Name: _____ Mark: _____ / 34

Teacher or Date and Time: _____

Read from "Wants" to "Late That Night"

This week, we will respond to identity crises and see others in a different light.

Staying In

Read Oscar Lopez's "A Latino Coming Out Story" and answer the accompanying questions.

"A Latino Coming Out Story" by Oscar Lopez

"Dad, I'm gay." The words stumbled out, finally unstuck from my mouth where they had been lodged for the last seven hours of the road trip. Dad immediately, instinctively, drove off the road down a dirt track. In the ensuing confusion of righting us, the announcement was not mentioned. For three days I held my breath while nothing was said, waiting for the anger and disappointment.

With its mixture of machismo, conservative family values and ardent Catholicism, the Latino community might seem like an ideal environment for a festering homophobia. Coming out to my Mexican dad was hard because that was the ideology he grew up in, and that was the culture I imagined he understood.

Yet increasingly it is becoming quite the opposite: Latinos are among the most progressive and supportive of LGBT rights in America and across Latin America. A 2013 Public Religion Research Institute study found that 55 percent of Hispanics supported same-sex marriage, in contrast to 53 percent in the general population. This represents a significant change in attitudes towards LGBT rights: In 2006, according to the Pew Research Center, 56 percent of Latinos were opposed to same-sex marriage.

The change has been a long time coming. When Celso Cardenas from the Association of Latinos/as Motivating Action (ALMA) was growing up in a Mexican family in Chicago, "sexual identity and cultural identity seemed to be at odds with one another."

Catholic values have often been an important obstacle for many gay Latinos to overcome, but that's changing. According to a report from Trinity College based on an American Religious Identification Survey, the number of U.S. Latinos who claim no religion rose from less than a million, or 6 percent of the Latino population, in 1990 to nearly 4 million, or 12 percent, in 2008. According to a Pew Research Center study, support for marriage equality is at 78 percent among nonreligious Latinos. Even among the religious, there's been a shift. According to the same Pew study, among Latinos who

identify as Catholic, 54 percent support same-sex marriage. And despite resistance among evangelical Latinos when President Barack Obama endorsed gay marriage in 2012, a number of Latinos in that community voiced their support, including Baptist minister Dr. Miguel de la Torre, president of the Society of Christian Ethics. "As a heterosexual minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I commend the president in taking a first step toward marriage equality," he said.
Changing demographics are helping. In 2008, 43 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds identified as nonreligious. In the Pew survey, 68 percent of that age group supported marriage equality. When you consider that the median age of Latinos in the United States is 27, it becomes apparent that there is a swelling section of the population that supports LGBT rights.

There is also a growing trend in Latin America that has affected Latinos in the United States. Gay marriage is legal in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico City; Uruguay allows civil unions and same-sex adoptions. Anti-discrimination laws are far more pervasive in the region than they are in the United States.

Undoubtedly, the American LGBT movement and the portrayals of LGBT characters in mainstream media have affected the region's progress. However, as professor Omar Encarnación argues in his forthcoming book,*Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution*, the idea of gay rights in Latin America as solely a byproduct of the U.S. movement is a misguided and simplistic notion.

Rather, Encarnación suggests, there are indigenous "social and political factors that have made Latin America very receptive to gay rights." These include a deepening of democratization, a waning of religious devotion and the rise of what professor Elisabeth Jay Friedman, director of Latin American studies at the University of San Francisco, calls "savvy social mobilization." She says following the end of dictatorial rule across the region, activists used an existing human rights framework to promote the rights of the LGBT community.

The ALMA's Cardenas says one of the things that make Latino culture unique in the U.S. is the ability to "retain our culture and stay connected to our home country." As such, "the political and social climate of our country is certainly going to influence how we think and perceive certain issues." So a thriving gay scene in Mexico City translates into greater acceptance for LGBT Latinos in the United States.

