic which associate power and

¹⁸ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, U. of Minneapolis Press, (2000) 159.

¹⁹ Audre Lorde. “Age, Race, Class, Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” *Sister Outsider*. (1984) 116.

privilege with one part of the binary and a lack of such power and privilege with the other end can be applied to any category associated with identity.²⁰ She notes that while these associations are in place in dominant culture, singularly, they are oversimplifications of much more complex systems of overlapping and intersectional difference.²¹

In Lorde's analysis, subjects more closely associated with the mythical norm are rendered knowable and their perspectives articulated as the correct or logical ones from which the rest of the world can be understood. Subjects and qualities outside of the binary system from which the mythical norm emerges are rendered unknowable and "othered" in this logic, often resulting in a discourse that understands difference to be beyond the limits of legitimacy, citizenship, and personhood, a point Lorde takes up in "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" and which I address in my third chapter. The fact that the mythical norm has an intersectional quality to it means that even as culture changes, the mythical norm can change to maintain practices of normativity and produces an imaginary subject position associated with power and privilege. As such, for those whose identities emerge through intersectional difference, the mythical norm becomes a moving goal post associated with a game that those marked by difference may not have known had goals at all.

Lorde's model also notes that our understanding of the mythical norm exists on the edge of consciousness, that is, something that we might perceive but not always be aware of. It only becomes recognizable when an individual encounters the mythical norm and says, "that's not me." As such, the mythical norm functions invisibly, like ideology or privilege from the perspective of someone who is served by an ideological apparatus or a system of power that bestows privileges onto them. However, it becomes recognizable when one is alienated by it or must recognize its unfairness. Chela Sandoval discusses this awareness of power as oppositional consciousness, that is, an awareness of how ideology

²⁰ Jesse Aleman. Class on critical theory. University of New Mexico, English Department. Fall 2011.

²¹ Lorde 114.

and discourse fiction to create oppression that emergence when a subject has experienced oppression. Sandoval notes that the experience of being oppressed by dominant cultural ideologies and discourses allows the oppressed individual to observe the topography of ideology, differing with Althusser's understanding of ideology as invisible.²² It is from this articulation of consciousness and oppositional consciousness that I borrow my use of the term "consciousness" within this project. An awareness of one's relationship to dominant culture and its attendant ideological and normative cultural discourses emerging from an understanding of how those discourses oppress individuals based on their difference, that is, their identities and subjectivities. Lorde's model denotes personal difference as a factor in how one imagines one's relationship to (or banishment from) the mythical norm, that is, one's identity renders them "normal" or "other." This attention to personal difference I read as a gesture toward intimacy and even a suggestion that power imposes the order of normativity through intimacy, something I explore in detail in my fourth chapter. Because Lorde recognizes an intersectional subject marked by difference, difference cannot simply be refused by normativity, it must be managed much as gendered difference is managed within heteropatriarchy.

My project explores the separation of spaces into gendered domains within normative society and dominant culture, that is the masculine public domain and the feminine domestic or private domain.²³ I join with Rosa Linda Fregoso in noting that within Chicano culture this separation exists as it does in U.S. dominant cultural discourse and other cultural formations, organized by patriarchy and acts to limit women to feminine (private) spaces like the home and to offer men the privilege to access masculine (public) spaces which participate in political, economic, and civil discourses²⁴ Fregoso sides

²² Chela Sandoval. *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) 55.

²³ One will no doubt see reflections of Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1988) and Wendy Brown's "Liberalism's Family Values" (1995) in this articulation of public and private gendered space. I cite both authors later in this project but find that the Chicana feminist scholars who critique this organization of space and who I cite in this introduction to be more pertinent to my project overall.

²⁴ Rosa Linda Fregoso, *Mexicana Encounters: The Making of Identities on the Borderlands*, 92-94.

with Nancy Fraser and Jean Franco as she writes that the separation of the public and private reproduce normativity, capitalist ideologies, and especially logics of patriarchy. She writes also that economic and social factors have made it difficult for women of color to take on the role of housewife without also working outside of the home and so notes that Chicanas have often been associated with domestic labor, rendering some forms of labor outside the limits of what normativity deems appropriate for Chicanas to do without risking cultural rebuke.²⁵

Several of these terms might signal that my project is an intervention into 20th and 21st century practices of liberalism. While the politics of liberalism are important to my project I look to liberalism, its practices, and its changes over the 20th century as a historical setting for my project and not the subject of my intervention. I think it worth noting that my intervention is one into and against normativity which I understand to be a separate and intersectional conversation which must account for the influences of liberal discourses but I do not consider normativity to be synonymous with liberalism. To the degree that I must address liberalism I turn to the work of Habiba Ibrahim and Jodi Melamed who both discuss changes in the way that liberal discourses articulate race over the 20th century, moving from what they both call racial liberalism and its assimilationist agenda toward a cultural logic in which diversity becomes a value associated with American liberalism and late capitalism which they term racial multiculturalism (Melamed's term) or liberal multiracialism (Ibrahim's term) in the 1960s and 70s.²⁶

Noting the organization of individuals by gender and how they are understood by power like dominant culture and other overlapping discourses brings up the question of identity and subjectivity. My project is concerned with subjectivity as a means of creating oppositional discourses that move toward less oppressive cultural practices and even articulate stakes associated with social justice. To

²⁵ Fregoso 93.

²⁶ Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, U. of Minnesota Press, 2011 and Habiba Ibrahim, *Troubling the Family: The Promise of Personhood and the Rise of Multiracialism*, U. of Minnesota Press, 2012 respectively.

that end, I will echo the explanation of identity and subjectivity that Chicana feminist scholar Michelle Habell-Pallán eloquently uses in her 2005 study of Latina popular culture titled *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture*. Habell-Pallán writes “Put simply, ‘identity’ can be seen as how one perceives oneself, while ‘subjectivity’ can be seen as how one imagines oneself in relation to others.” (7) Habell-Pallán’s distinction notes that subjectivity has a great deal to do with how we imagine ourselves in relation to others but also denotes that subjectivity requires that one take part in the process of imagining one’s relationship to other identities. In this I read an awareness of intimacy in Habell-Pallán’s definition articulated by the subject’s relationship to others that I also see in the woman of color feminist tradition from which her project emerges. I would add to this that subjectivity also includes imagining one’s relationship to institutions and discourses of power which themselves participate in a kind of cultural work to define an Imaginary.

The imaginary and more specifically the Imaginary as Lacan might write holds a place of importance in my project, which embraces the concept of the Imaginary as it has been revised by various scholars of color. Lacan’s early use of the term in his essay “The Mirror Stage” describes the subject’s entrance into a symbolic order, that is, a universe of signifiers that allow the subject to relate to the world around her, guided by The Imaginary or what Freud might call an “ego-ideal”. As Lacan frames it, the Imaginary constitutes how things should be or rather how they are idealized from the point of view of the subject in a particular symbolic system.

Hortense Spillers has noted that Lacan’s discussion of the imaginary overlooks race, which in her analysis is part of the reflection in Lacan’s mirror metaphor, pointing out that the mirror reflects the expectations of a culture and society and so reflects race back to the subject with all of the racism a particular dominant culture might embrace.²⁷ Such an association of cultural assumptions about race on

²⁷ Hortense Spillers, “All of the Things You Could be by Now if Sigmund Freud’s Wife was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race,” *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996) 710-734.

the part of the dominant culture reflects Freud's own qualification of his model of the superego which he noted to be associated with the unique limitations of particular societies, suggesting that what might be taboo in one culture might not be in another or at another point in time, framing the superego, the ego-ideal, and therefore the Imaginary as mutable.²⁸ Emma Pérez argues that the Imaginary imports coloniality into the symbolic order, the reflection being one framed by (to continue the mirror metaphor) the trappings of colonialism. She writes "the imaginary is the mirrored identity where coloniality overshadows the image in the mirror. Ever-present, it is that which is between the subject and the object being reflected..."²⁹ Pérez later ties this analysis to the work of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin/White Masks*. Fanon notes that the very act of expression within a colonized space for a colonized individual requires that the colonized be legible to the colonizer, fitting the colonial Imaginary that the colonizer has of the colonized to be credited with any sort of legitimacy.³⁰ Fanon uses the example of the colonized subject who must ask for rights in the language and style of the colonizer.

The host of cultural logics and oppressive forces deployed by power and normative discourse against non-normative and oppressed constitute what Gloria Anzaldúa calls "cultural tyranny" and describes such tyranny as the experience of being disciplined (to borrow a term from Foucault) by power and dominant culture to accept both normative discourse and the cultural roles it prescribes. She writes "Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them."³¹ Anzaldúa's concept of cultural tyranny accounts for the way that an oppressed individual

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (Read Books Ltd, 2014).

²⁹ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington IN: Indiana UP. (1999) 6-7.

³⁰ Frantz Fanon, "Chapter 4: The So Called Dependency Complex of Colonized People," *Black Skin/White Masks* (1952).

³¹ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ED (2012). San Francisco: Aunt Lute books. 1987. 38.

comes to understand their position in an oppressive hierarchy as “normal” or at least a simple part of reality. She goes on to discuss how culture punishes people and especially women who reject cultural norms through cultural tyranny. I read cultural tyranny and apply it as a concept to my project as the moment that a non-normative individual encounters normative discourse and comes to understand the oppression of normativity as part of reality. Cultural tyranny, therefore, participates in constructing a normative Imaginary associated with dominant culture at the same time that it corrects (sometimes to the point of alienation or death) subjects who refuses normativity and effectively normalizes that correction.

I join with Pérez and other critical race scholars in rejecting the idea of a monolithic Imaginary and suggest that from the perspective offered by an oppositional consciousness one can imagine something other than the oppressive symbolic order in which one might live day to day. Because a subject must imagine themselves in relation to an other and because the consciousness I discuss emerges from a moment of disidentification rather than identification with the mythical norm and dominant culture, a subject who has entered oppositional consciousness might reimagine their relationship to power, to normativity, to institutional practices, and to other individuals. Antonio Viego argues that the Imaginary as Lacan articulated it suggests a wholeness to the ego ideal of the self which renders individuals marked by difference from the Imaginary incomplete as they enter the symbolic order.³² Viego suggests that race constitutes an incongruity with the Imaginary and, like Pérez and Spillers, notes a political and cultural aspect to the Imaginary. This aspect, aligned with normativity in Lacan’s model, is what Viego, Spillers, and Pérez seek to revise. In other words, rather than accept an imaginary in which they are always at a disadvantage for their inconsistency with normativity and rendered incomplete, an individual might reject such an imaginary in favor on another built on the insight of difference and an understanding of how things could be without the expectations and oppression of the normative

³² Antonio Viego, *Dead Subjects: Towards a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies*, (2007.) 17.

imaginary. A simple example of this might be a queer individual who participates in intimacy outside of heteronormativity and chooses not to hide or be ashamed of it but find satisfaction in such a reimagined intimacy and identity. My project looks to ways in which the family participates in reproducing cultural-political imaginaries for normative and non-normative purposes and specifically at how reimagining family allows for alternative imaginaries to emerge for individuals who identify with their difference to restructure how such individuals relate to power and reject normativity.

Chapter Descriptions

My first chapter takes up the novel *Pocho* (1957) by José Antonio Villarreal and analyzes how this early proto-Chicano novel imagines Mexican-American identity while participating in a cultural imaginary associated with Americo Paredes' *corrido* warrior which I name the *corrido* imaginary. The *corrido* imaginary organizes the family along strict gender lines and mandates limited privileges for women even within the private family domain and few to none in the public domain enacting practices that I read as patriarchy while tying those practices to Mexican-American heritage. In this chapter I frame the *corrido* imaginary as one that consolidates a Mexican-American heritage and history in the family and which also suppresses and silences an emerging feminist consciousness which emergence within the family in opposition to the patriarchy of the *corrido* imaginary.

Chapter two explores Chicano *Familia* as imagined in a series of Chicano Manifestos by three Chicano Nationalists: "Chicano Nationalism: The Case for Unity" (1969) by Rudolfo "Corky" Gozáles, *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) by Armando B. Rendon, and "La Familia de la Raza" (1972) by José Armas. I read their framing of the Chicano family in the wake of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" and argue that Chicano Nationalism, while rejecting the notion that U.S. cultural politics could define family as a means of assimilating communities of color into White U.S. normativity, still embraced patriarchy as a marker of cultural-political legitimacy. I explore not only the arguments made within these manifestos for a patriarchally organized family but also the reasons

for suppressing any kind of intersectional feminist consciousness. Beyond that, I articulate the fear associated with an emerging Chicana Feminist consciousness on both the parts of Chicano Nationalism and U.S. dominant culture.

Chapter three explores some the work of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa in which they critique the role of family, normativity, and cultural tyranny in Chicano culture. I analyze the work that both authors have contributed to the collection *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981) as well as their independent works: *Loving in the War Years* (1983) by Moraga and *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) by Anzaldúa. My analysis traces both authors' articulation of difference and identity which emerges from a larger epistemology of women of color feminist critique largely provided by fellow *Bridge* contributor Audre Lorde and which Moraga attaches to a system of social capital and cultural hierarchy at work both in and outside of *la familia*. Moraga's work in *Loving* explores the politics of accepting or rejecting the cultural tyranny and economy of social capital associated with her own Chicano family and its intersectional yet tumultuous relationship with white and dominant culture. I read Anzaldúa's work as a continuation of Moraga's which imagines the possibilities of intimacy, family, and belonging without the limits imposed by normativity, U.S. dominant culture, or what I have termed "the *corrido* imaginary." I note that both author's stop short of actually reimagining the family and suggest that it was a restraint born out of caution as both authors were fearful of reproducing the same tyrannical relationship to a cultural imaginary they had just critiqued in Chicano culture and specifically Chicano Nationalism.

My last chapter explores the cultural-political impact of family defined on queer and Chican@ terms and outside of the limitations of normativity or rather in defiance of such limitations through what José Esteban Muñoz has called disidentification. I analyze two music videos by two queer Chican@ artist: "Cha-Cha, Bitch" by A. B. Soto and "D.T.F." by Adore Delano (also known as Danny Noriega) in terms of how they represent Chican@ identity as a form of disidentification that is able to queer oppressive discourses and reclaim space from normativity for a borderlands of queer and intersectional

subject formation. My analysis suggests that family made in this way prioritizes a politicized form of intimacy which is able to resist cultural tyranny at the same time that it claims a borderlands for alternative Chican@ meaning making. My analysis here makes use of alternative imaginaries and builds on the work of Emma Pérez in connection to Muñoz' articulation of utopia, suggesting that these artists make use of an identity in difference to disidentify with discourses that perpetuate cultural tyranny and build community with others who identify in difference to reclaim spaces and subjects from dominant culture and its oppression, articulating what I call politicized intimacy.

My conclusion to this dissertation returns to Viramontes' "The Cariboo Café" to consider the stakes of reimagining *la familia* from a queer perspective. I use Viramontes' short story to animate the potentials and dangers associated with the politicized intimacy I locate in the work of Soto and Delano as they create alternative world making discourses structured in a queer Chican@ imaginary.

Chapter One: The Chicana is Speaking from Inside the House: *Pocho's* Silenced Chicana Consciousness.

José Antonio Villarreal published the novel *Pocho* in 1957. It fell out of print shortly after but was resurrected in 1970 with a push from the Chicano Nationalist Movement, which embraced the novel as an early expression of Mexican-American identity and culture. *Pocho* is one of the earliest novels to place Mexican-American identity in conversation with an American cultural imaginary, that is, the way those in the dominant culture of the U.S. imagine the U.S. to be composed and the identities they associate with U.S. identity. *Pocho* works as both a specifically Mexican-American coming of age story and a story about the complexities of the American family. The novel articulates intersectional identities associated with Mexican-American identity which have very different relationships to power, privilege, and normativity. The family becomes the domain from which forms of consciousness (ways of knowing and understanding one's self and one's relationship to others and to power) both complicit with cultural normativity and oppositional to it emerge. In many ways, the family becomes a space to perpetuate and stabilize normativity through oppressive patriarchal practices, what Gloria Anzaldúa calls cultural tyranny.³³ This means that the family not only produces normative individuals but also has the potential to produce individuals who resist and push back against complex and overlapping systems of normativity creating the family a kind of cultural and political battleground.

The family creates the context through which, several of the major conflicts of the novel emerge as individual characters assert their identities and define or challenge their roles within a Mexican-American cultural imaginary and in keeping with dominant American cultural expectations. The family is central to the concept of normativity as a culturally perpetuated understanding of sameness based on a complex set of binaries: Good/Bad, public/private, same/different, normal/abnormal, American/Mexican, Man/Woman and so on. I argue that patriarchy and patriarchal oppression are

³³ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 38.

predicated on the dialectic logics that emerge as characters negotiate these binaries. As such I take a similar approach to my analysis of this novel and its representation of family and consciousness as Juan Bruce-Novoa, Rosaura Sanchez, and Malissa Hidalgo have, exploring moments in which dominant cultural logic is questioned and disrupted in the chapter while also paying especial attention to how the novel imagines Mexican-American identity.³⁴ Most notably, I am interested in how the public/private binary associated with normative and dominant society is disrupted in *Pocho* and what potential for consciousness and identity formation might be found within that disruption. Taking a page from Gloria Anzaldúa, I have no interest in locating a third category hidden in the dialectic; rather I am interested in how the disruption of such dialectics exposes ambiguity and instability in such clearly defined logics. Read within that ambiguity, I trace how the encounters with cultural tyranny create alternative understandings of power and alternative forms of knowledge. When I invoke the term “cultural tyranny” from Anzaldúa I refer to the effects that cultural-political practices and logics of heteropatriarchy and cultural normativity each of which is associated with U.S. cultural normativity and within particular articulation of Mexican-American identity which I will explore in this chapter, impact individuals unfairly. In short, I am interested in what Chela Sandoval describes as “oppositional consciousness” or an awareness of the fact that cultural and ideological forces are oppressive to an individual because of their own cultural or individual difference.³⁵

Pocho imagines a Mexican-American family of intersectional individuals who must create their own relationship to the dominant and overlapping discourses of national cultural identity, heteropatriarchy, and cultural normativity. Because the intersectional identities imagined within the novel are often incongruous with Mexican-American and even American dominant discourses and cultural practices, individuals in the novel, especially the women of the family, experience and speak out against

³⁴ Rosaura Sanchez. “Ideological Discourses in Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*.” (1991) and Melissa M. Hidalgo, “He Was a Sissy, Really,” *Aztlan* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 7–36.

³⁵ Sandoval, *Methodology*, 54-55.

the cultural tyranny that those dominant discourses inflict. In short, the novel imagines an always emergent identity that comes to be associated with Chicana/o cultural politics, one that is always critical of power and that always seeks to resist and disrupt normativity broadly and (within the novel) most specifically at the level of hetero-patriarchy.

My reading takes up a woman of color feminist analysis and participates in a woman of color feminist discourse, taking its cue from Audre Lorde's reading of normativity as "the mythical norm."³⁶ The chapter animates the work of two Chicana feminist scholars, Chela Sandoval and Emma Pérez, whose work challenges the credibility and efficacy of master narratives of this "mythical norm" and begin to offer strategies for opposing and undoing the forces of cultural tyranny associated with normativity and such narratives. I look at Sandoval's discussion of oppositional consciousness within the matrix of normativity as a method of becoming critical of and pushing against systems of power that harm and oppress individuals who fall outside of the "mythical norm," or whom I describe as marked by difference. Lorde's "mythical norm" describes an imaginary subject position that is associated with power and imagined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure.³⁷ I borrow from Pérez her model of a decolonial imaginary which revises Lacan's concept of The Imaginary as one of many posable imaginaries that emerge from experience and interactions with power. This is a conversation I will return to but for the moment it is enough to explain that I join with other scholars of color like Pérez, Hortense Spillers, and Antonio Viegó in critiquing the Imaginary as Lacan explained it as something akin to normativity and fraught with racism, hetero-patriarchy, oppression and, as Anzaldúa might call it, cultural tyranny. Anzaldúa writes: "Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—Men"

³⁶ Audre Lorde, *Age, Race, Class, Sex: Women Redefining Difference.* 116

³⁷ IBID

(38.) She notes that culture, which she associates with normativity and cultural tyranny, makes demands of subservience and submission on women in the guise of protection, placing women under the protection of men. It is this rigged and hieratical system that denotes tyranny from the perspective on any who are not part of the privileged group served by the dominant culture, a system which in her view, has a strong patriarchal thread though out.³⁸ My purpose here is to cast light on an emergent form of cultural-political consciousness that is both associated with Chicana/o/@ intellectual history and that is unstable and critical of normative power and its attendant cultural tyranny.

Cultural Imaginaries and the *Corrido* Warrior

The novel starts in México after the 1910 revolution as Juan Rubio, the main character's father, walks into a cantina. Juan takes a table and calls over a young dancing girl. She seems apprehensive and becomes even more so when he demands that she spend the night with him. She protests, saying that her Spanish lover will not like it. Her "lover," a Spanish pimp, soon arrives and after a short verbal exchange between the two men, Juan shoots the pimp and takes the young girl to a hotel room. In the hotel room, Juan asks the young girl her age which is when the reader and he both learn that she is 15. He makes her take off his boots and prepare him for bed. In the process, she asks if he would like to know her name but he tells her that it does not matter. After their encounter, Juan is arrested for murdering the Spaniard but he is not jailed due to his connections with General Villa and the revolution. Eventually he flees north to the United States to avoid murder charges. After a series of events that continue to dishearten Juan about the cause of the Revolution, culminating when Juan learns of the death of General Villa, he gives up his revolutionary ways and moves to California where, eventually, his wife with their daughters in tow finds him.³⁹

³⁸ Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 38-40.

³⁹ Villarreal, summary of pages 1-28.

As a revolutionary and a gun slinging proud Mexicano, Juan Rubio occupies the space of a unique figure in Chicano representational history—that of the *corrido* warrior. His swagger, his masculinity, his insistence on fighting for the world he believes in at any cost coincides with the gun wielding figure from Mexican folk ballads.⁴⁰ The scene does more than depict the old fashioned warrior; it also carries him forward in time out of the 1910 Revolution and into the U.S. 20th century. That is not to suggest that the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was not a part of modernity, but rather that the *corrido* warrior is a figure that recalls a romanticism and even some nostalgia for a model of masculinity associated with Mexican revolutionary ideological narratives. Indeed, that is his very gravitas and tragedy. He is the figure who fights for a lost cause, even at the cost of his life. Unlike those warriors from the folk ballads, Juan Rubio does not meet his end in a great show down with a Texas Ranger or a *gabacho* land developer. Instead he lives, and he come to the U.S. like so many of his countrymen, breaking with the mythic warrior figure as his reality takes him north to live among *gabacho* but to carry the romantic ideals of the *corrido* warrior with him.

The figure of the *corrido* warrior is an important one that influences Chicano culture in many significant ways and is well documented by the late and great Americo Paredes and explored by so many others.⁴¹ The *corrido* warrior functions as a touchstone within Chicana/o/@ cultural production and intellectual history. The warrior is symbolic of a larger cultural-political Imaginary and stands in as the epitome of what Mexican masculinity should be. Rather than stand as a figure from a time gone by, the *corrido* warrior is often represented as the figure that Chicanos should strive to be—the central figure around which identity with all of its complexity and relationships to nation, gender, and sexuality is

⁴⁰ Ramón Saldívar explore this reading of Juan Rubio in his 1990 work, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*, 60.

⁴¹ I refer to Paredes 1958 exploration of Mexican-American folklore *With his Pistol in his Hand* and of course to the many scholars who have continued analysis of the ubiquitous *corrido warrior* in Chicano studies.

organized. As a cultural figure, the *corrido* warrior allows Chicanos to connect to a history of resistance and revolution while navigating creating a Mexican-American and eventually Chicano identity in the U.S.

This figure organizes the discourse of Chicano identity. The cultural imaginary he inspires I term the “*corrido* imaginary.” My use of the term *corrido* imaginary should resonate with Lacan’s “Imaginary” as the unconscious as he describes it in his essay “The Mirror Stage.”⁴² However, I draw more directly on Emma Pérez’s revision of Lacan’s model in her landmark work *The Decolonial Imaginary* (1999). In Pérez’s model, the Imaginary offers a cultural norm which organizes all cultural practice.⁴³ Traditionally, this cultural norm or Imaginary assumes the values of colonial power, placing all people of color in a white supremacist narrative. Pérez suggests that there are ways of reframing that imaginary that does not embrace coloniality and heteropatriarchy, essentially rejecting the most oppressive aspects of normative culture from the Imaginary—those aspects that Gloria Anzaldúa calls “cultural tyranny”.⁴⁴ Echoing Pérez, Spillers, and Viego, I suggest that the oppressive practices and structures associated with normativity are part of the normative cultural and political imaginary. This should not suggest that cultural tyranny is uniquely associated to the normativity of the Imaginary, but rather that cultural tyranny helps to maintain the oppressive practices of normativity within the Imaginary and, like the repressive state apparatuses of Althusser, check and prevent anyone from stepping out of those practices and imagining something different.

In *Pocho*, Juan Rubio takes on the role of the last *corrido* warrior and works hard to maintain his position as a patriarch while embodying the *machismo* of those folk ballads. This positions the members of the Rubio family within a hierarchical system under his power. The reason for this is a simple one: the *corrido* warrior and the *corrido* imaginary upon which Juan’s identity and world view are built embrace

⁴² Lacan, Jacques. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experiment.” *Ecrits*. 1977.

⁴³ Pérez, 5-6.

⁴⁴ Please see my introduction for a deeper exploration of this term.

patriarchy and the gendered hierarchy that heteropatriarchy normatively recreates. As such, the women of the Rubio family (Consuelo his wife, Luz and his other daughters) are positioned to have the least amount of power under Juan's rule. A point made clear in a scene when Juan shouts at Consuelo for asking him to end his extramarital affairs, taking care to tell her "know your place" while in front of his daughters who weep with the understanding that in Mexican-American tradition, Consuelo's life would likely one day be their own.⁴⁵ Richard, Juan's son, the protagonist and titular *pocho* is, by contrast granted a great deal more privilege than the Rubio women. Despite the fact that the novel focuses on Richard, I am least interested in the novel's representation of him and much more interested in the way that the novel represents the women of the Rubio family and the way they become first aware of the disparity and unfairness of Juan's patriarchy and eventually take steps to oppose it, even to the point of doing battle with the embodiment of the aging avatar of the *corrido* warrior, Juan Rubio himself.

That's What Familia is for

I think it a good moment here to consider part of the larger arc of this, that being that family, however defined, constitutes a unique domain of knowledge production but, I argue, one that can transmit dominant cultural logics and normative discourses about identity and power to the individuals within the family. Anzaldúa noted this in her second chapter of *Borderlands* when she writes that "men make the laws, women transmit them."⁴⁶ I will return to Anzaldúa's comment in my second chapter where I discuss the gendered articulation of identity and political imaginary associated with the 1970s Chicano Nationalist Movement and with the politics of nationalism overall. It is enough to say here that family is a formation that can read, understand, and transmit the ways of cultural normativity as a cultural and political imaginary to individuals who make up said family, thereby ensconcing cultural tyranny as simply part of normative reality. This mobilization of family is of particular importance in

⁴⁵ Villarreal 91-92. I will return to this scene later in this chapter.

⁴⁶ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 39

Chicana/o intellectual history as its epistemological progression has never departed from consideration of the role family plays.

It is with this understanding of family and the articulations of Imaginary and normativity that I want to begin my analysis of two significant family conflicts within the novel, both of which articulate the limitations of feminine identity within Juan Rubio's view, that is, within the *corrido* imaginary. While the novel does focus on the life of a *corrido* warrior and his American-born son's coming of age, it also frames a family narrative in which individuals, especially women, express an oppositional consciousness to the dominant *corrido* imaginary for which the novel was embraced in the 1970s. Indeed, *Pocho* articulates a Mexican-American identity that cannot help but burst the limits of the *corrido* imaginary, giving voice to an always emerging oppositional identity that embraces difference at the same time that it critiques and challenges dominant culture and its discourses.

New Conflicts and Emerging Consciousness

The first parts of the novel are fascinating and include the coming to America narrative of the first chapter with Juan Rubio as the *corrido* warrior. The novel, overall, has not received a great deal of attention from scholars and offers a great deal to be considered in terms of identity, form, and representation.⁴⁷ However, my interest focuses on the conflicts within the family represented in the novel and the role that the family plays in organizing debates of identity and privilege, both within the family and in the public domain. For that reason, I want to skip to the fifth chapter and a discussion between Juan Rubio and his wife Consuelo, witnessed by Richard, their only son and the novel's protagonist and his young sisters (here unnamed within the chapter.)

⁴⁷ Malissa Hidalgo and John Alba Cultler have, in recent years, published some great analysis of *Pocho*, signaling a return to the novel in contemporary literary and cultural academic discourse. Both articulate a need for analysis of this novel to challenge early critiques of the text which blindly praise it for its articulation of the identarian politics of Chicano Nationalism (an inaccurate analysis in my considered opinion) or attempts by other scholars to characterize the work as a specifically American bildungsroman that imagines generational success and cultural assimilation as one in the same.

The fifth chapter of the novel opens on an argument between Juan and Consuelo. Juan is angry with Consuelo after she has asked him to stop having affairs outside of the marriage. Juan attempts to end the argument when he shouts “Enough! ... I have had my fill of your whimpering and your back talk! You are thinking yourself an American woman—well, you are not one and you should know your place. You have shelter, and you have food and clothing for you and your children. Be content! What I do outside the house is not your concern.”⁴⁸ Juan, the *corrido* warrior in the U.S., is frustrated with Consuelo and rebukes her for two reasons. Primarily, to correct her (in the most patriarchal way) for asking him to stop having affairs outside of their marriage and secondly to reinforce gendered roles and authority within the family.

Juan reacts from the perspective of one for whom the *corrido* imaginary is the way the world should be, indicating roles bound by both gender and culture and organized within a hierarchy. His accusation that Consuelo has (in his estimation) become Americanized recalls the *corrido* imaginary’s association of submission with feminine identity indicating that she should be content to be a submissive and dutiful Mexican wife, implying that in coming to the U.S. she has forgotten who she is and from where she has come. The larger implication of this is to suggest that she thinks she is something she is not, an American. More than that, however, his accusation suggests that she has betrayed her culture, an accusation that Anzaldúa notes is often associated with women who resist cultural tyranny. He might have also called her a *vendida*.⁴⁹

Later in the chapter we see Juan’s own thoughts on his reason for setting such limits as the narration of the novel offers his reflections on Consuelo’s audacious request. “...he could have set her fears at ease by merely explaining that he had not been unfaithful for years, but he could not do that...

⁴⁸ Villarreal 91.

⁴⁹ This term is an insult meaning something close to “race traitor.” Juan resists insults and acts in an almost performative and professorial way in front of his daughters as he critiques his wife. This is a point I would like to explore as I develop the manuscript.

In his mind, he would have been as right if he had done the things she had accused him of doing.”⁵⁰ In Juan’s eyes and in the patriarchal logic of the *corrido* imaginary what matters most in this interaction is that he, as a man, never be questioned in such a way about what he does outside of the house by his wife. Such a questioning is outside of the role he sees for his wife and seems to challenge his own legitimacy to act freely in the masculine domain of the public sphere—that is, outside of the house indicating the *corrido* imaginary’s assumption that it is a man’s world for men to do as they please like in the way Juan acted in the *cantina* at the start of the novel. To have allowed the question would be to permit the questioning of his authority to imagine and impose his idealized order, that is, to challenge the fact that men make the laws within normativity as Anzaldúa critiques. What is most notable is that Juan’s insistence on this role for Consuelo and his association of it with Mexican identity makes the demand that such roles be maintained in spite of the fact that the Mexico in which he as *corrido* warrior existed with true power and relevance is lost to the past, lost to a revolutionary moment, and lost to the Rubio family south beyond the border.

The uniqueness and even audacity (in Juan’s eyes) of Consuelo’s request is contextualized in the narration of the scene as a departure from other fights the couple has had in the past. “In México, long ago he had beaten her occasionally, but they had never had words.”⁵¹ The narration goes on exploring Consuelo’s thoughts, “Did this mean that she would speak up more easily the next time? Somehow she knew that it was not right that she should do this—not right as it was for her friends Catalina and Mariquita, but they were not Mexican women. Their lot was a different one.”⁵² In this we see a conflict with and awareness of the cultural laws that attempt to bind Consuelo. When she speaks up and questions her husband, Consuelo gives voice to a change in the cultural and political parameters of their relationship—that is, she can speak up as she felt it necessary. She notes however that because she

⁵⁰ Villarreal 92.

⁵¹ IBID.

