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LATINOS INC.

THE MARKETING AND MAKING OF A PEOPLE

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Knowledges

Facts and Fictions of a People as a Market

Generally they have a strong regard for the family and maintain close kinship ties across the generations. . . . Most intangibly, Latinos offer the U.S. an amalgam of buoyancy, sensuousness, and flair that many northern peoples find tantalizing or mysterious—and sometimes irritating or threatening.

Time magazine (1978)

The factor that stands out as one reads through these cases is that the U.S. Hispanic market is DIFFERENT from the general market.

Roslow and Therrein Decker (1997)

Having reviewed some recurring issues affecting the Hispanic marketing industry, let us now turn to the issue of definition and attempt to address who is a Latino/Hispanic and what constitutes the so-called Hispanic market. To do so, we need to investigate the particular knowledges and understandings of the market that inform the work of Hispanic agencies and advertisers in the industry at large. I refer to the stereotypes, clichés, and dominant ideas about Hispanics that are circulated in the industry, which give form to the “truth” about Hispanic consumers, informing their representation and the ways they are sold to prospective clients. As the director of a New York shop stated, “These are the ideas that we have been hearing for a long time and that we’ve ended up believing out of truth, custom, or repetition.” As we shall see, these ideas have limited the range of innovation within the industry, shaping an un-

complicated but highly marketable picture of the Hispanic consumer that leaves stereotypes virtually unchallenged.

Of course, by focusing on the popular perceptions about Hispanics that are generated in the Hispanic advertising industry, I am not suggesting that Hispanics are reducible to mere ideas. While my discussion will attempt a general critique of research, statistics, and other forms of sanctioned knowledge generated in this industry to construct the “Hispanic consumer,” I do not intend to argue that, once conceived as an essentialized construct, general socioeconomic or demographic conclusions cannot be drawn about any particular population. As Foucault would put it, part and parcel of constructing individuals as subjects involves the acquisition of knowledges that ease the operations of power to effect, describe, mold, and constitute through statistics, surveys, and/or reports. Hence, I will be concerned not with the empirical accuracy of such categories but with their use and with the ways in which knowledges about Hispanics as consumers are continually abstracted from context and manipulated into conventions about “Hispanic customs and attitudes” as part of the process of selling the market to prospective clients. It is precisely through such statistics and market reviews—attesting that Hispanics are highly informed shoppers, or else gullible and extremely loyal to particular brands, or traditional, or hip and urban, according to the needs of the corporate client—that this population is continually stereotyped and constituted into an undifferentiated Hispanic consumer.¹

The importance of such characterizations emerges when we consider that, as a result of the growing interest by advertisers in the Hispanic market, such ideas are increasingly circulated within corporate America and the public at large. We could even argue that knowledges and characterizations of the market promoted by experts on Hispanic marketing and supported by the variety of publications and reports on “how to market” to this population are even more influential than the actual advertising images aimed at Hispanics. These ideas permeate trade publications for the advertising, marketing, and media industry and, in contrast to social science and scholarly studies about Latinos or their contributions and/or subordination in this country, they are underwritten by corporate and private interests and so find their way into publications with widespread distribution and impact. Hispanic advertising and media professionals are also constantly surpassing the boundaries of their profession to become Hispanic or multicultural “experts” in corporate and non-profit conventions and seminars, as well as in popular magazines like

Newsweek or *Time*, thereby directly affecting the public discourse and debate about Hispanics.² Thus, while it is obviously profit rather than politics that underlies marketing definitions of Hispanics, my interest in these categorizations stems from a recognition of the potential of “advertising discourse,” embodied in research reports and in the opinions of Hispanic experts and corporate intellectuals, to shape attitudes toward and dominant definitions of Hispanics, not only among prospective clients but also within the context of U.S. society at large.

As discussed in chapter 1, cultural characterizations of the Hispanic market and of Hispanics as consumers are not new. After all, this is a market whose survival and growth always depended on some putative cultural characteristics shared among so-called Hispanics. During the early days of Hispanic advertising, most of these characterizations were drawn by Hispanic advertisers on the basis of their own instincts and experiences, and were rarely supported by research. Lack of both statistical data and public recognition of Hispanics’ presence made advertising for this population an issue of “faith,” as there was no way to demonstrate either the numbers or the cultural and social characteristics of the Hispanic consumer. Generalizations were also partly a function of the scarcity of advertising budgets for Hispanics. The first generation of ad executives I talked to recalled corporate clients expecting them to just know about the market—after all they too were Hispanics—rarely investing for research, as would be customary for the general market. Additionally, lack of research at this time was due to a general shift away from research within the advertising industry. As part of what Thomas Frank has described as a “cultural revolution,” the 1960s saw the ad industry transform itself by co-opting “hipness” and youth culture, and by celebrating creativity over research, considered the symbol of “scientific authoritarianism” and an impediment to artistic creativity (Frank 1997: 92–96).

This situation facilitated the dissemination of very marketable generalizations about the Hispanic consumer during the industry’s early years in the mid 1960s. One account manager, active for over twenty-five years, recalled how one of her supervisors successfully obtained a feminine napkin account with the argument that “Hispanic women bleed more because they are hot-blooded,” convincing the Anglo corporate client to launch a special campaign for this market. Another admitted to having convinced a client to reconceive a campaign on the basis that “Hispanics don’t like humor” and therefore would not appreciate the humorous strategy developed for a soap campaign for the general market. What

convinced clients was the single most valuable selling tactic of the time: the “Latinness” of the founding figures of the industry, embodied in their charisma, behavior, and personality, which helped mark their authenticity and expertise in this nascent market. Staff who had worked with the likes of Pedro Font, founder of Font and Vaamont Advertising (FOVA), and Alicia Conill, of Conill Advertising, recalled how charmed their clients were when Alicia Conill greeted them with kisses—a transportation of Latin American greeting practices, not an overt practice of “tropicalization,” which seemed to be the practice of the day. I was told that many would do “whatever it took,” be it dance on a table or personify the Latino consumer, just to get corporate America to advertise to Hispanics as a differentiated market. As a former research associate at Univision recalled, the trend was that “if you want colorful and exotic, I’ll give you colorful and exotic.” I was never able to corroborate any story of dancing on a client’s table, although these rumors certainly suggest the speculative context in which the first contemporary portrayals of the Hispanic consumer were born.

The performance of “Latinness” by Hispanic executives was also the order of the day at SIN. As a former staff member at Univision recalled, before the station signed up for national ratings through Nielsen, the station’s only pitch to clients was that “Latinos were a heck of a lot of fun,” and the way to prove this was by “wining and dining” clients based on what he described as the old rule that “the less quantifiable your value is, the better the wine you need to buy at dinner.” As he noted,

What the early pioneers did was to look for somebody inside the company who would just have a great time doing this Hispanic thing and make sure that they had as much fun as possible. Hispanic marketing is the only industry in the world with a spring break, with Calle Ocho, which became a very important part of the whole maturation process of this industry. There people saw a whole coherent marketing community, and a street of vendors, and a million people that would come down to attend the three days of parties at Miami Beach. All you needed to do was to take the brand manager to Miami, get him drunk, keep him drunk dancing salsa with beautiful women, stuff like that. And then you’d take them to the event on Sunday where you’d see a million people waiting for product samples in lines that went on for hours, and they all came back saying, “Hey, this Hispanic market thing is pretty amazing.”

One result of this lack of market research was the dissemination of generalized assessments about the Hispanic consumer that were ultimately based on the self-image, class background, and experiences of Hispanic marketers. As generated by the Cuban advertisers that domi-

nated the industry's growth, this was a view that revolved largely around the Hispanic Caribbean and the Spanish-dominant immigrant in the Northeast—a relatively recent immigrant population in contrast to Latinos in the West—as the prototype of the Hispanic. Lionel Sosa, Texas-born founder in the late 1970s of Bromley, Aguilar, and Associates, one of the first and largest agencies founded in the western United States, noted how this view hindered the industry's growth there, where there was a large population of mostly Mexican and English-speaking, not Spanish-dominant Latinos:

They had convinced everyone that everybody is Cuban, Puerto Rican, or speaks Spanish, to the point that I had major difficulty in convincing clients that there were other types of Latinos. All jingles had a Caribbean beat or Cuban or Puerto Rican accent, and it's not that we did not like that music but that there was no room for other types of Latinos.

