Powered by a driving beat, clever lyrics, and assertive attitudes, rap music and hip hop culture have engrossed American youth since the mid-1980s. Although the first rappers were African Americans, rap and hip hop culture quickly spread to other ethnic groups who have added their own cultural elements to the music. Chicano Rap offers the first in-depth look at how Chicano/a youth have adopted and adapted rap music and hip hop culture to express their views on gender and violence, as well as on how Chicano/a youth fit into a globalizing world.

Pancho McFarland, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Chicago State University, examines over five hundred songs and seventy rap artists from all the major Chicano rap regions—San Diego, San Francisco and Northern California, Texas, and Chicago and the Midwest, in his book Chicano Rap Gender and Violence in the Postindustrial Barrio.

Pancho McFarland discusses the cultural, political, historical, and economic contexts in which Chicano rap has emerged and how these have shaped the violence and misogyny often expressed in Chicano rap and hip hop. In particular, he argues that the misogyny and violence of Chicano rap are direct outcomes of the "patriarchal dominance paradigm" that governs human relations in the United States. McFarland also explains how globalization, economic restructuring, and the conservative shift in national politics have affected Chicano/a youth and Chicano rap. He concludes with a look at how Xicana feminists, some Chicano rappers, and other cultural workers are striving to reach Chicano/a youth with a democratic, peaceful, empowering, and liberating message.

Below is an excerpt and the table of contents. The book can be ordered at http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/mcfchi.html

Introduction: A Hip-Hop Project

In 1980 my cousin Pete Cortez introduced me to the Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight." It was unlike anything I had heard or seen. The cover to the fourteen-minute extended-play single was eye-catching, with a bright orange, yellow, and red psychedelic cylinder shape on a sky-blue background. The music of "Rapper's Delight" consisted of reinterpreted disco funk sounds including a sample of Chic's 1979 hit "Good Times." But it was the vocal delivery and lyrics that most intrigued me. The three MCs boast and tell funny stories in short, rapid, rhythmic, and rhyming phrases. Big Bank Hank uses part of his verse to court an imaginary

woman by comparing himself to Superman and boasting that he is, in fact, far superior. Wonder Mike tells of an awful dinner at his friend's house. I thought the song was musical and lyrical genius. I enjoyed the word play, clever use of image and metaphor, the way the MCs gave new meaning to familiar words, and the use of disparaging humor that was similar to the dozens (a form of African American humor in which two people compete to deliver the most creative insult).

Growing up in mostly Mexican American/Chicana/o communities of the Southwest, I witnessed and learned to participate in verbal joking and humorous storytelling sessions with aunts, uncles, and peers. The lyrics to "Rapper's Delight" reminded me of family get-togethers, hanging out with friends at parks and in school, and the type of humor to which I had become accustomed. I later learned that the type of disparaging humor in Mexican/Chicana/o communities I witnessed was called cábula. The way the Sugar Hill Gang practiced cábula or the dozens was especially fun and entertaining. I, like millions of other Black, Brown, White, Asian, and other youths, was hooked.

I listened to my piano idol, Stevie Wonder, and other funk pioneers; Mexican (American) rancheras, cumbias, and other popular music my mother played; and the psychedelic rock and roll my father preferred. But after this initial exposure to rap in my cousin's basement in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I began seeking out rap music. By the mid-1980s I had become a full-fledged hip-hop head. Through mass media outlets including movies such as Breakin" and Wild Style and tapes of "White Horse," "The Message," and Herbie Hancock's "Rock It," I learned about and participated in hip-hop culture. During my junior high school years in my hometowns of Raton, New Mexico, and Pueblo, Colorado, we developed a 'scene" of b-boys and b-girls (male and female breakdancers) along with other rap enthusiasts. A few of us got together to practice the breakdance moves we saw on the big screen and in some early music videos. I, like all hip-hop enthusiasts, began to integrate and innovate. I invented new moves to complement the standard popping, locking, ticking, windmilling, and backspinning of the early days and fused aspects of the Chicana/o culture that surrounded me with aspects of Black expressive culture that captured my imagination. The language of my Mexican American peers, the street slang, graffiti writing, the cool style of the Chicana/o stroll and attitude, and the intimate and intricate dance steps I learned at Chicana/o bars, weddings, and other celebrations merged with the dance steps I practiced in my living room watching Michael Jackson and Prince videos, the breaking moves I saw in the movies and in youth gatherings in Pueblo and Raton, and my faithful Saturday morning viewing of Soul Train.

