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# Citizenship(s), belonging and xenophobia

## Ecuador and NYC

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This article uses a linguistic anthropological approach to map and analyze the relationship between constructions of gayness vis-à-vis xenophobia and media discourses around it. This article is part of a broader research study that looks at the life strategies of the Ecuadorian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community in New York City in the face of exclusion resulting in xenophobia. This community's Ecuador-New York trajectory is marked not only by their identities as immigrants but also by other forms of diversity — race, class, ethnicity, migrant status and citizenship. The story of Renato, one of the Ecuadorian gay men interviewed is used as a backdrop to flesh out how language “acts” within this particular situated context.

**Keywords:** migration, xenophobia, queer studies, sexualities, gender, Ecuador, Latin America, citizenship, identities

### 1. Introduction

*[I]dentities, no matter how strategically deployed, are not always chosen, but are in fact constituted by relations of power always historically determined. (Visweswaran 1994:8)*

A queer political economic perspective on migration outlined by Cantú (2009) has helped to further make visible the importance of looking at the current global crisis vis-à-vis transnational and globalized flows of people, goods, ideas, technology and desire. Within this framework, I use a linguistic anthropological perspective to explore two issues: (1) negotiation of life strategies and identity formations among the Ecuadorian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) community in New York City considering the current global economic crisis and the toughening-up of U.S. migratory policies in the last ten years and; (2) processes of exclusion that include xenophobia. This paper is part of a larger ethnographic

research project that uses a socio-historic framework to problematize the multiple ways in which ethnicity, race, class, gender and sexuality are negotiated in Ecuadorian migrant experiences and the impact in the labor situation of this community.

By making these intricate relations more visible, I highlight how categories of language, sexuality, gender, class, race and ethnicity are directly entangled with issues of citizenship, desire, belonging and as such, immigration status. Some of this paper's key questions that emerge from the relationship between the securitization of migrant experiences and the precarious formation of citizenship highlight the intricate relations between these categories and issues. By making the issues of citizenship, desire, belonging and migration visible, I critically engage the limits and constraints of current paradigms within which sexuality and gender have been commonly analyzed as they intersect with race, class, ethnicity and citizenship (sexual and others).

In the case of Ecuadorians who self-identify as gay, the queer versus ethnic networks translate into groups not necessarily marked by ethnicity and/or place of origin but by sexual identity which quickly moves them from the enclaves of Ecuadorians and Latinos towards the Manhattan neighborhoods that are not only "whiter" but have more economic as well as social capital. This social mobility has enabled this group of gay Ecuadorians to have better opportunities to confront the economic crisis within the framework of changing immigration policies and securitization of life. This should not be assumed as assimilation (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters 2002) but rather as new ways of confronting and negotiating identity, belonging and citizenship.

## 2. Methodology

Using the work of Cantú (2009:21) as a preliminary theoretical and methodological framework, one of the objectives established for this research project was to emphasize the importance of articulating sexuality in migration studies and along with it the sexuality of non-heterosexual migrants not as a demographic characteristic or an additional component but rather as an axis in relationships of power that directly influence migratory routes and as such the communities of origin as well as those of destination. This theoretical and methodological act of "queering" migration is closely connected with the act of "queering" discourses and practices that reproduce heteronormativity. A pervasive but recurrent example of a heteronormative societal practice is xenophobia. In this article I juxtapose Ecuadorian gay men's narratives as they relate to processes of discrimination with xenophobic practices and discourses against Ecuadorians living in NYC (attacked based on the

perception that they were gay *and* Latino and/or Mexican). In order to do this, I use Fairclough's (2001) discourse analysis approach for social research that maps how power relations that are engrained in social interactions are embedded in everyday life discourses. I also include the concept of "strategic distancing" that refers to the ways in which different communities — such as the LGBT Latinos in D.C. — negotiate, challenge and resignify identity categories, positionalities and as such, belonging (Viteri in press). I argue that these concepts enable us to conceptualize how race,<sup>1</sup> ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive with and through the way (normative and non-normative) citizenship and belonging mechanisms operate. I draw out the underlying texts on race, ethnicity, immigrant status, belonging and citizenship through Butler and Spivak's (2011) analysis that starts with a crucial question that poignantly addresses these domains: Who sings the nation-state?