⁵² IBID.

understands herself as a Mexican woman, the cultural expectations she associated with México and with the corrido imaginary still extend to her. Her worry is that it is not right that she, as a Mexican woman, question Juan, her traditional role being one of compliance with her husband's desires. To step out of this traditional role does not seem right to her though it seems to be something she desires. Consuelo's trepidation over questioning Juan also signals an inability to imagine what their relationship could be like beyond the structures of patriarchy inspired by the *corrido* imaginary. Her friends might be able to do so but as she points out, though they have Latina names (Catalina and Mariquita) they are not Mexican women as she is and so do not feel the same attachment to the identity and role of Mexican woman.⁵³ In short, she does not know nor can she imagine what she might be outside of her position within that imaginary despite the cultural tyranny and unfairness of the conditions.

Despite Juan's desire to impose the patriarchy of the *corrido* imaginary both Consuelo and he have deviated from the ideals imagined in those old songs about a lost land, the men who fight for it, and the women who die for their love. Consuelo questions Juan even though she does not know where such questioning will lead. Juan is questioned and responds with words rather than striking out at his wife as he had in the past, in Revolutionary Mexico. This places the family in a kind of borderlands with respect to the logics that inform discipline and produce normative practices—a space in which the cultural expectations of corrido values with their attending Mexicano culture intersect, overlap, and clash with white U.S. cultural practices and formations of power.⁵⁴

Juan may not feel that things are as ambiguous as Anzaldúa's borderland metaphor suggests but for Consuelo, things are different. Consuelo explains to Richard, "He had never hit me since we came to

⁵³ There is a suggestion that these women could be Spanish or Portuguese but the text does not return to them.

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that there are references in some 1970s Chicano manifestos that contextualize feminism as a corrupting influence of white U.S. culture on Chicanas and the Chicano community. Both José Armas and Rodolfo González make such claims at various points in their work. While I do not treat those claims directly in my second chapter it is a point I want to return to at a later time in my work.

this country, but he knows better than to try that.”⁵⁵ When Richard asks what she means by that, Consuelo replies, “Here in this country, the woman is looked after by the law. If your father ever put a hand on me—why, they would lock him up, that is all.”⁵⁶ In this short assessment of her husband, Consuelo suggest that Juan has become aware of the cultural practices within the U.S. which allow a woman to call for legal intervention to protect her from her husband, a concept she implies did not exist for her in Mexico though she does not make clear if it was a lack of legal recourse or a cultural taboo that barred her from such an act. In México and in the culture they both participated in, Juan had the authority to strike her with impunity and she had nothing to say to it, but in the United States, Consuelo articulates a different cultural practice upheld by American juridical authority and cultural discourse as she notes Juan’s awareness of such legal consequences governing domestic violence.⁵⁷

It might be useful to think about what implications this has for Gloria Anzaldúa’s articulation of the gendered discursive practices of cultural tyranny. As men make the rules and women transmit them, this representation of that process demonstrates that it is not solely the man of the family but also masculine discourse that gives rise to cultural expectations and norms. In the case of the Rubio family, the public discourse of law and public institutions are American and masculine discourse as Carol Pateman point out but Juan and his own code of laws for his family are Mexican.⁵⁸ The man makes the law, meaning that the masculine discourse represented by the man in the family makes laws that are then communicated by the women within a domestic feminine discourse. Within this model, the man represents the patriarchal logics associated with the state as the man of the house. However, because Juan does not identify with the American state the masculine discourse fails to represent him. Women transmit the law of the man in the formation of cultural tyranny, but in these borderlands of *familia* they

⁵⁵ Villarreal 93.

⁵⁶ IBID

⁵⁷ This is not a moment for me to credit the American legal system, only to note that Consuelo recognizes there are laws that protect her and her situation.

⁵⁸ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 10-12.

transmit the law as inspired by both their husbands and the public masculine domain existing outside of the family domain, resulting in a transmission of laws and practices that hold different ideals and expectations and can lead to conflict. The way Consuelo describes the law, saying that in the US “the woman is looked after by the law” offers an alternative construction of the patriarchal order imagined by the *corrido* imaginary. Rather than the man “looking after” the woman, this construction subjugates the woman to the law.

Consuelo attempts to transmit both laws but understands that even Juan Rubio is bound by the laws of the country in which they live, suggesting a system of power that does not originate and find its limit in the husband of the family but one that take on the authority of the law.⁵⁹ Juan’s rule is no longer the only one transmitted to the children of the Rubio family by Consuelo. This patriarchal rule deployed by the authority of the US nation conflicts but does not totally supersede Juan’s rule. Rather, the two clash within the domain of the family leaving unresolvable conflicts and producing ambiguity with respect to cultural practices and identity and alliance. The family becomes a borderlands in which the influences and authorities of multiples formations of power extend, clash, and attempt to incorporate its members.

Consuelo is not the only woman of the family who looks at the expectations of patriarchy, Mexican identity for women, and the cultural tyranny of the *corrido* imaginary with discomfort. As Richard considers that his mother might one day call American authorities to remove his father from the home he is, for a moment, horrified. Not at the thought of violence done to his mother by his father but at the thought of such an intervention against the patriarchal order of the Rubio family. It is worth noting that Richard contextualized this moment as a threat to his father’s pride and identity but not a

⁵⁹ Pateman (cited above) and Wendy Brown in her essay “Liberalism’s Family Values” included in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995) both make this argument. However, I think that Judith Butler’s *Antigone’s Claim* (2000) discussion of the word of the father as the law and the limit of the symbolic where the political and juridical are concerned offers an articulation of this idea that also imagines opposition and political changes in ways that Pateman and Brown do not.

threat of violence to the family form the state. Richard notes that he sees Consuelo has “changed,” and that she is different from the way he had imagined her before. That is, different from the ideal woman cast within the *corrido* imaginary. But for a moment, he realizes that his mother’s situation, always the subjugated one in a hierarchy, is a horrifying one.

Then suddenly, clearly, he saw that she, too, was locked up, and the full horror of her situation struck him. He thought of his sisters and saw their future, and, now crying, he thought of himself, and starkly, without knowleges of the words that would describe it, he saw the demands of the tradition, of culture, of the social structure on an individual.”⁶⁰

Perhaps predictably, as Richard is promised a position of privilege within either an American patriarchal hierarchy or a *corrido* inspired one, he does not see this horror in understanding his mother’s desire to have a faithful husband, but rather in the horrified faces of his sisters who cry at the table having seen their parent’s first argument and their mother pledge to check Juan’s authority with that of the US legal system. Villarreal’s representation of that creeping horror of ongoing subjugation is not narrated by a woman but by a man who sees the horror and only just starts to understand it. This moment suggests an ability to bridge understanding across gender yet within Mexican-American identity though I recognize the antifeminist approach of articulating a woman’s experience through a male understanding.

The dissonance of the new image of his mother brings a moment of understanding to the protagonist, realizing that such a choice on his mother’s part not only positions her beyond his ability to understand or imagine her, out in the borderlands, but also suggests that such a choice is one she must make for lack of more familiar options. The text notes that upon imagining his father locked up in an American jail he also sees the limitations placed on his mother by the demands of culture or what Anzaldúa calls cultural tyranny. He realizes his sisters see this limitation as well and weep at the thought of it, understanding, likely far better than he can, that within the strict limitations of patriarchy and the

⁶⁰ Villarreal 95.

corrido imaginary that there are few roles for them beyond obedient wife and dutiful mother.

Consuelo's threat, the sisters' tears, and even Richard's cautious understanding of the women in the Rubio family all signal a growing consciousness within the family, one that emerges as the family becomes further ensconced within the borderlands. That is, a general awareness and understanding of themselves as oppressed and unserved by the cultural practices associated with the *corrido* imaginary amid the ambiguity of the borderlands. This awareness of oppression is best described in Chela Sandoval's 2000 term "oppositional consciousness."⁶¹ This phenomenon is not one unique to Chicana/o/a cultural production, but it is one that is somewhat surprising to see charted so clearly in a 1950s text.

An Emerging Oppositional Consciousness

Consuelo learns of the possibilities that she might have within US culture and the law from a coalition of women, her friends who, while not Mexican, seem to understand the impact and pain of cultural tyranny from a woman of color's perspective and who have themselves developed a consciousness of the precarious position of women as that consciousness unfolds in the U.S./Mexico borderlands of law, culture, and patriarchy. It is from them that she comes to understand the patriarchal ways of her husband and the *corrido* imaginary to be not simply her lot in life but a system of cultural and ideological practices that are designed to oppress her and build up others at the expense of her and her daughters, the very definition of oppositional consciousness as Sandoval employs the term. The consciousness of this position, that is, to experience and feel oppressed by cultural tyranny, comes from her overlapping knowledge and experienced within the borderlands of *familia*. Sandoval's use of oppositional consciousness hinges on the perception and experience of oppression based on cultural difference or uniqueness. She uses the example of ideology as Louis Althusser describes it and argues that counter to his analysis in which ideology is always invisible and the subject is unaware of it, there

⁶¹ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. (2000) 55.

are occasions when an individual perceives ideology because the logics of an ideology oppress them.⁶²

Oppositional consciousness is an awareness of oppression and oppressive practices in day to day culture. In other words, it is an awareness of cultural tyranny as part of cultural, discursive, normative and ideological practice. This consciousness gives rise to the possibility to resistance, and for Consuelo to the possibility of defining the parameters of her position within the family and her relationship with Juan in alternative ways.⁶³

To a large degree this oppositional consciousness can be credited to the fact that her friends do not communicate to Consuelo an idealized American normativity nor do they champion the patriarchal corrido imaginary that Juan represents. They are, after all, women of color as we learn when Richard questions how much Consuelo can have in common with “those Spanish and Portuguese women who boss their husbands,” and likely communicate their own understanding of American culture and cultural tyranny as only oppressed intersectional women of color can experience it.⁶⁴ Oppositional consciousness often is shared by others who have suffered similarly under cultural tyranny and has led oppressed individuals to make common cause with other oppressed individuals. The familiarity with which these women recognize Consuelo’s position and offer strategies to counter the oppression and violence associated with cultural tyranny suggests that they share a similar experience and critical awareness of similar oppressive cultural practices. This form of coalition building is like those outlined by many Chicana feminist and women of color feminists in the 1980s period (which I treat in Chapter 4) and akin

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⁶³ Oppositional consciousness is closely tied to decolonial practices as described by Emma Pérez who suggests that oppositional consciousness can be mobilized into a decolonial strategy that Sandoval calls differential consciousness which holds an anticolonial, anti-patriarchal, and generally anti-cultural tyranny ethos. I do not think I would argue that the develop form of consciousness that Sandoval describes is present in this moment of the text but the awareness of oppression and cultural tyranny are articulated in Consuelo’s hopes to stop her husband’s philandering and in her willingness to deny his authority to do physical violence to her.

⁶⁴ Villarreal 93.

to the formations that took place in the 1970s which Maylei Blackwell has discussed in her work.⁶⁵ While the novel does not explore this particular form of coalition building among women, the narrative does represent it as a component of the Mexican-American existence and part of the developing identity and emerging consciousness of *Mexicanas*, Mexican-Americans, and eventually, Chicanas.

While the oppositional consciousness and the hint at coalition building represented through Consuelo are significant, I want to consider the horrified tears that the Rubio daughters shed as they consider their consignment in the patriarchy of the *corrido* imaginary. The Rubio daughters do not have the same relationship with the *corrido* imaginary that their mother does. For them, it is a holdover from another place and another time. They, like the women who befriend and advise Consuelo are not Mexican as Consuelo considers herself to be. For them, the oppression of the *corrido* imaginary is more apparent because they have never been fully defined by it. They have always existed in a borderlands between American identity and the Mexican identity upheld by Juan and inspired by the *corrido* imaginary—both their father's law and that of the U.S. have been transmitted to them over the years. As such, the *corrido* imaginary has always seemed a dream, lived out in old songs but with little relevance to their lives and with equally little efficacy as we see from their tears at the future that such an imaginary seeks to create. This awareness of these conditions, that is, this oppositional consciousness finds voice in a confrontation between Juan Rubio and his daughter Luz.

Opposition in Action

At the start of chapter 10, years after the first fight we saw between Juan and Consuelo, Richard returns home at nearly three in the morning to learn that his sister, Luz, arrived just before him. Juan, frothing with anger, shouts at her for the late hour and accuses her of behaving like a whore for having

⁶⁵ *Chicana Power!* (2011) By Maylei Blackwell is of course not the only text to document the use of coalition building among Chicanas, however, similar to this project, it is also concerned with reevaluating the histories and epistemologies associated with Chicana/o/@ subjectivities and is worth a mention at this moment.

stayed out so late.⁶⁶ By equating her staying out late to behaving like a whore, Juan attempts to remind his daughter of the limited roles for women available within Mexican-American and Chicano culture, not unlike the way that Gloria Anzaldúa has described. Anzaldúa's own description of the limitations on feminine roles explains "For a woman in my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother... Culture (read males) professes to protect women. Actually, it keeps them in rigidly defined roles."⁶⁷ Anzaldúa's assessment speaks not only to a limited role (nun, mother, and whore) but also speaks to a limited ability to occupy space in the world. A woman who becomes a mother is placed in the home, a woman who becomes a nun is placed in the convent or the church. These two both indicate a removal of the woman from the public sphere—the sphere of power and politics within the borderlands, indicating a removal from Mexican-American, Chicano, and dominant U.S. cultural conceptions of normative society. Only the prostitute exists in the public sphere and her work often associates her with negative stereotypes and dangerous conditions of violence. The limitation of women's roles within the practices of cultural tyranny are marked by their inability to transgress across places and domains. Such mobility (within the matrix of cultural tyranny and heteronormative patriarchy of the borderlands) is uniquely the privilege of men. However, at the start of this scene Luz has just come home after being out in public. The behavior that Juan compares to that of a whore is simply that of Luz enacting the privileges of masculinity in spite of her female identity. By daring to be out and return at such an hour, Luz does not simply break the house rules or even transgress gendered and cultural expectations; rather she undermines the gendered logic that limits feminine behavior and mobility. It is worth noting that when we see this in action with respect to Luz, she is accused of acting like a whore not for actually selling her body but simply for being out in public at a later hour. The accusation has nothing to do with what she

⁶⁶ Villarreal 165.

⁶⁷ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 39.

was doing and everything to do with the fact that in Juan's view, that is the only thing she could be doing out in public at such an hour. There is a lack of other options in his mind, in other words.

After Juan denounces her action, Luz retorts, "If I am a whore, it is having your blood that makes me one."⁶⁸ Luz is harkening back to an earlier scene in the novel and treated in this chapter in which Juan insisted it was his place to have lovers on the side if he chose. To say that if she is a whore it is because of his blood, Luz ties the concept of Juan's promiscuity, which he associates with masculinity and patriarchal privilege, to his description of her as a whore, effectively saying that she can only be a whore if he is and if he is otherwise, so is she. Here, Luz equates her actions with Juan's and leaves the two of them to be interpreted as equals having exercised the same action in leaving the home and risking suspicion. She reapplies the gendered bias that would normally legitimate his actions and condemn hers. In doing so, she takes control of the discourse and defines her actions herself rather than allow them to be defined by the logics of cultural tyranny. It would be difficult to say if Juan realizes the significance of Luz' actions at this moment. Luz's insistence on redefining the scene is further developed in the next exchange when Juan demands to know where she had been and notes the time to be three in the morning. She replies, "That's no concern of yours... what I do is my business!"

The echoes between this exchange and the one earlier between Juan and Consuelo in which the girls sat at the table crying are hard to miss. This contest between Juan and Luz is followed by the sentence: "The Children were huddled against a wall, the smaller ones crying."⁶⁹ These scenes suggest that there is something fear inducing in seeing the patriarchy challenged while understanding that Juan will fight to reinstate his authority and the Imaginary that serves him. In the first scene, as I noted, the girls sat at the table and cried, aware of their destiny and the fact that it meant servitude and subservience. Across these scenes, Luz has both witnessed and experienced the cultural tyranny that

⁶⁸ IBID

⁶⁹ Villarreal 166.

has limited her mother's actions and that limit her own. She is aware of these expectations and aware that they are oppressive, articulating a form of oppositional consciousness that find expression in her rebellion against her father's law. That consciousness gives Luz the opportunity to address cultural tyranny when it is deployed on her and to speak back to it.

Luz rejects that idea that her roles and access to spaces is limited because of her gender. She refuses to be accountable to anyone for her actions outside of the private domain much as a man might and as her father does. With this understanding, Luz can exist out in public but on her own terms and outside of the concerns of any patriarch. This means that she is not positioned in the role of a prostitute by lack of options. Rather she takes on a role of her own making, one in control of her own identity and who can engage in a public domain and participate in a public discourse on her own terms. By understanding how her identity and her actions blur the line between public and private and give her access to the public domain, she uses the logics of cultural tyranny to facilitate her fluidity between domains and articulating a way of inhabiting the borderlands on her own terms rather than on those of the *corrido* imaginary or patriarchy more broadly defined. By insisting that her business is her own, she transgresses the gendered limitations that the *corrido* imaginary and its heteropatriarchy normally imposes in the borderlands. Luz is using the perspective that oppositional consciousness offers her to challenge and disrupt the practices of cultural tyranny by questioning the assumptions of gender.

As Juan becomes more and more angry with Luz he tells her that the house they all live in is his and as long as she is in it, she will answer to him, attempting to apply his masculine authority and assigning roles and domains for those who are not men. He attempts to base his authority in the logic of ownership and the privilege offered him as a breadwinner and the owner of the home; she must obey his rule since she lives in that private domain at his discretion. Luz's response to this attempt to place her into a subservient role disrupts his efforts. "'Wake up!' screamed Luz, and her face was ugly. 'This *your* house!' She laughed shrilly. 'This is our house, and if we want, we can have you put out! Tell him

Mamá. He put the house in your name, in case something happened to him you would have no trouble! *Tell him, Mamá!*' she screamed. 'Tell him something has happened to him!'"⁷⁰ Here Luz points to the fact that Juan's ownership of the private domain, of the home itself, is nothing more than an assumption on his part. A trick of the light but only when the *corrido* warrior is holding the light. She dispels the myth of his authority over the home by referencing the documentation attached to the home itself. She goes so far as to reference a conversation she heard her mother have earlier in chapter five in which she explained that should Juan ever hit her again, she would use the legal system and the police to have him arrested and taken from the home.

Luz suggests using the power of American law and the police to bring an end to Juan's authority, calling upon U.S. authority to dismiss Juan's own authority. This is a step beyond what her mother suggested when Consuelo discussed the idea with her daughters and son. Here, Luz confronts Juan with the idea in the form of a threat. In doing so she denies the authority that would normally be associated with the patriarchal role as she negates the assumption that he owns all things associated with the family by pointing out Juan's premise as the false assumption it is. Further, she uses the logics of heteropatriarchy (which assumes an otherness to women and children) to build coalition with her mother, sisters, and perhaps even her brother as she uses the word "our" rather than "my" or "Mamá's" to describe ownership of the house.⁷¹

Luz has just given voice to an alternative means of interacting with power: not from a position of acceptance but rather from one that is conscious of the cultural logics that perpetuate cultural tyranny by upholding patriarchy and normativity and can challenge them. She uses this formation of consciousness in order to disrupt the binary logics that normally limit how she is able to participate in

⁷⁰ Villarreal 166.

⁷¹ Each time I think of this moment and the otherness in which Juan sees women I am reminded of Anzaldúa's "shadow beast" concept, however, I have not had time to incorporate that in an effective way into this project though I think need to be articulated in later development of this manuscript.

the private family domain and restrict her from the public domain. In doing so, she is able to move between those domains in defiance of Juan's authority and in opposition to the forces of cultural tyranny that would name her a whore for doing so. Moreover, when she explains the realities of ownership to Juan—the fact that “something has happened,” she makes clear that his material claim to authority is a fake one and brings his perceived reality within the *corrido* imaginary into crisis with the intersecting realities of ownership and law in the borderlands. Luz's articulation of consciousness and her strategic use of it to push back against the tyranny and authority practiced by her father come about from an awareness of several formations of power that intersect on her, her mother, and her sisters. She is aware of the cultural logic that her father rules the family with and what his ideal place for her in that would be, but she is also aware that his cultural logic, that of the *corrido* imaginary does not line up perfectly with those of the U.S., allowing her to stand in the aporia of overlapping logics—as a woman able to assert authority in a space normally reserved for men, that is, in the borderlands. The oppositional consciousness Luz has developed and expresses in this passage is one that pushes against cultural tyranny and that could be read an early and emergent expression of Chicana consciousness.

By giving voice to her perspective she is able to define herself across domains, both outside and inside of the home. In doing so, Luz is in the position to enact a discourse which resists cultural tyranny and assumes its own authority without dependence on men while making use of other forms of power in the borderlands, specifically that of the U.S. State and its police. This moment signals the potential for a new ideological organization of the home and family structure, one in which the roles of women cannot be defined by patriarchy and in which women hold the ability to move between domains on their own authority. Luz says as much when she tells her mother to inform Juan that something has happened to him as the *corrido* imaginary is put in crisis by the ambiguity of the borderlands. Let me be clear here. Juan was just presented with the fact that his cultural imaginary also contends with a spectrum of other and saw Luz make use of U.S. law to challenge not only his authority but his reality through her

opposition to oppression and cultural tyranny. Juan has the chance to accept this new world that Luz has made clear exists but rather than allow his authority to be permanently put aside, he makes an attempt to put the world to rights, at least, from his perspective.

Obviously furious at the undermining of his position and his authority, Juan reacts against Luz as she finishes telling him that something, indeed, has happened:

Juan Rubio hit her with the back of his hand, and she bounced off the wall but she did not fall.

Again, she screamed to Consuelo, and Consuelo, given courage by the utterance of that which she had lately been telling her daughters, lost her head and stepped forward, screeching, "Do not dare to touch her again, you brute!" She took hold of his arm, as he spun toward her, the force of his movement knocking her off balance, so she stumbled crazily through the door and landed on her face in the kitchen.⁷²

Consuelo attempts to assert her own authority by preventing violence from being done to her daughter, aware that the actions that Luz has taken are to a degree inspired by the ideas she has suggested to her own children. She not only speaks out against Juan but attempts to restrain his actions as he tries to assert his authority through force, a clear departure from her limited role as a woman in the *corrido* imaginary. Juan's reaction to the two women demonstrates an attempt to place his family back into normative and traditional roles even if by force. He knocks Luz into a wall, letting her know that her place is in the home and never outside of it. He knocks Consuelo into the kitchen, the most stereotypical space reserved for a mother and wife where she lands face down, unable to speak. In the face of an emergent oppositional consciousness Juan's impulse is to attack it, contain it, and silence it.

Juan's violent reaction to Luz and Consuelo offers a way of understanding the exploitive and oppressive logic associated with the *corrido* imaginary and with patriarchy it represents. If Luz and Consuelo are able to leave the roles defined for them by patriarchy and the *corrido* imaginary of their

⁷² Villarreal 166.

own accord and in opposition to his authority, Juan's own position of authority and privilege are exposed as constructed and built on their subjugation. This emergent consciousness in both women is aware of this fact as well. When Juan finds himself face to face with an emergent proto-Chicana feminist consciousness in the borderlands of *familia* he attempts to curb that consciousness and safeguard his position and his cultural imaginary with the violence of cultural tyranny. The fact that Juan attempts to place Luz and Consuelo back into their roles under his authority through violence exposes the fact that under this patriarchy, any who depart their culturally normative roles are rendered appropriate targets for violence. His violent actions at once serve to remind his family that within the patriarchy of the corrido imaginary he has the right to inflict violence on those under his authority to both defend patriarchal authority in the *corrido* imaginary and to discipline them when they act abnormally in his patriarchal eyes.

Explaining Away the Abnormal Chicana

It is notable that Juan's physical assault on Luz is not commented on by the narration nor is it acknowledged by Richard, the protagonist. In terms of what Juan understands about the world, what Luz became in that moment was indescribable and beyond the limits of intelligibility within the corrido imaginary. Luz has developed an oppositional consciousness but Richard has not which accounts for the fact that he cannot understand what went on in the way that Luz does, interpreting the events between his father and sister as "a bad dream! A real bad dream or a Goddamn dumb show!"⁷³ While this means that he at least perceived the event, rather than attempting to understand what Luz's expression of oppositional consciousness could mean in terms of identity and her role in the family and in society, Richard interprets it as something not-real and fantastical suggesting that he, like his mother, had difficulty imagining a reality outside of the *corrido* imaginary even when that something is right in front of him. To return to Sandoval's comments on oppositional consciousness, this can be read as an

⁷³ Villarreal 166

example of ideology without such consciousness. Richard has not been harmed by the *corrido* imaginary nor any of its cultural logics and so can only see the events as an ambiguity with no significance to his reality, that is, a bad dream. Luz, who has been oppressed by patriarchy and the *corrido* imaginary understands that Juan Rubio's logic limits her privilege and reacts against it, daring to dream or imagine something different as she confronts her father, the *corrido* warrior.

Luz's expression of her emergent consciousness occurs within the private domain—the space in which difference is assumed to be allowed and contained within normative society.⁷⁴ In terms of how her consciousness is represented in *Pocho*, Luz's ability to transgress the limits of *corrido* imaginary and specifically of patriarchy remains locked within the discursive space of the family, now reclaimed by her father through the use of brutal force. The text returns to Luz just once more. Richard and Juan have a man to man talk about the fact that it is time for Juan to leave and Richard to take over as man of the house. As Juan and Richard say their goodbyes, the reader gets a single sentence to end Luz' story: "In the other room, Luz finally picked herself up off the floor and disappeared into her room."⁷⁵ Luz' rebuke and Juan's authority and her deployment of her own exceeds what is intelligible from within the *corrido* imaginary, a point which offers some insight into why she is banished to her room and from the narrative as the patriarchy of the *corrido* imaginary reasserts itself over the home. Because of this, the emergent oppositional consciousness in the domestic conflict with Juan is denied expression outside of the family domain—contained from public expression by the will and might of the patriarch. Luz, now the individual most marked by difference, is written out of the novel and left outside of the narrative's main focus. She disappears for the rest of the narrative into the privacy of her own room. The emergent consciousness is left contained by cultural tyranny, patriarchy, and normativity in a room the narrative need never visit again.

⁷⁴ Brown notes that difference resides in the home in the normative and patriarchal society of later modernity. 153.

⁷⁵ Villarreal 169.

While the *corrido* imaginary and its avatar, Juan, cannot understand Luz and her oppositional consciousness it must recognize it, at least as a signifier within some symbolic universe as something to be confronted, managed, and contained because it constitutes a threat to the patriarchal logic of the *corrido* imaginary. This is why Juan must confront it with violence and why Richard can only be aware of it as a bad dream or a dumb show. But the fact that it is incongruous, anomalous, and perhaps even antithetical to the underlying assumptions of the *corrido* imaginary can be made intelligible. This presents a basic problem of signification within the *corrido* imaginary which is solved by recognizing Luz, her consciousness, and her actions not as the complex annunciation of oppositional consciousness and an emerging Chicana consciousness but simply as something anomalous, and threatening and abnormal; like a bad dream to the cultural normativity and dominant culture of the *corrido* imaginary.

I use the term “abnormal” to reference Michel Foucault’s concept described in one of his 1974 lectures at the Collège de France and published in a collected titled *Abnormal*.⁷⁶ In his model, the figure of the abnormal arises from a progression and amalgamation of three earlier figures, each with their own “frame of reference” or discursive framework in relation to family and society that must attend to them and each with their own response from society, culture, and the law. He locates each of these within an earlier time period (18th century forward), but argues that the combined figure of the abnormal that encapsulates them all is a major figure in the construction and constitution of normative power in the 20th century. The first figure he offers is that of the “human monster.” This figure’s frame of reference is the law, both societal and natural: “The monster is the limit, both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases.” Foucault argues that this figure constitutes the violation of both the laws of nature and of society and, in short, marks where law, society, and ineligibility all end.⁷⁷ Society’s response in the case of the monster is either medicalization

⁷⁶ The lecture is his third in the series but does not have a specific name.

⁷⁷ Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal*. 55.

or violence—treat it or kill it, as it were.⁷⁸ The second figure is the individual to be corrected or “the incorrigible” whose frame of reference is the family and its adjoining or supporting institutions.⁷⁹ More common than the rare monster, this figure is accounted for in the disciplinary interactions between the family and the church, school, work, police, etc.⁸⁰

The final figure that is condensed into the figure of the abnormal is that of the masturbating child, who is not only common but considered ubiquitous—a figure that every family knows of but also denies. This figure’s frame of reference is the bedroom, the body, the parent, brothers and sisters, immediate supervisors and caretakers, and the doctor or, more simply put, the apparatus of the family and the family domain. The figure of the masturbating child requires supervision and intervention by the parents in the family to monitor the child and its behavior.⁸¹ The response to this figure leads to the construction of the nuclear (with the child as the nucleus) family as parents are called upon to intervene and monitor their child’s sexuality for the good of the next generation.⁸² This combination of the three figures into the abnormal also help to stabilize a separation of public and private domains as normative and even necessary in process of disciplining the abnormal figure.

Foucault notes that the figures overlap each other and collapse into one another, creating an “abnormal” figure that can be responded to by a host of formations and institutions within cultural normativity in order to maintain normativity and mark those who are legible as “abnormal” with difference. The methods of managing the “abnormal” in all of its forms is similar to the deployment of Anzaldúa’s concept of “cultural tyranny” except that Anzaldúa, working in conversation with Audre Lorde and her formulation of difference, that is anything that distances an individual from the “mythical

⁷⁸ Foucault, *Abnormal*. 56.

⁷⁹ Foucault, *Abnormal* 57.

⁸⁰ IBID

⁸¹ Foucault notes that as the figure gained in popularity, masturbation was linked to medical illness. *Abnormal* 237-242.

⁸² Foucault, *Abnormal* 248-51. Foucault also writes about the production of a population in his work *History of Sexuality Vol. I*.

norm,” which she defines as “as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure,” accounts for race and gender in a more complex way than Foucault does.⁸³ In the fight between Luz and Juan, Luz manifests as an Abnormal in a complex kind of way—not as a single figure but as all of them to some degree. She is monstrous because her consciousness of difference and opposition renders her a threat to the basic patriarchal order of the *corrido* imaginary. She is incorrigible in that Juan sees her as one who needs correction and has, to this point, assumed that the world he invasions, the normative one with *corrido* assumptions, will correct her. By calling her a whore and taking it upon himself to correct her as a father and patriarch, she is rendered to be the masturbating child, the well-known secret, as Foucault suggests. As such, Juan, the avatar of the *corrido* imaginary, attacks and contains the embodiment of “abnormal” in his attempt to maintain the cultural normativity and authority of that very imaginary. He cannot account for her abnormality on Luz’ terms but he can account for them using the mechanisms and institutions that serve the ideologies and discourses assumed within patriarchal normativity and his particular imaginary. As such, Juan used his authority in *corrido* imaginary to contain the “abnormal” figure and limit its challenge to his world order. Contextualizing Luz and her emerging oppositional consciousness as an abnormal allows the binary logic of the *corrido* imaginary to interpret her not as an alternative form of consciousness that can challenge its validity but as nothing more than a discrepancy to be managed and contained.

This concept is of particular importance for this project and for understanding the role that family can play within a Chicana/o/@ intellectual history. Foucault would note that these mechanisms are used to correct the “abnormal” and central to these mechanisms is the family. That is, the family acts in the service of normativity or what Chicana feminists have called the dominant culture. From a critical perspective, normative power uses the signifier “abnormal” to abstract the particularity of difference and of an oppositional formation and contain it, rendering its correction nothing more than

⁸³ Audre Lorde. “Age, Race, Class, Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” *Sister Outsider*. (1984) 116.

part of normative cultural practice and obscuring the cultural tyranny deployed to correct the “abnormal.”⁸⁴ Importantly, however, is the fact that it is the very domain of the family that is employed in containing this “abnormal” both in *Pocho* and in Foucault’s analysis. That is, the family as imagined, defined, and constructed by normative and patriarchal power. In this case, the *familia* imagined by the *corrido* warrior in his world making project, the *corrido* imaginary. This is why Luz can be banished to her room and from the narrative. Rather than confront her opposition which critiques the *corrido* imaginary in a complex and even intersectional way, something I will treat in a later chapter, the *corrido* imaginary makes use of a discourse with the power of normativity to abstract such opposition into a simple abnormality that must be managed and is best managed by the patriarchally organized family.

It is unsurprising that the intellectual history of Chicanismo and the Chicana/o/@ family is one that accounts for the struggle between dominant perspectives and an emerging oppositional consciousness and expressions of difference. For this reason, it is unsurprising that the Chicano Nationalist Movement embraced the novel for its use of the *corrido* warrior. It is also unsurprising that the 1971 introduction of the novel lamented the novel’s failure to offer a solidified “identity minded” narrative for 1970s Chicano nationalists.⁸⁵ However, Villarreal’s novel holds more significance for the struggles of Chicano Nationalism than simply offering a vexed representation of the *corrido* warrior. The emerging identity that Villarreal imagines is one that has not solidified patriarchy as the way forward for Mexican-Americans and future Chicanos and in fact articulates a kind of emerging feminist or at least oppositional consciousness tied to feminine identity within Mexican-American identity.⁸⁶ As the novel is

⁸⁴ There is a great deal to be written on how family here functions as crypt in the psychoanalytic sense however that is not yet what this project is about.