My identity was dramatically impacted by all of these aspects of Black and Chicana/o culture and the rural nuevo mexicano culture of Raton. I walked the walk and talked the talk of the emerging Chicana/o hip-hop culture. My clothes, my attitude, my stare exhibited a unique cultural syncretism that would continue to influence my worldview, consciousness, and personal

interactions. In many different ways, hundreds of thousands of Chicana/o youth since the 1980s have created a new culture and new cultural identities out of the multiple cultural, political, and social influences found in Mexican America. This new mestizaje (mixture) of Black, Mexican, Chicana/o, Native American, and corporate pop cultural elements shapes today's ethnic Mexican youth. How young people of Mexican descent understand themselves and their world in the postindustrial United States is a subject that few have addressed. In this study I examine hip-hop culture and rap music and Chicana/o participation in this new subculture in order to begin uncovering how the racial, cultural, economic, and political environments of the late twentieth century shaped the experiences of a large segment of Chicana/o youth.

Rap "blew up," becoming a mass, global phenomenon, in the mid- to late 1980s with the incredible commercial success of Run DMC and the Beastie Boys (my first rap concert). But by then I was in college, and the predominant culture of The Colorado College rejected rap for a stylized, neo-hippie environmentalism. Few there danced. Few appropriated, mixed, and reinvented (three central aspects of hip-hop culture) the street style that helped solidify and strengthen my identity. As a result, I felt myself in a cultural wasteland, and my dorm room and frequent visits home were my cultural oases. My associations with the campus MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and the Black Student Union kept rap and hip-hop culture alive for me. Kid Frost, also known as Frost, released his anthem, "La Raza," in 1990, and our weekly parties featured several listenings. Even so, I no longer danced. I had no one with whom to dance, riff off, or appreciate the artistry of rap music and hip-hop culture. In hip hop one needs a crew to do what we do.

I would not return to rap and hip-hop culture with the same kind of need until late in my graduate-school career when I needed the Black and Brown stylings, attitude, and outlook of hip hop as a shield against the often oppressive, soul-crushing, and Eurocentric culture of academia. Rap became my model for resisting the academy (Bragg and McFarland 1998). Its creative use of language, its communal nature, its "reality," its subject matter, its pedagogy, and its expressed privileging of people of color and our cultures provided inspiration and served as a model for my intellectual life and career. Like many youth of color, I used rap to survive. It is a release, a way to keep my dignity, sanity, and identity. Without it I could not have finished the dissertation, gotten a job, published articles, or helped maintain a family. From my years of participating in hip-hop culture and researching it and other expressive cultural forms, I am certain that it helped millions of young people of color succeed in their later lives. These pages, my raps, analyze some of the issues central to Chicano rap over the years. Perspectives of young Chicanas/os on gender and violence in particular, as well as their views on identity, politics, economics, love and other topics, have been largely overlooked, underappreciated, or reviled in the larger, dominant social, political, and cultural spaces of the United States. But in hip-hop culture and rap music, their voices are provided a stage. It is upon this stage we should look for a Chicana/o youth perspective.

Researching Rap

I began writing about rap music in 1997 when my partner and I would wake up nearly every morning and press the Play button on our CD player. In an instant our house was filled with the beautiful and angry baritone instrument that was Tupac Shakur's voice. Tupac's unapologetic pro-Black, pro-people of color rants, at once comforting and disconcerting, allowed us to navigate the choking traffic that was the 8 A.M. commute in Austin, Texas. After our desperate search for parking, we would walk to our offices chanting familiar lines from Tupac's Makaveli CD. We were ready to meet the day and our choice: assimilate and earn our degrees or be ourselves, speak out, and, most likely, flunk out. So we rapped "It's a White man's world" and then sang the response "Who knows what tomorrow brings?"