One of the first New York advertisers recalled that this image became so convincing that during nationwide advertising pitches, they had difficulty convincing clients, most of whom were located on the East Coast, that there were Latinos west of the Hudson River. Of course, this image was soon challenged by the advent of Hispanic marketing agencies in places like San Antonio and Los Angeles. There, another vision of the Hispanic consumer developed that was no less based on the personal experiences of those behind its production. For instance, Lionel Sosa's agency, the first and still one of the few agencies founded and led by a U.S.-born Mexican American, struggled to convince clients that there were also English-speaking Latinos who, like himself, had grown up bilingual in this country—although this alternative definition of the market never came close to eclipsing the dominant picture forged by the New York advertisers. What remained unchallenged, however, were the behavioral stereotypes that accompanied this early image of the Hispanic as a family-oriented, Catholic, traditional, conservative, and immigrant Spanish-speaking individual or, put in a harsher guise, the stereotype of the “tradition-bound, Spanish-speaking recent arrival who eats a lot, is suicidally brand-loyal, prefers audio-visual media, has a large family, does not venture beyond his ghetto-like environment, and really gets turned on by ‘his culture’ ” (Balkan 1982: 25). As will become evident in this chapter, these ideas have constituted a convincing and nearly insurmountable definition of Hispanic identity up to the present, and continue to be as dominant in contemporary advertising today as when it first began.

The persistence of these ideas has no simple explanation. As noted by Nederveen Pieterse (1992), images of “otherness” in the media function to render less threatening that which could otherwise represent a threat or alternative to the dominant social order. Accordingly, this unthreatening definition of Hispanics who remain in their place and with their culture, and who are conservative, traditional, and brand-loyal, is one that would be as attractive to corporate America as to mainstream U.S. society, and thus one that a variety of interests beyond Hispanic advertising professionals would be likely to support. After all, the Hispanic market would only “jibe” if Hispanics were packaged as “prospects, not suspects.”

Nonetheless, I would like to suggest that the saliency of these definitions rests not on their profitability but rather on their history and on the way in which U.S.-generated images of the Hispanic consumer invoked dominant ideas held by both U.S. and Latin American corporate intellectuals. Specifically, the value-laden Hispanic individual and family were not new creations but the reformulation of motifs through which Latin American intellectuals imagined themselves and projected ideas of Latin American commonality from the early 1900s onwards. In light of the growing ascendancy of the United States in the Americas, Latin American intellectuals had long developed theories of the greater worth of the Latin American civilization compared to U.S. materialism, lack of culture, and greater technological advancement, establishing in this manner “culture” as Latinos primary “domain of sovereignty” (Chatterjee 1986).³ By emphasizing Hispanic identity's moral component, as embodied in the respect for family, religion, and tradition, advertisers simply followed the same dichotomous frameworks around which Latin American middle- and upper-class intellectuals had defined what is Latin American: more moral, spiritual, and “whole” than the materialistic American culture (Fernández Retamar 1979). These ideas were congruent with the ways in which Americans had constructed Latin American populations from the nineteenth century on, although, seen from the standpoint of the United States, these were the very traits that made these populations appear ripe for and in need of U.S. colonization, modernization, or incorporation (Johnson 1980).

The dominant picture of the Hispanic consumer was therefore not an altogether original development. Instead, it is better regarded as an archetype, constituted by motifs that, while adaptable, persist across generations (Cashmore 1997: 28). In particular, the view of Hispanics as moral and traditional represents the modern equivalent of the “balance

of superiorities” between Anglos and Hispanics that characterized dominant representations of Hispanidad. As succinctly put in a marketing presentation for Colgate toothpaste drafted by SAMS in the 1970s, “Hispanics have created a balance of superiorities within the society [United States]; we are superior in culture, emotional sensitivity, delicacies of life. They are superior in technology, modernization, functionality.” Accordingly, marketing to Hispanics was an issue of communicating the superiority of American goods without “insulting Hispanic superiority,” that is, by showing deference to Hispanic values and culture.

Not surprisingly, these culturalist generalizations would prove extremely successful and convincing among Anglo corporate clients. They would also prove pivotal in linking heterogeneous populations in imagining and constructing a nationwide Hispanic market. Beginning in the mid-1970s, this development quickly became the order of the day. Until 1976, Spanish network television was quite decentralized. Although owned by SIN, each SIN affiliate operated independently in terms of advertising; this meant that advertisers had to sell ads to each station, hindering the elaboration of nationwide campaigns for the whole market. In 1976, however, Univision (then SIN) became the first major broadcaster to distribute programming to its affiliates via domestic satellite (Subervi-Vélez 1994). This development contributed to the networking of SIN stations and affiliates throughout the country and, as previously stated, lent strong support to the idea of nationwide campaigns for the totality of the Hispanic market.

This task, however, was teeming with complications. Marketing insights drawn mostly by Cubans in relation to the populations of the East—in its majority a Caribbean Hispanic population of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and later Dominicans—would often fail miserably when applied to the totality of the Hispanic market. The industry is full of such stories, some of which have attained almost folktale status. A telling example was related by a Cuban advertiser who, drawing on her immigrant experience, produced an ad in which a grandmother instructs her granddaughter about the wonders of a soap she had discovered when she first moved to this country. To her dismay, this ad was found to be offensive on the West Coast, where Latino heritage predates the very foundation of the United States. As she recalled, “This was a wake-up call. It showed how little we knew back then. This woman [a focus group participant] got up and after seeing the ad insisted that this was her country, the one that had been taken from her and that it was me who was the immigrant.” Fox’s examination of the development of Hispanic mar-

keting provides another example of these misunderstandings, this one involving a marketing plan developed by a Cuban radio personality for the Phoenix, Arizona, market. The audience, mostly Mexican and Mexican American, found a marketing event revolving around a giant paella, popular among Cubans, offensive for its connotations of Spain (Fox 1996: 35–36). In this context, research became necessary not only to reveal and to manage differences among Hispanics, such as those involving food and musical tastes or politics, but also, as we shall see, to reinforce early myths of generalizable Hispanic values and culture. These would continue to linger and even prosper with research.

THE TURN TO RESEARCH

Today, knowledges about the Hispanic market are still produced by Hispanic advertising professionals and legitimated in relation to their generalizable knowledge. However, since the 1980s these generalizations increasingly have been corroborated and justified by research. Prior to this, there had been publications defining the different regional markets, and advertisers had conducted some local research. Alicia Conill, discussing the development of her New York agency from her New York City East-side apartment, could still recall the 525 taped interviews she did by herself, dressed in “humble clothing with a dark-haired wig,” which she used to pass unnoticed while visiting high-density Latino communities for research, reminding us again of the always-present disparity between Hispanic marketers and consumers. As she told me, this research was pivotal in convincing national brand advertisers like Campbell’s Soup to advertise in the Hispanic market, allowing her to prove to her clients that Hispanics did use their products, although often in ways not intended by the manufacturer. She could still recall the bits of information she deployed in order to win the account, namely, information that emphasized the uniqueness of this market, in this case, the uncommon ways Hispanic used their products—that they cooked the soup without water, used it as *sofrito*, or a seasoned food base. However, while Conill’s 525 interviews constituted an exception in an industry dominated by the attitude described to me by an executive as “I’m a Pérez; I have a mustache; I know about the Hispanic consumer,” after the 1980s, research would become a central legitimating component of the industry. Behind this development, once more, were the Spanish TV networks (Univision, then SIN), which commissioned the first nationwide Hispanic market studies, such as Spanish USA, 1981 and 1984, conducted by the research com-

pany Yankelovich, Inc., to verify their national reach. They also helped promote and fund other research, such as the first national study of the Hispanic market by Miami-based Strategy Research Corporation and Guernica's (1982) *Reaching the Hispanic Market Effectively*, which, among other publications, provided a comprehensive view of Hispanic media, marketing, and research methods. Although not exempt from methodological problems, these studies began to imagine the Hispanic market as an essentially unified entity, marking a new trend toward legitimizing the market through research.⁴

Feeding this trend was the standardization of research within the advertising industry at large, which was even more essential for the Hispanic advertising industry because of its peripheral position. Hispanic marketers were aware that they had to prove themselves, their strategies, and the existence of their market to their general market counterparts. A research analyst explained, "In our market people are just waiting for the first opportunity to discontinue their Hispanic efforts or find fault in your campaign. Doing research allowed us to speak in their language." Hispanic research has since become the staple of a variety of research consultation firms as well as of the advertising agencies themselves, which have developed their own research divisions since the late 1980s, and—increasingly and most influentially—of general market research companies, which have also opened their own Hispanic divisions. Yankelovich has been publishing its *Hispanic Monitor*, detailing Hispanic demographics, values, and attitudes, since 1988; Nielsen inaugurated its Hispanic Television Index, tracing their TV habits, in 1992; and Simmons introduced its studies of their purchasing patterns in 1995. Other important sources of research include the *Ethnic Market Report*, published since 1993, and Isabel Valdes and Marta Seoane's *Hispanic Market Handbook* (1995; and Valdes's 2000 version) which I commonly heard referred to as the "bible of Hispanic marketing"; both could be found in all the advertising agencies I visited. Of course, these research sources are minimal compared with what is available for the general market and, most important, they have also not been exempt from criticism. This industry still relies largely on secondary research, particularly what Roberta Astroff (1997) has called "popular para-ethnography," that is, marketing research that does not present itself as science and therefore provides more room for the reification of cultural characteristics through stereotypes and for their legitimization by the "authenticity" of its authors.⁵