Monica Trasandes, GLAAD's Spanish-language media director, says there has been a much higher level of coverage in U.S. Spanish-language news and current affairs on LGBT issues. Moreover, the nature of this coverage has evolved "from being this controversial issue to being something more personal in a way that didn't treat the LGBT community as 'the other' but as part of the culture—these are LGBT Latinos."

There have been more LGBT contestants on reality TV programs like *Nuestra Belleza Latina* and *Mira Quien Baila* and central characters on telenovelas like *¿Donde Esta Elisa?* On English-language programming, LGBT Latino characters like Santana Lopez on *Glee* and Sara Ramirez's character on *Grey's Anatomy* have become the norm.

Latino gay celebrities and LGBT allies are also having an influence. Trasandes emphasizes the significance of Ricky Martin, whose coming out was "incredibly important" for the LGBT Latino community. This year GLAAD recognized Jennifer Lopez with a Vanguard Award for her role in

producing *The Fosters*: in her acceptance speech, Lopez highlighted the importance of "spreading the message of love and acceptance in English and en Español. El amor es el amor."

There's still progress to be made: LGBT Latinos made up just 4 percent of LGBT characters on U.S. broadcast television last year. And Trasandes says that particularly in comedy, "there is an attitude that the only way to write a funny LGB or T character is to use a really broad stereotype and make that person the butt of the joke."

Still, Cardenas says, the power of visibility cannot be underestimated. "My parents were born in a small little town in Mexico, they didn't have television, they barely had radio—they lived in this little bubble. Being able to have that exposure makes it so they can start thinking and processing."

Increasingly too, values that might seem diametrically opposed to LGBT issues can evolve. For Andres Duque, from the Queens Pride House in New York City, traditional family values are becoming a positive force, as Latino families are more and more likely to fiercely embrace their LGBT youth. "In Latino culture blood is thicker than water," he says.

1. Write 1 paragraph comparing and or contrasting the barriers that Oscar Lopez and Xavier (or Twin) have to overcome to "come out" as gay.

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Content: _____ / 3 Grammar: _____ / 1

2. If Xavier (Twin) read "A Latino Coming Out Story," what trends might he be encouraged by in coming out?

Content: _____ / 3 Grammar: _____ / 1

Cueros

Read the following excerpt on Nicki Minaj from Anne Helen Petersen's *Too Fat, Too Slutty, Too Loud: The Rise and Reign of the Unruly Woman.*

The tendency to label Minaj "too slutty" or sexually explicit is a symptom of a much larger anxiety: how to process a woman, and a black woman in particular, who has taken control of her body, her formidable talents, and the way they are marketed, monetized, and received. Minaj is unapologetic about who she is and how she chooses to live—exercising a form of self-determination that has been almost entirely unavailable to black women in America. Which is why, in a society still very much dominated by white men, that sort of sovereignty doesn't just threaten the existing cultural hierarchy, it compromises its very foundation.

For centuries, white men have largely controlled the way black women's bodies have been represented in both culture and civil society, whether in painting, sketches, sculpture, lyrics, photography, or film. In a world structured by Christian morals, including the disavowal of sexuality and lust, artists often displaced those qualities onto the black body. Black bodies were figured as more "earthy," more animal, more primal, more sexual—and, despite the black woman's historical subjugation, *more* free, *more open*. In this way, the black female body was made available for consumption and titillation, yet still distanced from the (pure, virginal) white body. With positions of power and production unavailable to black women themselves, this mode of representation was so common, so consistent, so unchallenged, that it came to be accepted as the truth.

