

black market goods. Theaters, bars, *cantinas* and discotheques where the rich think they are such hot shit. The poor beg a few beers, and in the brewery past the *Tianguis del Chopo* they sometimes pay for a few, sometimes scoff a few. They rip off those with healthier hobbies, guilty or innocent, for walking the straight line and following the system.

There are those who write the cultured lies, who present truths that are not so, because the vanity of their fame blocks out the talents and desires of the rest. They see themselves as perfect artists, as the only ones with any culture. Yet wait a minute! In these classes there is hypocrisy and a lot of shit in disguise. Indifference towards those thought to have no culture: urban, indigenous and subterranean cultures, street cultures.

The punk *chavas* are always searching for freedom, and while they live they will continue to protest. They are not fashion punks, nor pretenders. They drink their beer and move to their own rhythm, and those that doubt will fall behind. The *chavas* dance for animal liberation. My friend, if you were born fucked up, you'll remain so all your life. *Amiga*, you have to fight against marginality in order to surface and protest against your environment and your society. If

you resign yourself to it, nothing awaits you but frustration, vice, drugs, mediocrity and hopelessness.

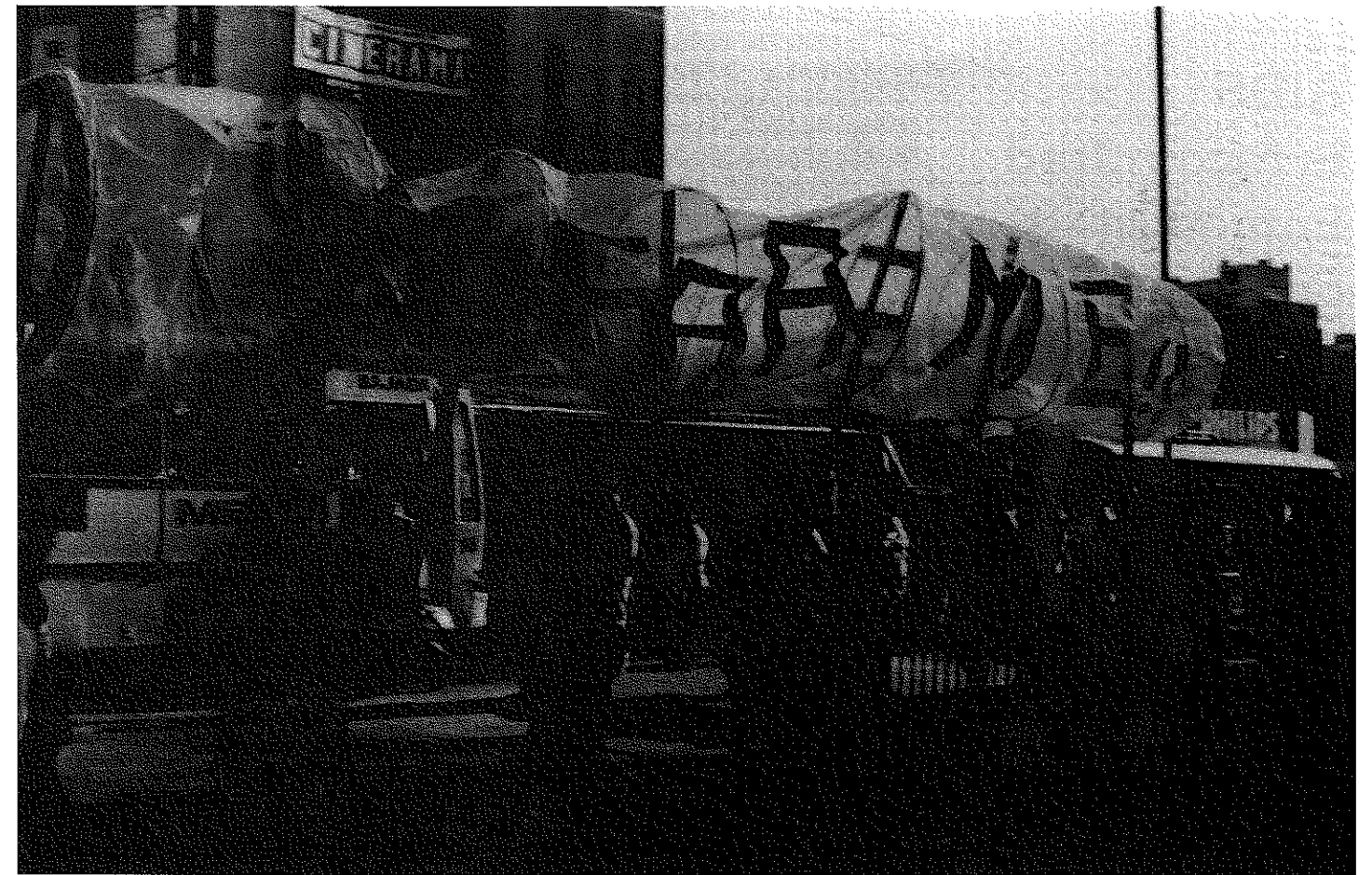
Everyday the *chavas* spit, vomit, shit, bleed, sweat, cry with rage; they wear scars or tattoos of anarchy on their bodies so as not to forget that sensibility or that consciousness. The Day of the Dead fills them with peace, not fear. They lament the loss of human beings - animals, children, women, *chavas*, *chavos* - a monumental and archeological heritage left unprotected in the filthy air and mutilated by the shameless who loot ancient cultures and sell them to the highest bidder. Destruction on all sides. Lost people who cry for the gods and goddesses in Paradise, for the robbery of ancient headdresses, jewels in gold and silver, plumages, such marvellous things. And we let it go on, so we condemn ourselves for caring so little for our city. The history of pre-history chills the future. We must escape. In Sanborns, VIPS, Dennys, Burger Boys and McDonalds, presumptuous, money-eyed people elbow each other in a rush of waste and gluttony, wolfing down rat meat, third grade chicken and beef bone. But these are exclusive places, so nobody questions what they eat and they pay good money for their fill. With their scraps of foreign and sophisticated meals, everyone is so contented to be in a multinational place.