⁸⁵ The original introduction of the novel in its 1971 resurrection penned by Ramón Eduardo Ruiz critiqued the novel for not being nationalist enough. The introduction has been heavily critiqued by Juan Bruce-Novoa who suggested that it would be better for Ruiz to read the novel as Literature rather than a framework for his own notions of racial politics in Novoa’s essay “Pocho as Literature.”

⁸⁶ Bruce-Novoa, *Chicano Authors: Inquiry by Interview* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980.) It is worth noting that when interviewed by Juan Bruce-Novoa, Villarreal said he did not know if he would call his work “Chicano” because he was not sure he agreed with all of the definitions of the term by Chicano Nationalism and noted the nationalist’s rejection of any definition other than their own. 12

pulled from obscurity in the early 1970s, the Chicano Nationalist movement does so in an attempt to stabilize Chicano identity within the *corrido* imaginary and create a hetero-patriarchal nationalist narrative that is also able to contain and restrict the oppositional consciousness of women in the movement, that is, contain the co-emergent Chicana feminism. That part of Chicana/o/@ intellectual history will be explored in my next chapter.

Chapter Two: Chicano Nationalism, the Fight for *Familia*, and the Fear of a *Feminista* Consciousness

Chicano Nationalism emerges at a moment in which the U.S. is trying to come to terms with the demands of the Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In looking for some kind of explanation as to why Black Americans met with less success and stability than white Americans, Daniel Patrick Moynihan offered a suggestion based in heteropatriarchal normativity, that is, one that argues that the patriarchal family, complete with parents and two children as he believed was common in White communities was the only hope for Black communities seeking equality. This argument was the centerpiece his now infamous 1965 report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." Equating heteronormativity with social and legal legitimacy in the eyes of the state, Moynihan offered an analysis of family that characterized non-patriarchally organized families as outside of the U.S. cultural-political norm and accused such families of requiring more government assistance and so characterized the Black family as a drag on U.S. economic growth and a threat to Black American masculinity. Moynihan's now infamous report codified the heteropatriarchal normative family as the marker of social, cultural and political legitimacy in the U.S. and centralized the concept in U.S. cultural-political discourse, suggesting that only through patriarchally organized families with clear gender roles could the U.S. hope to continue social and economic progress in a multiracial and multicultural future. The introduction to Moynihan's cites the 1964 Civil Rights act as a signifier that it was time for the U.S. Federal Government to act on behalf of the Black community to speed Black American's road toward equality with Whites, locating his articulation of "legitimacy" in a white U.S. perspective. I characterize his articulation of legitimacy as social, cultural, and political based on the goals to be achieved in the Black community by the U.S. Federal Government: to facilitate social equality and opportunity for the Black community, end cultural practices of racism which he called a "vicious," through such steps toward equality, move the

Black community toward political unification with white Americans and away from political opposition.⁸⁷

This set the tone for a debate about the role of family and identity in the U.S. by characterizing white families as normal and legitimate and families that did not look and act as he characterized white families to look and act, Moynihan's estimation as abnormal, a threat to national stability and prosperity and as such, illegitimate.⁸⁸

It was these expectations, codified in the discourse of legitimacy and associated with racial identity that would lead the manifesto writers of the Chicano Nationalist Movement to centralize family in explicitly Chicano terms. The characterization of the Black community as illegitimate and in need of rehabilitation was also associated with Mexican-Americans and what would eventually become the Chicano Nationalist Movement.⁸⁹ Writers of the Chicano Nationalist Movement of the 1960s and 70s sought to assert an opposition to what they understood to be a racist discourse addressing the family with goals of white assimilation as Moynihan's introduction suggested by redefining family in Chicano terms in the pages of various manifestos that articulate the role of family in a larger Chicano cultural-political movement. To do so, they articulated a distinct Chicano cultural-political identity that embraced patriarchal and culturally normative aspects of Moynihan's report to make their one claim for legitimacy on the grounds that Chicano cultural and racial identity were founded on patriarchal family organization but a patriarchy inspired through a Mexican-American heritage rather than a culturally or socially white one. In this chapter I argue two related points. First, that Chicano Nationalism was a cultural-political movement that attempted to reclaim and reimagine the family in a specifically Chicano way. This nationalist imaginary embraced patriarchy and politicized the family in order to create a Chicano

⁸⁷ Daniel Patrick Moynihan and United States. Department of Labor. Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. (1965) "introduction."

⁸⁸ I would not suggest that Moynihan simply assumes that white families are composed on a father, a mother, and children and organized in patriarchy, however the second chapter of his report associates this family structure to be much more common in white families and deteriorating in Black families. 6-9.

⁸⁹ Rodríguez, Richard T. *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*. Latin America Otherwise. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, (2009) 29.

oppositional politics and a Chicano counter-public that blurred the distinction of public/private domains in normative society into a cultural-political borderlands of which I wrote in Chapter One. Second, by reproducing heteropatriarchal assumptions about legitimacy, Chicano Nationalist Manifestos also reproduced a fear of feminist and especially intersectional feminist consciousness. In attempting to imagine and define Chicano identity through manifesto writing, the Chicano Nationalists participated in the same oppressive discourse of legitimacy produced by Moynihan, championing the role of the patriarch as key to success of future generations and demonizing the very idea of a woman who might act and exist in the world outside of the most normative and feminine roles. Both Moynihan and the three authors I will explore in this chapter characterize the influence of women as leaders of families or communities as destabilizing and a threat to the U.S. as a nation and to the nationalist values and efficacy of Aztlán.⁹⁰

In this chapter I will start by analyzing Moynihan's now infamous report and its role in perpetuating a discourse of heteropatriarchal normativity in multicultural 1960s and 70s U.S. political imaginaries. I will then explore the manifestos of three Chicano authors: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles who calls Nationalist political unity in the Chicano *familia*, Armando Rendon who discusses the formation of a Chicano "*barrio* union" or grassroots form of community governance and counter public, and José Armas who imagines a Chicano Nationalist *familia* that is intimately connected to a Chicano political movement. My goal here is not to offer an indictment of these Chicano Nationalist writers but rather to explore the complex path of an emergent oppositional consciousness and its nascent polity as part of a larger Chicana/o/@ intellectual history that emerges from an ongoing debate about what *familia* is and what it does. To be clear, I understand and am even sympathetic to critiques of Chicano Nationalism and

⁹⁰ Aztlán is the mythical homeland of the Aztecs and the Mestizo races and central to many ideological documents about Chicano cultural origins. It is assumed to be the western coast and south west portion of the US previously part of Mexico.

its misogynistic and homophobic assumptions, yet want to insist that its articulation of family and suggestions for political action were not without efficacy in some respects and need to be accounted for in any exploration of Chicana/o/@ intellectual history and especially in an exploration of the role the family plays in relation to Chicana/o/@ identity and subjectivity.

The Echo of the Moynihan Report

Moynihan's report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" was published in 1965 as a response to mounting pressure for equality driven by the civil rights movement, the passing of the Civil Rights act of 1964 the year prior, and mounting concern from white Americans about what equality might mean for Great Society liberalism.⁹¹ Overall, the report focuses on what Moynihan and his small staff understood to be the major problems within the "negro" community of the mid-1960s.⁹² The report specifically declares that the "deterioration of the Negro family" characterizes a "fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time." Moynihan's characterization of "weakness" was associated with what he saw as an "instability" in the Black family, marked by divorce and single parent households which he notes are incongruous with more economically and socially successful and "stable" white families.⁹³ Moynihan points to the inequalities, social conflicts, and economic disparities in Black communities when compared to white communities as effects of unstable family units, that is, homes not headed by a father figure.⁹⁴ The report goes on to note instances in which Black men leave their families in search of work or as a result of racist oppression, thereby creating a matriarchal family in which mothers must raise their children, something that was, for Moynihan, totally incongruous with the expectations of culture and politics in the U.S. at the time,

⁹¹ Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.) 145

⁹² Moynihan 1-2

⁹³ Moynihan 6.

⁹⁴ Moynihan 5.

making use of a patriarchal logic that is similar to that of the *corrido* imaginary about which I wrote in the last chapter yet in this case tied explicitly to a U.S. cultural-political imaginary.

The report was part of a larger conversation about race and American identity after the Civil Rights Act was passed to guarantee civil liberties to all U.S. citizens regardless of race. U.S. political discourse of this period attempted to reposition its characterization of Black Americans not as outsiders or a political opposition but as a group of racial “others” who were on their way to assimilated equality with white U.S. citizens. This shift in U.S. political discourse meant that Black Americans had to be incorporated into the cultural-political imaginary of U.S. dominant culture with its white supremacist assumptions. Largely, that meant asking dominant U.S. culture to imagine Black Americans as individuals with families that could contribute to U.S. society. Most scholars agree that the 1960s and the Moynihan report imposed a set of patriarchal values associated with white U.S. families by which Black communities could be judged. Ruth Feldstein notes that Moynihan and his report embraced a kind of “Great Society” liberalism that understood the family and not the individual as the primary object of concern and, more specifically, families headed and supported by a patriarch.⁹⁵ This “breadwinner liberalism” as Robert O. Self calls it framed the heteronormative patriarchal family as the primary building block of American society and understood families who did not replicate such a family as contributing to national weakness and imposing an economic burden on society.⁹⁶ The report and its characterization of the Black family participates in a dominant discourse that champions sameness and cultural normativity, as Habiba Ibrahim’s work on the Moynihan Report points out.⁹⁷ Put simply,

⁹⁵ Feldstein 145.

⁹⁶ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s*, First edition. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012)10-12.

⁹⁷ This formulation of liberalism is drawn from the work of Carol Pateman and of Wendy Brown to a degree though I recognize that neither authors addressed race in their framework while critiquing the heteropatriarchy of liberalism broadly. Other cultural critics of liberalism like Charles W. Mills, Rosa Linda Fregozo, Jodi Melamed, and Lisa Marie Cacho explore the shifts in American 20th century liberalism and its relationship to race, sameness, normativity, and representation and it is with their work in which I am in conversation when I invoke the framework of liberalism.

Moynihan's report articulates equality for the Black community as the assimilation of a racial and cultural "other" into a dominant and white U.S. cultural-political imaginary and polity rather than an attempt to help the Black Community find social and political prosperity on its own terms. While the report directly addressed the Black community from a white perspective, it also participated in a larger cultural-political discourse that characterized non-white racial and cultural identities as anomalous and problematic formations in need of white U.S. assimilation.

While Moynihan notes that hundreds of years of oppression under white supremacy have demanded a "fearful price" from the Black community, he also makes a point of demonizing any family formation that falls outside of the most patriarchal, traditional, and idealized nuclear family, especially any formations characterized by matriarchy. Formations that Moynihan claims the Black Family embraces: "In essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure, which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well."⁹⁸ This moment in the report does attempt to recognize the historical racism suffered by the Black community. However, the only explanation the report can locate for a family structure headed by women is one of most desperate necessity arrived at due to hundreds of years of oppression and exploitation. Beyond characterizing the departure from patriarchally organized families as the result of historical oppression, he also imagines that such a formation limits the efficacy of individuals associated with such families by suggesting that the lack of a patriarch "retards" Black American's ability to thrive in American society because of the larger instance of matriarchally organized families.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Moynihan. 29.

⁹⁹ IBID.

Moynihan goes on to characterize American society as essentially patriarchal, saying that there is “no special reason” for such a formation but that “ours is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage.”¹⁰⁰ In the first sentence he makes a point of characterizing the normative society as “our society,” that is, the domain of white men with power and the practices and cultural formations which Moynihan locates not only in the family but in the specific patriarchal practices of the family which positions the Black community to be nothing more than a sub-culture out of step with rest of the population. Moynihan sides with patriarchal normativity as he dismisses any need to critique the reasoning for such gendered hierarchy. Alternative formations are therefore rendered non-normative as they fail to meet the standard of patriarchal legitimacy set in this report.

The report characterizes the contemporary results of historic cultural oppression as a “crushing burden on the Negro male” and “on a great many Negro women as well.”¹⁰¹ This formulation builds on the assumption that patriarchal family structures are the only ones with societal efficacy in the U.S. cultural/political system and suggests that Black women only experience oppression when they fail to maintain the societal role assigned to their gender. This logic echoes with heteropatriarchal normativity and suggests that men are the ones who suffer the burden of oppression and that women only suffer it when they take (or are forced to take) on the role of head of the household.

“The Negro Family” positioned Black family practices as a topic to be addressed by a dominant political discourse. The point of the report was to establish Black citizenship, newly validated by the 1964 civil rights act, within a discourse that perpetuated family as a private unit that fortified national

¹⁰⁰ IBID.

¹⁰¹ IBID

wellbeing, that is, under the purview of the American nation.¹⁰² Put simply, Moynihan's report embraced the telos that the state had the authority and moral imperative to act on behalf of the Black family in order to make their family practices and structures more like those normative and patriarchal families that Moynihan associates with white American families. Unsurprisingly, this approach positions Black families low in a hierarchy of cultural family normativity and demands racial and cultural assimilation for such families to be regarded as legitimate. This approach is not unlike the logic of colonialism that Frantz Fanon describes when he notes that for the colonized individual to even make a complaint or articulate their ideas to the colonizer, the colonized must speak and act in a way regarded as legitimate by the colonizer.¹⁰³ Black families that did not meet this standard of legitimacy were understood to need intervention and influence by institutions, not unlike the logics associated with the figure of the "abnormal" in Foucault's analysis cited in the previous chapter. The Black family is in fact equated with what Moynihan terms a "pathology" for its embrace of matriarchal figures and goes so far as to suggest that only by assimilation and replication of the heteronormative patriarchal family can the Black family hope to contribute and participate in American society without placing undue burden on its members and on the dominant society as a whole.¹⁰⁴ To phrase that logic in simpler terms, a Black family that has not assimilated to white standards is pathological by nature. Such a pathology can only be remedied by action on the part of the U.S. Nation and its institutions.

The positioning of the Black family in this way offered at least two major political and cultural results that would impact how the Black family and Blackness itself come to be legible within the dominant discourse of U.S. cultural politics. Habiba Ibrahim argues that by reading the report in connection with the later Supreme Court ruling in the *Loving v. Virginia* case, not only are "state

¹⁰² Ibrahim. 44.

¹⁰³ Fanon 18-19.

¹⁰⁴ Moynihan 29

initiatives to reinforce heterosexual marriage and by extension the heteronormative family” given substance within the dominant discourse, but the heteronormative patriarchal family comes to align with the interests of the U.S. nation state. She goes on to explain that by characterizing the Black family as abnormal, deviant, and in need of state intervention, the discourse about family and the state produces an “ideological dimension of citizenship—an affective dimension, or the manner in which people emotionally belong to nation.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, practices of intimacy and organizing authority and responsibility in families were associated with feelings of belonging. Individuals could feel that the way their family practiced intimacy indicated a kind of belonging to a particular group and an othering of individuals from families that were organized differently or practiced intimacy in different ways, rendering those othered families as unknowable but a point of concern for any American. That is, they are understood within a signifier that contains difference rather than allow it to be legible in its particularity in the same way that Luz and her expression of oppositional consciousness were contained as abnormal in my previous chapter.

By critiquing the intimacy and structure of the Black family as pathological in the eyes of dominant discourse, non-normative families were cast as formations that needed the attention and intervention of government institutions to prevent them from dragging down American society. Considering what Ibrahim describes as the affective demotion of citizenship, this allows those who are part of normativity to feel pity for those who are not normative, that is the Black family, and expect that measures will be taken to make those families more like the white ones Moynihan imagines and that those measures are motivated by that very affective relationship to normativity, rendering the actions of normative power kindly and even magnanimous in the eye of normative subjects.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the affective dimension allows those caught up in the discourse to understand their own practices of

¹⁰⁵ Ibrahim 44-45.

¹⁰⁶ Ibrahim 45.

intimacy as identity-forming, either in the fact that they meet the patriarchal expectations of Moynihan and so are legitimate or if they do not and so are by default but still affectively part of an othered group. That affective dimension allows members of each group to develop feelings of belonging and a consciousness of their relationship to the expectations of dominant normativity where family, intimacy, and racial belonging are concerned. This affective dimension to belonging is not unlike the adherence to the *corrido* imaginary in that those who fail to meet the standard of legitimacy in Moynihan or adhere to strict gender roles as in the *corrido* imaginary are considered detractors to a larger cultural-political imaginary and its goals.

The Moynihan Report characterizes the strictest of gender roles within an ideological structure attached to a kind of national culture, one that creates belonging among those interpellated by the family ideology through an affective dimension. Such a process not only suggests that there is a correct and American (even patriotic) way of making family but that one ought to feel belonging and perhaps even pride in identifying with that cultural-political imaginary. Feldstein notes that for Moynihan family and not the individual as the primary object of concern but, most specifically, families headed and supported by a patriarch.¹⁰⁷ Black women were seen within the report to show too much independence, to the point of manifesting matriarchy by raising children on their own, a characteristic that Moynihan suggests was likely to cause them to become dependent on the state for support. Cultural Scholar Lisa Marie Cacho notes that Black women were not only held in contempt by Moynihan for making Black men as fathers redundant, but Moynihan calls Black women “responsible for emasculating fatherless sons, who then supposedly became unable and unwilling to work productively in legal economies.”¹⁰⁸ Moynihan himself suggests that families headed by Black women were a burden

¹⁰⁷ Feldstein 145.

¹⁰⁸ Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, Nation of Newcomers (New York: New York University Press, 2012) 128.

to the U.S. society and the federal government for their dependence on social programs and use of state resources.¹⁰⁹ Feldstein explains that within this discourse, Moynihan advocates the rehabilitation of Black men's masculinity, a rhetorical framework associated with the larger discourse about the Black family.¹¹⁰ Moynihan's call to action at the end of his report is one aimed at the U.S. Government, suggesting that Black men should be recruited to U.S. Military service in much greater numbers in an attempt to rehabilitate their masculinity. Moynihan suggests that the military is a meritocratic institution where racism will not disadvantage Black men and where Black men can become more like their patriarchal White counterparts—that is, an institution where Black men can be assimilated into White approved normative masculinity.

In this way, Black women and specifically Black mothers become a moral and political concern within the dominant discourse that sought to feminize and domesticate them within normative roles while the same discourse sought to establish a Black masculinity modeled on Moynihan's perceptions of white patriarchy and a model of assimilation.¹¹¹ Historian Robert O. Self writes that Moynihan's report would inform policy developed by both the Johnson and Nixon administrations and influence the larger discourse that would distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate families.¹¹² Such a distinction would attach race and practices of intimacy to a cultural-political discourse that associated "legitimate" with families that practiced or assimilated to practice patriarchal organization and could contribute to the Great Society associated "illegitimate" with families that did not and therefore were a burden on the U.S. and its institutions.

Feldstein writes that many in the Black community, especially after the assassination of Malcolm X "in the climate of growing Black nationalism...were deeply disturbed by the report's message that

¹⁰⁹ Moynihan 30

¹¹⁰ Feldstein 146-47.

¹¹¹ Cacho, 147.

¹¹² Self 38.

individual failure rather than systemic racism impeded racial progress” (148). White liberals were willing to accept that Black Americans were part of a distinctive culture but were all too happy, like Moynihan, to view that culture as pathological and to assume said pathology maintained itself through individual and cultural practices of intimacy within the Black community.¹¹³ In other words, the Black community was very aware of the political-cultural discourse coming from white liberals and the U.S. government and understood it to be an attack. In response to this, many in Black communities and especially in the Black Nationalist community sought to disprove these white liberal assumptions by demonstrating that Black men were not emasculated as Moynihan had claimed.¹¹⁴ This response by Black Nationalists asserting a dominant and masculine role for Black men left Black women with limited options in terms of their role within Black Nationalism. As Feldstein points out, in both white liberal discourse associated with Moynihan’s report and in Black Nationalism, Black men remained the “barometer” for measuring equality and racial progress. Black women were rendered suspect unless they fit into the patriarchal gender roles of either Black Nationalism or U.S. white liberalism. Their ability to benefit from what was characterized as racial progress articulated as contingent on their racial patriarchs.

Building a Chicano Nation from a Chicano Family or How to Chicano the right way

This broad attack on the family that Moynihan’s report participates in was also part of a larger discourse that characterized communities of color as similarly pathological and abnormal, something that Richard T. Rodríguez notes had been part of stereotyping of the Chicano community by dominant culture for what he describes as decades.¹¹⁵ The family had been claimed by a white normative discourse allowing for it to be codified in institutions and institutional practice and reinforced through practices of cultural tyranny. This practice was not lost on those taking part in the emerging Chicano

¹¹³ Daniel Geary, “Racial Liberalism, the Moynihan Report & the Dædalus Project on ‘The Negro American,’” *Daedalus* 140, no. 1 (2011) 53.

¹¹⁴ Feldstein 149.

¹¹⁵ Rodríguez 23.

movement which began to take shape in the late 1950s and eventually asserted itself as Chicano Nationalism by the early 1970s. Activists and leaders of the Chicano Nationalist Movement often looked at the treatment of the Black community culturally and politically by the U.S. state while considering the historic oppression of Mexican-Americans by the U.S. and seeing similarities to the oppression and calls for assimilation Chicanos understood to be associated with coloniality, imperialism and outright racism. Recognizing this approach to racialized families within the discourse of the state, Chicano activists and authors began to resist and outright oppose attempts by dominant culture and the U.S. government frame family and legitimacy as the province of White normativity and began to articulate their own formations of family, cultural identity, and arguments that legitimacy was not exclusively white in the growing political movement of Chicano Nationalism. The movement was concerned with giving voice to an emergent Chicano identity and fighting back against the racism and cultural tyranny of the U.S. nation state, its white supremacist ideologies, and colonial and assimilating practices. It was also concerned with enunciating an identity that differed from *Mexicano*, Mexican American, and especially assimilated American identity.¹¹⁶ Chicano historian Ignacio M. García notes that Chicano activists were frustrated with the passivity of their parents and grandparents in the face of discrimination and exploitation.¹¹⁷ Young Chicano activists sought to characterize their generation and cultural identity as one uniquely shaped by a heritage of struggles with oppression and coloniality, one that emerged through political and cultural consciences and one that positioned family at the center of their movement.

Chicano Nationalism not only found expression in activism but also in cultural production, producing a body of text which described Chicano identity, Chicano culture, engaging Chicano history,

¹¹⁶ A brief look at representations of assimilated Mexican-Americans in Chicano Nationalist cultural production, especially in the plays of Teatro Campesino will show that such individuals were often regarded as *vendidos* or race traitors.

¹¹⁷ García, Ignacio M. *United we Win: Rise and Fall of the Raza Unida Party*. University of Arizona Press, 1989. 12.

and giving voice to a Chicano political agenda.¹¹⁸ Considering the political aspect Chicano Nationalism it is perhaps unsurprising that the Movement produces several Chicano manifestos, works that were concerned with conjuring a cultural-political identity that could take part in the movement. These texts rejected the notion that the U.S. State had the ethos or authority to define identity or family from a unilateral perspective and rejected critiques by dominant culture that characterized Mexican-American and Chicano communities as abnormal or pathological. Richard T. Rodríguez notes that among the most important of the struggles associated with articulating a Chicano Nationalist identity within a nascent community was the fight to reclaim the family from dominant U.S. cultural-political discourse on behalf of Chicanos.¹¹⁹ This practice of self-determination in these “formative ideological documents” of Chicano philosophy, as Chicano philosophy scholar José Antonio Orozco calls them, allowed Chicanos and especially Chicano nationalists to write their own identity and theorize their own cultural engagement with American politics and culture.¹²⁰

Activists and writers associated with the movement were acutely aware not only of the cultural and historical experience shared by Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. but were also very conscious of the treatment and characterization of the Black family and community by the U.S. Government.¹²¹ The Movement worked hard to create public representations and conversations about Chicano identity that addressed Chicanos’ Mexican-American heritage, our vexed relationship with colonial practices, and especially to create discourse that defined the family as *la familia* and legitimate in all ways, rejecting discourses that associated legitimacy with primarily white families as Moynihan had

¹¹⁸ There are several authors who articulate the world making politics at the heart of Chicano nationalism and the texts contextualized as manifestos. Gloria Anzaldúa credits the poem “I am Joaquin” as the first text to let Chicanos know they were a people. Carlos Gallego, in his work *Chicano/a Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity* (2011) also associates this early work with an emergent political and cultural subjectivity associated with world making and, via Emma Pérez, world making goals.

¹¹⁹ Rodríguez, *Next of Kin* 24.

¹²⁰ José-Antonio Orozco, “Neighborhood Democracy and Chicana/O Cultural Citizenship in Armando Rendon’s Chicano Manifesto,” *Ethics, Place & Environment* 10, no. 2 (2007) 122.

¹²¹ Armando Rendon explores this point in his work which I will return to in this chapter.

done. However, the family that Chicano Nationalism imagined had a lot of the same qualities as the one Moynihan described as the model of success and male leadership in U.S. culture.

Rosa Linda Fregoso describes the Chicano Nationalist take on *familia* as a means of producing a gendered Chicano Nationalist imaginary to be championed within its own defining discourses and emulated in its other forms of cultural production. She recognizes the potentiality for stability that the family represents and notes that early movement activists saw *la familia* in cultural as well as political terms: “An indispensable support system capable not only of meeting the needs of its members but also of sheltering them from the violence, exploitation, racism, and abuse perpetrated in the external, public sphere of the Anglo capitalist world.”¹²² However, Fregoso, like myself, is critical of the way that *la familia* is imagined within the movement’s political and cultural ideologies. She writes that “the idealized *familia* of Chicano cultural politics looks conspicuously like the ‘singular ideal family’ of the west.” As she goes on to explain, “What early nationalist claims surrounding the *familia* as a ‘site of resistance’ failed to recognize is the extent to which the private sphere was itself implicated in Western patriarchy.” She argues that the *familia* imagined by the Chicano Cultural Nationalist movement conformed to a “western family ideology” embracing aspects of family form and cultural practice in keeping with White liberal and colonized normativity and the White U.S. nation state.¹²³ The men were expected to take part in the political action and fight the good fight against the colonizer for the Chicano people and the greater good of Aztlán out in the public domain. Women were expected to remain in the home to support their families and the larger movement. Both expectations are associated with the gendered roles embraced by the *corrido* imaginary but also are very similar to the heteropatriarchal normative family embraced by the Moynihan Report.

¹²² Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters* 73.

¹²³ Fregoso. 75-76.

Here I will turn to the first of three “formative ideological documents” or, more plainly put, manifestos of Chicano identity written in the 1970s. Each of these manifestos attempted to imagine a Chicano Consciousness and Nationalist ideology into political and cultural reality. Chicano manifestos of this time period were deeply concerned with cultivating a form of consciousness associated with Chicano identity and able to motivate political action in the public domain but also took special care to articulate the role of *la familia* in Chicano cultural identity and in Chicano cultural politics.

Nationalism Becomes *la Familia*

Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzáles is often regarded as one of the great intellectual leaders and organizers of the Chicano Nationalist Movement. It might seem a natural choice for my project here to explore his epic poem “I am Joaquin,” penned sometime in the 1960s.¹²⁴ While that poem is uniquely significant in establishing a Chicano identity and giving voice to a Chicano historical experience, I think more than enough ink has been spent analyzing its relationship to movement politics and Chicano subjectivity.¹²⁵ But “I am Joaquin” is not the limit of Gonzáles’ contributions to the movement and its body of intellectual work. A short piece written by Gonzáles in 1970 and included in the 1973 text *Chicano: The Evolution of a People* is more explicit in its articulation of what a Chicano cultural-political response to the assimilationist cultural and political practices of dominant U.S. society might look like and how it might take shape from consciousness to political action.¹²⁶ The essay titled “Chicano Nationalism: The key to Unity for La Raza,” joins several other manifestos that consider how to build an identity, a community, and a nationalist movement that resists oppression and ongoing colonization by

¹²⁴ The actual year of writing remains in dispute.

¹²⁵ Carlos Gallego explores this poem’s connection to Chicano subjectivity in unique and I think enlightening terms in his book *Chicano/a Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity: Between Recognition and Revolution*. It is also worth noting that Gloria Anzaldúa praised the poem in *Borderlands/La Frontera* where she wrote “Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Cesar Chávez and the farmworkers united and *I am Joaquín* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was founded in Texas.”

¹²⁶ The text itself is a collection of essays both predating the Chicano Nationalist Movement and newly written essays that articulate ideas of community, identity, and the history of Mexican Americans.

dominant society. The essay is also significant in that it contextualizes *familia* as a major factor in the building of Chicano nationalism and articulates the roles of individuals within *la familia* and in the Movement for nationalist ends.¹²⁷

González' argument in this brief piece adapted from a speech given at the 1969 Chicano Youth Conference in Denver CO is that nationalism is the most useful way of pushing back against exploitive and oppressive U.S. practices. He characterizes the U.S. as a nation of colonizers who were all too happy to send brown and Black men to die in a war against communism while denying brown and Black women financial support here in the stolen land of Aztlán.¹²⁸ He argues that family is the most important aspect of Chicano culture and that cultural and racial unity achieved through family unity is needed for Chicano nationalism to succeed in undermining an ongoing cultural attack by dominant society.¹²⁹ González locates *la familia* as the flashpoint for creating a politicized people who can take part in cultural nationalism. However, in doing so he also articulates a monolithic model of family practice associated with a singular model of culture and political participation, especially where gender is concerned.

The speech addresses several Chicanas who demanded that women take a more active role in the leadership of the Chicano movement. González warns that taking such a position could present a threat to the basic Chicano culture, the structure of nationalism, and the political unity of *la raza*. González explains, "I hope that our Chicana sisters can understand that they can be front runners in the revolution, they can be in the leadership of any social movement, but I pray to God that they do not lose their *Chicanisma* or their womanhood and become a frigid *gringa*. So, I'm for equality, but still want to

¹²⁷ "Chicano Nationalism: The key to Unity for La Raza" was adapted from a speech that Gonzales gave at the 1969 Chicano Youth Conference in Denver CO, one of the formative and historical events of the Chicano Nationalist Movement and the same place that "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" was drafted.

¹²⁸ González, Rodolfo (Corky). "Chicano Nationalism: The Key to Unity for La Raza." (1970) 427.

¹²⁹ 425.

see some sex in our women.”¹³⁰ Responding to the very notion of placing women in power within the movement, Gonzáles warns that such a thing is out of step with the cultural practices of Chicanismo and even runs the risk of separating Chicanas from their womanhood and culture. His warning is not simply that women in leadership positions might be unladylike but that such a role might detach them from both their *Chicanisma* (their cultural identity) and their sexuality, leaving them sexless and whitewashed. What is perhaps more troubling about this moment in the text is its dependence on masculine authority to permit or at the very least offer approval of Chicanas who want leadership positions. The whole suggestion is treated as something that Gonzáles, despite his worry that such an action will change the women of the movement, will permit though against his better judgment and in the most magnanimous of patriarchal consideration.

Here I wish to focus on how gender and sex both function within clearly defined roles in the political formation Gonzáles attempts to imagine. In his suggestion, women who act as leaders are abandoning traditional positions in Chicano culture and what I would characterize as the *corrido* imaginary. As such they were also seen to be abandoning their culture, race, and families from the perspective of Chicano Nationalism and Gonzáles. In no small way, Gonzáles, accuses such women of committing the same act that Juan Rubio accuses Luz and to a lesser extent Consuelo of committing: abandoning traditional Mexican culture by turning their back on the traditional roles that if offered them. These roles were clearly defined in Gonzáles’ view and to depart from them signaled a departure away from Chicanismo and an approach (however unintentional) toward white assimilation.

The assumption that men could have roles as leaders and that women should not echoes a patriarchal political imaginary similar to that of the *corrido* imaginary but also similar to the idealized family imagined in Moynihan’s report. Moynihan’s report understood an independent woman (one who

¹³⁰ IBID.

did not attach herself or was unattached to a man within a family by marriage) to be a threat to the overall stability of a community and a drag on the larger society. Gonzáles suggests much the same at the notion of Chicana leadership within the Nationalist Movement. Gonzáles own articulation of where women fit into the structure of nationalism casts such woman as “*gringas*” who have been desexualized, that is, women who have lost their cultural identity and rejected men for feminist leanings assumed in their daring to take leadership roles within the Movement. Both Moynihan and Gonzáles cast women who take on what patriarchy understands as masculine roles to be antithetical and morally problematic to the culture-political goals the two authors respectively support, articulating a similar method for unifying families within a particular cultural-political imaginary but with markedly different cultural identities and notions of belonging attached to them respectively.