The relative abundance of such para-ethnography as well as of facts

and findings ensuing from research reports have conferred an unprecedented level of legitimacy on the Hispanic market among prospective clients. Research has finally lent Hispanic agencies the credibility of numbers provided by nationally recognized firms, such as Nielsen. Advertisers are now fully versed in the numbers game, which has made Hispanics a coveted target population for prospective marketers. Thus, almost everyone I talked to and every market report I read or conference I attended repeatedly informed me that Hispanics have grown by almost 50 percent since the 1980s, and that because of immigration and higher birthrates than in the general market, they are expected to double in the next twenty years; that they constitute nearly 11 percent of the U.S. population; and that if their growth continues as projected, they will constitute the largest minority group by the year 2020. Like any Latino studies scholar in the social sciences, or perhaps with even greater facility, marketers easily handled population numbers and projections for different U.S. cities, adjusted according to census post-enumeration surveys to account for the illegal and the undercounted. By selling the idea of a sizable Hispanic population, this industry has served as a voice against the ongoing omission of the undercounted and the illegal from public discourse, although, as we shall see, and notwithstanding their claims of all-inclusive Hispanic representation, it is only a particular type of Latino that this industry has been most keen on advancing. Numbers are also constantly tossed around to show that, imagined as yet another Latin American country, U.S. Hispanics would be the fifth largest and the richest. They are also described as younger than general market consumers, which makes them more flexible and more susceptible to advertising, and research shows that 75 percent of the Hispanic population is concentrated in the top five Hispanic Designated Market Areas (DMA's) of California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois, making Hispanics a population that is geographically concentrated and thus easily targeted by advertising.⁶ Research has also helped support dominant clichés about Hispanics that have been upheld in the industry from the outset. In comparison to the general market, Latinos are described as having strong traditional family values, with religion underpinning those values, and having high aspirational values common to recently arrived immigrants in this country. Research has thus not presented a more complicated picture than that of Guernica's 1982 study on the Hispanic market, in which the Hispanic world view was ultimately "shaped by three determining cultural characteristics: prevalent use of the Spanish language, close fam-

ily ties, and strong adherence to Roman Catholicism," so that advertising to Hispanics simply involves utilizing these three encompassing concepts (124).

Still, research has complicated many of the simplistic views of the Hispanic consumer that had long been promoted. The same report validating the importance of family among Hispanics also documents that home and family values are "markedly higher" among foreign-born Hispanics, females, older Hispanics, and Cubans, but that the importance of family fell slightly below what had been reported in previous reports, pointing to the process of acculturation that is so feared by the industry at large (MDI / Yankelovich 1994). Research has also confirmed the growing number of English-speaking Hispanics, a revelation at odds with the Spanish-centered definition of the market, along with the fact that, contrary to the long-held myths of the traditional family, growing numbers of Hispanic households are headed by working women. Such contradictory pictures are obviously not limited to "Hispanic research" but are endemic to marketing research as an industry and to the technology of knowledge. We know, after all, that marketing research serves more to legitimize its practitioners in the eyes of their corporate clients than to make consumers any less imaginary (Lury 1994; Lury and Warde 1997).

Nonetheless, the contradictory nature of research represents an additional challenge to the Hispanic industry at large, as was evident to me every time I encountered marketing staff in complete denial of the changing market, and whenever I saw the range of strategies marketers used to interpret research to best fit their preconceived notions of the market.⁷ As a director of research in one of the largest New York agencies explained, "People are just afraid. Now that research is beginning to challenge common understandings of the market, some people want to move away from research. What I tell them is that we don't have to leave research behind; we have to learn to present it in ways that are productive to the market." According to this research director, different Hispanic traits and characteristics could still be emphasized or downplayed according to whatever product is being marketed or the particular needs of specific corporate clients. Defining Hispanics for marketing purposes thus depends today, as it always has, on whatever audience is being targeted and which product is being sold: the definition arises from the right combination of research, generalizations, and clichés.

This is not to say that when placing so much importance on research, Hispanic advertisers are unaware of its limitations or of their own manipulations of its data.⁸ As one owner of an ethnic market research com-

pany said when responding to my questions about the reliability of market research, "Figures lie, and liars figure." Indeed, the accuracy of research has long been the subject of criticism in the advertising and marketing industry at large, and Hispanic advertisers were just as quick to point to problems in market research as to show interest in more appropriate and revealing methodologies.⁹ A trend that seemed to be in vogue during my research was that of "account planning," involving a more ethnographic/in-depth study of consumers' lifestyles and interaction with particular products. This trend made me—the anthropologist—particularly interesting to the advertising executives I talked to: they offered me jobs and asked me to lecture them on the basics of anthropological practice—which I did—so they could get a better understanding of this industry-wide turn to ethnographic research. Yet, despite a general awareness of its limits, research is still awarded a disproportionate level of legitimacy in the industry, and criticisms of it seldom go as far as doubting its methodological assumption or biases.

Contributing to this trend is the proprietary nature of most research studies, available only through purchase or subscription, or not at all outside the company that commissioned them. Their high costs mean that only the most profitable agencies have access to them; thus, these reports are not readily accessible to anyone interested in corroborating the data, methodology, or statistics that are used to back findings about and knowledges of the Hispanic consumer. For instance, *The Hispanic Market and How to Reach It*, a report of 192-plus pages published by Package Facts, a research agency based in New York City, costs \$1,850; the Yankelovich *Hispanic Monitor*, a larger, statistical, attitudinal, cultural, and demographic study, can cost up to \$13,000 for the book and \$22,000 for the total sponsorship and presentation (all 1998 prices). As a result, only the major findings reach the level of public discourse, be it through the promotional releases put out by the research company itself to be published in marketing and advertising trade journals, or else through the interpretations and interventions of particular subscribers who use the data to back their marketing recommendations. The result, despite the legitimacy that advertisers seem to grant marketing research, is that its production, dissemination, and most of all its interpretation by advertisers are always tied to some type of marketing consideration and thus are neither apolitical nor unbiased. Granted, this is true of all forms of research, although it rings particularly true for marketing research, the costs and proprietary nature of which constrain analyses of its production and of the interests behind it: In this context, determining the accuracy or le-

gitimacy of a research tool is far less fruitful than considering some of the different maneuvers to which it may be subject in practice.

MANEUVERS IN THE MARKET

Marketing presentations assembled by advertising agencies for their clients are considered extremely confidential, because in them advertisers communicate their own "take" or philosophy of the craft of Hispanic marketing. During my research, however, I was able to review a number of these presentations for products as varied as beer, soft drinks, cars, and shampoo, and while each presentation was customized for the needs of particular products, I found that all tended to follow a similar structure and that they addressed similar thematic concerns, which makes them useful introductions to the facts, figures, and general understanding behind the conceptualizations of advertising campaigns for this market.

Specifically, these documents were full of examples of the multiple ways in which marketers interpret and manipulate research in the process of selling the market. One example concerns their projection of the Hispanic market as one that is profitable, that has purchasing power, but that nonetheless remains authentically and culturally Hispanic. Dominant stereotypes of Hispanics in mainstream society revolve around the poor and welfare-dependent population—views that repel corporate clients, who are interested in middle-class and affluent consumers, and have long challenged advertising executives to convince them that Hispanics are indeed a worthy target population. To this end, those selling the market have sought to promote the idea of Hispanics' growing affluence by pointing to the considerable growth in their household incomes during the past fifteen years. According to the Yankelovich *Hispanic Monitor*, for instance, the purchasing power of U.S. Hispanics more than doubled from 1982 to 1993, from \$104 to \$221 billion, while the Association of Hispanic Marketing Agencies estimates that Latinos now make up a \$380 billion market (Riley 2000).