Taco stands on the street, single ears of corn - squeeze on a little lemon to kill the amoebas and you still have something left over for a cup of hibiscus tea. You don't have to show off to anyone, and nobody does the same to you because they know where you are coming from. If you're on the same wavelength, well, give the fellow a tip!

The city lives, sleeps, dies, revives, reincarnates, survives. The girls, humans, women, punk *chavas* keep on going. They understand that they are slowly losing the hours of the watch. Punctual with their future and bleeding their past, they suck on the present like an apple. While they contradict themselves in terror, they are stopping to cry and on the streets they sing a sensual schizophrenia. The *chavas* don't accept wars or repression because they've stopped living the lies!

Susana Quiroz Martinez lives in Mexico City and writes plays and film scripts.

Dean Brown is a Vancouver translator currently planning a trip to Chile.



It is not WHAT you do, but HOW you do it: Cultural risks and HIV/AIDS in Chile

by Francisco Ibañez

When five of us from La Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA [Chilean Corporation for AIDS Prevention] CChPS - unfolded that huge condom made of clear plastic with big red letters that said "Use me" and held it for dear life marching along el Paseo Ahumada, the main boulevard of Santiago, shouting "El ministro cartuchón no se atreve a usar condón" [the prudish Minister of Health does not dare to use a condom] with a hundred others, I knew we were making history, the real one. Like small chat and gossip, this was one of those moments in which the stuff of life -- the collectively shared codes and cultural themes -- is transferred, transformed, re-interpreted and re-thematized. This is how we celebrated the World AIDS Day's motto "Sharing the Challenge" on December 1, 1991.

Moments before starting the march, a *Gringo* who had been a teacher of mine at the Universidad de Santiago came up to me and told me that this demonstration was colonization at its worst, that the World AIDS Day was nothing but a North American orchestration. I told him to fuck off, deep inside I had to recognize the ambiguities in what we were doing. But isn't that what cultures are all about, hybridization of themes and forms? Later, when I was visiting Antofagasta in the North of Chile, I read in a local newspaper that the archbishop of Santiago was scandalized and had said that "multitudinous demonstrations" in downtown Santiago weren't leading to anything good. I was joyous; this was the greatest favour that the Catholic church could do to us. It was better than having a bunch of *apolillados* [moth-eaten leftists] trying to perk up their discourse to include queers and other specimens that they had been ignoring (or attacking) a year before. Archbishop Carlos Oviedo's sustained stream of attacks and the media-quaking that it provoked was more effective than the disempowered voices of many "pobladores" [poor urban dwellers] who have organized themselves, but have not been heard seriously since 1973.