During the summers of 2011 and 2012, I conducted ethnographic research in New York City<sup>2</sup> (particularly in Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan) with gay, lesbian and trans Ecuadorians. This ethnographic research included twelve in-depth interviews with Ecuadorian men who self-identify as gay as well as semi-structured conversations and more informal conversations in subways, queer clubs, restaurants, on shopping trips and on the streets. Access to gay Ecuadorian men was relatively easy through HIV/AIDS organizations or similar groups. The average age of informants was between 34 and 49 years old. Of those, 30% have completed university studies but only 10% have legal residency; however, all have successful positions mostly in the service sector such as restaurants and many collaborate in Latino gay activists and HIV/AIDS prevention organizations. For the purpose of this article, I focus on one Ecuadorian gay man's narrative — that of Renato — as a backdrop to flesh out the relationship between constructions of gayness vis-à-vis xenophobia and media discourses around them. In order to do this, I also analyze internet sources that covered three xenophobic crimes against three Ecuadorians. I am particularly interested in how the queer community responded to one of these crimes that of José Sucuzhañay who was subjected to homophobic slurs and was killed based on his *perceived homosexuality*. I argue that the fact that Sucuzhañay was not gay but apparently killed because he was perceived as gay *and* Latino creates a disjuncture in the homogenous rhetoric encompassing xenophobia, sexualizing an already racialized discourse.

At the time of my research study, all the gay men interviewed were undocumented. In order to stay in the United States, they had all extended their visas. This implied that they did not arrive in the USA by having to walk for hours or days through the desert or cross a river with the characteristic coyote or by themselves. This immigrant status also implies an impossibility to leave the United States.<sup>3</sup> Another common denominator of this population was having delayed access to

the application process for political asylum, which was often due to lack of social networks or English fluency, as well as timely access to application forms and information.

With the objective of situating the gay, lesbian and trans-Ecuadorian community within the localized context of the Ecuadorian migration in New York, I conducted structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews that included the migrant community established in New York since the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> This data will not be analyzed in this article but it richly informs some of the historical trajectory for the analysis.

### 3. A queer anthropological approach to migration

The queer anthropological approach I have used in this research project is based on two key premises: (1) deterritorialization (Kearney 2004, Sassen 1996), which understands migration without the assumption that it has a fixed point of departure (home country) and point of arrival (recipient country); (2) the articulation of sexuality, language and migration as interconnected power relations that are implicated in the migration journey as well as on those who stayed behind. I am also interested in mapping how the relationship between language and sexuality highlights class, gender, ethnic, racial, sexual divisions and hierarchies. Situated accounts of language and sexuality by definition exclude some analytic elements from their purview while focusing intensely on others (Visweswaran 1994: 41). By *situating* these narratives (Haraway 1988), I highlight how knowledge is related to power structures as well as the need to break away from universals. The importance of this approach is that it adds an additional layer of analysis by placing sexuality/sexualities in the center of the discussion rhizomatically which is characterized by simultaneously going different ways and thereby inhibiting traditional categorizations and taxonomies as the emphasis is constantly changing (Viteri in press). This implies thinking about how different groups are inserted in a geo-socio-political migrant space, and whose real and perceived differences (such as being Latino and gay, or a heterosexual Latino perceived as gay) will intercede and act in xenophobic practices and discourses.

As a linguist and anthropologist, I use the word *migrant* in reference to all the moments and spaces of the migrant chain (Castro Domingo 2008: 246) that include the effects of migration and their role on the construction of daily practices, which constitute belonging and citizenship in ways that go beyond a legal definition. The use of italics in reference to *migrant* alludes to the historical racialization of the term and constant negative stereotyping as thoroughly discussed by Dávila (2001) on the making of *Latino* as a brand. “Legality” appears distant due to the

scope and perception of its discourse, but it also takes on life and is materialized in the bodies of people, in this case the Ecuadorian LGBTIQ community and in the institutional practices of Ecuador and the United States.

### 3.1 English with an accent: The racialization of *gay* and the sexualization of the *migrant*

Renato<sup>5</sup> is 34 years old, born in Guayaquil, the principal ocean port of Ecuador, and arrived in NYC 11 years ago. Based on his ancestry (Syrian grandfather), by traditional stereotypical standards, Renato would not easily be classified as either Ecuadorian or Latino as he is fair-skinned, blonde and taller than most Ecuadorian men. That is to say, Renato's physical appearance already confronts a lineal idea of *the Latino* as embedded in the imagery.