One morning while listening to Tupac we agreed to an experiment in the decolonization of our minds. We stayed home and began to write about the importance of rap and hip-hop culture to people like us, students of color frustrated at the crushing assimilative effects of the academy. In a few short weeks we wrote an article, shared it with friends and colleagues, and had it accepted for publication. I was in the middle of my dissertation research concerning the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, and was eager to finish. As soon as I finished my Ph.D., I began to more rigorously research rap phenomena. I chose to focus on Chicana/o participation in rap because only a small handful of articles had documented it. It was natural for me to look at Chicanas/os in rap and hip-hop culture since I had been a Chicano hip-hop head, I had studied Chicana/o culture formally for nearly a dozen years, and in my new surroundings (I had moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado) a large number of Chicana/o youths were involved in the culture. I began to speak to Chicana/o youths about rap and began listening to the artists they talked about. By the end of 1999 I developed a strategy for taking a sample of Chicano rap songs and coding them by topic. Methods

Since the early 1990s Chicano rap entrepreneurs have distributed their product via the Internet, grassroots advertising, and small distribution companies and out of the trunks of their cars at festivals, car shows, and swap meets. With some exceptions, Chicano rap acts have received very little radio airplay or national recognition. Most Chicano rap acts are known and supported in their hometowns and regions and work in small concert venues within a limited circuit that primarily encompasses the southwestern United States, though many have taken their acts to other countries.

Few scholars have conducted research into this subculture. Del Barco (1996), Delgado (1998), Kelly (1993), Rodriguez (2003), and Saldívar (2002) provide useful analyses of some of the early and most popular Chicano rappers, such as Kid Frost, Chicano 2 Da Bone, A Lighter

Shade of Brown, Latin Alliance, Aztlán Nation, and Cypress Hill. These initial discussions do not address the explosion in Chicano rap that occurred in the mid-1990s. While a focus on the nationalism of early Chicano rappers provides much-needed understanding of the politics and social critique of Chicano youth, such a small sample of the large and growing subculture fails to provide insight into the multiple and complex dialogues taking place in the Chicano hip-hop subculture. Thus, I have identified a need to expand upon the work of Del Barco, Delgado, Kelly, Rodríguez, and Saldívar by collecting and examining a large and diverse sample of Chicano rap songs.

Since previous scholarly work on Chicano rap focused primarily on Los Angeles musicians, I believe it is necessary to include rappers from all other major Chicano rap regions: San Diego, San Francisco and northern California, Texas, and Chicago and the Midwest. I also expand upon the narrow slice of Chicano rap presented by previous scholars by including work from different subgenres. Moreover, since the early 1990s, a new generation of Chicano rap consumers with different tastes and preferences has begun to participate in Chicana/o hip-hop culture.

I learned about youth preferences on websites and in focus groups with Chicanos ages twelve to twenty. Important websites such as the Chicana/o culture site Brown Pride (www.brownpride.com) and those of Chicano rap recording labels and artists provide a wealth of information on consumer preferences. The Brown Pride website had ten million visitors per month in 2004 (Krazy Race 2004d). It has chat rooms, bulletin boards, and forums where hundreds of Chicano rap aficionados discuss Chicana/o culture, society, and politics. Every day Chicano rap fans post hundreds of messages discussing their favorite artists, arguing over the importance of artists, conducting informal polls, and otherwise exchanging information about Chicana/o hip hop. Two other groups of youth enhanced my knowledge of Chicano rap. Various judges in Colorado Springs, Colorado, sentenced Chicanas/os of middle school and high school age to attend a youth program designed by a nonprofit Chicana/o family advocacy organization. These young people agreed to share their knowledge of Chicano rap with me. They introduced me to rappers who claimed "gangsta" or "thug" identities and who rapped about the often violent environments of working-class urban Chicanas/os. They emphasized the importance of groups such as Brownside, Darkroom Familia, Proper Dos, and Low Profile artists.