AIDS is recognized immediately as an "American" disease and a product of poor "American" moral standards, sexual revolution, and decadence. The image of "the Gringo" embodies both what is loathed and what is desired.

In October 1991 when I arrived in Chile the number of reported sero-conversion (people who come in contact with the HIV virus and become HIV positive - HIV+s), sero-prevalence (asymptomatic people living with HIV), and full blown AIDS cases was on the rise. This does not mean that the AIDS epidemic had suddenly begun, but it means that its effects were becoming more visible. Most women and men living with HIV/AIDS reside in the metropolitan area of Santiago or Valparaiso (Chile's main seaport). They are between 15 and 35 years old, they have acquired HIV via high risk sexual activities (many, but not necessarily all of them, with same-sex partners), and they belong to middle and lower socio-economic classes. Many questions arise here. What culturally specific meanings are attached to illness and sexuality in Chile? What are societal responses to epidemics such as this? What are people's understandings of transmissible sexual illness? How does "living with HIV/AIDS" translate into everyday living in Chile? Why have many people been living with HIV/AIDS and dying without ever having been reported?

For months I looked intently into every magazine and newspaper to see if HIV/AIDS reporting would go beyond the sensationalistic headlines. No such luck!! - obviously my presence in Chile would not alter the course of its history. Statistics about the booming Chilean economy, unemployment and issues such as "youth permissiveness" and "internal security", bank robbery, street theft and assaults, kidnapping, and terrorism occupy the top positions on the Chilean agenda. This is what concerns average citizens and what appears in news headlines. Many of the voices of "concerned citizens" echo long held themes and metaphors utilized in the dictator's rhetoric before 1989 in his *amedrentamiento* ["politics of fear"]. AIDS does not have the historical scaffolding necessary to be sus-

tained in people's collective agenda. It is perceived as closely linked to same-sex sexuality, marginal groups, and deviant behaviours and is weighed down by negative attitudes that have traditionally been sanctioned by cultural codes that run deep beneath the surface of Chilean society.

Latin America is above all "Baroque"; its countries have multiple and convoluted social, cultural, political and technological levels that overlap and co-exist creating a distinctive ethos, a way of inhabiting the world. *Mestizaje* and social class are among the most salient elements of this ethos that one must recognize in order to do HIV/AIDS prevention education. *Mestizos* was the name given at the time of the conquest to the children of Native women by Spanish men. Today *mestizaje* means a hybridization of races and blood. This is not only a biological process which began 500 years ago, it is a cultural process that has shaped Latin American identities and ethos. As Montecino writes, "to think of Latin America as a *mestiza*, baroque and ritual culture is to think about it as a particular [situation] where blood and symbols were amalgamated, where a history of complex combinations makes it difficult to define a single face." *Mestizaje* entails an ongoing political process. The *mestizo* identity places an individual at the heart of a perennial conflict between what is "mixed" (Native, European, African, Asian) and what is "pure" (European from the "mother land," Spain). The *mestizo* identity gives the individual an alter ego: the "pure" individual.

Latin American societies have been shaped by this cultural and political tension that runs parallel to a tension between what is romanticized as *nacional* ("Si es Chileno es bueno" - If it is Chilean it is good) and what is *extranjero* [foreign], in particular North American. In Chile both of these tensions can be recognized in the circulation of conflicting cultural themes. It is a common belief, for example, that in North America the lifestyle is generally comfortable, the society is homogeneous, and the people are white and

speak English as their first language; the quintessential "American dream." However, AIDS is recognized immediately as an "American" disease and a product of poor "American" moral standards, sexual revolution, and decadence. The image of the *Gringo* embodies both what is loathed and what is desired.

The *mestizo* is replaced in Chilean jargon by the term "roto" [a reference to "torn" clothes] that is either used as a derogatory term or is conveniently appropriated as a romantic hero of the national heritage, much like a museum artifact. The implications of these "distinctions" for AIDS work are manifold: for example, CChPS's volunteers, who mostly belong to a lower socio-economic class, when working at the *mesas informativas* [information booths] in uptown gay venues are met with indifference and condescension by those who perceive themselves as members of a superior socio-economic class. Thus, *mestizaje* is perceived as a disadvantage, a problem "one has to live with," in brief, as a trait of the lower classes that "naturally" determines their lack of satisfaction, political malleability, dependency, "low culture" lifestyle, and "relaxed" moral views. "Naturally," these characteristics make them prone to moral and physical contamination. This culturally stigmatized position is somewhat similar to that of IV drug users, sex workers, and ethnic minorities in North America. In Chilean societies low and middle socio-economic groups are most affected by the tensions produced between *mestizaje* and social class. The clientele of CChPS is mainly formed by male individuals who belong to these stigmatized groups.