Similarly, images of affluence are always portrayed or alluded to in media kits and reports selling "Hispanics" to prospective advertisers. Telemundo's 1997 presentation video for prospective advertisers, for instance, shows images of affluent and well-dressed Hispanics shopping in upscale boutiques with a backdrop of numbers and figures attesting to the growing buying power of Hispanic consumers. Images of Hispanic affluence, however, are greatly distorted. For one, this image is directly at odds with the economic reality of most Latinos, whose incomes may

have increased over the past decade but nevertheless remain low relative to nationwide standards. (Not surprisingly, charts of Hispanic affluence are never matched with income figures for non-Hispanic whites, whose median annual income, at \$42,439, far exceeds that of Hispanics [U.S. Census Bureau 1998]). Latinos are still among the poor of this country, with 25.6 percent (versus 8.2 percent for whites) living in poverty and largely trapped in low-wage jobs or unemployment (U.S. Census Bureau 1998). Moreover, images of affluence mask not only the growing inequality between whites and Latinos, but also the inequality existing within and across Latino subgroups. "Affluence" is more representative of the U.S.-born Hispanic than it is of the foreign-born, and also varies greatly along the lines of nationality or according to the contexts in which particular nationalities migrated (the best known example is that of the greater affluence of early Cuban immigrants in relation to the 1980s *marielito* counterpart, who were mostly working-class immigrants, and in relation to Mexican and Puerto Rican populations; see Nelson and Tienda 1997).¹⁰ Income levels also vary along lines of nationality and language use. Hispanics' buying power is lowest among Mexicans, and highest among Cubans; their yearly earnings are \$15,072 versus \$24,012 respectively (López 1998). While Los Angeles, which is primarily Mexican, may be the largest Hispanic market, its size stems from the strength of numbers not from Latino affluence, which is concentrated in the Miami/South Florida area (Hispanic 1999). English-speaking Latinos and U.S.-educated Latinos also attract higher incomes than Spanish-dominant Latinos. The problem, however, is that these are the very Hispanics who are at odds with dominant generalizations about the market: Spanish-speaking, traditional, and foreign-born. As stated before, the foreign-born, while generally poorer, are considered the most authentic Hispanics, the most likely to be Spanish-dominant and to uphold the traditional values that are supposedly shared by all Hispanics. In projecting the idea of the affluent but culture-bound Hispanic, we thus have one of many *mélanges* that are constructed in the process of selling the market: a construction involving the higher income of the U.S.-born cloaked in the authenticity of the foreign-born, which only becomes apparent when we ignore the intraclass variation among U.S. Latinos.

Indeed, a consistent problem in marketing research on Hispanics is its lack of attention to issues of class and the reduction of so-called Hispanic traits to culture-bound generalizations. Isabel Valdes and Marta Seoane, in their *Hispanic Market Handbook* (1995; and Valdes 2000), used in many marketing presentations as a resource on the psychographic

and value orientation of Latinos, provide one of many examples of this trend. While full of caveats about the dangers of homogenizing Hispanics as one undifferentiated population, they nonetheless engage freely in this type of cultural generalization. In one of many "snapshots" of Hispanic values and cultural characteristics, they describe Hispanics as seeing themselves as part of a group, relying mostly on family, friends, and community, respecting their elders, having obedient and dependent children, upholding defined and hierarchical roles, and characterized by male dominance or machismo, in contrast to Anglos, who supposedly see themselves as individuals, rely on themselves and institutions rather than on family, and stress symmetry and democracy in interpersonal and in cross-gender relationships. While the validity of such generalizations and the sharp dichotomy in values are certainly to be questioned, what I want to call attention to here is the fact that Anglos are class-identified as "American middle class," with class becoming the primary basis for defining them, while no information is provided on the class background dominant in Hispanic samples. In this model, culture is always triumphant over class among Latinos, which makes it irrelevant to identify them by class, since they are all culturally the same, while Anglo-Americans are devoid of culture. As a result, the extent to which so-called Hispanic traits and values are more class-related than culture-based is never addressed. Are lower-class Hispanics perhaps more similar in terms of values or shopping behaviors to their African American, or Asian American, or general market counterparts than to upscale Hispanics? These questions are rarely addressed in research that treats these markets as segregated and isolated from one another.

Hispanics are also consistently presented as the most brand-loyal of consumers, though I was never given a single explanation about why and in relation to whom they are considered more loyal. We are never told if this "loyalty" stems from a lack of choice in brand availability in different markets, or is related to price or to any variable other than to Latinos' traditionalism and conservatism. And this is not without consequence. If consumption is indeed the one arena where we are told that contemporary citizens are actually heard, then the construction of Latinos and other minorities as brand-loyal ultimately renders them as the most passive, uncritical, and unselective of consumers and hence of citizens.¹¹

Yet what is undoubtedly the most highly debated and manipulated issue is the level of acculturation and language use of Hispanics. This has been a constant source of debate and contention given that, since its origins, the dominant view in the Hispanic marketing industry is that His-

panics speak Spanish and thus that Hispanics respond, understand, and connect more efficiently to messages that are transmitted in "their language." This nativist view of language is backed by most research publications on how to market to Hispanics, from Guernica's 1982 report, which argued that "the most universal and culturally unifying characteristic of U.S. Hispanics is their use of Spanish" (124), to Strategy Research Corporation's *U.S. Hispanic Market Study* (1998) and more recent publications which, beyond lifestyles, educational levels, or length of residence in the United States, consider language the primary variable for determining levels of acculturation among Hispanics. This view is backed by the Spanish networks, where the Spanish language plays a symbolic role in corroborating Latino/Hispanic identity. This emphasis, however, is also guided by the corporate clients' marketing plans and priorities for reaching the maximum number of potential consumers. Convinced that Latinos who are English-dominant or bilingual are already being reached through mainstream media, corporations almost always approach Hispanic marketing agencies having already decided to limit their marketing efforts to Latino consumers who are Spanish-speaking. Faced with these pressures, all advertising presentations include a statement explaining that Spanish is the preferred language for all Hispanics, some being more emphatic about Hispanics' use of or proficiency in this language, but all stressing that Hispanics speak Spanish and that they will continue to do so, and that the best way of reaching and connecting with them is through "their language." Even if they do not speak it, Latinos are hence deemed to be symbolically moved and touched by Spanish, reproducing essentialist equations of Latinos with their language.¹² The irony that remains unstated is that such language purity is an unattainable goal in the world of advertising, where U.S. products are being advertised and where product names—all in English—necessarily fill the airwaves with English names and Spanglish phrases.

Yet another vector creating images and knowledges of Hispanics/Latinos are the different Hispanic-targeted media, which also produce and disseminate research through media kits and marketing materials. Primary among them is Univision, which has been a strong supporter of the prevailing view of the Spanish-dominant Hispanic consumer and has long been a strong advocate of research. This emphasis is evident in its media kit, which includes a colorful and handy supplement, "The U.S. Hispanic Market in Brief," a document used by many advertising agencies as a reliable research resource, as well as a "fact sheet" listing the latest Nielsen ratings and the ranking of its programs in different time-slots. These ma-

terials stress that 90 percent of U.S. Hispanics speak Spanish, that two-thirds of U.S. Hispanic adults are foreign-born, and that 47.6 percent of the Hispanic population is Spanish-dominant. Having defined the market in this manner, the material goes on to claim that "Univision covers 92.1 percent of U.S. Hispanic households coast to coast," and that Univision has an 87 percent prime-time share of Hispanic households versus Telemundo's 13 percent. In reality, however, Univision's 87 percent prime-time share is not based on the total Hispanic market but on the percentage of Hispanic viewers watching Spanish television, which according to the Nielsen ratings, can range from 25 percent to 40 percent depending on the season. It is only out of this percentage that Univision can claim its 87 percent share of viewers. Similarly, the statement claiming that Univision covers 92.1 percent of Hispanic households is based on the fact that 92.1 percent of these households have access to Univision, not that they actually watch it, although this is not made explicit in the media kit materials. As regards the percentage of foreign-born Hispanics, only among adults is this percentage as high as two-thirds of the population, not among youth, which the same report claims is the fastest growing segment of the total Hispanic population. The point here, however, is not Univision's self-serving manipulation of numbers, but that it constructs the totality of Hispanics out of one or another of its segments. Univision makes a part—its part—into the whole. That is, these statistics not only corroborate Univision's dominance among Hispanic viewers, but also convey that Univision's viewers are the totality of the Hispanic population, hereby defined as the Spanish-speaking, Univision-watching consumer.

The portrait of the foreign-born and Spanish-dominant Hispanic that watches only Univision or Telemundo has not gone unchallenged. This view has received much criticism because of its significance to the other interests seeking also to tap into the market. BBDO's annual study on Hispanics' viewing of English-language network television, for instance, has long noted that Hispanics "watch as much—if not more—English-language television than Spanish-language, even though their viewing preferences differ from those of the general market" (Burgi 1994: 11). Univision's dominance also faces the potential challenge of new media, which are now claiming interest in younger and second- and third-generation Hispanic segments—those who have grown up in the United States watching American sitcoms and who may be less attracted to soap operas or to Latin American programming (more detailed discussion appears in chapter 4).