The other group of youths came from a very different place. They were middle-class, privileged Chicana/o students who loved hip hop but tended to avoid the gangsta styles and narratives enjoyed by working-class youth. They rejected these rappers as taking advantage of White America's stereotype of Chicanas/os as violent and ill-mannered. They saw gangsta narratives as counterproductive. Instead, they talked about "old school" artists and those with an overtly progressive political stance. They focused on the ways in which certain artists spoke of love and kindness and presented "positive" plans for social change. Artists such as Delinquent Habits

and Kid Frost often came up in conversations as well as many progressive and/or underground Black rap artists such as Oakland's The Coup, Los Angeles'' Jurassic 5, and dead prez.

Between 1999 and 2002 I carefully monitored Chicana/o rap Internet sites and participated in dozens of stimulating discussions and debates about Chicano rap. I gained a wealth of information concerning important artists. This research, combined with years of Chicano rap consumption, provided me with valuable background on which artists Chicana/o youth preferred. Based on this research I chose a sample of Chicano rap artists and 470 songs for analysis. I coded the songs for themes of women, drug use, police-community relations, identity, violence, and social conditions in the communities. I have chosen to examine what Chicano rappers'' discussions of violence and gender can tell us about their experiences in the postindustrial United States, their gender and ethnic identities, and their understanding of political and economic processes.

Over the past five years I have discovered other artists and have been in conversations with many of them. Through email correspondence and phone conversations with Krazy Race, Zero, Slush the Villain, Transcend, Pony Boy, Shysti, Fernando Escobar, Jacken, and Jehuniko, my knowledge of Chicano rap artists has grown. This book presents what I have learned through conversations with youths and leading underground artists, four years of Internet monitoring, and seventeen years of listening to Chicana/o rap.

Chapter Summaries

This project is concerned with several issues I have identified as central to understanding Chicano rap and Chicanas/os participating in hip-hop culture. The first broad set of issues involves how to read Chicano rap. Chapters One and Two are dedicated to understanding the cultural, political, historical, and economic contexts in which this culture has evolved. In Chapter One, ''Reading Chicano Rap: The Patriarchal Dominance Paradigm in the Postindustrial Barrio,'' I develop a theoretical framework from which to examine Chicano rap discussions of violence and gender. I use the idea of ''articulation'' as a ''theory of contexts'' in which we examine the political, cultural, economic, and social fields of a given moment in order to understand the development and significance of cultural products. To understand Chicano rap violence and misogyny we must keep in mind the violent and misogynist contexts out of which it develops. I argue that we must examine the dominant, corporate-controlled culture industries, Mexican American oral culture, the popularity of gangsta rap, the political economy of the past three decades, and political violence. Through such an examination of the contexts of the late twentieth century we find that the dominant paradigm for understanding human relations in the United States is ''the patriarchal dominance paradigm.'' This paradigm favors dominance and

misogyny as opposed to cooperation and love and uses violence as a means of solving disputes. The paradigm encourages personal interactions based on competition and conquest, dichotomous understandings of others, xenophobia, and racism. This paradigm dominates the worldview of many U.S. denizens and contributes importantly to the worldview developed in some Chicano rap.

Chapter Two, "Chicano Rap Primer: A Guide to Artists and Genres," provides a brief overview of Chicano rap regions and styles. Chicano rap is incredibly diverse and has more than a twenty-year history. From the early innovators like Kid Frost, Cypress Hill, and Lighter Shade of Brown to today's underground groups, Chicanas/os in rap prove to be as diverse as the Chicana/o/Mexican population in the United States. Chicanas/os differ regionally, linguistically, generationally, racially, politically, and economically. Chicano rappers come from a variety of cities, have widely varying musical, political, and cultural influences, have myriad complex worldviews, and dress and speak differently depending upon locale and experience. This chapter details some of these distinctions. Importantly, I further examine the influence of urban African American youth culture on Chicana/o rap. Intercultural exchange between Blacks and Chicanas/os living in close proximity in urban settings such as Los Angeles and the popularity of urban Black culture have helped shape Chicana/o hip-hop culture, youth attitudes and worldview, and rap rhetoric of violence and misogyny.