The collectively held perception is that the lower classes are inevitably drawn to the substance abuse, idleness, unrestrained sexuality and violence places them at higher risk for HIV/AIDS. Chile, unlike other Latin American countries, has shown a contained population growth, but much like its neighbours it has shown an erosion of its rural life, a human and bureaucratic centralization in large urban centres, and an uncontrolled expansion of its

service sector both in the informal and formal versions. These processes have stimulated the growth of a large impoverished sector of the population that is predominantly young. Socio-economic factors translate into lack of educational resources, forceful initiation in the strained job market, as well as symbolic and cultural pressures to fit into a certain class and to behave accordingly.

Those involved in AIDS work face the difficult task of striking a balance between tensions brought about by cultural (and implicitly epidemiological) labelling of popular classes as "high risk" groups and the HIV/AIDS educational premise that all individuals regardless of their age, gender and social class are at risk. It is a case of a double bind between accepting that certain groups in Chilean society (and by extension in Latin American society) are groups at higher risk (as opposed to "high risk" groups) because of their disadvantaged position, and refusing public stigmatization and discrimination by forceful defense of the posture that states that (regarding HIV transmission) it does not matter what one does, with whom, where or when, but how one does it. This tension is felt strongly at the heart of CChPS as it tries to dislodge itself from a gay identity that, however paradoxically, needs at the same time to be preserved in order to educate people about life-affirming options for everybody.

The Catholic heritage and its relation to HIV/AIDS prevention education is also a point of consideration at CChPS and other Non-Government Organizations devoted to AIDS work. Strongly evidenced in the *Culto Mariano* [cult of virgin Mary], the Catholic presence and influence is key to understanding Chileans' views on sexuality, same-sex sexuality, emotional, and familial relationships. *Marianismo* carries specific Latin American and Chilean cultural themes such as *machismo*, the absent father, the dualism "virgin/whore," the dualism "caring mother/playful son," and many others that are directly associated with gender roles, sex roles, and cultural "games" of sexuality. The implications for

It is a case of double bind between accepting that certain groups in Chilean society (and by extension in Latin American society) are groups at higher risk (as opposed to "high risk" groups)

>>>



<<<

because of their disadvantaged position, and refusing public stigmatization and discrimination by forceful defense of the posture that states that (regarding HIV transmission) it does not matter what one does, with whom, where or when, but how one does it.

HIV/AIDS prevention education are multiple, but in general the existence of double standards and collectively held myths about men and women makes most educational efforts extremely difficult. For example, women are loosely categorized either as "easy" or "decent" (virgin/whore) depending on the relationship they have to male individuals. A brother would never allow anyone to doubt the chastity of his sister, even knowing that she engages in sexual activity with her fiancée. Comparatively, men are granted many privileges; for example, a mother is not likely openly to discuss her son's bisexuality (caring mother/playful son) and his *caídas* [falls] are likely to be explained as "blind spots" produced by males' "stronger" sexual drive.

Many minorities fall through cracks in this value system that places them at a great disadvantage. For example, lesbians do not fall into any of the cultural categories mentioned and their official existence is so marginal that there are almost no cultural narratives that include them. A lesbian is perceived as a non-person, she is unable to beget and raise children (as a caring mother), provide pleasure (a whore) and she is certainly not a virgin, an expectant vessel of purity to be deflowered by a male. This does not mean that Chilenas (and by extension Latinas) should be seen as powerless, for they make strategic use of their possibilities. For example, women might be unable to force men to wear condoms, but they are instrumental in mobilizing local resources and organizing traditional social networks to prevent STDs, obtain access to treatment, provide health services (e.g. abortions) and counselling.

An example of how ambivalent attitudes form invisible obstacles for AIDS educators in Chile is provided by detractors of the straightforward approach offered by CChPS through posters, condom demonstrations and brochures. It is claimed that this approach to education is "confrontational" and could place its receivers at greater risk; for instance, a middle class husband would be in trouble if a

safe sex brochure about bisexual practices were to be found in his jacket by his wife even if there is a tacit acceptance of his "fooling around." CChPS brochures are said to promote a "gay" identity that is colonized by North American standards and values that are at odds with the complex identity of a married man who has sex with men, but considers himself *macho*. The first response from an earnest AIDS educator could be that of calling this attitude "denial," "lack of self esteem," or in Chilean gay jargon *un truncado* [the one who is locked in]. An understanding of the ambivalent nature of these judgments and the ambivalent attitudes towards same sex-sexuality might not place the educator in a non-judgmental and objective area, but it might allow her/him to accept a complex reality that has not been named/spoken.

