

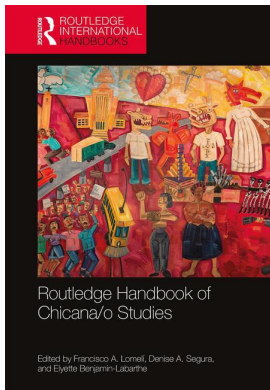
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of Chicana/o Studies

Francisco A. Lomelí, Denise A. Segura, Elyette Benjamin-Labarthe

Recent Chicana/o historiography

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726366-5>

Alex M. Saragoza

Published online on: 03 Aug 2018

How to cite :- Alex M. Saragoza. 03 Aug 2018, *Recent Chicana/o historiography from:* Routledge Handbook of Chicana/o Studies Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Sep 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726366-5>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Recent Chicana/o historiography

Advances, shortcomings, and challenges

Alex M. Saragoza

Introduction

In 2013, the *Pacific Historical Review* published a retrospective special issue on the writing of Chicana/o history, 40 years after the publication initially produced such an edition. As Albert Camarillo noted (2013, p. 504), Chicana/o historiography had undergone a transformation in its coverage, depth, and conceptualization. Since 2000, publishers have produced a growing number of works on Chicanas/os as interdisciplinary research across different scholarly fields have encompassed historical concerns that have added to the mounting archive relevant to Chicana/o history. Particular mention should be made regarding the increase of research related to gender and sexuality. Indeed, a standard database search found over 4,000 citations under the rubric of “Chicano/Mexican American history” for the years between 2000 and 2016. But, the field is not without significant gaps, challenged by questions of periodization, interpretation, and integration into larger narrative historical schemes. Nevertheless, these problematic aspects have also led to provocative insights, fruitful debates, and productive conceptual explorations.

This chapter examines recent Chicana/o historiography from 2000 to 2015, focusing on works that are representative of trends in the literature. Space constraints do not permit detailed commentary on the large body of valuable articles and books that have appeared in the period under review. The organization of the chapter begins with a discussion on the conceptualization of Chicana/o history, and I conclude its historical coverage by addressing the post-civil rights era. The last section emphasizes the shortcomings of recent Chicana/o historiography and the challenges to the field.

Conceptualization of Chicana/o history

Since the 1990s and into the second decade of the 21st century, distinct though overlapping conceptual frames have emerged to contest and/or to modify previous models of Chicana/o history. This does not suggest that there is a clear consensus within the perspectives indicated later, but their respective commonalities underlie a discrete approach to the study of the past of the Mexican-origin population in the United States. Perhaps the most fertile source of recent Chicano historical writings has come from the borderlands/transnational perspective. For

borderlands historians, the permeable frontier allowed for transborder flows of capital, goods, and people as well as cultural currents in a process that has basically continued into the present, marked by the persistence of Mexican (im)migration to the United States, except for two hiatuses: the Great Depression in the 1930s and the Great Recession of 2008–2012. This approach comes with a critical view and accentuates the formation of U.S. dominance of the region before and after the war of 1846–1848 with Mexico. Two publications capture the fresh insights by borderlands/transnational historians relevant to early Chicana/o history: *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States* (2012a), a collection of essays edited by John Tutino, and the other, Andrés Reséndez's *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850* (2005).

John Tutino's introductory essay offers a probing analysis of how Spain's North American frontier and subsequently Mexico's northern territories became enmeshed in the expansive economic orbit of the United States. Meanwhile, first Spain's and then Mexico's impoverished state and consequent inability to police its borders effectively, or to render sufficient economic resources to the area, served to facilitate the gravitational pull of U.S. capital and market forces over the region. Yet another major insight in the Tutino collection is the significance of the differing relations among and between Native peoples and Spanish-speaking settlements, especially the ramifications of the military prowess of the Comanche, whose power limited the colonization of Texas and stunted the economy of New Mexico.

In his study on national identities in Texas and New Mexico, Reséndez (2005) reinforces Tutino's view of the importance of the penetration of U.S. economic interests into northern Mexico and thus vulnerability to U.S. imperial aims. Reséndez, however, goes further in stressing the role of the state, that is, the policies and politics of both the United States and Mexico, which impinged upon the shaping of the distinct trajectories of Texas on the one hand and New Mexico on the other for the years 1800 to 1850. He also offers a compelling narrative of the forces and events on both sides of the border that contributed to the successful 1836 Texas revolt and its outcomes, as opposed to the failure of the Chimayó rebellion of 1837 in New Mexico during that period of putative Mexican rule. Reséndez's scrupulous use of sources from both sides of the border provides a rare depth of transnational analysis. Thus, his work represents a crucial contribution to an understanding of that period of Chicano history and particularly corrects the tendency of historians to elide the Mexican side of the borderlands prior to and after Mexican independence.