Specifically, the dominance of Spanish as the defining element of the market has been challenged by radio and print, cheaper and more adaptable media. In what has been called a "magazine boom," a variety of new publications have been launched in the last five years that target Hispanics, many of which challenge dominant definitions of the market with bilingual formats specifically geared to the more "acculturated market" (Nuiry 1996b). In doing so, they are creating different "knowledges" of the identity, needs, and desires of the Hispanic consumer through the same process of generalizing the totality of Hispanics out of one segment or another. In contrast to the networks, media kits for bilingual magazines increasingly stress the bilingual and bicultural experiences of most Hispanics, creating new "knowledges" about these consumers. The media kit for *Hispanic*, for instance, quotes the U.S. census to stress that 22 percent of all Hispanics speak only English, that 74 percent of Spanish-speaking Hispanics "speak English very well," and that 61 percent of Hispanics were born in the United States (*Hispanic* media kit, 1997). For its part, *Moderna's* media kit, besides detailing the high number of Latinas who regularly use foundation and mascara, emphasizes that 74 percent of its readership was born in the United States and 76 percent prefers to read in English (*Moderna* media kit, 1997). Similarly, *Urban*, aimed at the second- and third-generation youth market through articles on hip-hop personalities, Latino fraternities, and the evolution of graffiti murals, presents its constituency as the young, mobile, professional, English-dominant Latino. Again, the issue here is not whether the numbers are real or not. These conclusions are based on proprietary studies of their readers that are not shared among competing media, or else on similar sources that are given different emphasis and interpretation. The range of bilinguals, for instance, can be easily presented as English-dominant (as *Hispanic* magazine does) or Spanish-dominant (as does Univision). Rather, the point is that in reference to particular constituencies, different knowledges and definitions of the Hispanic population are generated through the same process of generalizing about the totality of Hispanics on the basis of a particular segment of that totality.

However, the proliferation of research and competing generalizations about Hispanics has also backfired in disrupting the consistent and salable portrait of this population for prospective clients. As a director of research in one of the ad agencies explained, most of their corporate clients are "Anglos from Iowa" who are prejudiced against and skeptical about marketing to Hispanics, and who, faced with research that contradicts what they had heard about Hispanics being a homogenous and

marketable construct, are more than likely to discontinue any Hispanic marketing effort. She recalled a case in which a "sure sell" was lost because the client got confused after being presented with different statistics and numbers about Hispanics, not only from competing agencies but also from different departments within her agency. Such occurrences have led the AHAA (Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies) to make the standardization of research a top priority for the organization, although the effort is doomed by this industry's essential function of selling through culture-bound generalizations.

The problems created by the different "knowledges" generated by the rise of research were highlighted during the 1998 annual meeting of the AHAA when a panel for a forum entitled "The Changing Latin Face of New York" included two speakers whose definitions of the New York market were directly at odds. New York's Designated Market Area (or DMA, based on Nielsen specifications) also includes parts of New Jersey and Connecticut, excluding most of upstate New York. Yet as noted by one of the speakers, what clients and advertisers mean by "New York" may vary greatly, as will the statistical portrayal of the New York Hispanic consumer when defined in geographic or market terms. Specifically, portrayals based on New York's statistics, defined in purely geographical terms, will reveal a more depressed picture of Hispanics as consumers than those that include the entire New York media market, which spans suburban Latino populations in Connecticut and New Jersey. As an ad executive stated, the strict geographic definition would suggest that "we are all from the ghetto"—hence the industry's concern with promoting the designated market rather than the geographical definitions of the city. Never mind that only in the imagined community conjured up by marketers are the inhabitants of New Jersey, Connecticut, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan Latinos all "New Yorkers."

AND DON'T FORGET THAT WE ALL EAT RICE AND BEANS
(OR *HABICHUELAS, POROTES, FRIJOLES* . . .)

So far I have stressed that advertisers and media executives selling to Hispanics are extremely concerned with the promotion and presentation of a comprehensive and generalizable picture of the Hispanic consumer, at least one that is consistent with the particular needs of clients and their products. However, reminiscent of Foucauldian technologies and strategies of power, managing the heterogeneity of Hispanics by exalting and organizing differences has also become a way of constituting the market

as a unique and manageable entity. Specifically, the growing recognition of difference among Hispanics by the media and the Hispanic advertising industry alike has been accompanied by the consolidation of an intricate system of typifications to manage and contain this difference, and to screen out what are viewed as nonauthentic Latinos from definitions of "Hispanic," in ways that secure bases of commonalities and the perpetuation of "authentic Hispanics."

A case in point concerns the increasingly popular categorization of Latinos/Hispanics along the axis of language use or level of acculturation by marketers and research strategists. In light of the growing recognition of Hispanics' bilingual and bicultural lives, most advertising agencies and research agencies have developed systems for categorizing these differences in order to present a more complex picture of Hispanics. Accordingly, the use of Spanish is increasingly presented not as a matter of dependency but also of preference, which provides a more fluid understanding of how Hispanics communicate in different settings. Based on a categorization of what is the dominant level of comfort, dependence, or preference in speaking a particular language—with language serving as the paramount proxy for acculturation—agencies can determine levels of acculturation in different segments of the population as well as receptivity to particular media strategies.¹³

These distinctions have not only facilitated the manipulation and selective use of segments of the "Hispanic" population but, most significantly, have provided new axes with which to market differences, such as through social and personality characterizations. One example of this trend is Dieste and Partners' breakdown of Hispanics into psychographic segments: Traditional, Conformists, Recent Seekers, Young Strivers, and Established Adapters. In this schema, levels of acculturation correspond to particular attitudes, language use, and income levels. Accordingly, the foreign-born and less acculturated are perceived as more fatalistic and conformist, whereas the most acculturated are defined by their greater aspirations, success, and income (Roslow and Therrien Decker 1998). Such definitions are obviously informed by the same dichotomies of representation along the Anglo/Hispanic axes that I have discussed throughout this chapter, although when applied to differences among Latinos, their negative undertones become more apparent. The model seems to suggest that the more Latino/a (and hence traditional) one is, the more fatalistic and conformist one also is, and that only through "acculturation" can Latinos rid themselves of such negative traits. Besides the obvious problem of reducing the complex phenomena of acculturation to

quantifiable variables that may or may not match the associations drawn by marketers for marketing purposes, I want to stress here that, upon closer examination, the categorization of Hispanics according to language use or acculturation levels often surfaces as a tool to preselect sample groups according to dominant definitions of the market. That is, these categorizations also facilitate the preselection for research purposes of monolingual Hispanics, which are considered the source of authenticity, the ones who update and renew the market, perpetuating the image of the static, unchanged, Spanish-speaking Hispanic who is so attractive to the dominant media, constituted by the Spanish networks, as well as to prospective clients.¹⁴

Indeed, during focus group sessions, Spanish-dominant Hispanics were commonly chosen as the yardstick for all Hispanics, at the cost of other categories of Hispanics, because marketers and advertisers alike were determined to create a TV ad whose only home would be a Spanish network. As the director of a New York-based market research firm explained, "Most clients interested in research make it clear that it is Spanish-dominant and regular consumers of Spanish media that they are most interested in recruiting. The problem is that they are constantly contradicting themselves. They want people [research subjects] who speak perfect Spanish but who have been here for over 2-3 years and are familiar with U.S. products." She went on to explain what had become their common solution to this quandary: the selection of Dominican participants who "tended to keep the language better," while limiting the number of "acculturated" Puerto Ricans, and keeping some extra subjects ready in the unfortunate case that one of the participants begins to break into Spanglish, or even worse, English. She did not elaborate on the generational differences between the Puerto Rican and the Dominican migrations that, for now, allow some first- or second-generation Dominicans to "speak better" than their Puerto Rican counterparts, providing an example of the unscrutinized culturalist characterizations common in the industry at large.

Yet another strategy with which advertising agencies safeguard the cultural authenticity of the Hispanic market is the selective use of mainland Puerto Ricans as part of the U.S. Hispanic market. As a U.S. Commonwealth, or free, associated state of the United States, Puerto Rico has an ambiguous political status that allows advertisers both on the mainland and on the island to present Puerto Rico both as part of the Hispanic market and as a distinct national market. My previous research on the island showed Puerto Rican marketers recurrently emphasizing the dis-

tinctiveness of their market vis-à-vis that of U.S. Hispanics in order to stress the need for nationally distinct campaigns for the nationally distinct Puerto Rican market (Dávila 1997). This distinctiveness was used to fuel the growth of the marketing industry in Puerto Rico and the popularization of nationalist symbols in advertising campaigns appealing to widespread sentiments of nationalism. At the same time, however, Puerto Rican marketers had also begun to situationally present their country as the paramount conduit for the U.S. Hispanic market, as both "Latin" and "American" and hence the best place to test products and advertising campaigns for the U.S. market. This view is represented by Puerto Rican associations like the Hispanic American Leadership, Inc., and is behind the involvement of such Puerto Rican ad agencies as Lopito, Ileana, and Howie in the newly founded Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies. The growing consolidation of the island Puerto Ricans as part of the U.S. market has important consequences for the nature and scope of the U.S. Hispanic market. For one, it instantly inflates the number of Latinos considered to be "non-acculturated and foreign-born Hispanics" in the U.S. Hispanic market. Most research companies are aware of this and generally omit Puerto Rico from their samples, following the general practice of the U.S. census, which limits U.S. Hispanics to those living in the continental United States. However, this has not curtailed the selective use of Puerto Rican statistics to imagine and present the Hispanic market in Hispanic market reports. Consider, for instance, Isabel Valdes's treatment of Puerto Rico. Despite her argument that Puerto Rico is a distinct case and that it should be treated apart from the U.S. market, she adds the number of Puerto Ricans to the number of foreign-born Hispanics in this country to make projections about the growing importance of foreign-born Hispanics. Similarly, SRC's 1998 *U.S. Hispanic Market Study* of the Strategy Research Corporation distributed questionnaires in Puerto Rico and lists Puerto Rico in its methodology, although it is not explicitly made evident where and how any resulting information was included in the final report. In both these cases, Puerto Rico is summoned by U.S. marketers as an example of the ideal "Hispanic" market: Spanish-dominant, authentic, and contained.