Ambivalent attitudes with respect to sexuality in Latin America can be attributed to widespread "cultural and internalized homophobia," a culturally based fear of same sex sexuality and emotionality, but this has proven to be a simplistic reduction. At the surface level the response to sexuality and its "dangers," such as STD infections and HIV transmission, is that of disapproving silence, condemning judgments or strong denial. At deeper levels Chilean society maintains traditional ways of dealing with sexuality that show great flexibility and compassion. For example, homosexuality is not discussed within families where lesbians and gay men live quite openly; to "asumirse" [accept one's sexuality] does not necessarily entail a public confession, as "coming out" does in North America. Full blown AIDS cases go unreported and tight social networks are formed around a sick person not only to provide care and support, but also to hide and camouflage the situation.

There is an authoritarian -- almost "feudal" -- tradition in Chile that directly affects HIV/AIDS prevention education. The basis of its rigid class system is the *Latifundio* [grand landowners] and one of the traditional social relationships is *el favor* [the

favour]. This can be compared to the North American tradition of commerce and its social relationship, the exchange. The "favor" differs from the exchange in that there is a greater imbalance in the relation of power between two individuals. A "favor" determines a certain degree of influence and authoritarianism that lies at the heart of social relationships in modern Chile. As Nestor Garcia Canclini explains, "European modernization was based on the autonomy of the individual, the universality of the law, the disinterested culture, the objective remuneration and its work ethics. The practice of the *favor* [in modern Latin America] allows for the dependence of the individual, the exception to the rules, the interested culture [elitist?], and the remuneration to personal services."

This traditional form of social relationship shapes the character of HIV/AIDS prevention education. The *favor* is a cultural tradition that has laid the foundations for social relationships of dependency at the interpersonal level between individuals and at the collective level between individuals and government institutions. In Chile there is a strong tradition of relying on government services and organizations to provide health care, education and legal services. The state is both loathed for its authoritarian policies and revered as the source of practitioners (social workers, teachers, judges, nurses, doctors) who can alleviate almost every malady. The *favor* influences social actors who seem to play their roles as employees, beneficiaries, clients or recipients on cue to get what they need from seemingly despotic, arrogant, and authoritarian bureaucrats, medical personnel, and security personnel, who deliver public service as a form of benign charity. One's social class largely determines at which end of the *favor* one is placed.

The state has traditionally occupied the patriarchal side of this relationship, although within the current neo-liberal market strategies the state is no longer responsible for social welfare anymore, but must ensure the functioning of the markets without inter-

vening in them (Schkolnik & Teitelboim, 1988: 20). AIDS service organizations such as CChPS have been created to palliate the surging AIDS crisis that the government was ignoring. Since the mid-70s NGOs have taken over substantial areas of health care and prevention education that had been the province of the government. The government has changed its policies but has kept its paternalistic rhetoric intact with only token assistance efforts. Organizations such as CChPS a way of doing the government's work without disbursing taxpayers' money.

The *favor* as interpersonal approach to social relations also influences the way people understand social mobilization around HIV/AIDS. Thus, the concept of volunteerism (as we know it in North America) cannot be applied to Chilean reality. Although people do offer their time and energy, when they belong to upper and upper-middle classes, they are likely to see it as a form of charity, and when they belong to lower classes, they are likely to see it as a political defense or a way to partake of the best *favores*. Organizations seem to adjust rapidly to the hierarchical roles played in the cultural concept of the *favor*. Boards of directors are formed mainly by professionals and middle class male volunteers. Straight women and homosexual men usually perform line duties. This enhances a top-down circulation of information and decision-making. This situation might be compared to the dynamics of power in North American organizations, where lip service is paid to empowerment of minorities and women, but decision-making is still retained by a small, usually white, male group. One salient element in Latin American organizations is the explicitness of the power relations. This allows for recognition of "who is who" in the hierarchies, which might present a more workable -- because more visible -- situation for those involved in AIDS work. The resistance of government officials is explicit; the disgust of many people is also quite evident. By contrast, the North American *modus operandi* seems to place some individuals in ambiguous situations

Similar to the North American experience, AIDS has been construed as a "gay disease," a "gringo disease," or as God's punishment.



with respect to political issues around HIV/AIDS education.