As I discuss elsewhere (Viteri 2013), current immigration policies and constant changes in Homeland Security guidelines have aided in representing 'Latinos' as potential 'terrorists'... as a serious confrontation to 'U.S. cultural values,' as predicated by Samuel Huntington (1996) and others writing specifically against 'Latino' immigration. Renato recalls how he always dreamed about traveling abroad while growing up in Guayaquil. It was probably Renato's father who spurred his migrant curiosity as he lived undocumented in NYC between 1980 and 1986 and then in Barcelona for nine years where he was a resident. Nevertheless, Renato's migration was not based on economic needs but was based on his sexual identity where he wanted to "find a place where he could be free and do and be whatever he wanted".

Renato does not have a college degree and has worked as a waiter in a restaurant in New York City for almost 8 years. He had previously lived in California for two years when he was much younger. Renato enjoys design and jewelry making. His current boyfriend provides for vacations and sick days. He lives alone in a luxurious building in Manhattan paid as part of his 7-year relationship with a prominent married man and has an apartment under his name. He considers himself gay although he has had relations with women. One of the salient facts in this narrative is that Renato disidentifies with the category of immigrant as his testimony illustrates:

*I identify as Ecuadorian not as an immigrant [cause] I have an apartment under my name, a job, stability, the only thing that I can't do is leave the country and come back.*

Following Fairclough (2001), what are the presupposed semantic relations between the linguistic and cultural category of immigrant and, as Renato suggests, having social and economic capital? Renato infers that this social and economic capital automatically distances himself from the loaded category of immigrant.

His undocumented status weights less than his social and economic — hence cultural — status in the island. By contesting the racial and class-loaded category of immigrant, Renato is confronting racialized depictions of his persona while at the same time reifying stereotypical meanings around both *Latino* and immigrant.

As a gay Latino man, Renato negotiates his life by a very well known saying both in English and Spanish: to have one foot here and one foot there (*con un pie aquí y allá*). For instance, he talks about how his *Latinidad* is usually a topic of conversation and sometimes mockery within his network of (white) gay Americans despite his ability to “pass as white”. This ability is constrained by how his accent is perceived in relation to his phenotype (as non-standard English, as a foreigner, as unable to speak fluent English). As Leap and Boellstorff (2004: 11) remind us, linguistic practices analyzed as ‘articulation between cultures’ can be powerful resources to localize (gay) language within particular social dynamics that inform larger issues. In Renato’s case, his primary identity as ‘gay’ might unpack his strategic distancing against *migrant* and hence *Latino* identities. White gay men’s interpellation of Renato’s accent speaks toward linguistic diversity as inextricably linked to the production and reproduction of social inequality (Kroskrity 2000: 27).

In Renato’s own words:

*(I’ve had) lots of luck in this country, (I have) an apartment in my name. This country has taught me a lot. In 10 years, I’ve learned much more than what I did there in 24 years. It’s like you have one foot here and one foot there — I pay taxes, I have a job, I have good credit. What I can’t do is leave this country and come back again. Because I am Latino and I have an accent people tease me: “Your accent is so strong — Why are you so blonde if you come from South America?” I have not been discriminated against for being homosexual in NYC but I have for having an accent and for being from Latin America. They have a ‘mafia’ — (white gay Americans) attack you although I can pass as someone from the US. (They will tell me) “You don’t look Ecuadorian. You look Russian.” (But) I love my country. I am 100% Ecuadorian. Now when I say I am gay, homosexual (heterosexual people) say “I have friends like you” (and I think) “What does that mean.”<sup>6</sup>*

Renato’s accent as made visible in his mostly “white” gay American social networks indexes the specificity of a race and ethnicity, in this particular case *Latino*. *Latino* is already associated with the category of “immigrant” as discussed earlier and as per media discourses<sup>7</sup> that shape the population’s image. His particular use of *mafia* as related to the “white” gay community allows him to disidentify — as in Muñoz’ (1999) discussion — with this community despite and because he is able to pass as white within certain changing contexts. I want to use Renato’s “passing as white” gay persona, disidentification practices and undocumented status as a context in which to problematize hate discourses and hate practices that ended in the assassination of three fellow Ecuadorians, none of whom were gay, but they

were killed in the assumption that they were Mexican and Latino and gay (except for Marcelo Lucero although all are feminized). This analysis parallels that of Epps, Valens and Johnson González (2005: 5) where passport controls, border checks, interviews, interdiction, detainment, 'secondary inspection,' profiling and other tactics have served to establish or determine identities, to draw out 'confessions' of who one is.