At another level, merging Puerto Rico with the U.S. market is troublesome because it takes as a fact what in reality is a highly contentious issue for Puerto Ricans both in the United States and on the island. Puerto Rico's independence from or incorporation into the United States has been debated throughout the hundred years of U.S. colonization of the island, and its premature resolution in marketing sources is not without

political implications: it constitutes, at the very least, a public statement in support of statehood as the only option that would ultimately secure the incorporation of Puerto Rico as part of the U.S. market.

Through this and other strategies, conceptualizations of the Hispanic market have tended to reproduce biases toward the foreign-born and Spanish-dominant Hispanics; consequently, the Latino or Hispanic identity of the English-dominant or U.S.-born Latino is downplayed if not erased. According to one marketer's interpretation of some of the language segmentation and acculturation models that are now common in the industry, "What we know is that there are three kinds of Latinos: the Latino that has just arrived, who is 100 percent Latino; the Latino that arrived as an adult, lives here for over twenty years and continues being Latino; and the one who is born here and becomes an American, even if they seek to identify themselves as a Latino." Or, as yet another one stated, "We have what we call core Hispanics, which is 70 percent of the Hispanic population; of those, 50 percent we call Spanish-dominant, the ones who live their lives in Spanish, and 20 percent we call bilingual. The remaining 30 percent are MELs (mostly English Latinos), who live their lives in English. Like me—I watch English TV and radio and may speak Spanish at home or eat rice and beans, but am in all respects gringo."

Another researcher made similar distinctions, but by differentiating between Latinos and Hispanics. While these terms are used mostly interchangeably, I also heard "Hispanics" used to refer to the unacculturated recent arrival and "Latino" to refer to the U.S.-born or more acculturated consumer. As this researcher explained, "We are really talking about two different types of Hispanics. The Hispanic who is Spanish-dominant, the guy that works hard and at night watches a soap opera and goes to sleep, and the Latino." Interestingly, as he went on to define these different segments, he attached a political personality to the Latino but not to the Hispanic. "It is Latinos that politicians are after," he added. "They are the ones that make noise and that complain if they don't like something" unlike the Hispanics who, according to him, just "watch soap operas, buy products, and work hard." This was not the first time that I heard such distinctions, in which Hispanics were seen as more docile and apolitical, and hence easier to please by advertising, as compared to their Latino counterparts, for in fact, the most marketable Hispanics are those most concerned with material acquisition, not politics. This is the Hispanic that is constructed as the nonpolitical subject, epitomized as the illegal, the alien, the one that "stays home," most afraid of visibil-

ity, traits that remain veiled and transposed, never mentioned but always implied in the very category of the "Hispanic."

Stark distinctions between Hispanics and Latinos, however, are not as prevalent in the industry. There is a general and tacit understanding that whether we call them "Latino" or "Hispanic" when we talk about them as consumers, we are referring to an "authentic" consumer not yet "contaminated" by American culture, the one who, according to our discussion above, would more likely be called a Hispanic than a Latino and who remains safe for mass consumption. I purposefully place emphasis on not being contaminated by American culture because the general view is that the more connected Hispanics are to Latin American, not U.S., culture, the more valuable they are as consumers. Latin America is thus largely regarded as the only source of vitality and strength for U.S. Latino culture. A vice president of research at BBDO, a Cuban woman who conducts presentations on the Hispanic market to clients, exemplified this current view:

Latinos don't assimilate and will not assimilate. With the advances in communications, they are constantly undergoing a process of cultural refueling. They are constantly going back to their countries and recharging their culture and values. The only ones that can't go back are the Cubans, but everyone else always goes back, and that's why we don't assimilate.

Never mind here that her statement ignores the many Central Americans who came to the United States as war refugees, as well as the working poor and illegal Latinos who can't afford such doses of cultural refurbishing upon which, according to her, Latinos' cultural identity is so dependent. She went on to explain why Cubans, who can't "benefit" from the cultural refurbishing provided by a quick airlift to Havana, remain so "Hispanic": they have highly developed family values. Her statement merits attention because, in stressing that Latinos need to travel to refurbish their culture, lest they lose it, it simultaneously implies that there is little of value in U.S.-generated Latino cultural expressions and, most significantly, that advances in telecommunications, not racism per se, are what motivate Latinos to hold their culture dear. For now, I only stress the general bias against the U.S. Latino consumer that is prevalent in this industry and is so much an outcome of marketers' projection of this market as a manageable construct. When I asked whether "Niuyoricans" and second- and third-generation, "acculturated" Latinos would ever see themselves in these images, I was invariably told that "those populations have already been lost," and that it was now up to the English-language

networks to target this type of consumer. One creative who was born and raised in Los Angeles and is fully aware that he would not be considered a Hispanic by many of his colleagues in the industry put it this way, "We know that this is not a language issue; it is a culture issue. My attitudes toward my family and toward my parents and neighborhood are all Latino, but then the issue is . . . how far can you fragment the market before it loses its value?"

In these attempts, heterogeneity is consistently downplayed or else subject to a range of "knowledges" for its management and containment according to marketing needs and requirements. A common strategy is to reduce differences not subsumed under the aforementioned issue of language/acclulturation to the issue of nationality. As an extension of the dominant view that Hispanics are culture-bound and "turned on by their culture," cultural differences among different subnationalities are often emphasized in research reports and marketing recommendations. Consider, for instance, the industry's treatment of the top Hispanic markets which, in order of size, are Los Angeles, New York, Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, San Antonio, and Houston. The populations in these markets differ greatly in terms of history, times of arrival, acculturation levels, and the heterogeneity of their Hispanic populations. Briefly, the Los Angeles and New York Hispanic populations are regarded as more acculturated than Miami's, which is the prototype of the ethnic Hispanic enclave; affluence is more concentrated in Miami than New York; large populations of Hispanics in the West date from the seventeenth century, whereas most immigration to New York peaked after the 1950s. Similarly, markets like New York City are far more heterogeneous than others, such as San Antonio, where Mexicans and Mexican Americans are 92 percent of the population, whereas there is a greater density of black Hispanics among the mostly Spanish Caribbean population of the east coast than in Los Angeles and San Antonio, where Mexicans and Central Americans represent mixtures of Spanish and Indian heritages. Despite these differences, most of the research strategists I talked to would narrow the issue of diversity to one that could easily be addressed by understanding the specific nationalities that dominate each market within specific regional areas. Following the old dictum of possessive individualism, whereby cultures are seen as distinct and self-contained (Coombe 1998; Handler 1988), regions are associated with particular cultures, and particular cultures with their own traits. This involves addressing the Miami Hispanic market by appealing to the dominant Cuban population,

that of New York by pitching to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, and making sure that any campaign for the West Coast market is undeniably Mexican. Focusing on nationalities, advertisers then rely on studies codifying the language use and cultural trademarks of these groups along the lines of religion, art, political issues, values, and socioeconomic characteristics, among other variables. Isabel Valdes's *Hispanic Market Handbook*, for instance, not only tells prospective advertisers what word each Latin American nationality uses for "beans" (*habichuelas* for Puerto Ricans, *frijoles* for Mexicans, *porotes* for Chileans) or for "bus" (*gua-gua* for Puerto Ricans, *camión* for Mexicans, and *omnibús* for Argentineans), but also which religious practices, sports, or values are dominant and what political issue is most sensitive among these groups. Not surprisingly, however, these culturalist presentations often end up reproducing distinctions and hierarchies among and across Latin American cultures and countries. Readers of Valdes's presentation of broad cultural differences among U.S. Hispanics, for instance, could easily surmise that Mexican American culture is the richest of all, on the basis of her longer discussion and more careful treatment of difference in Mexican culture relative to her discussion of Cuban and Puerto Rican culture. Readers are even guided to see the "discussion of U.S. Cubans" if they want to know about Puerto Rican language and music, subordinating Puerto Rican music to that of Cuba. Mexicans are described as "more group-oriented than other Hispanic groups," are said to "lead all other U.S. Hispanic groups in literary production," to "pronounce all the consonants, unlike Caribbean Spanish," and to be "more active politically" (Valdes and Seoane 1995: 194-202), statements that are obviously loaded with covert value judgments about the richness and complexity of particular Latino subcultures.