Gonzáles describes the important role that family unity plays in bringing about cultural nationalism. He explains, “Nationalism becomes *la familia*. Nationalism comes first out of the family, then into tribalism, and then into the alliances that are necessary to lift the burden of all suppressed humanity.”¹³¹ Here he explains how the values communicated within the family come to influence the affiliation and alliances of public and political ones in an echo of the structure that Anzaldúa critiques when she points out that within cultural tyranny and patriarchy, men make the rules, women transmit them. The practices of the private domain (the family) offer a guide for what must go on in the public (tribal) and political (alliances) domains. For this reason, family is the center of such a political formation and a lack of political unity within *la familia* circumvents the possibility of a political-cultural-racial unity in political discourses and domains.¹³²

At this point, Gonzáles explains how the concept of a unified *familia* works in a political field. He describes a family in which all members have a differing political affiliation or ideological approach. He

¹³¹ IBID.

¹³² Gonzáles 425-26.

notes that such a family cannot create a unified political body and only causes strife within the family due to the ununified discordance of political goals. Something that the Movement could not tolerate while the U.S. government and dominant culture worked to create policies and practices that exploit the *barrio* and the *campo*.¹³³ In short, a unified political project opposing dominant modes of political and cultural exploitation requires political unity in *la familia*. Such an articulation of family shares strong echoes of the Moynihan report yet is notably different in that Gonzáles' articulation of family does not seek to achieve assimilation or associate White families with normativity. Rather Gonzáles model attempts to resist assimilation and oppose the cultural-political forces that champion White normativity and White supremacy.

Despite the distinction from Moynihan's project, Gonzáles' articulates a similar distrust of feminine influences in the guidance of the Chicano Nationalist project. Later in the essay he describes a *concilio de la familia* (a family council) that governs the political body of Nationalism and its activist.¹³⁴ González says that anyone in the community can go before the *concilio* and suggest an idea to be considered as part of the movement and offers the example of a 7 year old boy who could potentially suggest an idea and have it considered by the *concilio* just as any other Chicano. However, when he discusses the possibility of women making political suggestions, he offers some words of caution:

A woman who influences her old man only under the covers or when they are talking over the table, and then he goes in—if it's a bad idea—and argues for that, because he's strong enough to carry it through, is doing a disservice to *La Causa*. Any woman can influence a man whether

¹³³ IBID.

¹³⁴ This larger body of activist make up *la familia de la raza* or the politicized Chicano community organized through what other Chicano nationalists call *carnalismo* or brotherhood. Richard T. Rodriguez has offered a wonderful analysis of the discourse of Chicano Nationalism's *Familia de la raza* and *Carnalismo* noting its masculine domination, homosocial structure, and heteronormative-Machismo values. I will return to this topic later in the chapter.

he is weak or strong. So it's better for her to bring it out in the *concilio* and then all of us can take it and evaluate it as to whether it's right or wrong, good or bad."¹³⁵

The fact that this brief paragraph follows the note about the seven year old boy suggests an immediate juxtaposition of the genders in the way this speech is organized. The young boy can and should suggest ideas to the *Concilio*, ideas that he might come up with at any point. However, the ideas of women from within the movement are cast as always already under suspicion due to some essential influence women hold over men. The notes about ideas suggested under the covers or over the table imply that such spaces are not for political thinking and so such conversations with women should be avoided until those women are before the *concilio*, in order to prevent a woman from interjecting any idea that parts ways with the patriarchy and *machismo* of Chicano Nationalism. This suggestion characterizes women as untrustworthy and in need of extra supervision from the *concilio*, implying a fear that women will use sex and sexuality to influence a single man should there be no other community members to intervene and prevent it. It is notable that this distrust of feminine influence, which I read as a fear of feminist consciousness as in Chapter One, is never explained beyond this point. The justification for this distrust of Chicanas and their ideas is simply contextualized as a need for family unity and devotion to a Nationalist *causa*.

González makes clear that the goal of Chicano Nationalism is to take back the family or rather *la familia* from the discourse of White U.S. assimilationist politics. In his effort to articulate opposition to the assimilationist politics Moynihan suggests, González offers nationalism as a cultural-political logic through which to build Chicano identity as politically influential in the U.S. When read in the shadow of the Moynihan Report, the call to reclaim family and for cultural-political unity (though troubling) is understandable. Such an embrace of patriarchally organized family from within Chicano communities

¹³⁵ IBID.

asserted a standard of legitimacy that dominant U.S. culture also held but articulated that patriarchy within a Mexican-American heritage and a *corrido* imaginary rather than within dominant U.S. culture and the normativity of the state. However, that point does little to explain the deep embrace of patriarchy that Moynihan characterizes as simply the way White U.S. culture does things without offering any further consideration of the topic or that Gonzáles suggests is necessary for Nationalism to proceed. Moreover, articulating a reason for patriarchy as an organizing force does little to explain the distrust for the influence of women within both political formations, each of which suggest that women in power undermine the ability of men to create political change and progress. I want to explore these two questions in the remainder of this chapter. First, I turn to Armando B. Rendon's 1971 *Chicano Manifesto* to shed some light on why Chicano Nationalism was so interested in embracing patriarchy. Second, I read Jose Armas' 1972 manifesto "La Familia de la Raza" to explore the fear of feminist consciousness so often expressed in Chicano Nationalist cultural production.

Shoring up Oppositional Consciousness with the Family

In his fascinating and I think undertreated 1971 work *Chicano Manifesto*, Armando B. Rendon discusses some historical moments when, in his analysis, the Mexican-American people become a revolutionary force in the U.S.¹³⁶ These events tie a Mexican-American identity derived from what Maylei Blackwell calls "narratives of labor history, migration and resistance to colonization" to the radicalism or "Chicano Revolt" of the late 1960s and early 1970s. He contextualizes the events associated with Chicanos and what he calls the "Chicano Revolt" in two ways. First, he situates them in relation to events often historically noted to be part of Mexican-American labor history, similar to Blackwell's explanation of Chicano consciousness and identity being tied to a 1970s effort to recuperate

¹³⁶ My project does not seek to verify or historicize these moments but instead seeks to understand how Rendon's contextualization of these moments in his manifesto come to influence the discourse and epistemology of Chicano consciousness.

and rediscover a historical legacy.¹³⁷ Second, he contextualizes the rising “Chicano revolt” alongside late 1960s racial politics associated with the emergence of Radical Black Nationalist politics. He writes “Unlike the efforts of the Negro people in America—who in past decades sought equality of treatment and opportunity in the Anglo-dominated world on the Anglo’s terms and only recently sought anew a Black identity and cultural separateness—the Chicano from the earliest phases of his uprising in the 1960s has sought equality and respect for his way of life, for his culture, and for his language.”¹³⁸ Setting the question of the accuracy of this statement aside, Rendon’s contextualization of this historical moment and of Chicano identity points to a period of radical racial thinking and activism in response to an oppressive “Anglo-dominated world” which gives rise to an oppositional cultural-political consciousness that articulates various racial and cultural identities. The very timeline that Rendon ties to Radicalism and Chicano identity starts in 1965, the year of the grape pickers strike in Delano California¹³⁹ and the year that Daniel Patrick Moynihan published his famous report.

Rendon’s 325-page work begins theorizing “The People of Aztlán” and moves forward to consider the 1970s Chicano polity, “Gringo-Colored” history, and a variety of cultural aspects associated with the emerging Chicano movement and population. This work differs from the variety of manifestos and manifesto-like texts penned by Chicanos in the early 1970s in its pragmatic approach which considers the cultural, political, and material conditions of the 1970s and theorizes an autonomous Chicano political sphere distinct from that of dominant White U.S. culture. I want to pay special attention to Rendon’s eighth chapter titled “Revolution in the Making” which considers the long history of oppression that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans suffered under the American colonizer and what political and cultural factors need to be associated with a revolutionary Chicano movement and

¹³⁷ Blackwell, *Chicana Power!* 95.

¹³⁸ Armando B. Rendón, *Chicano Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1971). 4.

¹³⁹ Rendon 1.

consciousness. Early in the chapter Rendon situates Chicanos alongside Black Americans and Native Americans as he sets the stage for political uprising that pushes back against the historic and ongoing white supremacy of the U.S.. He writes: “The Chicano and the two other larger minorities in America were exploited or annihilated for their labor and their land and only by sheer dint of internal resources managed to survive the Anglo American’s manifest destiny to destroy everything non-Anglo.”¹⁴⁰ This particular articulation situates all “non-Anglo” individuals but especially Chicano, Black, and Native American as the victims and enemies of ongoing violence and oppression by white supremacy associated with the U.S. nation state.

José-Antonio Orosco points out that Rendon was conscious of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s Poor People’s Campaign and saw urban issues like poverty, inequality, and lack of housing, education, and representations as means of linking communities of color who had suffered under the oppression of the U.S.¹⁴¹ Orosco also notes that Rendon was aware that the dominant culture and political forces of the U.S. would not tolerate racial insurgency without offering violent responses, as had been the case with the Black Panthers and Puerto Rican Young Lords. This led Rendon to theorize alternative and non-violent ways of achieving the same cultural-political effects that an insurgency might. In short, he was aware of a growing oppositional consciousness that encompassed all those oppressed by whiteness in the U.S. His plan involved cultivating coalition building in urban centers with large communities of color to create urban participation while at the same time cultivating a specific Chicano history and identity which he hoped would lead to a kind of Chicano citizenship among urban Mexican-Americans.¹⁴²

While articulating a need for Nationalist politics within the Chicano community, Rendon points towards the relationship between “The Chicano pueblo” and the American Black population. He notes

¹⁴⁰ Rendon, Armando B. *Chicano Manifesto* (1971) 107.

¹⁴¹ Orosco “Neighborhood Democracy” 122.

¹⁴² Orosco 123.

“While we Chicanos owe a great debt to Black people for striking out into untested ground, the Chicano can boast his own personal history of rebellion and rejection of oppression.”¹⁴³ This moment in the text starts the work of learning from those experiences of other racial groups in order to give voice to a Chicano consciousness while recognizing that Black racial organizing, resistance, and political activism led the way for Chicanos and other racial groups to follow suite and demand civil rights and social justice. Rendon’s note about the shared experience of oppression felt by communities of color under white rule recognizes the emergence of an oppositional consciousness with many shared aspects between those communities of color. However, he is emphatic that the history of each racial group and its relationship to U.S. oppression is a unique one.

Rendon also begins to touch on how the complexity and multiplicity of racial struggle and racial identity in the U.S. has been situated within a white supremacist discourse. He writes that “the Black revolution...has guaranteed that the minority peoples of the United States get a certain amount of attention from the dominant society, whether it is pro or con.”¹⁴⁴ His suggestion that the attention paid to minorities in the U.S. is largely from the dominant society makes it clear that communities of color and their calls for racial progress have become legible within a dominant discourse. He even acknowledges that the actions of racialized groups in the U.S. are “now front-page news, whereas only a generation ago there were rarely any activities reported.”¹⁴⁵ However, his earlier assertion that Chicanos have a unique history like other racial groups in the U.S. suggests a concern on Rendon’s part that Chicanos risk being lumped in with all other racial minorities of the time simply as an abstracted other within the imaginary of dominant U.S. culture. The attention being paid to calls for racial progress is, after all, from the dominant White society of the U.S. which has often cast all racial minorities as

¹⁴³ IBID.

¹⁴⁴ IBID.

¹⁴⁵ Rendon 108.

“others” in opposition to dominant white U.S. culture and its attendant discourses of normativity.

Rather than risk the specifics of Chicano Nationalist activism being lost or confused with the demands and needs of Black Nationalism and activism or dismissed all together as a collection of racial complaints from various angry minorities, Rendon points to a need for a unique Chicano political formation. One built on a cultural-political history unique to Chicanos and that can make specific demands of dominant society for Chicano communities.

Rendon here voices a cultural-political imperative for a uniquely Chicano cultural formation that resists complicity with the assimilating and abstracting discourse of the dominant culture, that is, something Chicano to identify with and stand against U. S. oppression. He goes on to note a need to forge a new political-cultural identity for Chicanos, inspired by our Black brothers and sisters but taking steps in direction and making progress toward goals that Black Americans had not. He writes “the current frustration and distrust within the Black community concerning the progress that has been made, ostensibly by the old leadership and through the old channels, illustrate to the Chicano that he has to surpass the effort by the Blacks if he is to endure as a Chicano and somehow contribute to the rehabilitation of the whole country.”¹⁴⁶ This awareness of Black politics is incorporated into Chicano political consciousness as a cautionary note. Rendon mentions a struggle within the Black community between an older generation of organizers and the current one, signaling a political precedent for breaking with previous generations to enact an emergent political agenda and consciousness. Rendon’s comment on the changing Black community echoes a claim by fellow nationalists and historian Ramon Ruíz and Rodolfo Acuña, who have both noted that young Chicanos of the Nationalist Movement were tired of seeing past generations play by the rules of the U.S. only to be oppressed, exploited, deported,

¹⁴⁶ IBID.

or murdered for their trouble.¹⁴⁷ In order to mark a break from previous generations and to distinguish Chicano identity from an abstract “other” racial group, Chicanos sought to articulate a unique history and a specific identity that could make particularized assertions of rights and needs yet remain legible as legitimate within the view of that dominant culture.

Chicano Nationalists like Rendon and Gonzáles understood that any racialized formation of society would be seen as pathological and backwards, contextualized as a threat to U.S. resources and stability from the perspective of the dominant discourse of the U.S. nation state exactly in the way the families of the Black community as characterized by Moynihan. Moynihan’s analysis and its attendant discourse assumed that there is a cultural component that must be assimilated out of people of color (specifically Black Americans) so that they could successfully contribute to the Great Society of the U.S. The claim that communities of color failed to establish legitimate families was the claim that the Black Panthers and the Chicano Nationalists seized on as they established oppositional discourses of their own to assert their cultural uniqueness and resists calls for assimilation. In their attempt to demonstrate cultural legitimacy, both embrace the same standard for legitimacy set by Moynihan in his report, that of patriarchy. Doing so allowed groups to articulate an ability to thrive in a U.S. cultural-political field while denying the claims of pathology levied at them in the dominant U.S. cultural and discourses of the 1960s and 70s.¹⁴⁸

Considering the arguments of both Fregoso and Ibrahim, who articulate the patriarchal family as an ideology that offers an opportunity to achieve legitimacy within dominant culture, the Chicano Nationalist turn to patriarchy as part of its cultural-political imaginary makes a degree of sense. Rather

¹⁴⁷ Ruíz notes this in his 1971 introduction to *Pocho* and Acuña does so in the introduction to his work *Occupied America* (1981).

¹⁴⁸ Feldstein notes that this emerged following both Moynihan’s report and after the assassination of Malcolm X. Her analysis focuses on the formation of a radical Black cultural movement lead by the Oakland Black Panthers and Huey Newton and embraced by the movement at large. 148-49.

than rejecting the terms of legitimacy set by the Moynihan report and the discourse it participates in, Chicano Nationalism attempted to assert the legitimacy of Chicano culture in a patriarchal society by championing a patriarchal family. This provided Chicano Nationalists with a means of asserting their own legitimacy in terms of family structure (which the dominant discourse understood as a formation with significant relevance across cultures) while also maintaining a connection to a unique Chicano history, embracing the patriarchal family within the logics of the *corrido* imaginary rather than on the terms of Great Society liberalism. As such, Chicano identity could be positioned as a legitimate identity that opposed white dominant normativity and its exploitation but was not at risk of being a drag on society or overly dependent on government resources.

Chicano Nationalism offered a cultural-political and racial and cultural identity that could participate in a public discourse and articulate a set of oppositional politics to confront the dominant White U.S. discourse. The arguments associated with white supremacy and white liberalism that were so alienating to communities of color could be exposed as outright racism and characterized as an attempt by the dominant society to whitewash the Chicano family and recruit Chicanos to an assimilationist project of ongoing coloniality. That is, create *vendidos* of would be Chicanos for *la causa*. Chicano Nationalists chose to resist this assimilation by embracing patriarchy, but on their terms using their own culture. In short, Chicanos set the goal of reclaiming the family as *la familia* and of defining it as both legitimate and uniquely Chicano in response to dominant narratives establishing white Americans as the group who naturally achieved legitimacy within families. Robert O. Self regards the shift toward patriarchy embraced by both the U.S. government in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and by racial groups who opposed assimilation and White supremacy as “breadwinner” politics, suggesting that these cultural formations were able to hold their own and contribute to something larger than their own

families in the real-world economies of the 1970s and 80s.¹⁴⁹ The breadwinner logic of patriarchy allowed Chicano Nationalist discourse to appear both legitimate and legible to a white dominated society. But because Chicano Nationalists theorized their political engagement and opposition from a perspective that grew from family into tribalism and community, their theorization of the role and limits of *familia* did not end at the border of the private domain as within normative U.S. white liberalism. This articulation of Chicano identity and political participation lead to a reimagining of *la familia* that would make the strict limits of the patriarchally organized family less clear and expose them as ideological at best and culturally tyrannical at worst.

La Familia de la Raza

Chicano Nationalism was interested in arguing for legitimacy on terrain claimed by dominant culture but also in maintaining their cultural difference as part of their identity. As such, Chicano nationalists needed to theorize a means of creating community around family that also embraced those differences. Rather than risk the emergent Chicano identity being assimilated, obscured, or even silenced by dominant discourses as it historically had been or as dominant culture had tried to do to the Black community, Rendon called for Chicano leaders to enact a discourse that draws on a unique Chicano past in their community building, something he called a “Barrio union.”¹⁵⁰ Orosco describes this as “Neighborhood democracy and cultural citizenship.”¹⁵¹ Within this model, Chicano identity would be the basis for an involved and identity-based Chicano citizenship that focused on community building while embracing the cultural practices of Chicanismo. Considering that Gonzáles locates the start of this cultural identity within the family it is safe to suggest that this public manifestation of Chicano identity emerges from the very family model Gonzáles describes, complete with his model of how the Chicano

¹⁴⁹ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s*. New York: Hill and Wang, (2012) 27-28.

¹⁵⁰ Rendon 211

¹⁵¹ Orosco 131.

family offers a stable ground from which to enact political engagement and a Chicano political sphere. Rendon's call for a *barrio* union is similar to, if not the same, as the *concilio de la familia* that Gonzáles describes as part of the governing body of the Denver Chicano group. Both of these nationalists call for a kind of public formation of Chicano activism and political engagement but one that grows out of *la familia* organized through patriarchy and able to express Chicano cultural identity as a personal identity and a public form of signification.

The expectation that Chicano men participate in the public activism meant that they were bound together in the rhetoric and practices of the movement but also in a kind of brotherhood as they defended their communities and culture against the oppression and exploitation of the white American colonizers.¹⁵² Richard T. Rodriguez notes that this political brotherhood was often called *carnalismo* by Chicanos. This politicized brotherhood constituted a kind of public extension of the private family called *la familia de la raza*, a phrase that connected the private family to those with similar cultural experiences and political goals who shared Chicano identity but were from a different biological family. The public aspect of *la Familia de la Raza* made Chicano identity politically legible to those outside of *la raza* by requiring young men to carry their *Chicanismo* into the public domain through activism and political engagement. Underlying the logic of asking Chicanos to show *carnalismo* in the public domain was the same logic associated with the *corrido* imaginary, in which the public domain was where men were called to duty as activists while the private domain was reserved for those who need protection from the exploitation and assimilationist practices of the colonizer: women, children, and the elderly.

While the U.S. was reacting to the political changes of the civil rights era and being swept up in breadwinner politics, Jose Armas penned and published a manifesto titled "La Familia de la Raza" in 1972. This work theorized the role of *la familia* in organizing personal values, political affiliations,

¹⁵² Rodriguez, *Next of Kin* (2009) 22.

perspectives on life and death, and *la raza's* relationship to white culture and power. Richard T. Rodríguez writes that the manifesto was a direct attempt at reclaiming the family for Chicanos and specifically Chicano Nationalism: "Claiming *la familia* in such politicized ways made sense given the racist terms in which Mexican and Mexican American communities were pathologically rendered." The normative and assimilationist politics articulated in the Moynihan report remained alive in popular liberal critiques of racial politics and culture.¹⁵³ Armas explains *familia* as a concept that extends beyond the limitations of blood relation and included "*Raza community as a family*," a concept that was common in Chicano Nationalist discourse before the manifesto but which he codified.¹⁵⁴ He writes that "the familia concepts may have been the outgrowth of religious influences as well as the shield against oppressive elements (i.e. economic, social oppression) but it has long since been a cultural trait which dictates that no matter how poor you are, if someone is hungry, you share what little you have."¹⁵⁵ This articulation of the *familia* imagines a domain shielded and apart from the public domain but also aware of the need to share in order to maintain what Gonzáles might have called a tribal presence, that is, a separate private domain that is also aware of its community or tribe in a similar way to what Rendon's *Barrio Union* might imagine. Armas' articulation echoes and revises this model in such a way as to make the family aware of these ongoing public discourses and extend familial relationships in brotherhood or *carnalismo* into the public domain as part an oppositional cultural-political consciousness. In Armas' model the very border between public and private becomes porous, penetrated by an awareness of "oppressive elements" but also an awareness of community within which people share oppositional experiences and perspectives as a cultural heritage. Put simply, public discourse penetrates into the family domain through oppositional consciousness and the personal aspects of cultural identity that

¹⁵³ Rodríguez 23.

¹⁵⁴ Armas, Jose. 30.

¹⁵⁵ Armas 31.

penetrate out into the public domain as an extension of *la familia* in service to *la Raza* and forming a unified public presence with political intentions through *carnalismo*.

Importantly, this embrace of *carnalismo* blurred the border between the public and private domains at the same time that it added layers between *la familia's* private domain and the public of the U.S. nation state by constituting a community with a shared experience emerging through *la Familia de la Raza*. In other words, *la Familia de la Raza* made use of *carnalismo* to create a public domain that was at once Chicano community and a Chicano counterpublic, that is, a public formation and community that resists and in this case opposes dominant culture, its discourses, and at time, its cultural logics.¹⁵⁶ Armas takes special care to explain the political brotherhood that constitutes *la Familia de la Raza*, noting that its importance to Chicano exceeds the commitment of White and normative Americas and assimilationist goals of the U.S. Government for young Chicanos. A *carnal* is more than a political ally. He writes:

From the concept of *la familia* grew a common term in the movement today; *carnal* or *carnalismo*...a brother in the closest sense... A carnal shares the common experience of being an oppressed human being in the parlor of the riches country in the world; of being slighted by Anglos because he is sometimes dark-skinned; of being made to feel ashamed by the Anglo because he speaks with an accent... A carnal shares and knows the humiliation of having his life undressed by a pretty smiling social worker in order to clothe his family.¹⁵⁷

Armas' reimagining of family as *la Familia de la Raza* makes use of a shared history and experience of cultural oppression in the U.S. This shared condition becomes the central focus around which *Carnalismo*, Chicano identity, and Chicano public discourse can coalesce. His characterization of the

¹⁵⁶ I borrow the term "counterpublics" from Michael Warner and specifically from his 2002 work *Publics and Counterpublics*.

¹⁵⁷ Armas 32.

Chicano experience of “the Anglo” is one of oppression, shame, and humiliation, making it clear that the political consciousness that emerges into Chicano counter-publics is an oppositional one infused with a similar cultural particularity that refuses U.S. Assimilation.

Seeming to oppose the logics of family and society embraced by the Moynihan Report and its underlying patriarchal and colonial logic, Armas’ manifesto does the epistemological and discursive work of reclaiming the family as *la familia* for Chicanos. However, it does so in such a way as to maintain practices and logics of patriarchy in his own new articulation of family discourse. Rodríguez points out that Armas’ manifesto “conjugates *la raza* and *la familia* with familiar, relative terms of nationalist sentiment. They are: Machismo, *car nalismo*, nation, *compadres*, and land. Each of these factors is necessarily male focused.”¹⁵⁸ Rodríguez explains that this use of male focused discourse worked to strengthen the discourse of *car nalismo* which did rearticulate *la familia* as a uniquely Chicano formation existing across the private/public divide of normative dominant culture. He notes also that this positioning of *la familia* called upon *car nales* and the practices of *car nalismo* to defend the family both as a community of Chicanos constituting *la raza* and as a cultural-political Chicano borderlands and a counter-public situated in opposition to dominant American culture and discourse.¹⁵⁹ To put it more clearly, Rodríguez writes “one’s commitment to the biological family demanded extension into the public sphere to orchestrate kinship networks with one’s community in the name of *car nalismo*,” making *car nalismo* not only a political practice but a cultural imperative associated with the emergent cultural identity.¹⁶⁰ Participation in *car nalismo* and *la Familia de la Raza* became associated with the role of men in Chicano cultural nationalism and the Chicano Nationalist Movement in a way that celebrated the cultural aspects of the *corrido* imaginary. After all, asking young men fighting to defend their

¹⁵⁸ Rodríguez 26-27.

¹⁵⁹ 27.

¹⁶⁰ 21.

communities and loved ones against U.S. oppressors was not very different from asking young Chicanos to imagine themselves as the very warriors from the old *corridos*, standing against *gringo* invaders with their pistols in their hands.

So, Chicano Nationalists sought to create a cultural-political identity that was at once different from dominant culture, oppositional to its assimilative expectations, but also legible as legitimate within the standards of family and patriarchy. But this does not explain the additional distrust of women that I pointed out in González's work. To gain a better understanding of that we need to consider the confluence of two major factors in the Chicano Nationalists' reimagining of the family. First, that family does play a major role in the politics of signification and the production and reproduction of cultural-political discourses and of cultural logics. Second, that Chicano Nationalist had articulated a family formation that blurred the lines between public and private to create a borderlands for Chicano publics or Rendon's *barrio* union. When these two things are considered within the cultural politics of legitimacy associated with patriarchy in the family and embraced by both Chicano Nationalism and dominant U.S. culture alike, the reason for the fear of a feminist consciences shared by Chicano Nationalist and Moynihan alike becomes clear.

Fear of a Feminista Consciousness

The manifestos I've touched on in this chapter sought to unify familial commitment to the Nationalist project. To return to González's description of how nationalism becomes *la familia* for a moment, his model describes an idea that is started within the family and, though family unity and commitment to a nationalist ideology, reproduced in how that family engages with the public domain and the various spheres of society. The logic underlying this assertion about *familia* is not unlike the logic about family and cultural tyranny that Anzaldúa discusses. To clarify, when González notes that nationalism becomes *la familia* through unity, his suggestion is not any different from Anzaldúa's assertion that women transmit the rules of culture within *la familia* to maintain cultural practices and,

often, cultural tyranny. Read together, the two explorations of family suggest that family is a domain of knowledge production: a space in which cultural norms and practices can be created and communicated to structure the Imaginary of individuals within the family in terms of how the larger world works. Put more simply, a family that embraces patriarchy and Chicano Nationalism will communicate those values to individuals in the family, who will use those values to set expectations for their engagement with the world.

Because Chicano Nationalism also expects the private relationships of family to extend into the public domain, the need for familial unity takes on a political importance. That unity was needed both to maintain patriarchy as a legitimating factor in breadwinner politics but also to safeguard it from other forms of consciousness that might imagine other formations of power and affiliation, formations such as those Moynihan condemns as antithetical to normativity and White supremacy when he calls matriarchally organized families part of his tangle of pathology. Any kind of departure from that unity is seen not only as a break with the norms of *la familia* but a betrayal of the cultural-political goals of *la Familia de la Raza*. Because Chicano Nationalism did not always serve the interests of Chicanas due to its limited privileges offered to women, the possibility of a vocal woman who might reject Nationalism for another kind of cultural-political engagement was a very real threat. After all, Chicano Nationalist understood the kind of oppositional consciousness that emerged to critique and challenge power when a group is oppressed. One need only consider Gonzáles' note about the dangers of women talking about cultural-political ideas to their male partners to understand that the patriarchy of Chicano nationalism not only prescribes roles for individuals on gendered line in the interests of a political objective but was also fearful of critical opposition from anyone who felt constrained within those roles. Fearful, in other words, of an emergent oppositional consciousness.

Chicana feminist historian Maylei Blackwell writes "nationalism was used to legitimate male dominance in cultural and political terms" to the point of outright sexism. She notes that nationalism

was a “signifying practice of political meaning making” and argues that Chicano Nationalism’s attachment to patriarchy and *carnalismo* lead to a practice in which insurgent voices who challenged patriarchy were understood to be outside or against the movement.¹⁶¹ This is a sentiment echoed by several prominent Chicana feminist writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Emma Pérez, and Norma Alarcón. This connection is particularly important in understanding the role that family plays in the epistemology and growing complexity of Chicano/a consciousness and subjectivity when one considers Fregoso’s analysis of *La familia de la Raza*, which notes that any ideas that challenged patriarchy within Chicano Nationalism were “positioned outside the familial romance, on the side of the colonialist enemies of the Chicano nation.”¹⁶² Put most simply, a woman who rejected the terms of nationalism risked creating a cultural-political imaginary that was incongruous with or even oppositional to that of Chicano nationalism. Considering how central both Moynihan and the Chicano Nationalists understood the family to be in reproducing cultural practices, the possibility of a woman who would not be bound by patriarchy constituted an existential threat to what Moynihan and Chicano Nationalist understood as the most basic organization of society. A woman who rejected patriarchy and could form coalitions on her own might transmit those practices to others in her family. A family that embraced a feminist oppositional consciousness that could critique patriarchy was a threat to patriarchy. A Chicana or woman of color who had developed an oppositional consciousness was likely to inspire critiques of not only patriarchy but of historical cultural, racial, and political practices which had wronged her and those she cared for.

Chicano Nationalism’s very engagement with cultural change and political opposition requires that the family extend into the public domain. This meant that the emergence of an oppositional

¹⁶¹ Blackwell *Chicana Power!* 93-94. It is worth noting that while Blackwell notes feminist to be the primary insurgent formation ousted from Chicano Nationalism, I would also mention that any manifestation of queerness or queer subjectivity not better explained by *carnalismo* would also felt the same ousting and alienation.

¹⁶² Fregoso 85.

Chicana feminist consciousness would have far reaching effects that were not in line with Chicano Nationalism. As such, it is no surprise that Chicano Nationalists rejected feminist influences and even worked to disrupt Chicana feminist organizing and efforts to build coalitions.¹⁶³ Chicano Nationalist and U.S. while liberals like Moynihan had a working understanding of what kind of impact an intersectional feminist consciousness that emerged out of the breadwinner racial politics following the Civil Rights era might have and were fearful of how such an emergent consciousness might fracture or disrupt cultural-political goals and narratives. However, as Blackwell and many other Chicana and women of color scholars will point out, that consciousness was already strong and finding expression even as the nationalists fought to defend the efficacy of the patriarchal family. It is that very emerging and intersectional oppositional Chicana consciousness that Nationalism and the *corrido* imaginary are unable to contain that will offer the terms and even method for reimagining *la familia* beyond the limits of dominant culture, normativity, and the *corrido* imaginary.

¹⁶³ Blackwell 7-8

Chapter Three: Family Among *Vendidas*: Reimagining the limits of *Familia* Through Chicana Feminist Consciousness

Maylei Blackwell's groundbreaking work *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (2011) notes that, unlike most understandings of Chicana/o culture, Chicanas and Chicana feminists were not silent through the height of the Nationalist Movement but were in fact active and influential in the development of Chicana/o identity and cultural production. Blackwell offers an important history of Chicanas who helped organize the movement and articulates a feminist presence within Chicano Nationalist circles. My project builds on Blackwell's history of coalition building by examining Chicana, women of color, and third world feminist efforts to redefine the family and lay the groundwork for a decolonial and oppositional cultural-political discourse that centralized difference as its point of identity rather than using sameness to contain, silence, or drive out difference. With that in mind, it becomes important to resituate the intellectual contributions of some of the Chicana feminists whose work emerged in the 1980s not as unexpected ruptures but as an emerging oppositional discourse. Rather than attempting to structure the family or to imagine how the family fits into a larger cultural political project, Chicana feminist oppositional discourse began by critiquing the family domain within Chicano and dominant culture.

