



Latino Studies: A 20th Anniversary Reader

Edited by
Lourdes Torres · Marisa Alicea

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We dedicate this volume to all the scholars who have contributed to Latino Studies. Your thoughtful work advances our knowledge about the lived experience and struggles of Latinx communities for equity, representation, and social justice.

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Lourdes Torres is Vincent de Paul Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University where she is also affiliate faculty in Critical Ethnic Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies. She served as editor-in-chief of Latino Studies from 2012 to 2023 and is co-series editor of the Global Latin/o American Series of the University of Ohio Press.

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October 30, 1997, was declared “Doctor Ana Celia Zentella Day” in NYC, for “her leading role in building appreciation for language diversity and respect for language rights.” She was named Public Intellectual of the Year (Latino Studies/LASA 2014) and honored for Public Outreach & Community Service (Society for Linguistic Anthropology 2016). In 2022, Zentella was inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

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Introduction

Lourdes Torres and Marisa Alicea

Since its founding in 2003, *Latino Studies* has established itself as the leading, international peer-reviewed journal for advancing interdisciplinary scholarship about the lived experience and struggles of Latinx communities for equality, representation, and social justice. The *Latino Studies: 20th Anniversary Reader* was created to mark the important milestone of the journal's first twenty years. Here we share a selection of cutting-edge articles published in the journal offering important theoretical and conceptual contributions to the field of Latinx studies. The engaging and incisive analyses featured in this anthology have shaped scholarly debates in the field and continue to have an impact.

Introduction by Lourdes Torres and Marisa Alicea.

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Before introducing the articles included in this anthology, we briefly discuss the history of the journal, the journal's editorial process, and the process we used to select the articles for this anthology. We also want to add a note on our terminology. We acknowledge the long history of productive discussion about the labels we use to reference our community. These sometimes contentious debates encourage us to be forever mindful of questions of representation and inclusivity. In what follows we use "*Latino Studies*" when referring to our journal as that is and has been the name of the journal since its founding. When referring to Latina/o/x community members, or the field, we use "Latinx" in order to be inclusive of those who do not align with gender binaries. See our volume 16 number 3 (2018) for a robust discussion of the term "Latinx."

LATINO STUDIES JOURNAL—HISTORY, MISSION, AND PROCESS

The establishment of a Latinx Studies infrastructure via academic institutions is intricately related to the production and distribution of our research. Given its interdisciplinary nature, Latinx studies research is found in disciplinary journals across a vast number of fields including the humanities and social sciences. However, one can argue that an important measure of the legitimacy of our field is the founding and establishment of academic journals centrally focused on publishing Latinx studies research. Clearly, the future of Latinx studies as a field is tied to the quality of our scholarship and the reputation of the academic journals in the discipline. In that regard, since it was established, our journal has been an important venue for disseminating the exciting research published on Latinx communities and the social, cultural, economic, and political issues that affect our lives and well-being. Our journal has been a pivotal venue for the expansion of Latinx studies scholarship nationally and internationally.

The journal founders recognized the need for a journal that explored the dynamics of diverse Latinx ethnonational groups in the United States and considered the transnational connections of these populations across the Americas. They recognized that the journal needed to be inclusive of interdisciplinary methodologies that bridge the social sciences and humanities. As we enter our twenty-first year of publication, the Latinx population continues to grow and diversify, and the problems we face are progressively more complex and multifaceted, rendering our journal more essential than ever.

Establishing a new journal is not easy, it takes a lot of work, dedication, and resources. Frances Aparicio and Suzanne Oboler are the foremothers of our journal. The first issue of *Latino Studies* appeared in 2003 but the work to establish the journal began many years before then. As Director of the Latin American and Latino Studies Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Aparicio conceived of the idea for the journal and over the years marshaled the resources to make it happen. Early in this process she consulted with Suzanne Oboler to submit a proposal to Palgrave Macmillan to publish the journal. David Bull, editor at Palgrave Macmillan at that time was an early and consistent supporter and champion of the project. Oboler left Brown University and came to UIC to serve as the founding editor of *Latino Studies*. Her leadership was pivotal to setting the journal off on a positive footing, generating interest in the project, and building the visibility of the journal in the field and beyond. She served as editor for ten years, passing the leadership of the journal to Lourdes Torres in 2012.