Similar to Renato, most gay Ecuadorian men that collaborated with this research study were reluctant to use "migrant" or "immigrant" as a primary identity. Instead, they used their gay identity as a source of pride. Based on the interviews we had, I argue that the strategic use of the term "gay" acts to confront the tainted stereotypes of "migrant". Disidentifying with "migrant" allowed these men to distance themselves from the negative linguistic and ideological forms of discrimination associated with being a migrant.

The binarism and heteronormativity of the traditional readings on migration are displaced through narratives like Renato's in which, on the one hand, heterosexuality is accentuated (he is able to pass as heterosexual) but ethnicity and nationality stand out *through* his accent. As discussed by Lippi-Green (1997: 41), non-accented English does not correspond to any particular variety of US English, but a collectively held ideal associated with a series of social and regional associations hierarchically organized.

What has it meant in the urban geography of NYC not to be identified as Ecuadorian but, for example, "Russian" (as revealed by *the* accent)? It implies, according to Renato, the possibility of a faster access to "white" middle class and upper class circles. It can also be read as an illustrative case of the latent contradictions when contrasting notions of race, ethnicity politics and citizenship converge (Castro Domingo 2008: 242), in this particular case, with a layer of additional convergence: sexuality. It can also be seen as racialism under the rigid black/white racial division still prevalent in the United States (Omi & Winant 1994).

The notion of borders as elucidated by authors such as Anzaldúa (1987), Sabsay (2011), Gilroy (2000) becomes essential to understand how mechanisms of exclusion operate, starting with those that define citizenship (Sabsay 2011: 29). Several of these processes are illustrated in Renato's narrative: marked stereotypical representations of Latin and South America as the opposite of "being blonde" within a certain phenotype. Language occupies a central place in the interpretations around accents, which are interconnected with comments about passing for American; that is to say, distinguishing oneself from what it means to be "Latino" *and* gay. Due to his perceived whiteness, Renato does not *confront* the quintuple stigma that some other gay Ecuadorians carry: migrant, undocumented, 'brown' *and* Latino, in addition to being perceived as non-heterosexual. While there has been a tendency to homogenize migrant populations, new approaches such as



those suggested by queer and feminist perspectives make visible the fact that there are groups that, while sharing the same nationality (in this case Ecuadorian), have very little in common other than their birthplace. Categories such as gay, undocumented, migrant, brown and Latino become unstable as they are appropriated by people in localized contexts confronting any straightforward relationships and thus destabilizing the categories, even momentarily.

Another theme that emerges from approaches that break away from the linear stance of traditional understandings of migration<sup>8</sup> is how identity, citizenship and physical presence in a country are not concomitant.<sup>9</sup> U.S. citizenship, awaited with hope and anxiety, might solve some basic needs such as work, rights and health insurance but it does not solve problems of belonging related to discrimination and segregation from society in everyday life nor the ability to be(come) an active citizen.

From an anthropological linguistic perspective, the *migrant* is already loaded with a multiplicity of signifiers that penalize those who inhabit the category. These signifiers paint the migrant as “brown”, illegal, wetback and speaking with an accent, just to name a few. These signifiers, coupled with the gay sexual identity add layers of discrimination while complicating the analysis as I explain further in the following section.

### 3.2 Securitization, homophobia and racialized ethnicity

Several other factors should be considered when looking at migration in this context such as the anti-immigrant policies of recent years, the impact of 9/11 in the reification of discriminatory nationalist discourses (Viteri & Tobler 2009), and the recent economic crisis which have strengthened the relationship between the racialized figure of the immigrant and the sexualization of that same figure with homophobic undertones. The result has been an increase in xenophobic and homophobic violence. Examples of this increased violence can be found in incidents that include two Ecuadorians, Marcelo Lucero (37 years) killed in Patchogue, Long Island in November 2008, and José Sucuzhañay (31 years) assassinated only a month later in Brooklyn after being subjected to homophobic and xenophobic insults (Southern Poverty Law Center 2009). From an anthropological linguistic perspective, one of the most important elements to be considered is Sucuzhañay’s heterosexuality: blogs and news articles suggest it was *unfair* to identify Sucuzhañay as gay whereas a xenophobic attack based on race was more naturalized as the following excerpt from a New York Times article illustrates:

*Prosecutors say the men assaulted the brothers because they were Hispanic and because the suspects mistakenly believed that the brothers were gay.*<sup>10</sup>

The concept of “perceived gayness” parallels an image built around the criminalization of “what is not considered heterosexual” and that is already racialized as Latino and immigrant. Particularly within the post 9/11 context, these shifting positionalities that Viteri and Tobler (2009) address are embedded within shifting political economies, the politics of immigration and racial formation as suggested by Alexander (2005:88).