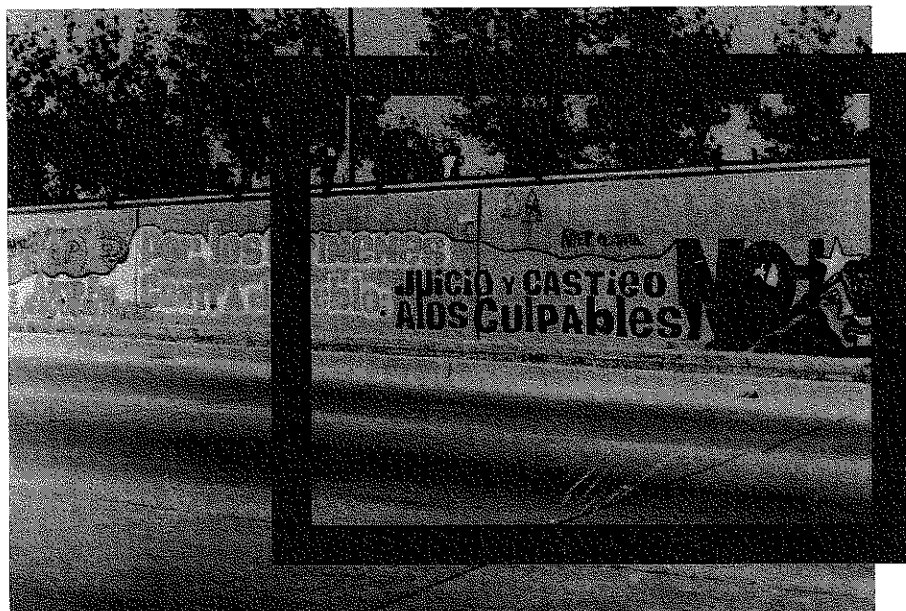
Mass media, in particular television, have played a cultural role in the HIV/AIDS epidemic similar to that of North American and British media. They reflect and re-thematize collective fears and cultural narratives long existing in the Chilean cultural matrices. Similar to the North American experience, AIDS has been construed as a "gay disease," a "gringo disease," or as God's punishment. The cultural connections between same-sex sexuality, non-stream sex (S/M, non-penetrative sex), "public" exposure (indecent, lack of decorum, prostitution) and concepts such as evil, perversion and sickness (read AIDS) are deeply rooted in the collective mind and are constantly reinforced by the media. Words such as illness, contamination, degradation, homosexuality, bisexuality, lesbianism, and *invertido* form a cluster, a constellation of concepts occluding most educational possibilities.

The elements described above come together along the axis of sexuality to configure a culturally specific situation where CChPS has had to develop its HIV/AIDS prevention education programmes. Class, age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity configure specific forms of sexuality that permeate the Latin American ethos. The North American stereotype of the oversexed black male is also held for the Mestizo in Latin America and it is translated mainly as a *macho* figure with strong homo-erotic connotations. Male sexuality is perceived both as a form of domination over submissive women and as a violence over men without sexual potency or prowess. The *macho* is, however, a troubled identity: he is connected to the absent-

present of the father of the *mestizo* (the Spaniard who plunders and retreats), he is eternally dependent on the mother (which makes him struggle with effeminacy), and he is in constant competition and must "show off" before his peers. In this context, women are obliged to consolidate a secure identity early in life that compensates for the instability of their counterparts. Although *machismo* does not fully explain the unspoken bisexuality of many Latin American males, it explains one important characteristic: its focus on "sexual aim" - as opposed to a focus on "sexual object-choice". That is, a focus on the act of fucking for pleasure rather than a focus on fucking the "right" person of the opposite sex.