This chapter takes up the contributions of two Chicana feminists, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, whose work critiques the practices of Chicano Nationalism as well as the dominant culture and articulates gender, sexuality, class, and embodiment as part of an intersectional and ever shifting identity. More than that, their work is a part of an intellectual genealogy which offers a critique of racist practices among white feminists and leads to what Carlos Gallego calls a schism in critical discourse, uniting them in a new movement of Chicana/woman of color, third world woman feminism which is connected to Chicana/o/@ identity but critiques culture and politics from the margins.¹⁶⁴ Both Moraga

¹⁶⁴ Gallego, Carlos. *Chicano Subjectivity and Desire* (Palgrave Macmillan Publishing. 2001.) 69.

and Anzaldúa recognize family and *la familia de la raza* (as Chicano Nationalists had termed it in the Chicano Manifestos of the 1970s) as a structure from which a racialized consciousness arises. This structure is worthy and in need of woman of color feminist critique in order to reimagine the parameters of *familia* outside of the patriarchal and oppressive trappings in which the Chicano Nationalist Movement and dominant culture had ensconced it.¹⁶⁵ While Chicano Nationalism embraced the family and took steps to politicize it and white feminists rethought the roles for women with privilege and affluence, Gloria Anzaldúa's and Cherrie Moraga's work rethinks what cultural and political forces structure family in order to understand its limitations and imagine how to create systems of belonging that embrace difference and intersectionality. Such a project participates in alternative discourses of world making which do not rely on the patriarchally organized family.¹⁶⁶

This chapter traces the contributions of both of these authors, starting with their work in the revolutionary collection *This Bridge Called my Back*, and analyzes portions of their most famous works, *Loving in the War Years* and *borderlands/La Frontera*. I analyze their articulation of "difference," which both authors borrow from fellow *Bridge* contributor Audre Lorde and her concept of the "mythical norm." In that context, difference is any subjective factor a subject can embody that distances or removes them from what Lorde calls "the mythical norm" defined as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure."¹⁶⁷ It is worth noting that such a position is an imaginary one in that an individual can only near such a norm as the signifiers associated with the myth continue

¹⁶⁵ The Preceding chapter of this dissertation explore the Chicano Nationalist intellectual history of family and identity.

¹⁶⁶ I realize that by considering Moraga and Anzaldúa after the writings of the Chicano Nationalists I risk creating the same narrativizing mistake that Blackwell critiques. However, I think it important to understand that while my project uses the language of epistemology my methodology is much more in keeping with a genealogical study of family in Chicano epistemology. In that I turn to these authors after the Nationalists of the 1970s largely because their writings were published following those Nationalist texts I treated but also because for my project and understanding of the limitations of Chicano Nationalism's approach to family and *la familia de la raza* is necessary for charting the emerging oppositional consciousness in the works of these Chicanas. It should go without saying that these ideas, as Blackwell points out, were not absent though they were silenced within Chicano Nationalism.

¹⁶⁷ Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, Sex: Women Redefining Difference."

to multiply, articulating a position that does not exist in reality but also one that normative culture and dominant culture serves. I analyze how Moraga and Anzaldúa articulate difference, opposition, and intimacy within the family domain and explore what their critiques of intersectional cultural oppression, or what Anzaldúa will later call “cultural tyranny,” might suggest for larger conversations about identity politics and personhood outside of the parameters of nation and citizenship. It is not uncommon to think of the two as part of the same movement, and indeed the two shared a great many of the same perspectives on culture and Chicana/o identity. It is however important to understand that the two were contributors to a larger, emerging intellectual tradition or genealogy which imagines and gives voice to a Chicana and at times queer articulation of identity, subjectivity, and personhood.

Scholarship on the work of Moraga and Anzaldúa often focuses on the importance of the body as it exists within identitarian discourses, state and cultural violence and oppression, and in terms of feminist and queer desire. Their joint works are often considered cornerstones of the Chicana feminist and Jotaria studies discourses but as Rosa Linda Fregoso and Angie Chabram write, their works also draw on larger bodies of cultural studies discourse inspired by Stuart Hall.¹⁶⁸ Authors like Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano and many others have noted that these major texts of Chicano feminism push back against nationalist ideas about identity by embracing ambiguity rather than reifying difference in essentialist ways. Instead, they look toward concepts of multiplicity built on analysis of intersectionality offered by prominent women of color thinkers like Audre Lorde.¹⁶⁹ Norma Alarcón has noted the importance of these texts in establishing a Chicana Feminist consciousness aware of cultural norms and at the same time disruptive to dominant narrative of identity both American Nationalist and Chicano Nationalist by embracing a complex and non-binary approach to identity emerging from the margins of dominant

¹⁶⁸Fregoso, Rosa Linda and Angie Chabram. “Chicana/o Cultural Representation.” *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian. (2006).

¹⁶⁹ Yarbro-Bejarano, Yvonne. “Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera: Cultural Studies, ‘Difference,’ and the Non-Unitary Subject.” *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian. (2006).

discourses.¹⁷⁰ This is a consciousness able to read the cultural logics of master-narratives from the margins to at once misidentify and create ambiguity. Laura Elisa Pérez even argues that Chicana Feminism is a practice in disordering white, hetero-patriarchal, European, and otherwise normative discourses and ways of knowing the world.¹⁷¹ Carlos Gallego credits the work of Chicana feminists with moving the critical discourse of Chicano studies away from prescriptive definitions of Chicano subjectivity and toward a discourse that is critical of race, class, and most importantly for my project, representation.¹⁷²

My intervention in this chapter considers what happens when oppositional and intersectional voices speak out against a dominant and oppressive cultural imaginary, calling out for some new way of imagining one's relationship to the world and to the self. By voice I refer to work of Women of color feminist and queers of color who have chosen to speak out, to write about, and to take action to opposes practices that are oppressive and exploitive to women, people of color, queers, and anyone else who does not fit well into the mythical norm. Scholars of Moraga, Anzaldúa, and of women of color feminism regularly account for the fact that there is significance in the ability of an oppressed and non-normative individual to speak out in such a way as to disrupt discourses and narrative of normativity in order to change them.¹⁷³

Moraga and Anzaldúa both characterize family as a domain where difference is used to maintain normative and oppressive hierarchies. Moraga suggests that by understanding how difference maintains hierarchies and oppressive cultural practices, oppressed individuals (especially women of color and

¹⁷⁰ Alarcón, Norma. "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of the Native Woman." *Cultural Studies* (1990).

¹⁷¹ Laura Elisa Pérez, "El Desorden, Nationalism, and Chicana/O Aesthetics" (Duke UP, 1999) 26-27.

¹⁷² Gallego, *Chicano/o Subjectivity* (2011) 71.

¹⁷³ I have chosen not to offer a review of scholarly literature about voice and the world of my two primary authors at this point in the chapter because so much discussion of voice takes place in relation their larger projects and contributions to Chicana consciousness that I felt it more useful to integrate such conversations in that way. However, it is safe to say that Alarcón, Saldívar-Hull, Ramon Saldívar, Blackwell, Gallego, Chabram, Fregoso, Yarbrow-Bejerano, and several others have explored this point.

queers) can learn to voice an oppositional consciousness that challenges such practices. Anzaldúa's work builds on Moraga's by mobilizing that oppositional consciousness to unite those harmed by cultural tyranny in oppositional publics that emerge from the intimacy of family and identity. To put it in clearer terms as I might for my students, Moraga develops a process for discovering and articulating an oppositional consciousness and Anzaldúa offers a praxis for creating an oppositional public space from the personal.

Building a Bridge from Difference

Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga begin a powerful and important critical conversation about consciousness and difference with the 1981 publication of *This Bridge Called my Back*, published by Kitchen Table: Woman of Color press. The collection consisted of a series of essays about women of color feminism and critical consciousness, forms of thought that met heavy criticism from Black and Chicano nationalism and of course from conservative American liberal nationalism, some even calling participation in such conversations a betrayal (conversations I noted in my previous chapter.) Sonia Saldívar-Hull credits the anthology with creating a space for Chicana lesbian feminism, asserting the perspectives of woman of color feminists as valid and noting that it was no more a betrayal of their race for Chicanas to embrace feminism in their own way than it was for Chicano Nationalists to embrace Marxism.¹⁷⁴ The anthology is also credited as a cornerstone of women of color feminism, bringing together the voices of various women of color thinkers who write about their experiences with race, gender, sexuality, and of course normativity and patriarchy. As Chicana feminists Norma Alarcón and Emma Pérez have noted, the collection, much like the Chicano Nationalist Movement, was concerned with creating a form of consciousness, one which the collection's editors needed to be not only conjured and cultivated but also acted upon as a method for creating real world change. Carlos Gallego argues

¹⁷⁴ Sonia Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 32-33

that the anthology “reflects a desire for sociopolitical recognition and inclusion on behalf of those subjects that feel ostracized... due to one’s gender, race, or sexuality” recognizing the works inclusion of queerness into its intersectional perspective.¹⁷⁵

The contributors of *This Bridge Called my Back* were critical of cultural politics that depended on sameness and that otherwise articulated individuals whose identities were marked by “difference” to be in need of assimilation or banishment, what Antonio Viego might have called an articulation of an incomplete subject.¹⁷⁶ Moraga and Anzaldúa’s work speaks out not only on behalf of Chicanas, queers, and women of color feminists but against the practices associated with a heteronormative and patriarchal cultural and political Imaginary. I take the term “Imaginary” from the work of Jacques Lacan and specifically from his essay “The Mirror Stage,” in which he describes the Imaginary and its relationship to the Symbolic order. In this model, the Imaginary works as a kind of ideal or guide that the symbolic or the language and representation that a subject used to relate and interact with the world, that is, the model of how the world ought to be organized and constructed through culture. I have discussed this concept in my introduction but will return to it for a moment here as well. In Lacan’s model the subject (a baby in his example) see itself reflected in a mirror, in this interaction the object in the mirror and the subject being reflected become intertwined and the subject come to think of the object reflected in the mirror as itself, that is, as an Imaginary or perhaps “ego ideal” to borrow a better known term from Freud. Hortense Spillers and Emma Pérez have both critiqued Lacan’s model suggesting that the imaginary also holds concepts of racism and colonial oppression to be reproduced in the symbolic order. Pérez writes “the imaginary is the mirrored identity where coloniality overshadows

¹⁷⁵ Gallego, 69-70.

¹⁷⁶ Jodi Melamed, Habiba Ibrahim, and Robert O. Self all note a shift in this period following the American civil rights era and its politics or racial liberalism shifting toward a repositioning of whiteness and power within what Ibrahim terms multiracialism. In terms of cultural-political epochs, this is a moment in which power attempts to contain the reality of intersectionality and its influence on indentitarian discourse, resisting the move toward understanding multiplicity within race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. as Paula M. Moya and Michael Hames-Garcia have described in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*. (2000).

the image in the mirror. Ever-present, it is that which is between the subject and the object being reflected.”¹⁷⁷ She later ties her analysis to the work of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin/White Masks* and Fanon’s argument that the very act of expression within a colonized space for a colonized individual requires that the colonized be legible to the colonizer, fitting the colonial Imaginary that the colonizer has of the colonized to be credited with any sort of legitimacy.¹⁷⁸ Considering the analysis of these scholars and of Antonio Viego who applies Spillers’ work to Latino representation and challenging the myth of the incomplete subject within dominant political imaginaries in the U.S., I offer that the Imaginary is not monolithic and in fact can be one of multiple mutable cultural-political imaginaries. As such, the field of the symbolic which constitutes cultural and political intelligibility and practices not unlike Foucault’s concept of discourse can also be changed by a shifting cultural-political and in the case of Moraga and Anzaldúa, oppositional Imaginary.

This Bridge Called my Back considers coalitional and revolutionary possibilities for those who chose to embrace their difference and reject myths of wholeness or the mythical norm in general, though ever aware that such political discourses need to be addressed. In other words, they were interested in what cultural-political impact could emerge from communities that identified with difference, that is, not simply recognizing difference as part of a dialectic logic that upholds a normative perspective but as a factor in uniting around difference and multiplicity to resist and work against the cultural tyranny of normativity and dominant culture.¹⁷⁹ Gallego notes that the anthology and its general perspective is well suited and timely for the later portion of the twentieth century, a period he writes “can be understood as moving away from the universalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth

¹⁷⁷ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary* 6-7.

¹⁷⁸ Frantz Fanon, “Chapter 4: The So Called Dependency Complex of Colonized People,” *Black Skin/White Masks* (1952).

¹⁷⁹ Considering Althusser, this would be the equivalent of rejecting the ideology of an institution; a woman refusing a domestic role in a family for instance.

centuries toward an era characterized by difference and particularity.”¹⁸⁰ While Gallego’s comments are accurate I do not think they go far enough. The anthology begins a revolutionary discourse that articulates difference as a kind of alternative form of knowledge which contributes to oppositional consciousness and cultural-political resistance to cultural tyranny and normativity all of which allows non-normative individuals to take part in world making discourses.

The preface of the collection, written by Cherríe Moraga, illustrates a growing consciousness of difference as a primary concern of the various authors in the anthology who offer their perspectives on how to know said difference and understand its significance. She writes “In this preface I have tried to recreate for you my own journey of struggle, growing consciousness, and subsequent politicization and vision as a woman of color.”¹⁸¹ Moraga points to personal struggle and experience as factors at work in developing an intersectional feminist form of oppositional consciousness, one which struggles against dominant culture and discourses as it emerges from oppressed women and queers of color. However, Moraga’s goal in the preface is not only to articulate a growing consciousness but also to demonstrate a growing body of intellectual contributions and intellectual genealogy and history attached to such a nascent consciousness—a collective of alienated individuals who have made common cause in that consciousness. As such, Moraga’s preface makes use of fellow contributor Audre Lorde’s articulation of difference and the concept of the “mythical norm,” which I have described above, and her description of understanding and knowledge to shape the “radical consciousness” to which she hopes the anthology will contribute.¹⁸² She quotes also from Lorde’s “An Open Letter to Mary Daly,” included in the *Bridge* collection in which Lorde writes “Assimilation within a solely western-european herstory is not

¹⁸⁰ Gallego 70-71. This again can be read in context of a period of racial politics that is moving away from racial liberalism and toward something more complex like multiracialism.

¹⁸¹ Cherríe Moraga “Preface.” *This Bridge Called my Back* xiii.

¹⁸² Because this concept of Lorde’s is so central to my overall project and work I have offered a full discussion of the “mythical norm” in my introduction which applies here as well.

acceptable.”¹⁸³ The quote and its inclusion in the preface make clear that third world women and women of color have a unique history that, though related to western-european history is a different one that exists in its own right. The open letter critiques Mary Daly for her work *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) (a feminist analysis of spirituality and anthropology) noting that she does not explore deities or spirituality outside of western-european traditions. Lorde accuses Daly of casting women of color and third world women as ghettoized figures who are no more than living lessons for white women to learn from.¹⁸⁴ In short, she critiques Daly for imposing western-european sameness on all women.

Lorde argues that Daly’s analysis obscures women of color, people of color, and those she describes as on the margins of dominant patriarchal society. She goes on to critique Daly for characterizing “understanding” as “knowledge,” concepts between which Lorde distinguishes as she offers a description of how the two relate: “When I speak of knowledge... I am speaking of that dark and true depth which understanding serves, waits upon, and makes accessible through language to ourselves and others. It is this depth within each of us that nurtures vision.”¹⁸⁵ Lorde makes clear that understanding serves knowledge but they are not one in the same. For Lorde, understanding makes knowledge accessible but she notes that knowledge is depth that needs to be accessed and that said depth is unique to each of us. Considering that knowledge and understanding are both unique to an individual’s experiences, any approach to knowledge with a singular form of understanding is limiting and obscures, even erases other experiences, rendering them illegitimate and without value. Lorde’s recognition of multiple kinds of knowledge and multiple ways of understanding decentralize knowledge and re-characterizes it, not as a monolith but as a changing field that must be explored in different ways by different kinds of understanding because a singular understanding is so very limited.

¹⁸³ Moraga, “Forward” *This Bridge Called my Back*. vi. Lorde chose not to apply standard capitalization in this sentence.

¹⁸⁴ Lorde does this in her critique not only of a particular chapter in Daly’s work but also in questioning Daly’s incorporation of Lorde’s own work into *Gyn/Ecology*.

¹⁸⁵ Audre Lorde. “An Open letter to Mary Daly.” *This Bridge Called my Back*. (1981) 95.

Moraga cites Lorde a second time in this preface, this time regarding racism, from a closing passage of her famous essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (also included in *This Bridge*). Lorde writes “I urge each one of us to reach down into that deep place of knowledge insider herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there.”¹⁸⁶ Moraga invokes this line again to call attention to the limitations of a singular way of understanding knowledge, but this time she also uses it as a means of enacting consciousness of difference within individuals, a kind of reflective way of considering difference. Moraga writes, “Audre is right. It is also a source of terror—how deeply separation between women hurts me. How discovering difference, profound difference between myself and women I love has sometimes rendered me helpless and immobilized.”¹⁸⁷ Here Moraga attempts to put that consciousness of difference into action as a way of finding value and not fear of difference, that is, valuing the other rather than fearing them. She also calls for identification with similarities that are shared as a means of creating comradery and new understanding about differences. In other words, she calls for a consciousness of differences that allows a multiplicity of experiences to be valued and understood by sharing and valuing the experiences of others, what I equate with “identifying in difference.”¹⁸⁸ It is this articulation of difference, understanding, and knowing borrowed from Lorde that allow Moraga and Anzaldúa to suggest a way of recognizing the oppression of cultural normativity not only within the institution of the family but in the practices of intimacy associated with family.

La Familia and the Bridge

¹⁸⁶ Lorde via Moraga. “Preface to *This Bridge Called my Back*.” *xvi*.

¹⁸⁷ Moraga, *xvi*.

¹⁸⁸ Lorde also offers a method for developing this consciousness which she models in her writing. Often, Lorde will take a moment in which she experienced oppression or erasure and reflect on what it could mean to her, to those who perpetrated it upon her, and what kind of cultural/societal logics allow such an action to appear acceptable. It is this method of reflection that the collection and largely Chicana feminism employs in building new forms of women of color consciousness and Chicana consciousness. Moreover, this methodology will also influence a great deal of the theory and analysis that begins to articulate the multiplicity of subjectivities and identities associated with Chicano: Chicana, Xicana, Chicanx, Chican@, etc.

Moraga and Anzaldúa both make contributions to the anthology *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981.) Apart from their coauthored introduction they both engage more directly with Chicano culture, at times directly critiquing the politics and practices of the Chicano Nationalists by whom both authors write that they have felt alienated. Moraga includes her well known essay “La Güera” in which she explores difference and sameness in terms of being a light skinned, half Chicana/half white lesbian. She begins by reflecting on the intimate relationships within her own family (brothers, sisters, and especially mother and father,) how they are organized in terms of power and hierarchy, and their impact on her own consciousness.¹⁸⁹ Moraga writes that she is, “‘La Güera’: fair-skinned. Born with the features of my Chicana mother, but with the skin of my Anglo father, I had it made.”¹⁹⁰ She writes about being treated differently than her dark skinned mother but also about her experience with culture and her family encouraging her to embrace her whiteness. “No one ever quite told me this (that light was right), but I knew that being light was something valued in my family (who were all Chicano, with the exception of my father). In fact, everything about my upbringing (at least what occurred on a conscious level) attempted to bleach me of what color I did have.”¹⁹¹ This sentiment notes that the family is able to communicate the cultural values of the dominant society which exist in the public sphere to the family’s members in the private domain, very like the Chicano Nationalists suggested in various manifestos.¹⁹²

This moment focuses on the politics of difference within the family. Her discussion of her family points to an understanding of whiteness or lightness associated with a desirable sameness in dominant

¹⁸⁹ Lisa Tatonetti argues in “A Kind of Queer Balance: Cherrie Moraga’s Aztlán” *MELUS* (2004) 29.2, that this is the inception of Moraga’s articulation of queer family. However, I would argue that Moraga, like many Chicana feminist was actually very cautious of interjecting such prescriptive approaches into the larger discourse of Chicana feminism to avoid recreating the utopic and absolutist approaches to identity she critiqued in Chicano Nationalism and 1970s dominant culture.

¹⁹⁰ Moraga, 28.

¹⁹¹ IBID.

¹⁹² *La familia de la raza* or translated, “the family of the race,” is a concept used by several Chicano manifesto authors of the Nationalist Movement. In his analysis of Chicana/o family in cultural politics Richard T. Rodríguez describes this as a kind of social and community engagement, writing “...one’s commitment to the biological family demanded extension into the public sphere to orchestrate kinship networks with one’s community in the name of *carnalismo* (Brotherhood)” 21.

society, juxtaposed against the continuity of difference within her own mixed and mostly brown family. Expanding on that point, Moraga is aware that the world overall values whiteness, but she is also aware that her family knows this and while they value her in their way, they also recognize the efficacy of light skin and more specifically that dark skin leaves one marked for oppression. This is also the moment in which she begins to explore the intersectionality of being a woman in a Chicana family. Moraga recalls that her mother and family held different expectations of her and applied different limitations to her than they might to her brothers. That is, her gender positioned her below brothers in the hierarchy of Chicano and dominant binary gender expectations offering her fewer privileges and demanding stricter acquiescence to cultural expectations of a woman and a Chicana.

Here Moraga discusses her lesbianism but not in relation to her family. Rather, she explores lesbianism in context of U.S. culture in order to make clear the impact that dominant cultural-political discourses have on the intimacy within *la familia*. She notes that her lesbianism is situated within a system of social capital. She writes “In this country, lesbianism is a poverty—as is being brown, as is being a woman.”¹⁹³ For Moraga, it is that difference which she characterizes as lesbianism which deprives her of social capital, and though she positions those oppressive forces in society more broadly it is her family that reminds her of her inability to connect to such heteronormative practice and further contributes to her oppositional consciousness.¹⁹⁴ Unable to see a use for such heteropatriarchal roles for herself, Moraga is also able to articulate her own feelings about the practices of hierarchy from an intersectional perspective. By positioning the two forms of non-normativity (gender and lesbianism) within a cultural and political field in which the public/private binary is already blurred, Moraga’s

¹⁹³ Moraga 29.

¹⁹⁴ My use of this term is borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu and his essay “The Forms of Capital” (Wiley, 2008) in which he defines the term as “...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognitions—or in other words, to membership in a group.” I understand this form of capital to exist primarily within systems of normativity. 286.

articulation of oppositional consciousness emerges to at once trouble gendered and racial assumptions of family and dominant culture from a complex and intersectional position¹⁹⁵

Moraga's discussion of her experiences in her family framed by the influence of dominant culture and Chicano Nationalism highlights the marginality of her perspective as a Chicana feminist and lesbian, pointing to the fact that within those overlapping frameworks, her perspective is at once devalued and rendered suspect in that it does not reflect an identity with more social capital. Her discussion suggests that perspectives not shared by the dominant culture are often regarded as unknowable or abnormal. She writes that "The 'unknown' is often depicted in racist literature as the darkness within a person," gesturing to the idea of difference being at once something that an individual does not understand and likely fears as she echoes Lorde's analysis of difference. This approach to difference limits the perspectives and ways of knowing the world (forms of knowledge) by those embraced by dominant society and its attendant ideologies in that it imagines a singular kind of understanding that finds its limit of what is knowable at the very limit of sameness, rendering difference unknowable. This is the very cultural logic that creates the politics and practices of normativity from the perspective of Moraga and Lorde. Rendering difference as unknowable also serves to limit, through the oppression of cultural tyranny, any understanding and eventual affiliation between outsiders and marginal individuals in order to maintain its dominance and the supremacy of all ideological apparatuses and discourses associated with normativity. Those who are different are understood by dominant culture and normativity as outsiders to be shunned or contained by the family but always barred from influencing dominant society and its discourse.

¹⁹⁵ A useful contemporary and sadly ongoing example of this happens when white queers recognize the newly granted right to marriage as equality and ignore the queers of color in their community still struggling with other forms of oppression and violence. Much like the advocates who spoke up for gun regulation after the massacre of more than fifty members of the queer of color community at Pulse Night Club in Orlando but refused to recognize the dimensions of that act that made it a hate crime against queers and Latin@s.

To allow such difference to become knowable or, even more dangerously, legible within dominant culture risks exposing and breaking the fragile singular perspective of dominant discourse, the very edifice upon which normativity is built. Moraga writes:

But it is not really differences the oppressor fears so much as similarity. He fears he will discover in himself the same aches, the same longings as those of the people he has shitted on. He fears the immobilization threatened by his own incipient guilt. He fears he will have to change his life once he has seen himself in the bodies of the people he has called different. He fears the hatred, anger, and violence of those he has hurt.¹⁹⁶

Here Moraga points out that affiliation across knowable and unknowable, speakable and unspeakable, bridges the perspectives of oppressor and oppressed, rendering those relationships a constantly shifting landscape rather than the binary uniformity upon which normativity is predicated. She writes “This is the oppressor’s nightmare, but it is not exclusive to him. We women have a similar nightmare, for each of us in some way has been both oppressed and oppressor... We are afraid to look at how we have taken the values of our oppressor into our hearts and turned them against ourselves and one another.”¹⁹⁷

Considering the relationship between understanding and knowledge Lorde and Moraga create, what Moraga here describes positions difference not beyond what normativity can understand but within reach of what shared understanding might make relatable. The ability to relate and to understand individuals in spite of narratives that render their difference unknowable has the potential to create dissonance in a subject as they are forced to reconcile their own identities with those who seem different and unknowable. This also frames a major portion of the consciousness she articulates as one that is critical of hierarchy and oppression, possible not only within categories of race and gender but potentialities in every interaction between individuals. This critical reframing points to the possibility of

¹⁹⁶ Moraga 32.

¹⁹⁷ IBID.

oppression and cultural tyranny as a normalized practice which often exists within the structure of the normative family.

The *Familia*, the War Years, and things that Never Cross One's Lips

Cherríe Moraga published the now famous *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* in 1983. Sonya Saldívar-Hull describes the work as a “comprehensive articulation of Chicana/Third World feminism” and points out that it is a text which “anticipates” Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* in many significant ways.¹⁹⁸ Ramon Saldívar writes that Moraga’s work “disrupts facile conceptions of a public self as she constructs her life story amid the historical conditions, material circumstances, the analytical categories of race, class, and gender that are crucial mechanisms in the maintenance of power.”¹⁹⁹ Expanding on this thought, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano writes:

In her writing about the most intimate experiences, Moraga has created a public voice for Chicana lesbian identity politics, making demands for entitlement as ‘citizens’ in multiple social arenas of historical exclusion and marginalization: U.S. mainstream society, Chicano nationalism, white middle-class feminism, and the gay/lesbian movement. Moraga’s writing claims a public space to voice the need for an intensified political response from the Chicano community in general and specifically from Chicana/o gays and lesbians.²⁰⁰

While my focus in this chapter is not explicitly on queerness, the centrality of queerness for Moraga’s work is significant, as Lisa Tatonatti points out in her own analysis of Moraga’s work, noting that queerness functions as the start of Moraga’s understanding of her Chicana Lesbian identity and intimacy.²⁰¹ With that in mind, I want to approach one of Moraga’s major essays in the *Loving in the War Years* with a queer eye, that is, an analytical perspective that is critical of privileges and advantages in

¹⁹⁸ Saldívar-Hull, Sonya 49.

¹⁹⁹ Saldívar, Ramon 188.

²⁰⁰ Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *The Wounded Heart: Writing on Cherríe Moraga*, 1st ed., Chicana Matters Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) 128.

²⁰¹ Tatonetti 228.

power offered to heteronormativity and one that celebrates departures from heteronormativity, much as Sandra K. Soto has suggested.²⁰² I agree with Yarbrow-Bejarano and Ramon Saldívar that Moraga is disrupting the public private dialectic in powerful ways to create a space for a Chicana feminist consciousness to speak out against oppressive power formations as Norma Alarcón has described.²⁰³ However, it is significant that this disruption of the public/private dialectic which she creates comes from her own analysis of Chicano and dominant culture in their ability to intrude into the private domain at the level of intimacy, as Yarbrow-Bejarano suggests.

Moraga takes a critical and reflective look at the intimacy within Chicano families in her essay “A Long Line of Vendidas.” In this context, I understand intimacy much as Lisa Lowe defines it as familial or conjugal relations, that is, a way of relating to individuals that expresses familial sexual affiliation. Individual or subjective difference that might be rendered unknowable from a singular dominant perspective can be made understandable to individuals who share such intimacy and desire to unite across that difference at the same time that each also value it. Lowe herself notes that such a formation was understood to exist within the private domain of the bourgeois home, however, she also notes that because of the slave economy that existed in colonial America, such treatment of intimacy was at times uneven where interactions between slaves and colonizers were concerned.²⁰⁴ This is not to say that intimacy itself disrupts normativity. Rather it is to suggest that approaching intimacy with a critical oppositional consciousness can achieve a disruption in the interpersonal interactions that often reproduce normative power. Such an uneven treatment of intimacy also exists within Chicana/o cultural discourse as I’ve noted in my discussion of *familia* and *carnalismo* in the previous chapter.

²⁰² Sandra K. Soto of course offers a queer reading of race and self-identified racialization in her work *Reading Chican@ like a Queer* (2010). This perspective is helpful in understanding the complicated cleaving with heteronormativity that Moraga’s work undertakes.

²⁰³ Alarcón, Norma. “Making Familia from Scratch.”

²⁰⁴ Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacy of Four Continents.” *Haunted by Empire* Ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). 195.

“A Long Line of Vendidads” is the lead work of the section titled “lo que nunca pasó por sus labios.” Moraga uses the essay to do away with any pretext that there is a clear divide between public and private for raced, gendered and queer subjects within the dominant culture of the US. She begins by comparing her and her brother in terms of the expectations that her mother and father placed on them. Her brother would come home with his male friends and demand that Moraga and her sister fetch them drinks from the kitchen. She writes about being expected, as a Chicana, to iron and wash her brother’s clothes and to help clean his room, even “lend” him money when he needed to go out because he often would quit his jobs to take part in sports at school. Her description sets up a clear delineation of how gender roles and privilege work within her own family, writing “in my mother’s home, my brother and father are waited on by the women, including me.”²⁰⁵ Reflecting about an afternoon in which her brother returned home with a group of his friends and demands that she bring them drinks, she writes that she considered refusing this and telling him to get his drinks himself (among other things she might tell him). “But my mother was out in the yard working and to refuse him would have brought her into the house with a scene before these boys’ eyes that would have made it impossible for us to show our faces at school the following Monday. We had been through that before.”²⁰⁶

Within the first two pages of the text, Moraga charts a strict hierarchy of privilege and expectation that she reflects upon as she is forced to get lemonade for her brother and his two friends. She is aware that to refuse would bring her mother into the house, angry and causing a scene. This is not because there is a standing order that Moraga and her sister treat her brother this way. The reason is greater than that and is tied to gender roles embraced by Chicano nationalist discourse and that her mother embraces and imposes on her Chicano *familia*. To refuse would be to reject her role as a Chicana in a Chicano family—to reject the shared identity of her entire family. Moraga ties this to a longer

²⁰⁵ C herrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: Lo Que Nunca Pasó Por Sus Labios* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983) 82.

²⁰⁶ Moraga 83.

tradition stretching out into the working-class heritage she inherits as she describes similar expectations that had been placed on her mother when she was young.²⁰⁷ “They’d come in from work or a day’s drinking. And las mujeres, often just in from the fields themselves, would already be in the kitchen making tortillas, warming frijoles or pigs’ feet, albóndigas soup, what have you.”²⁰⁸ Moraga’s characterization of this heritage resonates with the *corrido* imaginary applied to Mexican-American history by the Chicano Nationalists but also draws attention to how heteropatriarchal normativity makes different demands of individuals in terms of labor and family based on gender.

Moraga reflects the significance of this opening scene herself as she later makes a powerful point about the fact that her brother, due to his male privilege, never understood the deep feeling of oppression, exploitation, or alienation that she experienced when conscripted into this rigid cultural system. Within the scene we see Moraga and her brother take part in a kind of scripted relationship which, because of its positioning within the family, I read as a particular formation of intimacy; he demands and she acquiesces. Moraga brings the weight of history and heritage to the moment as she recognizes that for her mother, who would enforce this strict assignment of roles, this is the most natural thing in the world. To refuse it would cause a scene, a scene that would of course take place in the private domain of Moraga’s mother’s home, but one that would be discussed by the boys there with her brother later at school, creating a larger and more public discourse about their family and the individuals who comprise it that would reach across families and cultures into a generalized public discourse. However, the implications of this scene reach beyond some school boys gossiping about what happened in Moraga’s mother’s home.

²⁰⁷ To be clear, when I write working class I mean a particularly Chicano and Mexicano working class, one which labors in the fields, picks fruit, and led a major component of the civil rights work around immigrant labor when Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez began to organize for better labor practices and later began to work with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

²⁰⁸ Moraga 83

This essay is written in the wake of the Chicano Nationalist Movement. Moraga's brother and his friends, despite his light skin, comprise the masculine dominated *familia de la raza* described by Rodolfo Gonzales and José Armas I explored in my last chapter. Those boys represent an ambiguity between public and private. While they share intimacy among one another, that intimacy is cast along the lines of *la familia de la raza* as Jose Armas imagined it, an extension of the private family space into the public creating comradery among Chicano men but still squarely masculine in the most traditional of public domains because that public intimacy is between men even if it is fostered amid patriarchal practices of intimacy in the privacy of the home and private family domain.