The mechanisms of racialization under the framework of the current immigration policy create an agenda where the immigrant becomes synonymous with “criminal”. Although Obama’s Dream Act<sup>11</sup> passed at the national level in June 2012, there are threatening policies left intact such as the essential core of the Arizona law that allows law enforcement to determine if a person who has been stopped or arrested for any reason is undocumented. In doing so, these mechanisms reify negative stereotypes about Latino migrants (or those who are perceived as such) in particular. These racializing mechanisms are other forms of exclusion vis-à-vis the mechanisms of sexualization as discussed in the next section.

In addition to the exacerbation of the figure of the migrant as “other” — that is, foreign and threatening the status quo — we can bring into the analysis the well-known case of Marcelo Lucero mentioned above, in which a group of American “white” teenagers had come to “hunt Mexicans” in a kind of pastime that put an end to the life of this young Ecuadorian man. Wong, Roberts and Campbell-Kibler (2002) talk about the politics of signification — that is to say, the various ways in which the social practice of meaning-making is controlled and determined. According to the authors, words are not given fixed meanings; rather they draw on social category labels that draw on social stereotypes, moral attitudes, old connotations and future possibilities as well as different ideologies. Marcelo Lucero was *neither* Mexican nor gay but the profile of the undesirable immigrant constructed by this community of young white boys already feminized Marcelo, assigned him a nationality, a perceived “race”, a perceived migration status and a perceived ethnicity to any that might fit the racially-charged immigrant stereotype. This racially *and* sexually charged profile is in turn constructed by media representations that both stigmatize and essentialize the Latino community as discussed by Arlene Dávila (2001). Marcelo might not have been killed if these discourses — then turned into practices — will not be in place.

Another hate crime is that of Anthony Collao who was only 18 years old when he attended a gay party in Queens and upon leaving was beaten and killed, accused of being homosexual. Some of the news coverage on this case highlights Collao’s heterosexuality in the headlines and in the text: “New York: a young man of 18 years, heterosexual, died a victim of a homophobic attack.”<sup>12</sup>

The New York blog entitled “Two Apples” (its objective is to keep the LGBT community informed of relevant news), continued its coverage with several references

to the fact that both Collao and Sucuzhañay were not gay but were perceived to have been, pointing out the homophobic nature of the attack in the first place:

*A young man of 18 who died last week after a brutal aggression of a homophobic nature.*

*Collao was not gay, but it didn't matter.*<sup>13</sup>

*Jose, an Ecuadorian immigrant, died in New York in 2008 from a similar attack victim: he was mistaken for a gay and suffered a brutal homophobic aggression.*<sup>14</sup>

These texts speak towards Visweswaran's (1994: 41) argument that "acts of omission are as important to read as the acts of commission constructing the analysis". When race and ethnicity collide with sexuality within a particular context where country of origin and "illegal" immigration status are paralleled with non-whiteness, the effects are pervasive. What I mean by "pervasive" is that this discourse takes the reader back to an essentialist question of whether "race" or sexuality comes first and how language acts to construct those categories differentially. As made evident in the newspaper headline, within the hierarchy of social categories, *non-heterosexuality* is seen as more transgressive than *non-whiteness* itself. For Sucuzhañay and Collao, being perceived as gay *and* Latino acted as two signifying meanings that translated as extreme violence that led to their assassination. Based on Fairclough's (2001: 130) approach, "what is at issue here is classification, preconstructed classificatory schemes or systems of classification... preconstructed and taken for granted 'di-visions' through which people continuously generate 'visions' of the world". Following Ochs (1992), gender, sexual and ethnic markers are informing these media and community responses, indexing citizenship as a social category where belonging is hindered by those same markers. Sexuality is intrinsic and directly tied to both the nationality and the 'race' and ethnicity of these Ecuadorians.