The male population becomes a "hard to reach" population because within their troubled identity, men do not see themselves at risk of contracting a virus that attacks weak *maricones* [fags]. Women, again, are left out of the sexual tension. Male homosexuals who until recently

called each other *entendidos* [the one who is in on the secret, who understands] and *locas* [crazy females], as signs of secrecy and weakness, are now calling themselves "gays," which marks a departure from their resigned position as "marginals," but also marks a dangerous imitation of a partially understood North American figure established during the 70s. The risk of acquiring HIV mainly resides in the misleading attitude that only *pasivos* [passive sexual partners, men or women] are prone to acquiring HIV from sheltered *activos* [active sexual partner]. *Pasivos* take on the female roles and *activos* remain *machos* regardless of the danger. This "aim-oriented" focus makes sexuality a more fluid affair and re-defines homophobia (which in North America is at the centre of HIV/AIDS education). In a North American context homophobia means fear of same gender sexuality and emotionality; in a Latin American context it needs to be re-conceptualized as a fear of being seen as weak and passive.



In practice CChPS has opened its activities to people with many interests and to all social classes. Its positive message of HIV/AIDS prevention has been particularly heard by those who needed to work in a safe space that did not discriminate because of their different sexual identity or social class. However, while CChPS is a safe and open space for "lower" socio-economic peoples of the gay population of Santiago, gay middle class professionals are reluctant to be seen or associated with it. Heterosexual professionals (women and men) actively participate in the activities of CChPS, mainly as contributors. This fragmentation may seem odd, but it can be explained by the rigid class distinctions that are imposed (and self-imposed) on people in Chilean society. Gay men respond to stereotypes that describe them as fashionable and classy, but these stereotypes break down in such a diverse group of people. Many of the volunteers, collaborators, monitors and directors of CChPS are people who come from a political background,

who actively participated in political parties and are well educated and sensitive about issues surrounding class and politics. This gradual development of political sensibility is observable in the current discourses of political parties in Chile that are including previously unheard topics that include violence against women, abortion, divorce and sexuality.

North American HIV/AIDS prevention education, in its pretense of neutrality, refusal to judge and objectivity, has been successful in the task-oriented step of delivering information, but not in educating for change because it does not offer people viable solutions or strong motivation to modify their behaviour in an environment that is hostile. It is imperative that AIDS educators resist the unsatisfying explanations provided by the dependence and imitation theories that were so popular throughout the 70s and 80s. These unidirectional, cause-and-effect theories do not satisfactorily explain the cultural and social processes that so called "developed" or "underdeveloped" countries are experiencing. Understanding such cultural processes allows us to understand the social actors who perform them. To understand why HIV/AIDS prevention education programmes for Latinas/os in North America have failed, we must understand the poor fit between educational concepts such as "participation," "conscientization" and "democracy," and the "reality" of the target audiences; we must also acknowledge the ethnocentrism with which these projects have been designed and implemented. Cultural elements specific to a white, middle class, literate, able-bodied culture are embodied in phrases and slogans such as "coming out," "gay community," "homophobia," "safe sex," "just say no," and "high = high risk;" and these phrases are then used to "educate" (read instruct) ethnic minorities. To understand lifelong, sustained and non-discriminatory HIV/AIDS education we must understand that most scenarios will always be saturated by the tensions produced by overlapping and conflicting experiences of reality.

When border-crossing into North American countries these culturally specific tensions are increased, as a new identity is thrust upon Latinas/os: the immigrants. Being an immigrant is an experience fraught with danger and many pitfalls. Long standing stereotypes and misconceptions configure the image of the Latina/o that is received with an immoral form of indifference in North America. This places Latinas/os at a greater risk for welfare dependence, drug and alcohol dependence, unwanted pregnancies, crime, STDs, HIV acquisition and AIDS development. Just as Latinas/os are not "naturally" a problem, their lives are not fateful and naturally determined. What we know about HIV/AIDS prevention education is that it has little or nothing to do with what is spoken/unspoken and practiced/unpracticed at the street level. There is a gap between the formal discourse of "what we ought to do" and their/our street talk packed with jokes, anecdotes, stories, whispers, and sarcasm that bluntly spits out "we do what we do," "I am what I am" and "one has to die of something anyway." This is because there is a profound indifference (and sometimes open resistance) to introducing aspects that are culturally relevant to ethno-cultural communities. The experiences and understandings of both *Gringos* and *Latinos* who have crossed the borders leave a *flor de piel* [at the surface of the skin] the conflict between official discourse and street discourse, between an ethnocentric representation of culture and the hybrid identities of *Latinos*.

Francisco Ibañez
is a graduate student
in the Faculty of Education
at Simon Fraser University.

There is a gap between the formal discourse of "what we ought to do" and their/our street talk packed with jokes, anecdotes, stories, whispers, and sarcasm that bluntly spits out "we do what we do," "I am what I am" and "one has to die of something anyway."