Despite the fact that those boys compose a masculine public, they also share a homosocial bond, participating in the family hierarchy as other male family members might, sharing familial intimacy among each other as they recognize the differences and shared experiences that bind them together. The moment in the text demonstrates that the border between public and private can be blurred by the homosociality of *carnalismo*. It becomes clear that for her light skinned brother, queering the domains to create his own kind of discourse and public is permissible and that for her it is not because of a gendered hierarchy organizing what Chicano and American culture expect of her as woman. Her own use of queer affiliation or intimacy, what she describes as her lesbianism, is at issue in this moment because while her brother's homosocial affiliation is permissible and even encouraged, hers as a woman is denied. Put in context with social capital, her brother's heterosexuality and light skin offer him the social capital to take part in homosociality, whereas Moraga's gender denies her the capital to do the same. Such a formation contributes a great deal to the oppositional consciousness that her essay articulates. Moraga's critique and eventual rejection of this family ideal with its normative and oppressive practices of intimacy alienates her and pushes her to embrace oppositional consciousness as a means of identifying with her own difference but outside of White U.S. heteronormativity and its economy of social capital.

Moraga's reconsideration of intimacy and intimate family practices is incorporated into the essay's critique of the normative Chicano family for its participation in oppression and cultural tyranny. Within normativity, family becomes the refuge for those who, through hierarchy and binary logic, hold less or no social capital at all. Those with social capital are allowed to exist in the public domain, even to blur the public and the private. Those with little to no social capital, however, must be maintained and perhaps even contained within the family domain. Moraga's analysis of those with limited or no social capital (women, non-heterosexual individuals, those with darker skin) reflects Lorde's model of the mythical norm but also demonstrates the cost of failing to embody such a mythical norm, that is, a lack of privilege even in the private domain.²⁰⁹

Moraga recognizes ways in which this system of male and white dominated heteropatriarchy and normativity perpetuate oppressive logics while seeming to offer opportunities for those impoverished by difference (in terms of social capital) to move up in the hierarchy and align with a mythical norm. She notes that while it might make sense for a woman to align with other women, the logics of "heterosexism" prevent such affiliations. In a section sub-titled "Traitor Begets Traitor" she notes that women must first betray other women to adhere to the heterosexist expectations of normativity: "Chicanas begin to turn our backs on each other either to gain male approval or to avoid being sexually stigmatized by men under the name of puta, vendida, jota."²¹⁰ Affiliation with Chicanas rather than with men leads to these titles characterizing women as whores, traitors, and dikes in the eyes and discourses of a male dominated normative society. Such terms mark a woman as both unwilling to take part in the affiliation with men that would elevate her status but also work to

²⁰⁹ Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider* 116. Moraga and Lorde both warn against misunderstanding the way that the cultural tyranny of the mythical norm work, indicating that one should not be fooled into thinking that is only one aspect of difference that detracts from the social capital of the mythical norm, rather that it is oppression that targets all differences in different ways but that hold sway in that it can always position a difference on the losing side of a binary which awards a mythical subject position.

²¹⁰ Moraga, *Loving in the War Years* 90.

dehumanize the woman by devaluing her in terms of her social capital, rendering her unknowable or effectively othering her. This confluence of systems Moraga critiques positions women who identify with difference to be unworthy of privilege. Any sort of social capital that a woman might accrue through feminist affiliation is understood as suspect by patriarchal authority in both Chicano Nationalism and dominant culture, which only recognizes social capital within normativity to be legitimate. Such women cannot be understood by heteropatriarchal normativity and so cannot be trusted, a cultural logic that maintains the most social capital in the non-existent position of the mythical norm.

The implications of this within Chicano families and in terms of intimate affiliation are brought to light in her summation of her light skinned Chicano brother's ability to pass both as white and into dominant culture. She writes about her brother once telling her that he never felt "culturally deprived" in any way and notes that he is "*Male in a man's world. Light-skinned in a white world. Why change?*"²¹¹ Moraga recognizes that her brother had the potential to pass for white and be freed from the social poverty of his Chicano identity, his white privilege bolstered by his male authority in a man's world. She laments that within dominant society, such a choice would never be possible for her, such an affiliation would be out of reach. "The pull to identify with the oppressor was never as great I me as it was in my brother. For unlike him, I could never have *become* the white man, only the white man's *woman*."²¹² This system she describes calls to minorities and the oppressed to affiliate as closely to its mythical norm as possible. Her brother need only identify with the oppressor to gain access and privilege because he looks like a white man. For Moraga and her sister, they must marry a white man and become his woman to gain such access and begin to detract from their own social poverty.²¹³

²¹¹ IBID. Italics are original.

²¹² IBID.

²¹³ I have no doubt that the pull to identify with the oppressor also has a great deal of relevance in the electoral choices of several in the 2016 U.S. election, in particular for White women who voted, seemingly, against their interests for now President Trump who presented himself as anything but a feminist.

The concept of affiliating with those who are also oppressed, a strategy which may seem logical to most, is thwarted by the insidious pull of normativity toward social capital and hierarchy. Within the system of meaning making that reinforces the mythical norm, Moraga's brother's intersectionality is erased by the social capital he gains by his light skin, male embodiment, and heterosexuality. Because she cannot escape her intersectionality (brown skinned Chicana lesbian from a poor family) she is left with only the option to marry into social capital. Those who turn away from social capital risk being read as "othered," unknowable, and even abnormal. To affiliate with such cultural "*vendidas*" is to not only make oneself a pariah but is to place oneself in danger of dehumanization. It is to be abnormal, in need of correction and further interpellation if we are to look at the models of cultural normativity offered by Foucault and Althusser. It is a position that leaves those sans social capital appropriate targets for violence and inappropriate for defense by those who chose to affiliate with normativity because of their unknowable and unspeakable status. Moraga frames this limitation to feminist affiliation in a system of cultural signification that she calls "the institution of heterosexuality."²¹⁴ This suggests that heterosexuality and its attendant institutions are positioned within dominant culture to encourage heterosexual practices and cast other practices of intimacy as abnormal. This institution of course lends legitimacy to the attendant institution of the family but it does so in such a way as to reinforce the social poverty associated with difference. Moraga notes that intimacy and sexuality outside of heterosexuality of any kind "challenges the very foundation of la familia" meaning that such expressions are never allowed and even targeted as threats to the fragile cultural-political system that enshrines the normative family and its normative subjects.²¹⁵

Anzaldúa, Aztlán, and the Borderlands

²¹⁴ Moraga, *Loving in the War Years* 102

²¹⁵ It is useful here to consider that her invocation of the term "institution" calls up the analysis of ideology by Louis Althusser and his articulation of ISA and RSA which correct individuals who take part in practices unsupported by ideological apparatuses.

Gloria Anzaldúa, like Moraga and other Chicana feminists, was also critical of dominant perspective on the family perpetuated by the Chicano Nationalist Movement and by the U.S. for their reliance on patriarchy. Like Moraga, Anzaldúa also makes *familia* central to her work and especially to her 1987 book *Borderlands/La Frontera* in which she charts the development of an emerging oppositional consciousness and its world making possibilities which, for her, emerges from her intimate experiences within and her reflections on the family. For Anzaldúa, much like Moraga, the oppositional consciousness that emerges is a specifically Chicana one, that is, it articulates race, culture, ethnicity, and gender as horizons of opposition for Chicanas and for Anzaldúa herself. Anzaldúa's emerging Chicana consciousness embraces ambiguity, unevenness, and a much more complex understanding of history embodied in what she calls "the new mestiza," or the intersectional and critically consciousness Chicana subject. Her first chapter is entitled "The Homeland, Aztlán/ *El otro México*" explores the significance of the Nationalist concept of *Aztlán*, the fabled homeland of the *Aztecas* and other Mesoamerican tribes but opens with some lines from a Los Tigres del Norte song, "*El otro México*."

The song and the band singing it are both significant as a means of reframing a discussion about Aztlán. Los Tigres del Norte are a well-known *conjunto* or *norteño* band originating in California and composed of Mexican American members who had immigrated to San Jose California in the 1960s. The song itself describes another Mexican nation, *el otro México*, existing in conquered territory, that is, within the United States' borders. The Mexico it describes, the "other" Mexico, is one constructed by those who live north of the border or what those in Mexico often call *el otro lado*. The first prose we encounter in the chapter by the author follows a quote by Jack D. Forbes describing Aztlán as the homeland of Chicanos and noting that the *Aztecas* compose the largest single tribe in the US, tying Aztlán and Chicanos to an indigenous past. Anzaldúa moves then from a sampling of popular culture and an academic claim to one of her own poems. She writes:

Wind tugging at my sleeve

Feet sinking into the sand
I stand at the edge of where earth touches ocean
Where the two overlap
A gentle coming together
At other times and places a violent crash.²¹⁶

The first time that the reader encounters Anzaldúa's voice it is in the form of poetry that brings dichotomous concepts together: wind tugging as feet sink, ocean and earth overlapping in a constant flux, and all of it coming together, sometimes gently and sometimes violently. That Anzaldúa's voice speaks out after the reflection on the "other Mexico" by Los Tigres is also significant in that the text works in such a way as to remind the reader that Anzaldúa is speaking from within and about this "other Mexico."

At first glance, this seems similar to the juxtaposition of all Chicano manifestos from the 1960s and 70s; however, Anzaldúa offers a subtle difference. Whereas those juxtapositions associated with Chicanos were always positioned as two conflicting things existing in a single space like in Rodolfo Gonzalez poem "I am Joaquin," in which Gonzalez calls the Chicano "both tyrant and slave," Anzaldúa instead offers a moment of cleaving, of constant coming together and breaking apart. The incorporation of different voices from different genres articulating descriptions of the same space also forces the reader to consider that there are multiple ways of interpreting the same place and allows the reader to come to terms with the fact that each approach offers a different way of understanding the space. From there, the text describes sights seen across the border from the American side. Mexican traditions associated with a transnational religion practiced in an American park. Smells and memories that refuse

²¹⁶ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. (1987) 4th ed (2012). 23.

to be bound by the barbed fence separating *Tijuana* from *San Diego*. Finally, we get a concrete description of the border:

1,950 mile-long open wound

Dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,
 running down the length of my body,
 staking fence rods in my flesh,
 splits me splits me
me raja me raja
 this is my home
 this thin edge of
 barbedwire.²¹⁷

Here, Anzaldúa charts the border not simply as a line in the brown dirt and caliche between two countries and cultures, but a bloody line across her own body, a line dividing a people from one another and cutting through culture and *pueblos* at the same time it cuts through flesh.

Much in the way that Moraga considered her skin and gendered embodiment, this text considers the physical body within the matrix of culture and power of Chicano Nationalism and the U.S. But here, Anzaldúa notes how that body is split, in both English and Spanish, by this imaginary line in the sand that always divides and is always an ongoing act of violence as it cleaves not only the land of Aztlán but her body as well. Keeping in mind that Aztlán is the Chicano homeland, Anzaldúa points to her home, locating it on the thin edge of barbedwire. Positioning the homeland of Chicanos in this way denies any kind of positivist definition of Aztlán. In her articulation, Aztlán becomes part of an imaginary that is not attached to a physical space but one that comes into being through the deployment and discourse of a particular consciousness. A space that cuts through bodies and cultures and is left

²¹⁷ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 24-25.

ambiguous by the influence of multiple, overlapping, and competing discourses of power and identity. For Anzaldúa, home is within this constructed and imagined ambiguous space that comes into being because of ambiguity and the very real failure of absolutist and essentialist discourses like those of nation and cultural nationalism to fully and unquestionably define a space and a people, along the edge of the barbedwire.

Indeed, Anzaldúa uses a formalist technique in her description here as she describes her home, the home that includes the Home of Chicanos, Aztlán. In her own poem, she breaks the final line describing the home on the barbed wire, ending the line, not with the noun of “barbedwire” but with the preposition “of.” Barbedwire exists on its own line, so too does the concept of home, above. Between home and barbedwire exists “this thin edge of,” linking the concept of home to the painful and cruel fact of sharp end of *espinas* on a wire fence. The line linking the two things uses only a single noun, but one referencing the end of something tangible, literally the end of what can be touched and the start of what resists positivist definition—the edge. Moreover, this word signifying an ambiguity places both homeland and personal home on and edge, that is, a space that must be imagined. She also ends the line on the preposition “of,” a word that lacks meaning unless it connects two or more concepts. For Anzaldúa, the Homeland of Chicanos (the domain of *La Familia*) blurs and mixes with her personal home (the domain of her own family) making them one in the same though not synonymous, rather a constant cleaving. This new and hard to define home is rendered legible only when understood as a space emerging from the ambiguity of failed absolutist discourses. It is in that space of ambiguity in which the borderlands exist and within that space that she reads and imagines Aztlán.

By naming this space and the ambiguity that emerges from this space Anzaldúa is able to articulate an awareness or consciousness of a multiplicity of intersecting formations of power and identitarian narratives that overlay her body and her psyche. This borderlands consciousness or what Anzaldúa eventually calls Mestiza consciousness is a form of oppositional consciousness that inspires

oppositional discourse. However, this consciousness is far more than a simple rejection of absolutist identity politics or the result of fragmenting absolutist narratives about race, identity, and personhood. The *Mestiza* consciousness she describes is based in an intersectional understanding of the self. One that, through oppositional process and differential strategies, emerges out of the family domain and begins to rupture cultural absolute in narratives of identity, gender, racial and national essentialism. Much like Moraga's *vendida*, this consciousness also ruptures the public/private binary as it announces its own intersecting and disrupting discourse, collapsing the personal and the public as Keating and González-López describe.

Vendida Rebellion

In the second chapter of *Borderlands/La Frontera* titled "*Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan*," Anzaldúa moves from a redefinition of home and a homeland toward the interpersonal politics and intimacies of those domains.²¹⁸ She describes the fact that she left her home and the Rio Grande Valley as an act of rebellion, offering even a subheading for this portion of the essay "The Strength of my Rebellion."²¹⁹ It is here that she explains her fraught relationship with her family and her role within her family as she makes the title of the chapter clear and notes that rebellion is against her family and the cultural expectations that structure her very normative Chicano/Mexican *familia*. Anzaldúa describes a photograph of her father, her mother and herself at six years old. "To this day I'm not sure where I found the strength to leave the source, the mother, disengage from my family, *mi tierra, mi gente*, and all that picture stood for."²²⁰ As she describes what it was that she left when she left the valley, she also unpacks the deeper meaning and metonymic significance held in the Photo of her Chicano parents and her six-year-old self. The photo serves as a reference to the Imaginary, a kind of

²¹⁸ "Movements of Rebellion and Cultures of Betrayal."

²¹⁹ Anzaldúa 37.

²²⁰ 37-38

cultural ideal reminding the reader and Anzaldúa what an idealized Chicano family might look like, locked in the photo and safe from any of the world's intrusions. Within the discourses of normative and patriarchal power that I've noted over the past two chapters, this photo should represent family life for a Mexican-American family, the very photo of cultural solidarity, heteronormativity, and heterosexual futurity. A Chicano family able to stand strong and unified amid the onslaught of white supremacist America.

Yet it is with this image that Anzaldúa comes to disidentify, learning to carry that image with her, even as she finds that she does not fit into the image of that family as well as might be assumed from the photo.²²¹ She writes:

I was the first in six generations to leave the valley, the only one in my family to ever leave home... At a very early age I had a strong sense of who I was and what I was about and what was fair. I had a stubborn will. It tried constantly to mobilize my soul under my own regime, to live life on my own terms no matter how unsuitable to others they were. Even as a child I would not obey. I was "lazy." Instead of ironing my younger brothers' shirts or cleaning the cupboards, I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. Nothing in my culture approved of me.²²²

Anzaldúa's description is a disidentification with the idealized family. The description recognizes the complex relationship between the symbol of her Chicano *familia* and all that is implied by such a signifier in play, invoking the norms and traditions of a Chicano family with the very gender roles upon

²²¹ I borrow this term from the late Jose Esteban Muñoz's definition of it in his book *Disidentifications* (1994) where he defines the term as "The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications." 31.

²²² Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 38

which Gonzalez might have built a Chicano political body. The passage recognizes that her will and understanding of her self did not fit into the cultural demands of a young Chicana, expected to comply with domestic and servile roles and helping to care for her brothers until they could find wives to do the same as their mother and sisters had.²²³ She frames the desire to do other than what was expected of a young domesticated Chicana as a rebellion against the cultural expectations that influence her family's embrace of such gendered and limited roles. That emerging rebel within her constitutes the oppositional consciousness she later associates with Chicana Consciousness and comes to term the shadow beast. She notes that she not only had no interest in acquiescing the cultural and familial demands placed upon her but that she saw them as oppressive and notes that she desired something different. Her disidentification from normativity and these cultural demands is driven by her rebelling oppositional Chicana consciousness.

Anzaldúa's disidentification with the photo constitutes a rejection of both the cultural imaginary and the symbolic universe that structures it much in the way that Emma Pérez and Hortense Spillers have described and leads to a very different relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic universes within which she can exist. The symbolic order referenced by the photo is a normative one, complete with a family structures that separate private from public and perpetuate normative cultural practices, politics, and of course cultural tyranny. The family is, after all, pictured apart from such influences in an idealized image. When Anzaldúa rebels, it is against the cultural-political imaginary associated with this photo. However, Anzaldúa's disidentification with that Symbolic order does not fully emancipate her from the ordering power of the Imaginary, rather it forces her to create a new domain in which the imaginary and the symbolic are not so neatly distinguished. Moving from oppositional consciousness as Anzaldúa does allows the subject to gain insight into the fact that they are a split subject (the subject that emerges from Lacan's "mirror stage") and to recognize the coloniality and

²²³ Melanie Hernandez has called this phenomenon "Mi Hito syndrome." Conversation 2012.

racism that overhangs the mirror as Pérez might put it. This process results in the creation of an alternative symbolic field, one that acts as its own domain of knowledge, still consciousness of the trappings of cultural tyranny within the larger and normative symbolic field but able to rebel against them. This alternative symbolic field does not erase the normative one but it does call its practices and assumptions into question from the perspective of anyone who has access to a non-normative imaginary. Pérez terms this domain third space and it is worth knowing that such a domain emerges within the borderlands.²²⁴

Anzaldúa's disidentification with the normative Imaginary allows her to be critical of it and of the normative practices within the symbolic manifesting as culture. More importantly, it allows her to understand what is expected of her within the normative order and to see how her own desire, her Shadowbeast, might exist in a world in which that order and desire for it is rejected. It is from this perspective that Anzaldúa names the expectations, demands, and consequences of normative society as "cultural tyranny" and notes that this is an aspect of culture that manifests not only in white heteronormative society but at the level of intimate interactions across cultures, genders, and sexualities.²²⁵ Her discussion of culture in this way also critiques the normative creation of a symbolic order and the normative factors of the Imaginary upon which the Symbolic is based. As she describes cultural tyranny, she writes "Culture forms our beliefs. We perceived the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as questionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture."²²⁶ The reality she here describes, the one created through "dominant paradigms," is the very symbolic order with which Anzaldúa rejects through her disidentification and which Spillers and Pérez both critique for its embrace of racism and coloniality.

²²⁴ Emma Pérez *xvi*.

²²⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 38-39

²²⁶ IBID

In Anzaldúa's analysis, normative or dominant culture's influence works to consolidate individual beliefs and the interactions between individuals into a unified totality. Practices of normativity work to assimilate all into a normative symbolic order with the threat of cultural tyranny and alienate through othering anyone who does not fit into the normative Imaginary. This process serves to legitimate the cultural practices and cultural tyranny that alienates and deploys violence against those marked by difference. Her note that such cultural practices are characterized within this order as beyond question and unchallengeable supplements the perceived unity of such an order as a reality. Because those with the most privilege and power are most well served by this order, any challenge or disruption in it is seen by those with the most power as wrong, improper, and abnormal. Anzaldúa goes on to describe how gender roles and Chicano and *Mexicano* cultural impose hierarchy on women, placing them below men in terms of power and privilege. She notes that women who reject this system or rebels against it is seen as a "*mujer mala...selfish...*" much in the way that Moraga articulates the figure of *la vendida*.²²⁷ She writes "For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the street as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother." Here we see two the options of women framed within the binary of public and private. A woman may be a nun or a mother, both contained within private domains, either cloistered by the Church or domesticated by patriarchal societal structures. The third option, that of a prostitute, is cast as a consequence of a woman who did not safeguard her body to be preserved by the patriarchal church or a husband, put out to be blatantly commodified and used by men to whom she does not belong.

In other words, the consequence of a public existence for a subject interpellated to belong in the private domain based on the gender binary. It is important to read this passage with the understanding that Anzaldúa's disidentification with this system, her rebellion, begins with the idealized

²²⁷ IBID

image of her family and encompasses a rebellion against this cultural limitation. Her shadow beast or her consciousness and opposition to such limitations is not in fact a new concept, rather it is one that is recognized by both normative white culture and Chicano Nationalism as I argued in my second chapter. That consciousness has the power to resist and disrupt the totality of the normative and dominant culture and even the potential to imagine a new potential existence for the individual. It is for this reason that normative culture places such forms of consciousness in domains that can contain them and inscribe a particular kind of signification to their expression. Anzaldúa notes that those who buck against such containment are read within dominant culture as abnormal and often labeled “*mujeres malas*.” When read through that hierarchical structure, even should a woman not chose to be a prostitute, to step out of the contained and domesticated role that culture expects of women is to associate with the lower end of the binary that is associated with prostitution, selfishness, maleficence, and above all, things considered to be bad. In no uncertain terms, Anzaldúa’s analysis recognizes family as the container for such a consciousness to manage any influence that such a consciousness might have in the public and political domains. More importantly, Anzaldúa’s intervention looks toward an application of the processes that imagine intimacy differently, without the violence of cultural tyranny or the guide of a normative imaginary.

Consequences of Rebellion in the Borderlands

Anzaldúa’s break from her family and their cultural expectations lead her to critique the relationship of culture, patriarchy, and cultural tranny overall to the normative family institution. “Much of what the culture condemns focuses on kinship relationships. The welfare of the family, the community, the tribe is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin—as sister, as father, as *padrino*—and last as self.”²²⁸ This critique looks directly at the construction of

²²⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 40.

La Familia Chicana discussed by both Gonzalez and Armas, as part of an institution that gives rise to a community and a culture unified against white oppression. However, the critique also recognizes the bluntness of the nationalist agenda as a tool. Anzaldúa establishes *la familia* as the point of contact with culture, oppressive power, and cultural tyranny and points out that the individual can only be made legible as part of a family. Echoing Moraga, she notes that any move toward embracing her individual desires which do not comply with those dominant discourses that oppress her, that is embracing her shadowbeast, means she will be seen as a traitor to the family, selfish, perhaps even to the point of *vendida*.

Anzaldúa notes that queer Chicanos fear embracing their queerness (one could also say shadowbeast) because they fear that one will be seen as a *vendida* and rejected from the family, the home, the culture, and be left truly alone in a white world that does not embrace them. She explains how a fellow Chicano in a university she once taught in misunderstood the world “homophobia” taking it to suggest a “fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We’re afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged.”²²⁹ The quote calls attention to the difficulty in separating *la familia* from *la familia Chicana*, at once noting a fear of being rejected by our culture for queerness and a fear of losing the intimate connection to our family. For Anzaldúa, this is a shift toward the intimate as a key factor in her project to revise perspectives on power from the margins. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that her analysis embraces the intimate considering that her framework for analysis emerges out of a woman of color discourse and out of Lorde’s articulation of difference which suggests that alienation from power based on difference takes place though interpersonal or intimate interactions.

²²⁹ IBID.

Anzaldúa goes on to recognize that dominant culture and its attendant discourses and practices work to contain her consciousness by policing her queerness and her intimacy in general. She terms this “intimate terrorism,” recognizing that such processes are meant to contain such an emerging consciousness within the family and use the threat of losing one’s family and culture to back up that cultural expectation. Her focus on the intimate is important to her larger project because it is in writing about intimacy and queerness that Anzaldúa moves her analysis beyond that of simply identifying with the *vendida* or the shadow beast and moves toward imagining a new politics of world making.²³⁰

By centralizing the concept of intimacy and positioning it between normativity enforced by cultural tyranny and the secret desires of the shadowbeast, Anzaldúa creates an opportunity for an oppositional discourse to emerge even within that of the dominate discourse and culture. Such a discourse emerges not only from the experiences that give rise to her own oppositional consciousness but also from the choice to take part in disidentification from normativity and the normative discourse of power with its attending practices of cultural tyranny. Throughout the text, Anzaldúa refers not only to culture but to “the culture.” This construction suggests that within her analysis, culture is not a singular thing. Rather, Anzaldúa’s work begins to chart a domain of knowledge with identities and concepts of personhood well beyond the limited understanding of dominant culture and normativity. A domain of knowledge only rendered knowable through understanding emerging from the borderlands. This break with cultural normativity and its binary logic leads her to a larger concept, that of “nepantla” or a tolerance for ambiguity.²³¹ Anzaldúa rejects the concepts of duality and even intervenes into the way that cultural arguments are made as she points out the danger of “counterstances” to categories and cultural concepts. She notes that “a counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and

²³⁰ Anzaldúa discusses the practices of world making in her “Now Let Us Shift” essay about *conosimento* or ways of knowing and understanding in the collection *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002.)

²³¹ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 100-101.

oppressed...” reducing both to a “common denominator of violence” in the struggle. This moment offers some context into her own rebellion and prevents it from being read as a counterstance and asks the reader to consider multiplicity within a borderlands, identity and intimacy amid many formations and powers, not all of which are clear or fully understandable. She notes that this approach is a step in creating new discourse but it is not a way of life.²³²

For Anzaldúa, disidentification is only the first step. The move toward nepantlism invokes Anzaldúa’s concept of *la facultad*, “the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface.”²³³ This critical understanding is derived from understanding that delves into the knowledge of the borderlands, that is, lived experiences facing oppression and alienation with a consciousness of the normative expectations of power.²³⁴ However this process is not simply to take an intimate desire that cultural normativity has suggested is abnormal or abhorrent and consider that it might not be. Rather it is to consider that for the individual, this is an intimacy to be desired and will be understood by some as abhorrent and by other as exciting and validating. In other words, this process requires the Mestiza, the Chicana, the Chican@, etc. to reimagine what intimacy is and what it is used for while considering that the models of intimacy they have learned in dominant culture are likely oppressive and hurtful. In a very real way, this requires that the individual create a new Imaginary from which to create a new discourse and Symbolic order.

This call for a new Imaginary is attached to the concepts of intimacy and *familia* that Moraga and Anzaldúa both articulate, however their best known work stops short of reimagining the family. My best speculation on this is that both authors were cautious of creating a positivist definition of *familia* as the Chicano Nationalists did for fear of reproducing the same cultural tyranny. The two only offer a

²³² Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 104

²³³ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 60.

²³⁴ IBID.

method for considering and even planning to reimagine the family though clearly articulate an urgency to doing so. This urgency is reflected in the short story “The Cariboo Café” by Helena Maria Viramontes and in a future draft of this manuscript I hope to construct a chapter around that story that explores Chicana/o/@ representations of *familia* in the 1990s. For the time being I have offered a brief reading of this story in my conclusion because I think it most relevant to consider the possibilities of actually reimagining family and its relationship to intimacy and power. My next chapter offers an analysis of two queer Chican@ artists who queer Chicano identity and create their own version of queer *familia*.

Chapter 4: *Dime con quien andas*: Politicized Intimacy and Making Queer *Familia*. Or Doing Laundry and Fagging Out.

This chapter looks at two queer Chican@ performance artists who represent their identities in politicized ways as they reclaim for queers of color discourses about identity, intimacy, masculinity while negotiating space in a fast gentrifying city.²³⁵ Those two are A. B. Soto and the drag queen Adore Delano, also known as Danny Noriega. Both Soto and Delano reframe the relationship of queer Chicano@s to culture, identity, and to family in their work, each reimagining narratives of identity and intimacy as queer so as to refuse the cultural tyranny and oppression of normative discourses and heteropatriarchal cultural logics. This reimagining and queering of identity starts, as I have argued in this manuscript, from the emergence of oppositional consciousness, however the way that intimacy is imagined to work in the two examples I will analyze here allows that oppositional consciousness to not only oppose dominant culture and normativity but to reshape those discourses by creating new politicized forms of intimacy that bridge oppositional consciousness and dominant culture. This articulating of identity does not directly attack normativity but undermines it, at once impoverishing the social capital associated with normativity while offering intimacy as a means of sharing an identity in difference with non-normative subjects, that is, it creates the opportunity for other to identify in difference by participating in a politicized form of intimacy with another individual who identifies in difference. I offer an in-depth explanation of politicized intimacy later in this chapter but for now I will offer a preliminary definition, a form of intimacy that is public and also legible to a multiplicity of discourses that it is enacted without concern or in spite of normativity or the expectations of dominant culture. The implementation of this politicized intimacy not only allows for the creation of a *familia* imagined within queerness and Chicanismo, that is, a *familia* that embraces difference, but also allows

²³⁵ I borrow Sandy Soto's articulation of queer Chicana/o identity and perspective which she writes as "Chican@." I do so not only to signal a queer Chicana/o or "Joto" identity but to denote a queer and Chicana/o subject position that interoperates the world queerly and that participates in signification queerly as well.

members of that queer *familia* to renegotiate on what terms and to what ends they navigate normative power. Put more clearly, by identifying in difference as Chican@s, these artists make use of intimacy in a politicized and public way with others, bridging difference and normativity to create a borderlands of identity where a kind of queer *familia* can come into being and resist the cultural logics of normativity and dominant culture. My intervention suggests a way of creating alternative cultural-political imaginaries, that is, ways of imagining the cultural and political logics of how the world is organized by power and discourse that enacts them in order to create queer and Chican@ world making discourses that refuse cultural tyranny.

A. B. Soto is what one might call a Chicano performance artist. He has a background in dance and fashion and now records his own music and collaborates in producing his own music videos.²³⁶ His work takes up concepts of masculinity (specifically Chicano masculinity) in a queer way, often challenging normative perspectives and concepts of Chicano masculinity by embodying them in a queer way. Soto's work reimagines Chicano masculinity in ways that take up figures from Chicano culture and, through his performance and embodiment of them, queers those figures by positioning them as focal points of a queer gaze in his videos. His work constructs narratives of queer desirability, sexuality, and most importantly, intimacy around these reimagined figures of Chicano masculinity.

I think that all Soto's work is very complex and needs the attention of Chican@ journalists and scholars to document its significance for a public audience but for the purposes of this discussion I want to focus on one of his singles entitled "Cha-Cha, Bitch!" (2015). I won't suggest that this particular video animates queer intimacy or maps out the possibilities of queer family-making from a Chican@ perspective, however I do think that Soto's treatment of Chicano masculinity embraces what I have previously described as the *corrido* imaginary in a queer way as it begins the process of cleaving Chicano gendered identity from its most oppressive and hetero-patriarchal associations. In short, Soto's

²³⁶ "AB SOTO GAYLETTER INTERVIEW 2013." YouTube, YouTube, 14 May 2013

representation of Chicano identities embraces difference in such a way as to disidentify with racial and heteropatriarchal normativity, queering such intersectional identities as he imagines not simply Chicano figures but Chican@ identities.

I read Soto's video and its representations as a kind of primer for another video by queer Chican@ and drag performer Adore Delano. Adore Delano, a drag performer whose drag aesthetic is largely based on the style of California cholas from the 1990s and today, offers a fascinating video entitled "D.T.F." (2014) in which she and a group of other Chican@s enter a gentrified space and, through a politicized form of intimacy, redefine it at the level of culture and counter publics as an intersectional one which embraces difference in contrast to the rejection of difference the space and its occupants suggest at the start of the video. Despite the fact that Soto's video was produced after Delano's, I find that when reading the two together it is productive to look to Soto's queering of Chicano masculinity and the *corrido* imaginary before Delano's video. Encountering the representative logic in Soto's work in terms of reclaiming masculine identities queerly for Chican@s allows for a better understanding of Adore Delano's politicization of those identities and their potential to enact queer intimacies to reimagine family and claim space for queer Chican@ *familia*. I read the world of these two artists as the continuation and perhaps even response to the call to reimagining family and identify in difference that I discussed in relation to Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's work in my previous chapter.

Cha-Cha, Bitch! or "Hay, perra! That charro is a joto!"