Marcelo, José, Anthony and the Ecuadorian brothers Julio and Marco are material lives from which the mechanisms and processes of language and surveillance around heteronormativity make unexpected intersections with the migratory experience. Gender, sexuality, migrant bodies, "Latinidad" and belonging — which in many senses is precarious and contradictory — politicize the daily life of both migrants and their communities. Migratory experiences in relation to precarious citizenship in turn acknowledge the relationship between sexuality, desire and processes of xenophobia, citizenship, belonging, and migrant status directly related to the mechanisms and discourses around securitization, which in turn will influence decisions about the economy.

The heteronormative sexualization of the (already racialized) Latino migrant persona turns into an excuse for torture, discrimination and persecution in what is defined as hate language translated into hate crimes. I define heteronormative sexualization within a migratory context as a mechanism through which migrants

are either feminized (Puar 2008), refused any sexuality other than heterosexual, and/or demonized for disrupting the nuclear family (leaving spouses and/or kids behind). Similar to Luibhéid and Cantú's (2005) analysis, the narratives analyzed illustrate how citizenship boundaries are continually redrawn through practices of discipline and surveillance directed at migrants.

Following Sassen (2009), it is precisely the inability to achieve full citizenship that allows agency and other (new) various forms of citizenship to emerge. These various forms of citizenship and agency, as well as the experience of discrimination in its intersectionality ("race", ethnicity, gender, sexuality, readings of the population in the host country [possibilities of passing for "heterosexual" or "white"]) are non-linear, and are therefore subject to a series of juxtaposed factors according to the above-mentioned narratives. In terms of discrimination within a framework of post 9/11 securitization, there is a marked reference to discrimination based on sexual identity in the country of origin compared to that experienced in New York which seems masked, at least rhetorically, compared to the experiences of discrimination based on "race" and ethnicity. What does it mean to "be mistaken for a gay" within a xenophobic context? It implies that the media discourses analyzed above reinforce stereotypical assumptions where a hate crime is constructed mostly around ethnicity devaluing/obscuring the importance of the intersection between ethnicity and sexuality. Regimes of language and sexuality interact with those of ethnicity and nationhood to enable xenophobia and xenophobic responses. The way blog/media discourses index race and ethnicity in opposition to sexuality produces a new form of heteronormativity that tends to naturalize race and ethnicity-based violence.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the ethnographic work conducted, I have argued that by situating sexuality and desire as means to critically approach other kinds of normativities — such as racial and ethnic difference, class hierarchies, (il)legal status, migratory status, national belonging, or citizenship — anthropologists working on the intersections of language, discourse and power are better able to epistemologically and methodologically confront and critique not only regimes of heteronormativity, but also other kinds of hierarchies and normativities such as those visible through Renato's experience of having an accent in English. Having an accent is associated with having less education and less ability to integrate, and marks an ethnic and racial identity that points toward a particular nationality, in this case non-American and Latino.

Jokisch and Pribilsky (2002) have stressed the importance of analyzing so-called new migrations of Ecuadorians who have expanded their countries of

destination from Europe (mainly Spain, as a result of the economic crisis of Ecuador in 1999), considering three main factors: gender relations, the importance of transnational networks and their connections, and the emerging roles of non-governmental actors in the formalization of migration. This paper has added language and sexuality as another axis of analysis to look at the racialized *and* sexualized migrant persona.

Ecuadorian gay men such as Renato have been able to negotiate different ways of belonging despite their undocumented status and having an accent. The sexualization of race as per media discourses and LGBT and Ecuadorian community responses speaks to the many forms of homophobia and xenophobia that take place. Nevertheless, Ecuadorian gay men such as Renato have been able to move up the social and economic ladder relatively quickly due to three main factors: (1) a favorable period of migration to NYC in which surveillance mechanisms were less aggressive, (2) higher education level at the time of migration (undergraduate studies) and, (3) stronger gay networks in opposition to ethnic networks.