Another valuable contribution in Reséndez's monograph are the questions raised over miscegenation (*mestizaje*) among the Spanish-speaking, Native peoples and foreigners, the latter mainly from the United States. As Reséndez points out, and Ramón Gutiérrez (2012) outlines in his essay in the Tutino collection, racial mixing during the Spanish and Mexican periods led to permutations of identity that defy easy characterization or generalization; a situation complicated further by the racialized hierarchies that developed under Spanish colonialism and the persistence of those residual attitudes under Mexican rule. As Reséndez aptly argues, national or ethnic identification formation occurred in "a world of exceedingly fluid identities" (2005, p. 1). In this sense, Reséndez's work engages the notion of Chicana/o identity by carefully historicizing its complex origins and elasticity shorn of the simplistic mestizo binary of "Spanish" and "Indian" categories.

The complicated relations that ensued among Indigenous peoples, "Spaniards," "Mexicans," and "Euro Americans" and the context in which those relations took place point to another conceptual advance in the writing of Chicano history: a relational perspective. This conceptualization is splendidly reflected in Natalia Molina's *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (2014), where she states: "a relational treatment

recognizes that race is a mutually constitutive process and thus attends to how, when, where and to what extent groups intersect. It recognizes that there are limits to examining racialized groups in isolation” (Molina 2014, p. 3). She applies this insight to various historical episodes by examining, for example, the nativist, restrictive immigration legislation of the late 19th and early 20th century (and the court cases that denied citizenship to Asians) as fundamental to understanding the racialization of Mexican immigrants at that time. In making her argument, she employs the term racial scripts as a means “to highlight the ways in which the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths” (Molina 2014, p. 6). On the other hand, she proposes that racial scripts also provoke counter scripts “where practices of resistance, claims for dignity, and downright refusal to take it anymore cut across a range of communities of color, thus once again showing how they are linked” (Molina 2014, p. 11). In sum, Molina widens the optic of Chicana/o history and offers a powerful corrective to include forms of racialization not necessarily aimed only at those of Mexican descent.

In the publications already noted by John Tutino and Andrés Reséndez, they argue persuasively of the centrality of U.S. capitalist interests to the racialized development of northern Mexico by the turn of the 19th century. In contrast, Chicana/o historians have generally eschewed the modern workings of the political economy of the United States and its position within the global order as a means of understanding the more contemporary life of Chicana/o communities. The writings of David Gutiérrez (2013, 2004, 1999), among others, have recently given concerted attention to the structural underpinnings of Chicana/o history, particularly for the post-WWII era. Building on his seminal essay of 1999 on his concept of a “third space” (Gutiérrez 1999), he argues that two tectonic shifts have marked the history of Latinas/os, Chicanas/os in particular, especially after 1945: first, a momentous demographic change spearheaded by Latin American (im)migration, most importantly that from Mexico and its consequent effects; and second, a structural transition due to neoliberal-inspired forms of globalization, punctuated by the expansion of transnational low-wage economies (i.e., the service economy of the United States) that have generated migratory flows from (and within) Latin America, Mexico specifically. From this perspective, Gutiérrez places Chicanas/os within a broader, transnational structural frame in order to situate the racialization of Chicanos within a post-industrial U.S. polity.

This structural approach complements parallel fields of study, such as the political reconfiguration of the United States. In this vein, Ian Haney López’s brilliant *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (2014) examines the workings of the racializing political structures that buttress neoliberal policies and their inequitable outcomes for Chicanas/os and other racialized groups. Towards this end, he traces the ways in which conservatives have utilized thinly veiled racist language and legislation to undermine the civil rights gains of the 1960s and 1970s. Haney López outlines this move particularly within the Republican Party to use race as a means to electoral success. He provides a revealing story that culminates with the rise of the so-called Tea Party, a gerrymandered GOP-controlled congress, and a conservative-dominated Supreme Court (until the death of Antonin Scalia, as of this writing), and what Haney López terms “strategic racism” (2014, p. 46): the deployment of coded racial appeals to promote an agenda bent on the political suppression of people of color, the poor, and the incarcerated. Coupled with the work of David Gutiérrez and other proponents of the structural approach, *Dog Whistle Politics* uncovers the methods by which conservatives have accumulated the exercise of political power to nurture inequalities of race and class.

The varying conceptual frames of Chicana/o historiography noted previously (relational, borderlands/transnational, and structural), despite their apparent commonalities, offer evident differences of emphasis and interpretation. A cursory glance of survey texts clearly demonstrates

the dissimilarities in the writing of Chicana/o history. Neil Foley, for instance, in his *Mexicans in the Making of America* (2014), basically begins his book with the U.S.–Mexico War. In contrast, Zaragosa Vargas in *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans, from Colonial Times to the Present Era* (2010) reaches back to Spanish North America to open the story of the Chicano past. The disparity over the onset of Chicana/o history between these two historians continues in their respective schemes of periodization, interpretation of certain events, and the measure of attention paid to particular organizations and individuals.