The second set of issues I examine in this study involves images of gender and what these representations tell us about Chicano gender socialization and attitudes toward gender identity, gender relations, and gender roles. Chapter Three, "Machos y Malas Mujeres: The Gendered Image," examines how the dominant U.S. culture and our Chicano patriarchal traditions contribute to a rigid understanding of gender for most Chicana/o youth. In Chicano rap, men are hypermasculine, dominant creatures, and women are hyperfeminine, sexualized Others. Through a discussion of Chicana/o and Mexicano expressive culture and the representation of women in popular culture, we see how closely representations of gender in Chicano rap resemble long-held dichotomous notions of gender. Moreover, these representations are powerful in that they tend to normalize gender inequality and violence and to socialize youth into narrow beliefs about gender roles and identities-beliefs that more often than not are detrimental to women and lead to dangerous male behaviors.

In Chapter Four, 'sexual Agency in Chicana Rap: JV Versus Ms. Sancha," I examine the work of these two Chicana rappers. They create their music on a thin line between the misogyny of the dominant and youth cultures and their own experiences as strong young women. While they must participate in a youth subculture that privileges males and their worldviews, they recognize that as young Chicanas their experiences, worldviews, and attitudes differ and often challenge those of their male peers. Their balancing act consists of mastering a male-dominated art form, language, and style that rap audiences prefer without repeating and strengthening the misogyny

and violence of much of Chicano rap lyrics. This chapter presents two very different perspectives on female identity and sexuality. Ms. Sancha represents an uncritical, sexually objectified woman under patriarchal control. JV, on the other hand, presents herself and womanhood as complex and contradictory. She presents women as sexual subjects and agents of their lives. She is out of male control but is not always a Xicanista (Chicana feminist).

The third set of issues concerns the violent lyrical content of much Chicano rap music. Chapter Five, "Violence and Chicano Rap: Mirror of a Belligerent Society," examines the ways in which an aesthetics of violence, interpersonal violence, and a politics of violence are central parts of the cultural field from which young Chicanos draw to develop their discussions and analyses of violence. I examine the ubiquity of violence in U.S. popular entertainment and how close readings of Chicano rap reveal the influence of movies, video games, and gangsta rap music on hip-hop culture. The rise in interpersonal violence, especially the sanctioning of violence against women and the epidemic of gang violence during the 1980s, also contributes to young Chicanos" understandings of violence. Misogynist violence in Chicano rap reveals a devaluing of women similar to that found in our dominant media and in our culture, which naturalizes violence against women and fails to protect them from assault and other abuses by men.

Misogynist and entertainment violence are part of a larger culture of violence upon which U.S. identity, polity, economy, and territory are based. The history of state violence to capture territory and resources and to subdue resistance to U.S. colonialism, slavery, and ongoing violent racism is celebrated in our schoolbooks, national holidays, and media. Recent and current military exercises and wars and their depictions in the corporate media socialize our youth into a belief that U.S. government violence is always right and moral and that solving problems by violence is legitimate and necessary. Many Chicano rappers reflect these attitudes in their lyrics. Chicano rappers whom I label "gangsta rappers" are quick to use violence to solve rivalries or to gain resources. Other rappers connect our long history of state violence to elite greed, racism, and colonial desires for the expansion of territory and control of others" resources. They critique state violence and argue for resistance to it.