Such characterizations are fairly common in presentations and conferences where Hispanic consumers are even psychographically segmented along the lines of nationality. For instance, at a conference in New York City entitled "Direct Marketing to Multicultural Markets," a representative from Bell Atlantic distinguished Puerto Ricans and Caribbeans as "traditionalist" versus the South American "Proud Moderns" who, he argued, were more sophisticated and willing to take chances, and thus more likely to buy products like call waiting, caller ID, and other telephone technologies.¹⁵ In the Q & A period, I noted that class and income levels are likely to be better predictors of who would acquire such additional telecommunications services, but this suggestion

did not seem to change the presenter's mind in any way. Despite the fact that Puerto Ricans, given their commonwealth status and long involvement with the U.S. economy, could well be considered the least "traditional" of the Latino subgroups, he was convinced that the reason they did not buy these services was the "traditional" outlook of consumers of Hispanic Caribbean origin.

These differences are not only codified but also caricaturized to subsume regional, class, or generational specificities in highly reductionist ways that can be easily configured into marketing formulas. A common example of this is the reduction of regional and cultural diversity to a matter of music preferences. Adjusting to local tastes and cultural needs thus becomes a matter of using *tejano* music for multigenerational, bilingual Texas, or *rancheras* or *banda* music for rural California, or a mix of salsa and merengue for the New York market—appeals that rely on particularized nationalistic associations that ironically negate the pan-ethnic pretenses of the generic Pan-Latino project.

Evidence of the pervasiveness of this approach is the rise of ethnic festivals since the late 1980s, which have facilitated marketers' appeals to different nationalities (see figures 4 and 5). It is not surprising that the New York City market, with one of the most diversified Latino populations, is home to the greatest number of festivals, events, and parades, from the Cuban Parade in New Jersey to the Mexican, Ecuadorian, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Day Parades, always exploited to reach these subnational markets. Even some of the Pan-Hispanic festivals in the city, like Manhattan's 116th Street Festival, are organized so as to provide segmented marketing opportunities, with each stage platform dedicated to a different type of music, intended to attract particular nationalities and hence particular sponsors.

However, in seeking the more profitable nationwide campaigns, which appeal to the entire U.S. Hispanic market, advertisers are still left with the need to emphasize the existence of essential commonalities that are supposedly shared by all Latinos in order to safeguard the cohesiveness and profitability of this market. This does not mean that TV ads are no longer customized for different regional markets, but that tales of difference are always balanced with those of unity and similarity among all Hispanics, leading back to the all-familiar founding myths of spirituality, *familismo*, and conservatism. Thus, the same advertiser I quoted above as claiming that only the recently arrived Latino is truly 100 percent Latino later said that differences among Latinos were ultimately irrelevant because

the Hispanic is a very particular race. It has 50 percent of similarities, in that we are all the same, you and I are attached to our families, we love our families, we respect our ancestors and are proud of them, unlike the American, we are proud of our roots and keep eating rice and beans, but we are 50 percent different in that the Cuban is different from the Argentinean and he in turn from the Colombian . . . what we seek is to tap into that 50 percent that makes us all the same.

I heard a range of percentages of what made Hispanics the same, with the maximum being 90 percent, consisting mostly of their values (which almost always remain implied and unspecified). Whether 50 percent or 90 percent (not that levels of cultural "sameness" could ever be quantifiable), however, it is this need to define what "makes us all the same" that feeds the images through which Hispanics are represented.

Primary among these commonalities is the notion that U.S. Hispanics constitute a distinct nation within a nation. In contrast to the traditional sense of a territorially bounded nation, this "nation" is conceived as a symbolic or "imagined" community (Anderson 1983), shaped and constructed through the media, which would vest it with its own idiosyncrasies and particularities. As the founder of Font and Vaamonte, Cuban-born Pedro Font, recalled, the market had to be seen as a separate nation, "as a country that is separate and apart from the United States" if it were to be a profitable market. "This is the only way to create and maintain the Hispanic market, by considering it as a different entity with a different language and a totally different culture." The concept of a Hispanic nation was mostly used by the founders of this industry, not by its present staff, although most shared the view that U.S. Hispanics constituted a separate entity from both the United States and Latin America, as in constituting the aforementioned "fifth largest and richest Latin American country," and all shared a pervasive need to define the cultural and identity boundaries of Latinos. In this way, even if inadvertently, they too engaged in processes that are similar to nationalism, insofar as they were also concerned with the definition and consolidation of ideas about what is the most authentic or appropriate representation of Latino/Hispanic culture, a whole which comprises a conglomerate of "cultures."¹⁶

In this "nation," differences among Latinos have to be made as irrelevant and immaterial as are the differences within the U.S. market, an analogy that some marketers have used to convince clients to pay them to find an acceptable image that would lure the Puerto Rican in New York as much as the Mexican in California. As explained by a creative



Figure 4. Direct marketing through outdoor ads. *Latina* magazine float in the Puerto Rican Day Parade, New York City. Photo by author.

at Siboney Advertising, “I always tell my clients that just as they don’t do a different ad for Arkansas and Massachusetts, we don’t need to do something different for New York or California. We find something that is acceptable for all. It is like a good stew; you need to know how to cook.” In fact, it is to a Hispanic nation that most ads transport viewers, a nation in which there is little reference to the greater U.S. society in which they live.

However, while the United States is mostly absent from this advertising, it has nevertheless been a key symbolic reference in the marketers’ conceptualization of the Hispanic consumer. Just as it was in the 1960s, the United States and things “American” have been central references that have allowed them to project commonalities and override differences of race, class, or ethnicity among Hispanics. One need only talk to marketers to perceive the strength of these ideas, as I learned after asking some New York marketers to describe the “average” consumers to whom they target their ads. They were described, among overtly culturalist characterizations that recycled a view of “traditional” Hispanics in opposition to “Americans,” as people who are “conservative, who care about their culture, who are respectful of their elders and traditions, and who love to eat rice and beans.” Even staff who had been critical of market clichés repeated this idea in different versions or guises. Feeding this



Figure 5. Goya float in the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Photo by author.

notion is the unchallenged view that this market is ultimately defined by its culture and that any type of demographic, financial, attitudinal information on Hispanics must ultimately be condensed into presentations that are somehow “cultural.” Presentations to clients that do not sound “cultural enough” run the risk of losing their relevance. This view drives the continuous production of research, surveys, and portraits of the Hispanic consumer who, unlike the mainstream consumer, who is targeted in terms of class, generations, or gender, is continually reduced to the issue of “culture.”

Part of this trend is the culturalist explanation of behavior and attitudes that may actually apply to any other consumer. That Hispanics love to buy things, but that they prefer to know and trust the person they buy things from, that watching TV is a family affair, or that Hispanics love their families and want to see themselves represented in a positive light in advertising—all these qualities apply to most U.S. consumers, but they were consistently explained to me as a function of cultural uniqueness in the case of Hispanics.¹⁷

This makes communicating with Hispanic consumers a matter of communicating with emotion and to the emotions. As simply put by Lionel Sosa, founder of one of the largest Hispanic ad agencies in the United States, Sosa, Bromley, Aguilar, Noble and Associates (now Bromley Agui-

lar) in his best-selling book, *The Americano Dream*, "What we're dealing with here is the logic of the heart, not the logic of reason, and the power of its effect on everyone, but especially Latinos is remarkable. . . . Like our homelands, we are lush and warm. We are extraordinarily open with each other. We communicate through a touch, a gesture, an embrace . . ." (Sosa 1998: 112). These views are not different from many I repeatedly heard that, as simplistic as they may sound, were always backed by some sort of "research." They are not different from those that first made Hispanics so attractive for being highly diverse yet essentially culturally unified and thus approachable and marketable. Thus, after thirty years of Hispanic marketing, research initiatives, and reports, and after the growing diversification of the U.S. Hispanic population, old stereotypes are as powerful as they always were, and are perhaps even more marketable today. In contrast to the early 1960s, today these stereotypes are supported by and cloaked in the authenticity of research.

Having elaborated on some of the problems of the marketing discourse on Hispanics, we are left to contend with the fact that in projecting a sizable market, the Hispanic marketing industry has played a central role in raising Hispanics' visibility in public life. No other sector in society has been as invested in emphasizing the increasing size of this population. My point throughout this chapter, however, has been to stress that this development has been accompanied by an extension of the methods and measurements that purport to prove Hispanics' abiding cultural uniqueness and hence foreignness with respect to U.S. society and culture. Underscoring the importance of Spanish—which is a defining element of Hispanic identity but not synonymous with it—has had unavoidable repercussions on the identification of non-Spanish-speaking Latinos as integral members of this population. This calls into question the Hispanic identity of most second- or third-generation Latinos, who are bypassed by advertisers and marketing staff who, in maintaining the Spanish-centered definition of the market, have tended to emphasize the role of foreign-born, Spanish-speaking immigrants. The immigrant and Spanish-dominant Hispanic is viewed as the one who constantly reviews the market, who gives it its cultural qualities, and who—in contrast to the "complicated," bilingual, bicultural, perhaps polluted, Hispanic—is most easily sold to corporate America.