Soto's "Cha Cha, Bitch!" begins with him and some dancers emerging from a black Cadillac on a bridge. The dancers are both men of color and dressed scantily with pink shorts, no shirt, denim vests, and head bands. Soto emerges in a sequined pink suit, *charro* style boots, and a pink cowboy hat. There is nothing clearly queer about the three men at the start of the video but there is the fact that these three men of color present themselves as incongruous with the heteronormativity of normative culture

and normative cultural-political imaginaries as I've discussed across this project. I suggest that Soto and his dancers present as queer within the context of how Lara Romero applies the term: as isolated from one's community through difference.²³⁷ I revise that definition a bit and here suggest that queer also means isolated or alienated from dominant culture and normative cultural-political imaginaries through difference. As the three start to take position on the bridge Soto begins to walk the length of the bridge as though it were a runway while a trumpet (perhaps more recognizable in a mariachi song) begins to play. Soto struts the runway/bridge a few paces before breaking into a step-ball-change with a cross step followed by a sashay (a cha-cha step) and telling the audience to clap their hands. The opening lyrics note, "I'm going to teach you how to cha-cha like this. One, three, cha-cha, bitch." Soto dances around the bridge borrowing movements that are associated with Latin dance, specifically samba and cha-cha. He then shifts language to Spanish as he dances, presumably teaching us how to cha-cha his way and singing "*uno, tres, cinco, seis, cha-cha, bitch! Perra. Bien perra, cinco seis, cha-cha, bitch!*"

For those who don't speak Spanish and specifically queer Chican@ slang, the last phrase is not one that translates with ease to English. As close as I can get would be "Bitch! Oh, Bitch!", read with the excitement of a fan shouting "Yaasss Gaga!" and the passion of Chris Crocker as he cries "Leave Britney alone!", but distinctly Chican@ in its affect. The shout of "*Bien perra!*" follows a couple of high pitched *gritos* (shouts) as one might hear in a mariachi song and which I'm sure many of you have shouted out as the opening cords of "*Volver Volver*" sing out at the end of a long and hazy evening. The words signal something that is uniquely Chicano, referencing mariachi music through the use of the *grito* and referencing queer Chican@ slang in the invocation of the phrase "*bien perra.*" Already we have an amalgamation that is unique to Soto and to gay Chican@ community, the articulation of masculinity in a queer way framed with queer slang to contextualize, even narrativize it as such. Soto's outfit is not

²³⁷ Lora Romero, "'When Something Goes Queer': Familiarity, Formalism, and Minority Intellectuals in the 1980s," *The Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities* 6, no. 1 (1993): 121–42, 126.

explicitly Chicano or queer but his dancing and singing make it such, characterizing the pink of the outfit as something outside of normative masculinity and offering clarification of that queerness by offering a term to describe the outfit—*bien perra!*

The video shifts to Soto dressed in a skin-tight charro outfit, one that might be associated with mariachi performers but that is also associated with the corrido warriors out of the old folk ballads. He is laying down on his left side facing the camera dangling a tambourine from one hand. The next sequence has Soto shifting between laying down, kneeling on all fours with his back arched and his butt up, and standing as he dances. The shot looks over Soto's body, casting a sexual gaze on it but making sure to focus that gaze on a male brown body, focusing on the queer and sexualized embodiment of the *corrido* warrior rather than his actions toward others as is most traditional for such a figure.²³⁸ Soto's presentation goes beyond simply taking up the dress and suggesting a queer role of a *corrido* warrior. He mobilizes the *corrido* imaginary to embody the *corrido* warrior queerly, that is embodying the *corrido* warrior figure as a queer Chican@ subject who can reimagine the narrative of identity and the larger *corrido* imaginary from a queer and Chican@ perspective.

Emphatically, Soto however does not embody the figure as the infamous Juakin might have in Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles' poem nor as Juan Rubio might have in *Pocho*. Whereas that use of the figure placed the heteronormative and patriarchal logics of the corrido warrior into a discourse that imagined such a figure to play a role in advancing Chicano Nationalist politics by its participation in a patriarchal discourse, Soto's embodiment is notably different. Taking the language and the sexualization of a figure right out of the old *corridos*, the *corrido* warrior begins to rearticulate the old mainstay of Chicano

²³⁸ Again, I look to Americo Paredes definition of the *corrido* warrior and Ramon Saldivar's analysis of the figure's significance and style of signification in Chicano culture.

cultural production in a notably queer way, embodying queerness at the same time that he embodies gay sexuality.²³⁹

Dancing in a way that he has previously described as “fagging out” or feeling and expressing one’s queerness, Soto exposes the constructedness of this *corrido* warrior figure.²⁴⁰ By taking on that role, Soto not only conjures up the figure but also embodies the swaggering warrior, not as the Juan Rubio in search of young dancing girls but as a figure who exudes queer sexuality and who expresses himself using queer Chican@ language. The way Soto writhes on the floor is of course sexual but does not cross into any clear articulation of femininity, noting the attention the camera and thus the gaze pays to his chest, mostly exposed as a Charro might but notably fringed in glitter and working to sexualize the masculinity of his body. The shot of Soto on all fours lifting his butt as he sings recalls a particularity of gay sexuality and could be read as an enthusiastic bottom presenting his body in such a way as to suggest his desire to be topped. The lines of the song become important to understanding this embodiment as Soto sings “*ella morena*” invoking the Spanish term for the word “She” and noting the dark or *morena* skin as two queer men in a familiar or friendly way might when describing one another, something similar to the term “girl” shared between two gay men in English. He goes on: “We in the club and we gonna slay ya. *Bailando con ella...*” suggesting that he and his crew are there to impress as they dance and otherwise “fag out” with another queer individual, that is, *bailando con ella*.

A particular line stands out to me at this moment in which Soto seemingly describes the look of his costume and embodiment singing, “her look? She’s giving *princesa*.” To this point, Soto has described himself in third person and in gay Chicano slang as “ella” and now notes that her look is

²³⁹ I make use of the term “gay” as a signifier within the spectrum of what queerness can encompass but specifically referencing sexuality and intimacy between men or male identified individuals who sexualize and desire sexual intimacy with other men and male identified individuals and the cultural practices that surround such expressions of sexuality and intimacy.

²⁴⁰ In the 2013 interview with Soto cited above Soto describes “fagging out” as being comfortable in one’s own skin as a gay man and embracing one’s gayness.

“*princesa*” or something that might be thought of as fancy and sexy at once—meant to attract the attention of some lucky man. In short, creating a narrative around this embodiment of the corrido warrior that allows him to participate in a gay male system of signification and discourse, that is a system of signification and discourse between others who identify in gay Chican@ difference. Soto brings his performance of the figure to life through the sexuality associated with the corrido warrior but queering the cultural imaginary so as to occupy the subject position as a brown and queer individual.

Eventually we see the figure of Soto dressed as a Charro doubled and flanking another image of him, this time dressed in zebra striped blazer and pants, a ruffled shirt, and a bright red fedora. The figure suggests that of a pimp, now flanked by two images of himself in the *charro* outfit. The pimp figure suggests a more normative masculinity and a different articulation of the patriarchal figure, a *macho* figure who might normally be imagined to be flanked by two women who are dressed to attract the male gaze. However, Soto again occupies the position in a queer way, giving commands to his two other selves to dance and not to twerk but specifically to “cha-cha, bitch.” His command would normally be one to an individual with less power than his, a pimp to another who is controlled by the pimp. Traditionally the pimp figure would command others through some patriarchal logics but in this case, the individuals being commanded are both the same person as the pimp figure. More to that point, they are all men and occupy these complex and intersectional masculinities through their own desire, even seemingly to accept the relationship between the pimp figure and the Charro Princesa as one in which the two different figures can sexualize one another in ways that are at once disruptive to the heterosexual logics normally associated with the figures while queering the intimate power dynamics between the two, effectively making good on the suggestions from earlier in the video of “*bailando con ella*.” While there is a great deal to analyze in this video, it is enough to say that throughout Soto takes on masculine figures closely associated with Chicano identity and tied to the corrido imaginary and does so as a joto or a queer Chican@. Because both figures embody Chicano masculinity in a queer way, the

narrative associated with such figures becomes reimagined. Rather than a *charro* who will dance (among other things) the ladies away and once more reproduce the narrative of masculinity's power over women, the *charro* figure seeks to attract sexual attention from other men. Rather than exploit and command women from a position of masculine power and authority, the pimp figure seeks to revise his story to one in which he is able to sexualize and share intimacy with the *charro princesa*. Rather than inspire a narrative in which heteropatriarchy is reinforced these figures enact a narrative in which heteropatriarchy is refused in favor of gay intimacy through "fagging out." In doing so, their ability to signify—to make meaning within a cultural-political imaginary shifts in such a way as to enact a queer, joto, or Chican@ subject who can create cultural discourse in a way that articulates the intersection of queerness, gay desire, and Chicano identity. In short, participating in a Chican@ Imaginary as the figures begin a discourse using Chican@ symbolic systems.

To a large degree this is an example of what Norma Alarcón calls identities in difference, that is, the identity that emerges when one builds one's identity and a group identity in terms of difference from a mythical norm.²⁴¹ José Muñoz points out that such an identity suggests that an individual "falls off the majoritarian maps of the public sphere, that one is exiled from paradigms of communicative reason," in short displacing the individual and blocking, through that exile, the individual who identifies in difference's access to normativity. Muñoz articulates this removal from the majoritarian map in relation to his concept of "feeling brown," that is, embracing and performing ones Latinidad or Latina/o identity. He notes that "feeling brown" is linked to an inability to correctly perform affective normativity—not correctly performing whiteness in his example.²⁴² Muñoz frames this in terms of normative racialization, noting that Latino difference is an obstacle to performed and perceived normativity which is, as Lorde and so many others have pointed out, white. I want to borrow this

²⁴¹ Alarcón, Norma. "Conjugating Subjects in the Age of Multiculturalism."

²⁴² José Esteban Muñoz and Ricardo L. Ortiz, "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)*" (Duke UP, 2011) 202.

articulation of “feeling brown” but move it into opposition to normativity more broadly with all of the heteropatriarchy and constructed whiteness that such a move would assume. Both articulations of Chicano masculinity that Soto embodied in this moment “feel brown,” but there is more to their construction than racial discourse, embracing as they do multiple discourses of identity, many of which transgress or even exist beyond the limits of hetero, racial, and cultural normativity. It is that intersectionality that sets them apart from what is knowable within normativity.

These figures in Soto’s video that “feel brown” as they “fag out” are legible to normativity as part of an identity in difference though their performance of intersectional identity. Muñoz notes that such difference is often read as overwhelming to the minimalist affect of normative whiteness and the same, I argue, can be said of an intersectional identity in difference (like those that Soto performs) and its ability to overwhelm normativity as articulated as a multiplicity of discourses the construct dominant culture. Muñoz clarifies: “Rather than say that Latina/o affect is too much, I want to suggest that the presence of Latina/o affect puts a great deal of pressure on the affective base of whiteness, insofar as it instructs us in a reading of the affect of whiteness as underdeveloped and impoverished.”²⁴³ This suggests a threat posed to whiteness and to normativity by the expression of Chican@ affect. What is most important about this point is that these figures, at risk of alienation from the universe of signifiers and meaning making discourses associated with normativity, that is, being exiled from the normative map, express identities in difference though their embrace of their race and queerness or “fagging out,” as my fellow jotos and Chican@s might say.

Soto’s queer embodiment of these identities that puts pressure on normativity runs the risk of being rendered unknowable and devalued by dint of the particularity associated with his Chican@ presentation. That is, he risks exile from the normative public sphere for his refusal of normativity. Lisa Marie Cacho describes this as a system of devaluation, noting that the politics that offer value or social

²⁴³ Muñoz and Ortiz 206-207.

capital to normativity do so by utilizing the “other” as a negative resource—the normative has value because the non-normative cannot be valued and so constitutes a lack of value or a negative value. This suggests that identities and subjects that are more normative can be valued (mourned in her example) and located closer to personhood with more success and social capital than identities that fail to approach normativity and are dehumanized, devalued, and othered.²⁴⁴ In the example I offer from Soto, the non-normative subject does not have the social capital to remain on Muñoz’ majoritarian map. However, I want to suggest that the positioning of the Chicano pimp figure between the two Charro princesa in Soto’s video builds on Cacho’s read of normative politics by repositioning the figures outside of a normative imaginary and in a Chican@ one.

Cacho’s brilliant analysis of mourning and normativity frames the expectations of normative masculinity as within discourses of racial identity as well as normative discourses associated with dominant U.S. culture. Further, her analysis suggests that failed normative citizenship risks contextualizing a non-normative individual (specifically male in her example) as devalued, unworthy of intimacy, and therefore unmournable because they lacked value in normative life.²⁴⁵ The very system that she describes which builds value for normativity on a negative value for the non-normative is challenged within the framing of Soto’s representations of the two figures. The Pimp figure is positioned in between the doubled Charro *Princesa* and is able to look, lustfully at the two as they dance, seemingly at his request. It is notable that the figures being depicted are not able to contextualize themselves within normativity. Situated through Muñoz’s approach, they are blocked from the framework of normativity and from even its affect. Both must assess one another and relate to one another as individuals who identify in difference, that is, both non-normative figures who fail to perform white

²⁴⁴ Cacho, Lisa Marie. “Racialized Hauntings of the Devalued Dead” 27-28.

²⁴⁵ I want to offer a tip of the hat to Judith Halberstam’s framing of queerness as “failures” within the majoritarian politics of heteronormativity in her work *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011.) While I do not spend a great deal of time with her work here the idea of queerness constituting a failure from a heteronormative perspective undergirds a great deal of my own work in articulating queer intersectional identities and subjectivities.

normativity and therefore have no need to consider its trappings as they navigate how to relate to one another while both are “feeling brown.” Situated in addition through Cacho’s analysis, both are already devalued within normativity but not necessarily to one another. By relating to each other as two identities in difference, there is the opportunity for the cultural tyranny of the mythical norm to assert itself, rendering the one closest to it the most powerful, the most valued, the most legible to normativity. However, there is also a chance for those individuals to find affinity, even legibility or at least intelligibility with one another’s differences—to value one another through differences that allow these two gay Chicanos to read one another’s’ particularity as Chican@s and crate an affective economy of social capital that is not reliant of normativity or white supremacy.

This system of valuation risks, I think, being read as a kind of alternative publics or counter-publics. But I want to resist that reading. Muñoz’ suggestion that those who identify in difference risk exile from the normative map still requires that the non-normative figure be addressed by the public discourse of that very normativity. The “abnormal” figure might be exiled but s/he is still legible if only as a figure to be cast out. Cacho’s analysis explores a similar point. Cacho writes about the death of her cousin who died in a car wreck whom, because of his refusal of normative masculinity and normative narratives of “success,” she reads as somewhat queer; he was considered a failure by the standards of normative masculinity and thus cannot be mourned properly by her family. She writes that his rejection of or even disinterest in the institutions of heteronormative futurity (marriage, having kids, building a family, buying a home, building a career, etc.) rendered him as negative and no more than a cautionary tale within normative narratives of identity.²⁴⁶ In short, despite their devaluation and exile from the normative public sphere, these “abnormal” figures still are legible from a normative perspective, suggesting that their existence must be explained through devaluation as Cacho describes or risk the impoverishment of normativity as Muñoz describes. This point I think risks being lost to abstraction here

²⁴⁶ Cacho, 26.

so I want to turn my discussion to another Chican@ performer, Adore Delano, and her representation of Chican@ and queer intimacy as politicized.

The Chola Drag of Adore Delano

Adore Delano is the drag and performance name of performance artist and vocalist Danny Noriega of American Idol and Rupaul's Drag Race Season 6 fame and, as she will tell you, proudly the child of a chola from Azuca California.²⁴⁷ Like any drag queer or drag performer there is a lot to unpack about her character and her career, more that I have the space to explore. I want to look at a 2014 music video that Adore Delano released titled "D.T.F." D. T. F is shorthand for the phrase "down to fuck," implying that someone is both interested and open to sex in a casual and excited way. Adore is known for being unpolished but very creative, always able to mix high fashion couture with a California 1990s chola aesthetic.²⁴⁸ She is also known by fans of drag as a queen who embraces the idea that drag, identity, and love can be anything you want them to be. Ideas that appeal to me and my project on several levels.

The video "D.T.F." opens on a group of Chicanos walking down a sidewalk seemingly to do laundry as they are carrying baskets of clothes. Adore leads them in cut off shorts, a sleeveless shirt, and blond hair with black roots. She is followed by a shirtless, tattooed and muscled Chicano holding the hand another man dressed in a white tank top, a pink bandana worn as a headband, and Dickies shorts. Another woman dressed similarly to the man in the tank top and a single woman with a sports bra, short shorts, and a very visible baby belly complete the group as they arrive at a laundromat in the strip mall. As the group walks in the viewer becomes aware that the group of Chican@s are not expected nor, it

²⁴⁷ I will refer to Adore Delano by the she/her set of pronouns here based on how I have seen her referred to in most media. I do not know what her preferred pronouns are and will happily make changes should I have gotten this wrong. In general, it has been my experience that while in drag, many drag performers are comfortable with the she/her pronoun set.

²⁴⁸ Rosa Linda Fregoso discusses this aesthetic at length in a chapter of her book *meXicana encounters: The Making of Identities on the Borderlands* (2003).

would seem, welcome there. A large and older white man sneers at Adore as she and her crew walk in, first surprised then allowing his face to shift to stern disapproval at the site of her cut-off shorts and chola drag before he shakes his head at her. Two more individuals look at various members of the group; first the two men holding hands receive a glare from a woman fanning herself as she sits on a folding table, then a younger looking white man lifts his phone to his ear while looking, mouth agape, at the exposed baby belly of one of Adore's crew. The final two women come into the laundromat seeming to survey the reactions of the community members there. The video intercuts scenes of the whole crew hanging out on playground equipment and scenes of their walk into the laundry, allowing for close-ups on the individuals between images of the complete group. The intercutting allows for the viewer to get a clear idea of the members of the crew and their notably Chola/o aesthetic, highlighting eyebrows drawn with precision, sagging pants, plaid boxers, a flannel shirt, and head bands adorning members of the group. The intercutting also makes clear that the group has a history of showing and sharing affection and intimacy between one another and the viewer can come to understand that the group spends a great deal of time together. At a basic level, it is clear though their dress that they are a group of their own and different from those already washing clothes. They are, for all intents and purposes, a queer *familia*.

Cut back to Adore's stroll to a washing machine as a white woman gasps, grabs her laundry cart and scurries out of Adore's way. In another cut to the playground the crew poses as Adore sing/raps the words, "down, down, down, d-down, I'm D. T. F." throwing up doves for each letter.²⁴⁹ I want to take a moment to recognize the use of the term "down" here, noting that it holds several implications in Adore's use of it. Down can mean that one is ready or prepared or looking to do something. It also can mean that she is someone who can be relied upon in a difficult time—a down ass Chola, ready to ride of

²⁴⁹ "dove" here as a term for a letter made with one's hand that is often in keeping with gang hand symbols rather than America Sign Language.

die for her crew. She connects the fact that she is “down” to the fact that she is also down to fuck. The context of this statement is implied by the only person in the laundromat who does not express shock or disgust at Adore and her crew, a young and well-muscled white man who looks toward Adore with unmistakable interest and delighted surprise.

I want to draw the reader’s attention in this video to the newness of the laundromat. This is a nice laundromat in what is likely a newly developed or, as city officials are so fond of saying, revitalized part of town. The white fans on the ceiling are new and clean, the floor is un-scuffed, and the washers and dryers all look relatively new and none are marked out of order. In short, this is a laundromat in a newly gentrifying neighborhood. Note the fact that the front of the laundromat is filled with cars though Adore and her crew walked to the place. It is likely that the stare they get upon entering the space are not simply ones that disapprove of their queerness, though that seems evident, but also of their complex working class brownness—their Chicanismo. This suggest that they are not welcome in this space striving to embrace a higher class of lower middle class existence as it gentrifies.

The people in the laundromat also appear to be, like Adore and her crew, working class but with more upward mobility, denoted by their new and white laundry baskets, name brand detergent, and access to newer brands of cell phones, all depicted in the video. By contrast, Adore carries in an older style of laundry basket, oblong and dark while her friends carry an old fashion circular and collapsible one. The contrast is, I think, subtle but it does call attention to variations in working class life. The new white baskets are things to be found at discount stores but are also things that, in my experience growing up in Albuquerque’s South Valley which is a kind of barrio, were associated with someone who could afford to buy accessories to wash clothes rather than using old baskets borrowed from their moms and grandmothers or simply throwing it all in a pillow case. While the mostly white people in the laundromat are also working class (not so rich as to have anyone to wash their clothes) they are a kind of working class in the midst of upward mobility. The point being that the video starts by framing a clash

between these two group not only in terms of culture (Adore's chola Chicanisma) but also in terms of the subtleties of class difference.

Adore and her group represent a racial and cultural formation that is historically displaced by those with more upward mobility in spaces that become gentrified, in particular in California where Adore often notes she is from. Her and her crew's entrance into the laundromat constitutes a disruption of the new up-and-coming community of gentrifiers with more upward mobility than the working class Chicano community that they are displacing. The fact that they walked into this space signals a disruption to the new cultural narrative of a "revitalized" neighborhood with the more complex and harder to reconcile narrative of a neighborhood displacing a previous population as its new residents reach for their position in the middle class. The queerness of the Chican@s is further disruptive in that it contrasts with the generalized normativity of the space, founded on abstraction as Lorde might point out rather than on anything real like actual sexuality.

However, this is not the limit of the discomfort and disapproval of those who watch the Chican@s enter. As I noted, they are not all that different in terms of class from Adore and her group. Notably, it is likely that they occupy a slightly different and higher socioeconomic position than the Chican@s in the video but not one that is clearly different. They all are washing their clothes in the same machines and they do, after all, share the neighborhood despite their apparent disapproval of the Chican@s who have entered the laundromat. In short, Adore's existence in this space suggests that their position in an upwardly mobile neighborhood and racialized class identity is a tenuous one, not all that far off from Adore's existence or that of her crew. A great deal of what distinguishes those in the laundromat from the Chican@s is tied to social capital and a performed identity that appears nearer to the mythical norm than the Chican@s.

The idea that they are a singular community and that the Chican@s who enter in the video are outsiders to that community is not much more than a trick of the light (trick of color?). The commonality

of space and closeness of class identity that the people of the laundromat and the incoming Chican@s share calls any kind of singular or unitary definition of the space and its community along normative lines into question. The fact that The Chican@s share that space and arrive at the space on foot for such a mundane task as laundry suggests a kind of borderlands between the up-and-coming community already in the laundromat and the Chicano community who are historically displaced in California gentrification. A borderlands in which the groups cannot see the difference required to enforce the cultural tyranny or oppression of normativity or to define the Chican@s as any kind of abnormal.

The Sameness of a Different Color

The would be normative community cannot devalue the Chican@s entering the laundry because their identities, in terms of class and day to day practice, are not all that different, exposed by the shared need to wash clothes in the same laundromat. The stares and disapproval of the normative community can be tied to the affectation of normativity in that the affect of Adore and her crew is one that puts pressure on the would be normative identities in the laundromat to define itself or accept commonality with the Chican@s. Adore and her group do identify in difference as Alarcón might say, but unlike the more usual articulations of such a formation, they do not fall off of the majoritarian map of the public sphere as Muñoz describes because they are not set apart in terms of difference in such a way as to be rendered unknowable or unrecognizable by those closest to the mythical norm.

Reading those in the laundromat in this way requires that I pay special attention to the young shirtless man who shows interest in Adore as she walks in. Already washing his clothes, he is characterized as part of the would be normative community. However, despite his associative relationship with normativity he finds interest in Adore as she prepares to wash her own clothes. He makes a point watching her as she places clothing in the wash and even reacts as though he is mesmerized when he shakes his head as though he is waking from a dream. Across the laundromat, Adore tosses her hair and even shows off her panties as she tosses them into the wash. The viewer is

offered an image of the shirtless man as he watches with apparent excitement, going so far as to eyefuck Adore as she does her laundry and performs her identity and sexuality.²⁵⁰ For the remainder of the video the two continue to look at each other and offer signals beyond eyefucking that they are interested in one another. The young man with no shirt even pulls his pants and eventually underwear off to show his interest. At this point, it is clear that he is interested and that the others in the laundromat no longer matter in the view of Adore and the young man. In the background, her crew either seems nonplused by this interaction or in the case of the two gay men, ignore the whole situation as they kiss and shift to more sexual diversions.

At this point, the laundromat is dominated by Adore, her crew, and the young man. The others have disappeared and the space has been claimed by a coalition of the Chican@s and the young man through the intimate connection between he and Adore. By the end of the video, the two leave the laundromat on the young man's motorbike and drive, appropriately enough, into the sunset. This shift in the video is something I want to spend the remainder of this chapter discussing. Upon walking into the laundromat Adore resisted the judgment of the others there though her own identity in difference; however when she leaves she has created a new kind of affiliation, a coalition with the young man through a very public expression of intimacy: an intimacy that failed to devalue the non-normative Adore as such things might in Cacho's analysis and that does not overwhelm the affect of the white and by some definitions straight (at least performatively) young man.²⁵¹ Something I would go so far as to call politicized intimacy.

Intimacy Politicized

²⁵⁰ I borrow the term "eyefuck" from Stevi Costa who uses the term in her own work to characterize "a burlesque or drag performer locking eyes with an audience member in a way that creates intimacy within a larger public space." *Conversation*, 2/24/17

²⁵¹ I realize that all evidence questions the possibility of the young man being "straight" or heterosexual in a strict way however I do think that he is contextualized within normativity before his encounter with Adore. Further, because he appears to be attracted to Adore in full drag as she presents as a woman suggests a queering of his heterosexuality though of course does not stabilize it by any stretch of the imagination.

I want to return to Lisa Lowe's second definition of "intimacy" I described in my third chapter: "conjugal and familial relations in the bourgeois home, distinguished from the public realm of work, society, and politics."²⁵² This intimacy shared between Adore and the young man is one that, unlike Lowe's preliminary definition, does not take place strictly in a private domain but a notably public one.²⁵³ The moment shared between the two is a moment of eyefucking—charged intimacy in which both of them express a desire for sexual interaction—not unlike the framework of cruising that so many queer scholars have discussed and used as metaphor. The intimacy shared between the two is the only suggestion of something that cuts through the public domain and even cuts through two very different forms of identity and consciousness: Adore's Chican@ and drag identity and the young man's white one, (formally) associated with dominant culture.²⁵⁴ I turn to the term "politicized intimacy" simply because the expression of intimacy between the two is not only performed in public but in such a way as to navigate difference and identity politics as it creates a bridge between Chican@ and normative identity and subjects.

It is not enough to understand that these two individuals share a moment of intimacy. It is important to also understand the larger implications of that shared political intimacy in context of their respective identities and in context of the space (newly gentrified and normative) in which they both occupy. Despite his ability to occupy a white and normative subject position in a public domain, the young man finds something interesting in the difference that Adore embodies. It is obvious that Adore finds something interesting about him as well. Both take part in a bit of performance of their sexualities,

²⁵² Lowe 195.

²⁵³ It is worth noting that Lowe eventually revises this definition in her own work as a factor in cultural consciousness with respect to popular narratives about Chinese labor in British colonies.

²⁵⁴ I am momentarily reminded of the 1998 essay by Luran Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public" in which they explore the expression of performative intimacy in a counter public. However, I want to stress that what goes on between Adore and the young man differs from Berlant and Warner's analysis of performative sex. In the case of Adore and the young man, the performance is a public one but one done for one another though of course aware, perhaps even erotically aware of the public around them. I will return to this consideration later in this chapter.

whatever those might be. To do so, each must understand themselves within the context of a kind of value, that is, they both must think that they are worth being sexualized and worth being the target of eyefucking by the other. This moment revises the normative system Cacho critiques by allowing the two to find value in themselves but without drawing that value from a reservoir of negative value as Cacho describes. Neither needs to devalue another individual to find value in themselves in other words. This queer and raced disruption of the normative process for creating value does not stop there because the two must also find value in one another. Something that must take place across difference. For the young man, this means finding value in Adore who, under cultural tyranny, should constitute the reservoir of negative value. Because the two are able to value each other's differences in this sexualized way, the normative system based on negative value fails to find any kind of purchase within their politicized intimacy by reading value in what would normatively be read as negative or in need of removal.

Because Adore and her crew already practice identifying in difference, finding affinity and even value in the difference of another is not a huge step for her. Because she already exists in a subject position and has an identity that rejects normativity to find value in difference, finding value in the particularized difference of another who identifies in difference is more in keeping with the politics of identity and affinity that she already practices. Unlike the other normative subjects in the laundromat, the young white man appears surprised by Adore but not lost as to what to do in order to attract more of her attention by sexualizing himself through performance as I describe above. By expressing his intimacy and performing his sexuality for a willing individual who identifies in difference all while in public, that quiet affect of the normative subject becomes very loud, very noticeable, not at all understated, and marked by difference in that he is attracted to someone who is not normative.²⁵⁵ This

²⁵⁵ Considering that we are discussing the attraction of a white man to a queer of color I find it important to point out that his attraction does not, in my analysis, appear to fetishize her race or queerness.

distances him (though does not remove him) from the quiet affect of normativity and prevents his affect from being overwhelmed by Adore's.

The young white man removes his jeans, kicking his legs up into the air as he pulls his pants free of his feet in order to display his body and offer the suggestion of accessibility in a way sometimes known as "presenting" or showing a top that one's body is ready and willing to bottom.²⁵⁶ In doing so, he is able to articulate a particularity of his own—one in which he can sexualize himself in a performative way that is traditionally associated with women performing their sexuality for a male gaze. I do not know if I would call his performance of his sexuality gay but it does articulate a difference from and transgression of heteronormativity and so I will call it queer. In any case, both have identified in difference and have found a way to chart a bridge to one another despite the fact that they are separated from one another through the terms of normativity. It is in their intimacy that they create a bridge that questions normativity and the practices that perpetuate it. Though this politicized intimacy, each is able to allow the affect of the other's identity to ring out loudly but without threat of being overwhelmed by the other and without any need to devalue the identity of another. There is no need, in that moment, for the two to consider the fragility of normativity because the bridge of politicized intimacy reframes their identities as constituted through one another and refuses the trappings of normativity for the possibilities of intimacy.

Of Laundromats and other Borderlands

As Adore and the young white man negotiate their intimacy, the space around them becomes reframed, no longer a domain of would be and fragile normativity but one with no clear definition. The Chican@s have taken it for their own use, the two gay men even taking part in sexual escapades while

²⁵⁶ For those unaware, the terms top and bottom imply several things but in this context suggest the one who is active and able to dominate or penetrate their partner (the top) and the one who might be passive, dominated, or penetrated by their partner (the bottom.) These definitions are not in any way absolute but offer some context to my discussion.

Adore and the young man create their bridge of intimacy. The one member of the normative group steps away from his normativity in order to identify with difference because frankly, washing clothes is more fun when it includes sex with a good looking Chican@. The space becomes redefined through the performance of intimacy that takes place in it. Here I want to look at the intimacy between Adore and the young white man in terms of publics, queer publics, and counter publics.

In their well-known essay "Sex in Public," Berlant and Warner describe the creation of a queer space around performative sex between two performers and the community who's interests to some degree coincide with the sexuality expressed in such a performance and the location in which it takes place. It is that sexual performance in the club that make the space into a queer one or at the very least, a counter public for gay individuals whose emergence is constituted by the performance of a counter-culture, that is, a performance around which "support forms of affective, erotic, and personal living" can emerge for a community attempting to imagine those in a counter public.²⁵⁷ However to compare the example that Berlant and Warner use to the politicized intimacy between Adore and the young man is, I think, a bit short of the mark. Berlant and Warner's example hinges on the creation of a counter public through a specifically sexual performance that centralizes sexuality in the discourse of that gay space.²⁵⁸ That is not the case in the laundromat. The shift in the space from that of a normative dominated one to one in which Adore's difference finds an intimate connection with that of the young man's by no means essentializes sexuality in the way that the performance in Berlant and Warner's example does. Rather, the shift comes from the fact that Adore occupies an intersectional identity. Her existence in that space questions the unity of what is imagined to be a normative subjectivity, exposing its intersectional

²⁵⁷ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry*, 24.2, (winter 1998) 562.

²⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the speculation in "Sex in Public" about the heterosexuality of the bottom does not figure in my mode nor do I think it matters all that much for Berlant and Warner's analysis. The performance was there to create models of intimacy among community looking for them and so it is the performance of the bottom's queerness that is important the "Sex in Public." My model hinges on intimacy shared and performed between two who desire each other across difference and in a queer way, again, not needing to reconcile the speculation of the bottom's rumored heterosexual proclivities.

construction as I've already noted in terms of class. However, the bridge that Adore and the young man form is based on his own articulation of intersectionality, embracing difference in his sexuality to be able to value and sexualize Adore's difference through intimacy. Moreover, neither he nor she are in that space for sexual or notably queer or gay reasons. They are both there to wash their clothes. It is the sexuality of their intersectionality that allows the two to form that bridge between their respective identities, even their respective subjectivities. This shift signals the creation of a discourse alternative to that of dominant and normative identity discourses in which possibilities of intimacy emerge but are not centralized.