Since its inception, the journal has been dedicated to advancing the scholarship produced about Latinxs, actively building, and shaping our interdisciplinary field, and mentoring emerging scholars in the process. We are committed to publishing the most influential, innovative, and substantive scholarship in our field. The mission of the journal has remained the same since the founding of the journal in 2003:

Latino Studies is an international, peer-reviewed journal. Its principle aim is to advance interdisciplinary scholarship about the lived experience and struggles of Latinas and Latinos for equity, representation, and social justice. Sustaining the tradition of activist scholarship of the founders of Chicana and Chicano studies and Puerto Rican studies, we critically engage the study of the local, national, transnational, and hemispheric realities that continue to influence the presence of Latino/as in the United States. *Latino Studies* presents an international research agenda that builds bridges between the academic and non-academic worlds and promotes mutual learning and collaboration among all the Latino national groups.

The journal provides an intellectual forum for trailblazing research on our Latinx communities. In addition to original articles, the journal publishes shorter essays that complement the research articles and keep the community informed about pressing political, social, and cultural happenings. *Vivencias: Reports from the Field* are short personal essays that describe and analyze significant local issues, struggles, and events affecting

the lives of Latinxs in different regions of the country. This section aims to highlight issues and events that tend to be ignored in mainstream local and national media sources. Also included in this section are interviews with artists and activists.

Reflexiones Pedagógicas features articles that highlight pedagogical and curricular innovations connected to Latinx studies. The articles in this section offer exciting techniques and materials instructors can turn to in order to update their teaching toolbox. *Páginas Recuperadas* draws attention to archival documents. These essays shed light on documents and photos that are historically significant and worthy of consideration in the present. *El Foro* is an occasional section addressing current urgent politics and happenings that deserve our attention. Finally, the *Book and Media Review Section* offers appraisals of noteworthy books, films, and exhibitions.

Collaboration has been a key element of the success of the journal. We have always counted on the insight and wisdom of a small cadre of top-notch scholars who believed in and contributed to shaping and executing the journal's mission. Since its founding, the journal has been run by the editor in partnership with a team consisting of the managing editor and associate editors from different academic disciplines. A distinguished group of scholars from across the country and Latin America have participated on our international advisory board since its beginning. These colleagues serve as external reviewers and provide advice and input at annual board meetings and in consultation with the editor.

During the first ten years of the journal when Suzanne Oboler served as Editor-in-Chief, Karen Benita Reyes was her indispensable managing editor for a good number of years. A dedicated group of scholars participated as associate editors or as editors of one of the journal's special sections. We are honored to acknowledge the contributions of Pedro Cabán, Vilma Santiago-Irizarry, Silvio Torres Saillant, Antonia Darder, Ray Rocco, Alejandro Lugo, Roberto Márquez, and Ramona Hernández, all of whom provided advice, ideas, and guidance that were indispensable as the journal's editor developed and grew the journal during its first decade. Collaborating with experts in the field, Oboler hosted or co-hosted conferences on issues such as "Latino/as in the media," "South American immigrants in the United States," "Latinos in the US South," and "Latinos and Prison." These conferences brought together emerging and established interdisciplinary scholars and scholar activists to discuss crucial issues for the Latinx community and provided the content for

timely special issues on these topics. (See Oboler, 2017 for a more detailed discussion of the journal's first ten years.)

During its second decade, we have been fortunate to count on the amazing skills and commitment of a team of associate editors that has been steady and consistent in their dedication to the journal. Marisa Alicea and Silvio Saillant Torres transitioned from their work as associate editors with the first editor to continue their work with the second editor, Lourdes Torres, who took charge of the journal in the summer of 2012. Their sustained devotedness to the journal is quite remarkable! Vilma Ortiz came on board five years ago after the departure of Raymond Rocco who also served as an associate editor for many years. This wonderful team has been supported by the gifted María Isabel Ochoa who has served as the managing editor of the journal for the last ten years. In this capacity, Ochoa has effectively assisted the editorial team as well as authors as they work their way through the various stages of publication.