The irony is that in constructing a Hispanic market that is easily marketable—that remains safe, authentic, and ready for mass consumption—the industry ends up erasing the historical roots of Latinos in the United States that arise from its very foundation, invalidating the political claims

of Latino populations that are an intrinsic rather than an external or recently incorporated segment of the U.S. population. This view therefore reinforces the dominant image of Hispanics as immigrants who are "burdens" to the national community and foreign to U.S. society, politics, and culture. These are the Hispanics that we can market to, but also expel or banish, who will remain in their place, within their culture: the "nation within the nation" that is never really part of the "Nation." Obviously then, marketing discourse on Hispanics is implicated in perpetuating this domesticated image and must be analyzed in relation to its likely impact on contemporary Latino cultural politics. But first, let us turn to the visual representation of Hispanics, which presents similar and additional dilemmas.

25. Hispanic Heritage Month had its origins in the early 1960s when President Lyndon Johnson designated the second week of September as Hispanic Heritage Week. It was extended to a month by Congress in 1988 and observed nationally from September 15 to October 15.

26. Some companies started targeting their efforts to ethnic consumers much earlier. Robert Weems notes that in the 1940s, Pepsi-Cola had already established a "Negro-Sales Department," headed by an African American, to court African American consumers (Weems 1998). It was only after the 1970s, however, that concerted efforts were made to reach minority consumers, involving the creation of departments and the incorporation of ethnic marketing as part of a company's organization. Breweries were among the first to target Hispanics as part of a new focus on ethnic and special-interest groups in the early 1980s (McDowell 1981). Other companies opening Hispanic or ethnic marketing divisions from the late 1970s onwards include Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Anheuser-Busch, and retailers such as Sears and J. C. Penney (Khermouch 1996). For more information on American corporations' patterns of investments in the U.S. Hispanic market, see the reports issued by the Hispanic Policy Development Project (1987).

27. SAMS was bought by DeGarbo; Conill Advertising was bought by Saatchi and Saatchi; Bravo was instituted as a Hispanic shop for Young and Rubicam; Siboney U.S.A. was integrated with True North Communications; and Font and Vaamonte became part of Grey Advertising. Outside New York City, Bromley, Aguilar became 49 percent owned by the MacManus Group, and Mendoza-Dillon and Associates was bought by the WPP Group.

28. According to a study by Broadcast Investment Analysts in 1998, there were seven hundred fewer minority-owned radio stations since the passing of the Telecommunications Act in 1996 (Merli 1998). Similarly, out of more than twelve hundred TV stations in the United States, it is estimated that as of 1995 minorities owned only thirty-seven. Media ownership by minorities has been particularly affected by the eradication of the tax certificate policy, which gave tax breaks to broadcast and cable owners who sold to minority buyers (Marble 1997).

29. Many of these issues were discussed by Neil Comber, who initiated Hispanic marketing at Procter & Gamble, in a presentation on the "mundolization" of marketing at the AHAA semi-annual conference in San Antonio, February 25-28, 1999. He also explained the relative advantages to a transnational agency of hiring a Hispanic shop from the corporate clients' perspective.

CHAPTER 2

1. On this point, see Juan Flores's (1997) discussion of the demographic and analytical approaches to Latinos developed in the commercial and social science literature and how they affect conceptions of the Latino community. He makes a distinction between these approaches, which favor the quantification and hence manipulation of Latinos according to static or imposed categories, and a more fluid cultural imaginary composed of history, memory, and experience, which is thus not as quantifiable.

2. There are even reference books on "multicultural experts" available now that list ad agencies, research firms, and individual experts in multicultural mar-

kets. One example is the *Source Book of Multicultural Experts*, published by New York-based Multicultural Marketing Resources, Inc. (a multicultural marketing company tapping into this market by publishing news and information about upcoming conferences on ethnic and Hispanic marketing).

3. The Anglo/Latin dichotomy has long been at the center of nationalist ideologies in Latin America, as evidenced in the writings of Mexican José Vasconcelos, Uruguayan José E. Rodo, Cuban José Martí (Ramos 1989). These dynamics are primarily evocative of nationalist discourses in colonial contexts which have similarly established dichotomies between culture and technology and spiritualism and materialism (Chatterjee 1993). For the reformulation of these ideas by Hispanic marketers and advertisers, see Valdés and Seoane (1995), and Roslow and Therrien Decker (1998).

4. Some of these include the reports by Miami-based Strategy Research, such as its annual *Blue Book* and the *Star TV Ratings Reports*. These and other reports have been criticized for inflating statistics, generalizing about Hispanic populations on the basis of surveys conducted in high-density Hispanic urban neighborhoods, and failing to account fully for the acculturation of Hispanics (see, for instance, Soruco and Meyer 1993; Balkan 1982).

5. I am not implying here that qualitative marketing research would make a dramatic change in this situation. While consumers have been increasingly incorporated into the making of ads through research, problems in the application of ethnographic methods in marketing research and in the interpretation of this data make it far from representative of consumers' views (Stern 1998). A case in point is the screening of Hispanic consumers for focus group situations in ways that preselect the recently arrived, Spanish-dominant consumer—the one most likely to present the attitudes associated in the industry with the model Hispanic consumer.

6. These figures come mostly from the MDI/Yankelovich *Hispanic Monitor*, but readers will find them also corroborated in the reports by Strategy Research Corporation and other research reports.

7. In fact, concerns about a changing market have been debated in Hispanic marketing trade publications since the 1980s, although these issues have attained renewed importance because of the proliferation of research (Savage 1982; Gage 1983).

8. See Timothy Burke's discussion of advertising in Zimbabwe (1996) and of how knowledge of the processes of marketing research led to a general skepticism about marketing research and its use among advertising practitioners.

9. For a discussion of problems of context, perception, and interpretation in marketing research, see Leiss et al. 1997 and Ang 1996.

10. For a discussion of income disparities between English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latinos, see Dávila and Mora 2000. Their study emphatically shows that English skills are directly correlated to income growth, even in regions where the minority language (Spanish) is dominant.

11. On this point, see Austin (1994) and Chin (2001), who discuss the pathologization of consumption among African Americans and their rendering as uncritical, compulsive shoppers.

12. This situation echoes Vilma Santiago-Irizarry's (1996) discussion of how

language was treated in therapeutic settings in the context of multicultural health policies. Just as Latinos were prescribed culturally sensitive or language-driven therapy as the default treatment, language purity is deemed the optimal medium through which to reach the Hispanic consumer.

13. See Bell 1995 for a discussion of these strategies by Sosa, Bromley, Aguilar, Noble and Associates of San Antonio.

14. These are the kinds of issues behind current debates about the accuracy of Nielsen's Hispanic ratings (Wartzman and Flint 2000). See also Soruco and Meyer (1993) for criticisms of sampling methods according to geography and surname—for instance, they note that in many areas of the country, Hispanics often do not have Hispanic surnames and are not counted or surveyed as such. Granted, the preselection of audiences for focus group purposes is not unique to the case at hand. Esther Hamburger's study of the use of focus groups by audience researchers at Brazil's Globo, for instance, perceptively revealed how the entire Brazilian audience is spoken for on the basis of a limited universe of viewers: urban, middle-class women selected only from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Hamburger 2000).

15. Conference: Direct Marketing to Multicultural Markets, March 18-19, 1999, at the New York Helmsley Hotel.

16. These issues have been discussed in relation to multiculturalism by Cruz 1996; Segal and Handler 1995; Turner 1994; and Williams 1993. I also discuss them in greater detail in Dávila 1999a. Briefly, this research has noted that the process of identity creation forged by multiculturalism and nationalism reproduces an essentialized view of cultural identities, whereby these are seen and presented as single, concrete, and identifiable entities with a unique history and cultural property that corroborate their existence and connect them with a distinct past and territory.

17. An interesting study that dispels some of the generalizations about Hispanics' media habits was recently produced by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (1998). It attests to the bilingual nature of Latino TV viewership, contradicting the Spanish-centered viewing habits claimed by Hispanic marketers. It also evidences many similarities in Anglo and Latino viewing habits, as well as differences in the TV viewing habits of Spanish- and English-dominant Latinos, contradicting the representation of Latinos as one undifferentiated construct.

CHAPTER 3

1. Whether Latinas constitute a racial or ethnic group is a contentious issue. When describing "Hispanic" and "Latina" as racial categories I seek to call attention to the unavailability of race as a central variable affecting the incorporation and subordination of Latinas in the U.S. context. While some subgroups are certainly more likely to be racialized, all have to contend with the lingering effects that race plays in defining contemporary Latinidad. For discussion of these issues, see Alcoff 2000 and Gracia and De Greiff 2000.

2. Until the late 1960s, most advertising (approximately 84 percent) aired on Spanish-language TV consisted of local spots for local products and advertisers (Wilkinson 1995). Thus, whereas it was common for marketing presenta-