This analysis allows for a broader understanding of the processes and mechanisms involved in the migrant journey. Judith Butler (Visweswaran 1994:69) urges us to examine institutional histories of subjection and subjectification to comprehend the grammar of the subject. The ways that some gay Ecuadorian men negotiate a precarious citizenship exceeds hegemonic discourses of regimented citizenship as well as the way borders are theorized. Discourses around the immigrant who is assumed to be illegal *and* Mexican unpack the tension through which “race”, ethnicity and sexuality become productive mechanisms for xenophobia and discrimination. Renato’s strategic distancing from the figure of the “migrant” reveals the pervasiveness of this prescribed category that is discriminated against to the point of killing, as analyzed in the latter half of this article. At the same time, the sexualization (faggot, gay) of this prescriptive category (Latino, Mexican, Ecuadorian) reifies the heteronormativity of the migrant and how media discourses and the communities themselves respond to xenophobic practices as in the cases of Marcelo, José and Anthony. Within the particular context of José’s murder after being called a faggot, the newspaper headlines and NYC blogs had reported his race and ethnicity and his being heterosexual. By indexing his race, ethnicity and his being heterosexual, media discourses on Ecuadorian non-queer migrants like José and Anthony reify heteronormative immigration images. Simultaneously, gay men like Renato challenge those same representations by refusing to fit the ethnicity and migrant categories, and instead place the emphasis on his gayness. Media coverage of murdered Ecuadorian men vis-à-vis Renato’s narrative demonstrate once again the importance of being able to ‘pass’ as white in the U.S.A. which allows Renato to belong as gay in the thriving and competitive world of Manhattan despite his undocumented status and his Ecuatorianidad.

## Notes

1. Race is understood as a social construction legitimized by hegemonic discourses that depict it as biological, fixed.
2. This research project was possible thanks to FLACSO/Ecuador's FDA research funding for professors.
3. One of my informants, now a good friend, was able to obtain residency and travel to Ecuador to visit his hometown Cuenca after at least eight years of living in the United States. Another is also in the process of obtaining a resident visa.
4. Among these particular type of migrants I was able to interview some of its leaders, founders, directors or presidents of Ecuadorian organizations, clubs and the like; the owners and directors of Ecuadorian newspapers; Ecuadorian government officials, business owners and bankers that have become successful and that are recognized by the community.
5. I use pseudonyms for the Ecuadorians that participated in this investigation.
6. The original quote in Spanish is as follows: "Yo he tenido mucha suerte en este país, (tengo) un apartamento a mi nombre. Este país me ha dado mucha sabiduría. En 10 años, aprendí mucho más de lo que viví allá en 24 años. (osea) tienes un pie aquí y otra allá, pago taxes, tengo mi trabajo, tengo buen crédito. Lo que no puedo es salir de este país y volver a entrar. Por ser Latino y por tener acento me molestan, your accent is so hard why you so blonde if you come from South America. Así por cosa homosexualidad no le he tenido en NY pero sí por ser Latino por tener un acento, por venir de Latinoamérica. Tienen una mafia, un ataque y eso que paso por estadounidense you don't look Ecuadorian you look Russian. (But) I love my country I am 100% Ecuadorian. (Pero) cuando yo digo soy Gay homosexual (la gente) me dice "I have friends like you", (y yo digo) what does that mean?"
7. For an exhaustive analysis of the relationship on how the market produces Latino as a brand, please refer to Arlene Dávila's (2001) book *Latino Inc.*
8. For example, the assimilationist (Chicago School) followed by the integrationist and acculturation according to Portes (1997).
9. In my forthcoming book entitled "Desbordes: Translating Racial, Ethnic, Sexual and Gender Identities Across the Americas" (in press by SUNY), I make visible this phenomenon through my ethnographic work with Latin LGBTIQ communities in Washington, D.C., El Salvador and Ecuador. Cantú (2009) makes a similar reference in relation to legal status and the condition of forming part of an 'erotic minority' that makes a gay migrant even more foreign (outsider) than others.
10. [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/s/jose\\_o\\_suczhanay/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/s/jose_o_suczhanay/index.html)
11. Obama's Dream Act would give legal status to the small subset of illegal immigrants who were brought to the United States before they turned 16 years old, are no older than 30, have been in the U.S. for at least five years, have been convicted of no serious crime, and have a high-school diploma, a GED, or a stint in the U.S. military. It does not grant citizenship or legal status.

12. Original in Spanish: see <http://www.dosmanzanas.com/2011/03/nueva-york-un-joven-de-18-años-heterosexual-muere-victima-de-un-ataque-homofobo.html>
13. “Un joven de 18 años que murió la pasada semana tras una brutal agresión de carácter homófobo. Collao no era gay, pero no importó”.
14. “José, inmigrante ecuatoriano, murió en Nueva York en 2008 víctima de un ataque similar: fue confundido con un gay y sufrió una brutal agresión homófoba”.

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