Within this paradigm, the only way for a black woman to excel—especially in a public, performing sense—was to embody the very understanding that's been mapped on her, regardless of the its veracity. As feminist scholar bell hooks explains, "many black women singers, irrespective of the quality of their voices, have cultivated an image which suggests they're sexually available and licensed. Undesirable in the conventional sense, which defines beauty and sexuality as desirable only to the extent that it is idealized and unattainable, the black female body gains attention only when it is synonymous with accessibility, availability, and when it is sexually deviant."[3] Hooks points to the example of Billie Holiday, but it's a lineage that also includes Dorothy Dandridge, Tina Turner, Diana Ross, and, more recently, Janet Jackson, Beyoncé, and Rihanna. To study these women is to consider larger questions of power, self-objection, and false consciousness: If women of all races have been objectified for centuries, what happens when one decides to do it herself? Is it liberating—and if she thinks it's liberating, has she simply accepted the ideology of the oppressor? And how do the questions of empowerment function differently when applied to white women and women of color?

This approach of thinking about women's bodies and their representation falls under the broad umbrella of "intersectional feminism," which suggests that the only way to talk about lives of women under patriarchy is to also consider the ways in which these lives are constructed at the nexus of race, sexuality, class, religion, ability, and nationality. It's a feminism that, in the words of cultural critic Teresa Jusino, "acknowledges that different communities of women within our greater Sisterhood have concerns that are specific to them, and deserve focus if Women as a group are ever going to move forward."

…

Minaj occupied the stereotype only long enough for it to gain her notice—specifically, that of Lil Wayne, who signed her to his Young Money label—and then disposed of it. "When I grew up I saw females doing certain things, and I thought I had to do that exactly," Minaj told *Vibe* magazine in 2010, just as she was rising to national prominence. "The female rappers of my day spoke about sex a lot … And I thought that to have the success they got, I would have to represent the same thing. When in fact I didn't have to represent the same thing."[9]

Instead, she adopted a cornucopia of identities, some more fully fleshed than others, to accompany the various aural personalities that distinguished her rapping style. Most prominently, there's Roman Zolanski, a gay British boy with a cockney accent and a deep reservoir of rage, and Harajuku Barbie, with a girly voice and hyper-feminine aesthetic, but there are nearly a dozen more: Nicki the Ninja, Point Dexter, Female Weezy, Nicki the Boss, Nicki Lewinsky.

The personas, Minja explains, allow her to occupy attitudes often viewed as "unacceptable" for women: they're angry, lewd, coy, uncouth, violent, and frequently at odds as in the video for "Monster," when two of the personas verbally spar as one binds and whips the other. They also serve as a commentary on the fractured, performative nature of femininity: as Minaj explains, "Every women is multifaceted. Every woman has a switch, whether she's going to be maternal, whether she's going to be a man-eater, whether she has to show the guys that she's just as smart or smarter, she's just as talented or creative. Women suppress a lot of their sides." It's a form of "code-switching"—a term to describe how one speaks and behaves different in order to match an intended audience. Code switching is, at heart, a survival mechanism: a way of showing, at any particular moment, that you fit in, you're not a threat, you *belong*.

1. What fears does Nicki Minaj evoke? Consider who fears in your answer.

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Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

2. Does Xiomara evoke the same or similar fears as Nicki Minaj? If not, what fears does Xiomara evoke? Again, consider who fears (Xiomara) in your answer.

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Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

3. Who or what has (tried to) control black women's bodies? How?

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Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

4. Who or what has (tried to) control Xiomara's body? How?

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Content: _____ / 3 Grammar: _____ / 1

5. How does Nicki Minaj subvert stereotypes? Consider bell hooks's words as well as Minaj's in *Vibe*.

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Content: _____ / 3 Grammar: _____ / 1

6. How does Xiomara subvert stereotypes?

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Content: _____ / 3 Grammar: _____ / 1

Bonus: What is your favourite Nicki Minaj song and why? (2 marks)

Final Draft of Assignment 3

Describe someone who is misunderstood by society. **Double-space** your writing!

Grammar: There are no errors.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Content: The writing clearly expresses the opposing perspectives on the person written about. The writing leads the reader to have an agreeable opinion of the person written about or, at the very least, it opens their mind to having one.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2 2.25 2.5 2.75 3