Chicano rap has developed in a period of capitalist globalization, economic restructuring in the United States, and a push to the extreme right in national politics. Working-class Chicana/o youth of the 1980s and 1990s have suffered some of the worst consequences of these trends. We have seen our job prospects become more limited, our schools deteriorate, our incarceration rates increase dramatically, and an all-out war against us in the name of the war on drugs and "tough on crime" legislation. Many of us have seen our very existence criminalized as anti-immigrant legislation and rhetoric have spawned a new nativism among the U.S. citizenry, and the gang threat has led to egregious civil rights abuses that include not allowing many young people to gather in large groups, drive their cars, or listen to certain types of music. Chapter Six, "The Chicano Rap on Globalization," is intended to assist those who

have misinformation or no information about working-class Chicano youth and the consequences of globalization understand the effects on our communities that the past thirty years of oppressive legislation have had. I examine the work of a small group of Chicano rappers who address the consequences of globalization in their lyrics. Through an engagement with this extremely marginalized sector of the U.S. population we can begin to see globalization from the perspective of those victimized by it. Moreover, as I suggest throughout the book, Chicana/o youth are not simply victims of a "crazed world," but they speak back to power and have created a subculture that is often beyond the control of the market, the political parties, and the cops.

The final broad issue I examine is developing a rap pedagogy. In Chapter Seven, "Confronting Dominance and Constructing Relationships with Young People," I examine the challenges to the patriarchal dominance paradigm posed by Xicana feminist scholarship, some Chicano rappers, and cultural work that explores the radical, life-affirming possibilities of community and love. Xicana feminists expand the possibilities of understanding gender, peace, and human relationships. They explode oppressive categories like male, female, Chicano, and democracy while creating examples of egalitarian, anti-authoritarian cultural and social practices that might serve as models for working-class Chicana/o and other youth. Groups like El Vuh, Victor E, 2Mex, and 5th Battalion speak for unity, peace, justice, and the transcendent power of love. They gain an ever-greater following each year they spread their messages. As we approach a new historical epoch, what the Maya called "the Sixth Sun," these artists disperse a call of revolution rooted in indigenous traditions and spirituality, love, understanding, and hospitality. Luis Rodriguez, veteran of inner-city street wars, racism, and economic inequality, has emerged as a leading critic of U.S. domestic policy concerning youth, criminal justice, drugs, class, and race. He has advocated for Chicana/o, Black, and other youth for more than two decades. He speaks about the revolutionary potential of community building for changing problems facing our youth and our society. He challenges elders and all community members to take our youth as our number one priority, not give up on them, and realize our responsibility toward them (L. Rodriguez 2001).

In accepting the advice and wisdom of these groups of Chicana/o intellectuals, I argue for a pedagogy of hip hop that addresses youth in their places while constantly challenging them to venture toward new ideas and possibilities. Rap music and hip-hop culture continue to impact the lives of young people. My experiences in the classroom discussing rap music have taught me that with our guidance, youth cultures can have powerful positive effects. Hip hop and rap have the potential to transcend the patriarchal dominance paradigm, but they also have the potential to further drive our youth and our world into violence, authoritarianism, and misogyny. The actions of elders, professors, teachers, police personnel, family members, and other community members can tip the balance in favor of positive change.

A Note on Labels and Language

I prefer the term "Chicano" as opposed to other ethnic identifiers for several reasons. First, often the rappers of Mexican and Mexican American descent in the United States on whom I focus here use "Chicano" as their central racial/ethnic identifier. Second, any in-depth examination of the genre will be able to draw a clear line between the music, lyrics, attitudes, language, and politics of these rappers and Mexican American, Mexican, and Chicana/o history and culture. Chicano rap as I define it in these pages is clearly a part of a tradition that begins in the Valley of Mexico several hundred years ago, continues through the Spanish and U.S. conquests of the colonial period (1519 to the early 1900s), and culminates in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. These rappers are part of the historical legacy of the fateful period in Mexican and U.S. history when the United States of America took possession of Mexico's northern frontier through warfare. Chicano rappers are the sons and grandsons of Mexicans who were dispossessed of their lands after the Mexican-U.S. War (1846-1848) or who because of the United States" dominance of Mexico since the war have chosen to (or been forced to, depending on one's perspective) migrate to what was once northern Mexico. Third, "Chicano" is as much a political identifier as an ethnic one. These young men (and some women) challenge the postcolonial, postindustrial politics of the United States of America. Their rebellious attitudes, independent spirits, and often radical rhetoric are implicit, if not always explicit, critiques of contemporary U.S. society. In the 1960s "Chicano" became the identity of choice for young people who similarly challenged U.S. society. For these reasons I choose the term "Chicano" as opposed to "Mexican," "Mexican American," "Mexican-American," "Mexicano," "Latino," or "Hispanic."