The current editor and associate editors have continued Suzanne Oboler's practice of promoting the journal by participating in academic spaces where Latinx studies research is presented. We have co-sponsored panels across the years at meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, Latino Studies Association, American Studies Association, the Puerto Rican Studies Association, and the National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies, among others. These have been sites of frequent dialogues about creating more visible institutional and intellectual spaces for Latinx studies. Our journal consistently works to promote and legitimize our field and has participated in advocating for and helping to create the now-established Latino Studies Association. All these spaces and conversations have been important for the advancement of our field.

One of the most important outcomes of these promotional efforts is that over the years scholars from across the country responded to calls to serve as guest editors and proposed special issues on under-researched areas in Latinx studies. As a result, several thematic issues were published under Torres' editorship and with her guidance including, for example, one concerning Latinos, militarism, and militarization, another on critical Latinx indigenities, and another on neoliberalism and Latinos. We are grateful to the many guest editors for bringing together scholars from various disciplines to create special issues that brought attention to critical topics in our field. A more complete list of special issues of *Latino Studies* can be found here, <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41276/volumes-issues/special-issues>.

It has also been one of our key goals from the beginning to mentor and foster the development of new generations of scholars. As mentoring emerging scholars and thereby sustaining the growth of the field is an important mission of the journal, our submission process is structured so as to give as much feedback as possible to potential contributors. The journal has three submission deadlines. The Internal Review Committee (the editor and associate editors) meets three times a year following the submission deadlines. At this weekend long meeting, the committee discusses each and every one of the articles that have been submitted to date and discusses the viability of each article. The committee determines if each article is suitable for our interdisciplinary journal and if it is ready for our rigorous external review process or needs further work before it can be sent out. Every author receives extensive feedback from our internal review team. In making our decision about which articles to send out for external review, we privilege articles with the potential to speak to an interdisciplinary audience of scholars across the many disciplines represented in Latinx studies. Even if we decide to reject an article because it is not appropriate for our journal, we provide feedback to help authors rework their manuscripts. Revised articles approved by the internal review team go out to three scholars for double-blind peer review. Appropriate reviewers are drawn from our international advisory board and other experts in the field. Thanks to this process the scholarship published in our journal is vetted in multiple stages by scholars from various fields, leading to substantive contributions to the field of Latinx studies. Through this mentoring work, we encourage scholars to produce their best work as we also strengthen the quality of the work published in our journal.

PROCESS WE USED TO SELECT ARTICLES FOR THE READER

The process for selecting articles for this special anniversary volume was not easy given the high quality and impactful articles published in *Latino Studies* over the last twenty years. Going into the project, we knew we wanted to choose articles that have offered important theoretical and conceptual contributions to our field while also ensuring we represented a diverse set of topics. We sought to include articles that represented different Latinx groups and did not limit ourselves to recently published articles.

To choose articles, we reviewed the most cited and downloaded articles, as well as articles that have stood out to us over the years for their rich analysis and relevance to understanding current Latinx experiences and issues. From a larger pool of articles, we selected the ones published here using the criteria outlined above. This was an iterative process as we went back and forth between the articles, our criteria, and the knowledge we could publish only twenty articles. These twenty articles are exemplars of the analytically rich and diverse articles we have published in *Latino Studies*.

OVERVIEW OF READER SECTIONS

There has been an explosion of Latinx Studies publications over the last decades. Our research has had an impact on disciplines across the social sciences and humanities and has contributed to and created new areas of knowledge that are innovative, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary. We have offered paradigm shifting theoretical and applied contributions to the study of transnationalism, immigration, sexuality, and racialization, to name but a few areas.

One of the pleasures of working on the journal is being able to observe emerging trends in our field. Perusing the table of contents of our journal is a great way to get a sense of significant themes and emerging concerns in our field over the last twenty years, as well as of the theoretical frameworks and approaches that are trending. We note for example, that throughout our twenty-year existence there has been a consistent focus on immigration and migration, transnationalism and globalism, citizenship and ethnicity, as well as race and identity. In the recent past, as the demographics of the Latinx population have evolved in new directions, we have witnessed more submissions on issues such as Latinxs in the South, Latinxs in new destinations, and Central American migrations to the United States. We are beginning to see more submissions in essential areas meriting more attention in our field such as Latinx Indigenities, Afro-Latinidades, Latinxs and health, and intra-Latinx relations. Important theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary analytics such as settler colonialism, post-nationalisms, and racialized illegality are also occupying more space in our journal.