The working-class identity of the normative community in this space is what allows for the Chican@s to enter and feel at home there.²⁵⁹ It is also that shared working-class particularity between Adore and the young man that allows them to be both knowable and able to offer value to one another without devaluing or overwhelming the other. It is in the sharing of particularities amid intersectional identities that the space shifts from one dominated by normativity to one of ambiguity with possibilities for intimacy and new community. A closer connection to a well-known queer analysis of such a formation would be more in line with Samuel Delany's work in *Times Square Red/Times Square Blue* (1999), where he discusses the creation of a community within the adult theaters of New York before they were driven out and Times Square was sterilized. Delany is not subtle when he claims that the connections between individuals in those theaters were real relationship, complete with goals, intimacies, and limits.²⁶⁰ He notes also that spaces do not serve a singular purpose for the communities who access them. The course of his famous work discusses the spectrum of identities and individuals who make use of the adult theaters for a variety of reasons. Some of course come to watch the adult

²⁵⁹ I'll note that I do not feel any attachment to the term "working class" here and would happily use "lower middle class" or as a friend of mine used to describe it, "out of the barrio but only walking distance."

²⁶⁰ Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University Press, 1999) 40.

films but many others go because it is a social place to meet members of a community and catch up with one another. He also notes that such spaces were accepting of those most on the fringes of normative society, those suffering from mental illness, those who were chronically homeless, or those for whom other social interactions that might cross into gay sexuality or sexuality in general might feel unsafe. This is not at all different from what Adore and the young man share in the laundromat. Despite the fact that it is there for laundry, it is clear that it is a meeting place for the community and like Delany's theaters and despite the angry looks of those would be normative individuals, one which attracts a multiplicity of community members.

Delany points out the importance of intersectionality in such spaces, noting that they serve the needs and interests of the community they bring together, not unlike the examples of basic chores, community gathering, and intimacy we see depicted in "DTF."²⁶¹ However Delany notes that these spaces risk disintegration or delegitimation when they become associated with excess—especially social excess.²⁶² To be clear, the excess Delany describes is not unlike the affect that Muñoz notes in his comparison of Latino affect as it overwhelms white normativity. Delany takes a definitive stance against that characterization of such spaces and the communities they support as excess. He notes such arguments allow such spaces to be dismissed "smashed or flattened" in the most literal way because such arguments frame them as only important to those margins of society. He pushes hard against this characterization because it risks dehumanizing those who occupy the spaces and identities and communities that are excess to the limitations of normativity. "People are not excess," he points out. "It is the same argument that dismisses the needs of Blacks, Jews, Hispanics, Asians, woman, gays, the homeless, the poor, the worker—and all other margins that, taken together (people like you, people like me), are the country's overwhelming majority: those who, socioeconomically, are simply less

²⁶¹ Delany 58.

²⁶² Delany 90

powerful.”²⁶³ Delany is pointing out that those with less social capital as Moraga might describe them run the risk of being dismissed, even having their spaces removed, by the very logics that permit gentrification and its own dehumanization of those with fewer resources.

I bring this up because the creation of a connection between Adore and the young man in the video offers a response to Delany’s discussion of such spaces and the threat of having such spaces associated with excess. Delany laments the loss of such spaces because for him, those are spaces that support communities. They are spaces that allow the creation of what he calls “contact.” Interactions between people from different walks of life because of a common goal or need. He notes that such a thing can be as simple as a conversation in a grocery store line but is also the “contact” between two people as they share intimacy, physical and otherwise. It is the particularity that two or more people share that allows them to understand one another in a moment and through an action or need even if they share very little else. A sharing that hinges on intersectionality, on the multiplicity of identity.

Delany’s analysis of this suggests that “contact” needs a space to happen in and that the dismantling of such spaces threatens the communities and relationships that develop there and their connections across borders of identity. However, in the video, Adore and the young man are able to facilitate “contact” in the face of the disapproval of the normative community in the laundromat. I do not want to suggest that I am discounting Delany, rather that the interaction between Adore and the young man provide a different framing for the creation of communities, connections, and contacts. For Adore and the young man, it is simply the moment of contact that allows those who share contact to create a new, however limited, understanding of one another. Because of their intersectionality, they are able to act on that contact to create not only an understanding of one another but also the first steps toward creating a discourse that allows them to take power over the space to define it. The two

²⁶³ IBID.

share a connection and repurpose the space, a welcome step that answers for the tragedy of those theaters that were knocked down as it claims the space that these two who have shared contact.²⁶⁴

Adore and the young man share contact because they are able to articulate a particular aspect of their identity and make it legible to one another, an articulation of what Chela Sandoval has described as the differential mode of consciousness.²⁶⁵ Using the differential mode in this way, they take the step that Sandoval describes in choosing how they are seen by others, that is, having a say in their own subjectivity.²⁶⁶ Adore and the young man have done just this, recognizing how they want to identify themselves and how they want to be identified using differential logics as Sandoval describes to create a connection in Delany's terms, even amid and to the end of disrupting the cultural normativity of the laundromat.

By embracing differential conscious as part of their politicized intimacy assumed within their "contact" and intersectionality, both articulate something more challenging to normativity than simple opposition to its power or even resistance to its discursive or ideological influence. The interaction between them has created a counter-discourse at least somewhat legible (even if they would not care to admit it) to all those in the borderlands of the Laundromat, normative and Chican@ alike. The two have created a connection—a contact forged in intimacy between them that inspires a queer discourse that transgresses heteronormativity and the assumed cultural normativity of race in in spite of and in sight of normativity. To be clear, that contact is the first step in articulating an intimacy that is not unlike the

²⁶⁴ This is different from the performativity that Berlant and Warner suggest because for Delany, "contact", something formed between individuals, is the first step to forming a counter public by created a new kind of discourse. Berlant and Warner's model comes together around a planned performance. To my own way of thinking it is the difference between forging intimacy as one builds relationships and a group meeting for a book club.

²⁶⁵ Please see my introduction and chapter 2 for a deeper analysis of Sandoval's concept of differential consciousness.

²⁶⁶ I will note that this claim may seem overstated but it is worth noting that Sandoval's model requires that the differential subject be willing to recognize dominant power and make strategic decisions about what part of their intersectional identity to present in every situation, thereby (and here she borrows Althusser's language to describe subjectivity) interpolating themselves into subjectivity rather than being interpolated by ideology, power, or discourse.

intimacy of family or community but, like all things in the borderlands, the specific terms of that contact do not lend themselves clearly to definition. This articulation of contact constitutes a threat to the power of normativity as a discourse and even as an ideology.²⁶⁷ Adore already disidentified with normativity to the point of identifying with difference, and it is in that differential identification that she takes on a dual role as at once a corrupting force that recruits subjects away from normativity and also the catalyst of contact in a formation outside of the limits of dominant culture and normativity.

Adore's differential identity and creation of a differential subjectivity is what attracts the young man in the laundromat and encourages him to make contact with her, shifting away from the affect of normativity toward one that is louder and queerer. In doing so, he comes to share with her a differential logic of identity and subjectivity. That is, they are able to know and understand one another through difference very much like the understanding that inspires revolution that the contributors of *This Bridge Called my Back* described. They create a new discourse of knowledge between each other. Because knowledge and knowing organize cultural logic within discourse and ideology, the two effectively create a new discourse between each other. Adore's ability to create contact out of her differential identity calls the young man to abandoned the constructed normative identity and subjectivity that he occupies in favor on one that emerges between she and he. In doing so, Adore might be thought of as a corruptor from the perspective of normative power and dominant culture, considering that Adore's embodied and performed difference calls to the young man in a kind of hail but not one like Ideology in which he would always already be part of it. She does so in a way as to offer her difference to be read as he chooses to read it, risking rejection from him as she encountered from the others in the laundromat. Unlike

²⁶⁷ In this discussion, I will articulate what I mean across both of those concepts but I want to point out that following the traditions of Woman of Color Feminism via Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Lorde, I tend to look at the overarching logics that create culture and cultural tyranny as "power" which manifests as ideology, discourse, and as I hope I've made clear, through intimacy between individuals and systems of power and cultural logic.

ideologies associated with normativity or dominant culture, he has the choice to respond to her hail and does so by making “contact” with her.

When he makes this choice, he makes common cause with Adore, joining her in identifying with difference and joining her as she perpetuates a new discourse between the two. This does not negate the logics of normative discourse and normative power that surround them, but it does rupture it. It exposes the fact that those who participate in the discourse Adore and the young man take part in have the choice of identifying within the tyrannical logics of cultural normativity or to identify in difference. They are able to move between such identities and such subjectivities within a multiplicity of discourses—to become differential subjects. It is this choice that demonstrates the threat that the corruptor poses to power, specifically to the deployment of cultural tyranny within intimacy, the private domain, the public domain, and the political sphere. This choice allows for the young white man to leave the limits of normativity and abandon the easily overwhelmed and fragile affect of normativity for something much more conspicuous and particularized that by its very embrace of difference exposed normativity as an abstraction. In this logic, Adore acts as the corruptor to provide the young white man with the choice to make contact with her and her difference, that is, with her identity in difference. By making that choice he recruits himself into the emerging discourse and nascent domain of knowledge that disrupts normativity as a cultural logic. In doing so, he not only signals the fragility of normativity but exposes that affiliation with normativity is a choice and that to be a normative subject is a choice that, when put in context of doing laundry or doing laundry in a sexy way with a sexy guy in drag, is more than a little boring.

From the perspective of normativity and the totality it must project in order to justify its power and legitimate its use of cultural tyranny, this choice to identify as something else seems like a permanent choice to disidentify with normativity—to leave it forever. There may even be some truth to that. Sandoval contextualizes the move toward differential consciousness as a step in the direction of

what she calls a hermeneutic of love, creating a system of meaning at the level of the individual and at the level of the body that embraces difference and creates new coalitions and communities—new formations of *familia*. The step of differential consciousness which is encompassed by the act of identifying in difference follows a kind of break or rupture within cultural normativity which she describes as oppositional consciousness, as I have discussed over the course of this manuscript. Oppositional consciousness emerges and takes part in a hermeneutic cycle of meaning making only after the individual understands that normativity can only reject their particularity, removing them from the majoritarian map because of their difference. The act of disidentifying that I noted in previous chapters precedes the differential mode and offers the opportunity to create an identity within normativity but on the terms of the individual who has already recognized its oppression and resisted it. Read from within the trappings of power associated with normativity, a move toward the differential mode can only be understood as abandonment or seduction away from normativity as a legitimate system of meaning making.

More than understanding the contact and identifying in difference that that Adore and the young white man share as abandonment of normativity, normative power must also contend with the fact that as a new discourse emerges through their contact, the space around those individuals is reshaped the emerging discourse. That is not to say that the space becomes that of those who created contact and the emerging discourse but it is to say that with this contact and the emergence of an alternative system of knowledge prevents the space from being clearly or unquestionably dominated by normative power. Rather the space becomes a borderlands, resisting definition and laying all ambiguity out as possibility for which to be identified in. This is a direct threat to the powers of normativity because from that perspective, this hermeneutic claims bodies and spaces from normativity for formations that normativity cannot sustain; ambiguity and non-normative difference. This formation also allows for intimacy to become a political action that does not need the private space and can

rupture the cultural logics and meaning making systems of the public domain. In effect, the rupture that the contact and discourse create allows for the formation of alternative forms of knowledge, of alternative forms of subject formation, of whole worlds of knowledge based on difference that need only individuals to exist, should they be embraced. To put that another way, Adore and the young man have taken part in a method of making family that is queer and that embraces difference. They have moved away from a family model that embraces patriarchy or even kinship and toward one that dares to share intimacy in a public and political way to create new domains of knowledge, that is, a new *familia*. Moreover, they have developed a form of differential consciousness that can undermine normativity with its cultural tyranny and develop a coalitional formation that allows its members to understand difference and expand knowledge rather than banish difference from normativity's limited understanding.

Conclusion: Facing the Liquid Dark or A Return to the Cariboo Café

From 1974-75 Michel Foucault facilitated a lecture series at the Collège de France on what he called “the abnormal” and its role in organizing society. The lectures would include discussions of the clinic, the discursive power of “the norm” or what might be characterized as normativity, and the rise of various institutions and practices associated with discipline, all themes that would appear in several of his most well-known published works. The genealogy he presented in the series of lectures would also position the family within normative society as a domain in need of protection from and regulation against what he would eventually call the figure of the *Abnormal*, the eventual title of the series when it was made into a book. Foucault’s concern over these lectures is far ranging but does coalesce around the tensions between what constitutes normal and abnormal and how that dialectic is used to structure the limits of society, institutions, and discursive power as well as define the role and place of family in “normal” society. Foucault uses his genealogy to explore how the binary of abnormal/normal organizes basic practices and ideological discourses within normative society or what I characterize as dominant culture, concepts reaching so far as to determine how to educate children, how to respond to individuals in need of correction, and how to negotiate who is human and who is something other. Considering the trajectory of my project, it might seem like an oversight that Foucault’s model of the abnormal and its association, even dependency on the family had not made an appearance until this point. Yet I was always bothered by some aspects of Foucault’s model and found it difficult to apply to my project. Primarily, I was always bothered that the model does not address race in any specific way, though the same can often be said for most of Foucault’s work. Secondly, it was frustrating that Foucault did not theorize the progression of the figure beyond the 19th century, especially considering that he was writing at a time of major political, cultural, and economic change and should have been

able to account for coloniality and post-colonial critiques which were emerging more than 20 years before Foucault's lectures were presented.²⁶⁸

I have brought up Foucault's abnormal figure here because I think that the woman from Nicaragua in Helena Maria Viramontes short story "The Cariboo Café" which I touched on at the start of this project calls for a rethinking Foucault's model at the same time as it animates the imperatives and dangers to reimagining family that I explore in this project and especially in the final chapter. With that in mind I want to continue my conversation about the short story from the introduction of this manuscript and develop on it.²⁶⁹

Reading the last painful and violent moments of Maria Helena Viramontes' short story "The Cariboo Café" one can only hope that the individuals there in the café who seem so badly in need of a family will unite to create one. The story illustrates the caution and hope that Moraga and Anzaldúa's work call for as they come to the brink of reimagining the family, yet resist actually taking part in any kind of reimagining that might be characterized as positivist. Such a reimagining risks recreating the same family-focused cultural tyranny that Chicano Nationalism created through its definition of family that I describe in chapter three. Instead Moraga and Anzaldúa offer a starting point to remake the family, not a plan. In Viramontes short story, we see that call take on a life and death imperative in the violent end of the story as any hope something will assert some love and empathy for a traumatized woman, a sad and fearful man, and two lost children is dashed when the woman is gunned down imagining herself to be *La Llorona* redeemed.

The pieces are there, yet without anything to cause them to coalesce into a family and without any attempt to understand one another from a perspective that does not rely on a normative family

²⁶⁸ I am thinking specifically of Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972 English translation) and Frantz Fanon who published their most well-known works in 1950 and 1952 respectively.

²⁶⁹ Rather than repeat my summary of Viramontes short story here I will invite the reader to see the summary at the start of the introduction.

imaginary, the would-be family remains the same lost and traumatized characters that the story begins with. Tragic though this may be, Sonya Saldívar-Hull considers the story to be a call for political intervention from Chicana feminists, arguing that the story aligns Chicana feminists with refugees and political exiles. She also suggests that the story's representation of existence on the margins, that is, beyond the tracks and off the radar of the authorities is one relatable by Chicanos and so argues that the story expands the reach of the "Chicano" signifier to those with similar experiences of marginality, intersectionality, and colonial oppression.²⁷⁰ The point that emerges at the end of the Viramontes short story is that each of the characters can be rendered knowable and relatable and that those interested in expanding narratives of personhood and social justice must be willing to take the step of building community with such figures.²⁷¹ This reading also makes clear that the difference embodied in each of the characters from the perspective of normativity renders them outsiders to the mythical norm, on the margins of dominant culture or, in a word, "abnormal."

This seems to bring us back to Foucault's 1974-75 lectures, where he introduces the figure of the abnormal as one that emerges from a genealogy which combines and collapses three earlier figures with similar non-normative associations for their cultural and historical moment of discursive power. I have already discussed this model by Foucault in my first chapter but I will revisit it here as well to keep the reader from having to turn back to a previous page of the manuscript. Each figure he examines has its own "frame of reference" or discursive framework in relation to family and society that must attend to them with unique or at least appropriately specific response from society, culture, and the law. He locates each of these figures from across the 18th century and into the 19th until they are collapsed into the dynamic figure of "the abnormal" at the end of the 19th century. The first figure Foucault discusses the "human monster" who's frame of reference is the natural law (god's law or divine law) and juridical

²⁷⁰ Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border* 126-27.

²⁷¹ Carlos Gallego makes a similar point in the final chapter of his analysis of Chicana/o subjectivity offering a reading of Samuel Beckett as a Chicano author, *Chicano/a Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity*, 205.

law. He writes, “The monster is the limit, both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases” and argues that this figure constitutes the violation of both of the laws of nature and of society. What this means is that the monster marks the limits of society but the human monster who might manifest in society in the form of an intersexed individual or conjoined twins constitutes a moment in which both the logics of natural and juridical law fail to offer any kind of understanding of how such a figure can be addressed and disciplined by such authority.²⁷² He writes that society has only two responses to the figures of the monster: to medicate it being that it needs more attention from society as it cannot be understood by natural or juridical law, or to kill it because it is a violation of both.²⁷³ The monster works also to assert the authority of society to define itself in opposition to that which is unintelligible from the perspective of normative intelligibility, that is, to mark a domain that is ordered and knowable as society and that which is not as something beyond society and monstrously different, unchecked by law or nature.

The second figure is the individual to be corrected or “the incorrigible” whose frame of reference is the family and its adjoining or supporting institutions, that is, the institutions that support the family attend to the correction of this abnormal figure.²⁷⁴ More common than the rare monster, this figure’s frame of reference is the disciplinary interactions between the family and the church, school, work, police, etc.²⁷⁵ Less well defined than the others, the figure takes on the aspects of societal ills that can be corrected by institutional power and so is more common than the monster. This figure is those institutions that attend the family, as Foucault puts it, to expand their power in service to the family to correct this figure and discipline him into a mostly normative figure.²⁷⁶ Foucault notes that this figure emerges as authority to arbitrate what is normal and what is not shifts away from the church and

²⁷² Foucault, 55-56.

²⁷³ Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal*. 56.

²⁷⁴ Foucault. *Abnormal* 57.

²⁷⁵ IBID

²⁷⁶ Foucault 58.

toward institutions within society: schools and the educational apparatus, doctors and the clinic, and a general progression toward governmentality.

The final figure that is condensed into the figure of the abnormal is that of the masturbating child who is not only common but ubiquitous—a figure that every family knows of but also denies. This figure's frame of reference is the bedroom, the body, the parent, brothers and sisters, immediate supervisors and caretakers, and the doctor or more simply put, the family apparatus. The figure of the masturbating child requires supervision and intervention by the parents in the family to monitor the child and its behavior with the support of other members and the direction of doctors and other experts.²⁷⁷ Foucault argues that response to this figure leads to the construction of the nuclear (with the child as the nucleus) family as parents are called upon to intervene and monitor their child's sexuality for the good of the next generation²⁷⁸. This combination of the three figures into the abnormal works to stabilize a separation of public and private domains for negotiating discipline and addressing normal and abnormal. The private domain in this model is one where the very body of the ubiquitous child is disciplined into normativity, appropriate to the public space of society. The abnormal in public can reinforce the authority of institutions as they deploy ideological discourses to maintain normativity in the public domain, correcting any incorrigibles who might stray from the ideal imaginary of what a subject should be in public. Finally, the horizon of the monster remains in the figure of the abnormal to offer power the authority to call for treatment of those antithetical to normativity or to justify their violent deaths. The emergence of the masturbating child marks a final shift toward institutional power and governmentality in Foucault's mode.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Foucault notes that as the figure gained in popularity, masturbation was linked to medical illness. *Abnormal* 237-242.

²⁷⁸ Foucault, *Abnormal* 248-51. Foucault also writes about the production of a population in his work *History of Sexuality Vol. I*.

²⁷⁹ Foucault 59.

Yet Foucault's paradigm does not explain the violence done to the woman from Nicaragua. She cannot be contextualized as a human monster by dominant society unless her brownness, that is, her skin color is read as a disfiguration. Writing this in 2017, that is a claim that one can make especially when considering how common it is for a person of color to die from an interaction with the police. Such a reading of the interaction does call for the intervention and activism of Chicana feminist and other cultural workers and critics as well as activist and every day people however it is notable that her death is brought about by the police, an institution with correctional purposes in society and though able to use violence, not regarded as monster hunters. Beyond that point, reading her or other people of color gunned down by police as the monster oversimplifies the workings of normative power as they are deployed by U.S. institutions. If read as an incorrigible, an undocumented immigrant with untreated mental illness plagued by poverty, an argument can be made that it would offer normativity more authority to treat her, institutionalize her, or deport her. But she is not corrected, she is killed. Here legal status as an undocumented immigrant constitutes the well-known secret that transgresses the horizon of nation and the juridical code that defines legal and illegal personhood in the eyes of the state, not a secret contained by the private domain but one that is negotiated and of course never spoken of in the public domain as something common and even necessary and so it might be tempting to read her as a masturbating child. As such, it would be expected that the would-be family step in to correct her, dealing with her delusional thinking and actions in a quiet and private way. Yet the only family that could be in the short story never comes together to do that and instead distrusts her.

Foucault's model of the abnormal falls short of explaining the violence done to this woman, largely because his model is predicated on dominant cultural normativity's impulse to defend the normative heteropatriarchal family and provide the conditions for it to reproduce itself over generations. Read in context of Saldívar-Hull's analysis of the story's end, it becomes clear that the violence deployed against the woman is not associated only with her marginality and intersectionality

but also with the imperative to reimagine the parameters of family as something that might include those in the café. I would argue that she did not die only because she was different from a mythical norm or dominant Imaginary and therefore unknowable from the perspective of normative power. Rather, she dies because she represented a figure that could unite difference in a politicized intimacy and in opposition to normative power.

Viramontes articulates a figure in the woman from Nicaragua that is not explained the figure of the “abnormal” nor by the genealogical constituent parts of the monster, the incorrigible, and the masturbating child. Instead she represents the possibility of a coalition, a family, forming around the concept of difference, the very imperative that allows the ending of the story to be so tragic and call for coalition building by Chicana feminists and their allies. The woman represents a figure that calls for the disparate individuals there in the café and those reading to coalesce into a coalitional unit and to share understanding of one another’s’ difference in the same intimate way I described in my fourth chapter. In the same way that Adore can be read by normative power as corrupting, the woman can also undermine the influence of normativity to alienate those of us furthest from the mythical norm by articulating a desire to be united with family for intimate reasons that allow her difference to be part of her identity and the way in which she relates and understands other. The woman does just that by reimagining the moment not as one of violence in which police kill her, thinking she is a crazed kidnapper, but by imagining that she is a mother, finally reunited with her son and no longer the woman who asked her son to go to his death one night in Nicaragua when she asked her son to buy her a mango from the street vendor outside. She reimagines that situation as one of familial unification in which she is powerful enough to defend her son against forces larger than herself.²⁸⁰ In other words, she is the only of the abnormal figures taking part in a reimagining of what family is and is doing so in such a way that

²⁸⁰ Norma Alarcón makes this argument about “The Cariboo Café” in her 1988 essay “Making Familia from Scratch.” Sonya Saldívar-Hull echoes this reading in her own analysis of the story in the fifth chapter of her book *Feminism on the Border*.

can be understood by the reader though it seems to be missed by those characters in the story. She acts as a mother defending her child and, though her misidentification of Macky, allows for the possibility that but for the intervention of the police backed by state and normative power, we could be reading a family romance and not the violent end of an immigration narrative. She constitutes the possibility that intimacy can be deployed to create formations, indeed families, outside the understanding of normativity and without the blessing of dominant culture. As such, she represents a new and dangerous figure to be added to Foucault's *Abnormal*, one I'll here call "the corruptor", offering my choice of ominous terminology from the perspective of the normative which sees all outside itself with trepidation and fear.

Foucault notes that each of the figures he describes is within the purview of a particular set of institutions, power formations, and domains. The Corruptor is no different in this regard and resides within the purview of cultural normativity and public and political discourse. It is a figure to be named a corruptor by a national discourse or at the very least a threat to dominant culture and normativity. All of the figures within the abnormal constitute a threat to the authority of normativity situated within society which Foucault associates with the state when he collapses the figures into a single figure and notes the family's role in reproducing normative individuals for the next generation.²⁸¹ The threat is, in actuality, one against the authority of normative power as I read it but it is contextualized as a threat to the family in the discourse of dominant culture. The threat of the corruptor comes from the fact that it is not a single institution or set of institutions that name it an abnormal figure. Rather this figure challenges institutions that embrace normativity from its intersectional subject position, acting against racial, gendered, sexual, religious, and class based normativity. Much as Foucault noted that the emergence of each figure marks the shift of power to different organizations, from the church to the clinic, from religion to governmentality, the corruptor marks a shift from institutional power to the

²⁸¹ Foucault 254-56.

mobilization of institutions to act on behalf of the nation to counter a spreading difference in identity with respect to intersectional individuals amid 20th and 21st century ongoing coloniality, capitalism, and mass migration.²⁸² In a real way, the figure emerges as the perimeters of state power are absorbed by the practices of nation in a globalizing moment.

The purview of such a national public/political/cultural discourse in American representational politics articulates its attendant cultural and political normativity as a kind of nationalism and a clear echo of its articulation in the 1970s. However, this articulation seeks to support what it might imagine as “real Americans” by deploying a political imaginary of subjectivity not so clearly tied to race but to a larger, more fluid, and culturally tyrannical normativity that works to mark people of color, queers, immigrants, women, and non-Christians as illegitimate. To be clear, marking them as such not for their difference but for their identity-in-difference. The figure of the corruptor emerges in intersectionality as able to identify in difference, a subject position rendered abhorrent by the essentialism of normativity yet unavoidable in a multicultural population like the U.S. at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st (much like the incorrigible or the masturbating child). The corruptor calls into question the validity of normative ideological formation and discourses of power. This figure challenges the very discourse that champions national and cultural normativity by dint of its intersectionality, exposing the idea of a normative subject as ideologically constructed. Moreover, the corruptor exposes the normative subject as the creation of a national imaginary at the same time that it suggests that the Imaginary is not a monolithic field, making clear to would be normative or assimilating subjects that an alternative imaginary might hold more efficacy for them and their own particularized difference. In other words, the existence of an intersectional individual like the woman from Nicaragua challenges and obviates the

²⁸² Foucault 48-50.

ideological engendering and discursive construction of the essential national subject and a normative family imaginary upon which dominant culture is predicated.²⁸³

Considering this within the larger arc of my project, one can see that the woman from Nicaragua is lacking in social capital because of her alienation from a mythical norm. She also lacks affiliations with the mythical norm through intimacy or marriage that might offer her security or safety as Moraga might describe, suggesting that to gain more social capital she would need to marry a man. In that context, she lacks sufficient social capital to remain on Muñoz' majoritarian map and therefore becomes legible not as in intersectional and knowable individual but as a corrupting abnormal figure appropriate for violence for the threat she constitutes to dominant culture and normative power. To find intimacy and affiliate with someone closer to the mythical norm might have saved her but it would do nothing to challenge the practices of normativity, indeed it would reinforce them. What Viramontes short story calls out for is something more audacious than marrying into normativity. It calls for the creation of a family where the logics of normativity insist through the use of cultural tyranny one cannot be—a formation normativity will not recognize as a family and one it must destroy to defend itself and its authority. "The Cariboo Café" calls for the practice of intimacy in a political and public setting, that is, the use of politicized intimacy to reimagine family precisely along the lines that I argue Adore Delano's Video "D.T.F." does.

The intimacy of "D.T.F." depends on those who share it recognizing their own difference, identifying in that difference, and assuming that it is a reason to affiliate with others who are different rather than reading that difference as a reason to resist intimacy and affiliation. The owner of the café considers that he might make that very kind of contact; he did, after all with the young man Paulie who he helped and even thought of as a son. However, he resists this the possibility of contact for fear of being taken advantage of by individuals he does not know or understand or by state authorities who he

²⁸³ The recent narrativization of white working-class Americans as the victims of immigrants, Black Lives Matter, queer organizing, diversity is an example of this in which the logics of white nationalism and supremacy were used to gain political power and populism leading to the election of Mr. Trump in the 2016 US election.

already distrusts. Put more clearly in context of the story, he resists because to embrace that kind of intimacy would implicate him in a political situation in which he would be seen to have affiliated with groups who attract the attention of cops and he notes that the cops are not his friends.²⁸⁴ What he and Viramontes both leave unsaid is the fact that the choice to extend his intimacy in a public domain risks reliving the trauma of losing his son, losing his wife, losing Paulie. It risks attracting the attention of authorities, the anger of communities, and the repression of institutions. The fact is that this kind of politicized intimacy, because it is based on the practice of identifying with difference, means that it is those very aspects of identity that one uses to define oneself that are put at risk in the gesture of politicized intimacy by cultural tyranny. That is, the difference used to make contact across difference and in spite of normativity is positioned in such a way as to be vulnerable for attack from cultural tyranny, from the repressive state apparatuses, from the institutions that serve to maintain what is normal and respond to what is abnormal. That risk might mean healing from trauma, or finding a new family but it might also mean risking physical brutality as so often is the case for queer and brown bodies and was the case for the woman from Nicaragua.

That risk is what is negotiated when an individual decides to identify in difference. It is perhaps safer to resist that choice, to look only to the private for familiar and well known kinds of intimacy and to restrict the family to a private and kinship based (biological) signifier. The would-be family in the café is also faced with that choice and understands that it might be safer to side with normativity because with normativity comes anonymity from institutions that might target them for their difference or even the protection of those institutions should an individual find their way near enough to the mythical norm. Though the latter is not really a choice for the characters in the café. The children want to avoid Immigration agents for fear of deportation and fear of losing their father. The woman wants to avoid Immigration as well but also wants to avoid anyone who realized that she relives the day she lost her

²⁸⁴ Viramontes 70.

son every moment and so does not live in any normative reality—people will think she’s crazy. The man wants to avoid attention of the cops who are not his friends and who he blames for driving his like-a-son Paulie to death. These people want anonymity from those institutional forces which they know very well hunt down difference and destroy it, correct it, and train it out. So rather than reach across the politics of difference and normativity for intimacy to create a different kind of *familia*, they pull back. They do not ever hope to be embraced by normativity, they know too well that such a thing will not, cannot happen. They turn away from the complexities of a politicized intimacy that could create a queer *familia* like Adore’s crew for fear (a very real and well-founded fear) of attention from the very institutions that maintain normativity.

This is the reason that A. B. Soto “Fags out” as a Chican@ embracing and queering the *corrido imaginary*, not ignorant of what such an identification in difference could bring him to, but despite it. It is why I turn to Adore Delano’s suggestion that she is down to fuck, because the other alternative is to know one’s place, to keep to it, and to do nothing more exciting or empowering than wash one’s clothes on an afternoon in silence. These two models do more than simply imagine identities in difference. They leave behind the lamentable feeling of what could have been that the Cariboo Café ends with and participates in the cultural work of what can be if they—if we—build it. These two artists take part in imagining as cultural work. They imagine things that challenge culture all the while understanding that they risk cultural tyranny for their trouble. Knowing that that cultural tyranny could manifest as anything from social alienation as a queer to the bloody mess left on the floor of a small café after a mother, *llorando por su hijo*, died protecting him.

These artists offer a map to the cultural imaginary that the Chicana feminists of the 1980s and 90s dared to suggest as they rewrote the terms of understanding, consciousness, family and subjectivity from the margins created by previous Chicano cultural contributions. They politicize that imaginary because for them, there is no other way to do it. Their intimacy exists beyond the limits of the

public/private binary because there is no one place that they exist perfectly. Their intimacy makes contact and builds bridges across identities because there is no single identity that defines them. They create, by their very existence, a borderlands, because they know that no thing or place or idea is ever only one thing but many. They are more than what a single discourse of power defines them to be and they risk the danger and attention of institutions that might deploy cultural tyranny to destroy them for recognizing that they are so much more than gays and Chicanos. In spite of these risks, when they dare to create family thorough politicized intimacy, they create the possibility for so much more than what normativity could ever see. Perhaps I'll end here with something my grandma told me a long time ago.

*"Del comal a la boca, la masa es poca."*²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ This is a saying by my Grandmother, Lottie Baros, which I have translated as "From the pan to the mouth, there is never enough dough" It does not translate well but if you get it, you understand. 1988, conversation.

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