I often refer to Chicanos-that is, males. I do this purposefully, leaving out females because this is a male-dominated cultural scene, and I am mostly referring to young men. Rappers are overwhelmingly young men. While females participate, I am primarily speaking about a male expressive practice. This does not mean that young women are absent or that they have had no impact on the culture. It simply suggests that the dominant discourses, attitudes, styles, language, and themes result from the cultures and concerns of young men. This, of course, is changing, and I describe the work of important Chicana rappers in Chapter Four. When I speak of young women and men together I use the term "Chicanas/os." Otherwise, I use the gender-specific terms "Chicano" and sometimes "Chicana."

Throughout the book I also use the terms "Latino," "Latina/o," and "Hispanic," reluctantly, when quoting others or citing data that use these pan-ethnic terms. "Hispanic" is problematic because many see it as an ethnic identifier forced upon U.S. communities of Latin American descent; it is not a label freely chosen by these communities. Second, "Hispanic," like "Latino," as a pan-ethnic term is misleading in that it condenses vastly different peoples and cultures under one label. The various groups that constitute "Hispanic" have different histories, settlement

patterns, economic situations, racial make ups, and relations to other races. "Latino" is problematic because it is not specific to the community I am examining. Many find it more acceptable since the term is, at least, in Spanish.

"Latino" and "Hispanic" also privilege the European aspects of the cultures of people of Latin American descent, many of whom have begun to recover and take pride in their indigenous heritage. Many suggest that this erasing of the indigenous in our biological and cultural makeup furthers European colonization and is, at its root, racist. However, there are times when I feel it is appropriate to speak of U.S. communities of Latin American descent. In these cases, I prefer the terms "Latino" or "Latina/o." I occasionally use the term "Mexicano," which suggests Mexican culture in both Mexico and the United States.

I use the terms "rappers," "MCs," and "artists" consciously and for specific purposes. Since this book is concerned primarily with the lyrics as rapped and written by Chicanos, I most commonly use the term "rapper" to describe them. "Rapper" emphasizes oral ability and the use of written language and poetics. "MC" is a term that many old hip-hop heads use to distinguish good rappers from bad ones and that I use interchangeably with "rapper." However, "MC" is common only within certain sectors of the hip-hop community and is not used or even known by those outside of this community. Thus I generally use the term "rapper," as it is a more common identifier. I use "artist" throughout the book to emphasize more than the oral or lyrical abilities of the rappers and to suggest that these young men and women are more than poets or wordsmiths. They are artists who use music, other sounds, language, style, facial expression, clothes, and dance to express themselves and communicate to their audience and peers. I intend to deliberately challenge those who reserve the term "artist" for what is often referred to as "high art." The elitist notion of high art versus popular culture or low art has been used to suggest the inferiority of popular or folk artistic expression. It has often been used in racist ways to distinguish European classical art and music from the "folk" art of ethnic Others. The music and lyrics of the best Chicano rappers and music producers are every bit as complicated, nuanced, and sophisticated as European classical music, for example. While most Chicano rappers and music producers are not formally trained in music, they have a complex understanding of rhythm, vocal delivery, the biological and psychological impacts of sound on their audiences, and other aspects of music. They may not be able to articulate their knowledge in ways that music professors or classical musicians might understand and respect, but it is important knowledge nonetheless. And their knowledge may be more important and pertinent to the contemporary society and culture in which we live.

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