This collection embraces a broad range of topics organized in four sections representative of major themes in the field. While we did not have the space to include articles in all important areas, we think the collection

provides an excellent introduction to themes central to our field over the last two decades. The articles in the first section, *Latinidades/Identities*, focus on constructions of *Latinidades* across multiple spaces, cultural practices, and identifications. *Race/Racializations* brings together thinking on the complex ways Latinxs are racialized through skin color, language, and immigration status, and the implications of these varied racializations. The third section, *Migration/Immigration*, examines contemporary Latinx migratory movements across the United States as well as the impact racialization, gendered processes and legal regimes have on diverse Latinx populations including farmworkers and students. The final section, *Legality/Citizenship/Belonging*, features essays centering on how Latinxs navigate complex borders and legal systems to establish their presence in the United States in the context of bearing undocumented status or possessing a second-class citizenship. Below we present a brief introduction to the articles included in each of these sections.

Latinidades/Identities

The articles in the first section, *Latinidades/Identities*, focus on constructions of *Latinidades* across multiple historical moments, cultural practices, and identifications. These essays offer a sampling of various dimensions of identity formation as they have been imagined in popular culture, sociological texts, and historical discourse. The articles make the case that *Latinidad* is a dynamic and constantly evolving analytic that changes as community members who are unseen in mainstream representations reimagine their identities and identifications and as scholars use incisive reading strategies and innovative methodological tools to uncover suppressed or emerging identifications.

We start the section with an important unpacking of *Latinidad*, a concept that has been so pivotal to our field. In her study, Frances R. Aparicio acknowledges the legitimate critiques of *Latinidad* as a potentially totalizing and homogenizing concept that seems to leave out so many community members. She then moves on to analyze useful strategic deployments of *Latinidad* as a site that can productively educate and bring people together. She uses the film *Selena* which features Puerto Rican icon Jennifer Lopez enacting the role of Chicana superstar Selena to consider the ways in which such complex sites might be reclaimed to explore similarities and differences of experiences within the Latinx communities. She argues that such multifaceted spaces can be useful sites to interrogate

questions of resistance and coalition building as well as other crucial issues such as considerations of phenotype, body types, and fashion within a Latina feminist framework.

Also exploring cultural production, Yajaira M. Padilla, develops the concept of a “Central American transnational imaginary” as it materializes in film and literature. Expanding on José Saldívar’s concept of a “transnational imaginary” she argues that a “Central American transnational imaginary” includes Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Salvadorean immigrants whose life changes have been impacted by civil war and heavy-handed US policies which have propelled the migration of many across Mexico into the United States. Although each country has its specific history and context, these shared experiences contribute to the formation of a new Central American identity. Padilla explores the formation of such an imaginary in the film *Sin nombre* directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, which focuses on a Honduran female character, the novel, *Bernardo and the Virgin* by Silvio Sirias which centers Nicaraguan history, and the Salvadorean autobiographical text, *December Sky: Beyond My Undocumented Life* by Evelyn Cortez-Davis. All of these texts focus on women and Padilla emphasizes the often ignored dimension of women’s transnational migratory experiences. Padilla provides an incisive perspective on identity and community-making strategies and opportunities among Central American immigrants in the United States.

Like Aparicio and Padilla, Nicole Guidotti-Hernández utilizes a cultural studies approach to consider the construction of Latinidades in the beloved children’s television show *Dora The Explorer*. The Nickelodeon show went into syndication in 2000 and continues to resonate today in reruns and new manifestations of its main character, Dora. Guidotti-Hernández situates the show’s success in changing demographics in the United States and the rise of a multicultural and bilingual audience. Avoiding affiliation with any Latin American national identity which might lessen its broad appeal, the show presents Dora as “a post-modern model of globalized “Latinidades,” citizenship, race, and gender.” While elements of different Latin American national customs, music, and spaces are introduced in the show, it works to “express a universal Latinx/a subjectivity.” Given this duality, the show enacts a contested perspective of Latinx identity. The author argues that the show’s marketing and commercialization of Latinx identity entails repercussions for Latinx communities that go beyond the show.