Nonetheless, Vargas and Foley have in common the intent to insert Chicana/o history into the larger narrative of American history. The title of Foley's book evinces this point, while Vargas makes clear his aim to place "the history of Mexican Americans directly in the mainstream of American history" (Vargas 2010, p. XV). Their intent to frame Chicana/o history within the broad narrative of U.S. history raises the question of the radicalism of the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, or *movimiento*, and its resonance with the treatment of that period in mainstream American textbooks. Yet, both authors fall short of fully developing the connections between the goals of the Chicano movement and those of non-Chicano organizations of that era. Foley and Vargas, however, echo the views of recent scholarship that concedes the significance of the movement's fractured nature to its demise. Not surprisingly, the *movimiento* more recently has attracted considerable attention by scholars as they grapple with its meanings and consequences.

For Jorge Mariscal (2002), the movement was rooted in its working-class ethos as exemplified, for instance, by the militancy of Bert Corona and his organization that pushed for higher wages, better benefits, improved working conditions, and the end of job racial discrimination. In the *Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twentieth Century* (2014), edited by Mario T. García, several of the essays testify to the significance of workplace concerns that fueled Chicano activism. The collection, however, also covers other issues within the frame of the *movimiento*, such as ideological differences, Border Patrol abuse of immigrants, student-led organizations, and electoral campaigns. In brief, the movement embraced a constellation of local permutations, as suggested by García's collection. In some cases, the differences among Chicano groupings were overcome and led to concrete advances. In other cases, initial mobilizations and electoral victories did not necessarily lead to sustained political power, higher wages, or enduring multiracial working-class coalitions. Rather, recent scholarship suggests that specific local conditions shaped many of the gains by Chicana/o activism, but also its limitations and setbacks. If Mariscal is correct about the working-class base of the *movimiento*, the fact remains that few historians have dedicated specific attention to Chicana/o working-class history. Ironically, substantial research has appeared in recent years on the United Farm Workers and César Chávez, including revisionist critical inquiry, but the overwhelming majority of Chicanas/os were employed in non-agricultural labor before and after the apogee of the *movimiento*.

Recent Chicano movement historiography underscores the difficulty of generalizations, given the dominance paid to particular localities, most obviously California, Los Angeles more specifically, and to Texas. For example, the famous walkouts of Los Angeles high schools in 1968, inspired by the resolute courage of high school teacher Sal Castro, has received justifiable attention in *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (2011) by Mario T. García with Sal Castro. Similarly, the development of the *movimiento* in Texas has attracted substantial research as well. For the rest of "Aztlán," the impact of the movement is at best dimly understood, and García's collection stands as a singular reminder of Chicano-related activism beyond southern California and south Texas. Other publications tend to plow the same terrain, albeit from differing perspectives. *Mi Raza Primero: Nationalism, Identity and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966–1978* (2002) by Ernesto Chávez centers on Los Angeles, arguably

the cauldron of the movement in California. The work plumbs deeply into the stories of the now-iconic organizations associated with the *movimiento*, the Brown Berets, CASA (Centro de Acción Social Autónomo), Moratorium, and the LRUP (La Raza Unida Party or the People's Party). Chávez offers a narrative that interprets their ultimate decline to the intrinsic differences that characterized the Mexican-descent community of Los Angeles: the cleavages of class, generation, and political outlook could not be easily papered over by nationalist claims. In a sprawling overview of the movement, Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vázquez in their *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture in the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966–1977* (2014) generally support Chávez's contention that the fragmented character of the movement undermined efforts for an effective political front, although the *movimiento* held a number of successes, not the least of which was a flourishing of artistic expression across various genres. Moreover, Quiñones and Chávez underline the generalized masculinist bias as a key weakness of the movement's ideological and organizational structure; a flaw that has become an essential factor of analysis for recent work on the movement, such as in Lee Bebout's monograph, *Mythohistorical Interventions: The Chicano Movement and its Legacies* (2011). The propensity to examine the movement through the lens of its most prominent actors and groupings, however, limits the reach of the current literature. By the end of the 1970s, most colleges and universities in California, for instance, had established some form of Chicana/o Studies programs – an enduring, pivotal achievement of the movement – but the stories of these programs and their trajectories remain woefully understudied. Rodolfo Acuña's *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (2011) presents an episodic treatment, mainly focused on California with a sprinkling of references to academic institutions outside of the Golden State. In sum, the historical literature on the Chicano movement remains a work-in-progress, still largely confined to a handful of localities, and overly focused on the seemingly standardized list of organizations, events, and individuals.

Gender, sexuality, and Chicano history

One of the most welcomed developments in recent Chicana/o historiography has been the work on issues of gender and sexuality, including attention to the experience of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gender, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) communities. The list of books and articles on these subjects has grown enormously since 2000, complicating virtually any Chicana/o historical topic regardless of the period involved. Three areas of study have drawn particular attention: first, the positioning of women in the pre-1848 northern frontier of Spanish and then Mexican territories; second, the changing, fluid social place of Chicanas induced by the WWII era; and third, the role of Mexican-descent women in the *movimiento*. The confluence of these fields of study raises central questions over Chicana/o social history, in particular over patriarchy, sexual norms, and gendered tolerance towards non-heterosexual behavior.

For the pre-1848 period, the recent literature tends to involve the relations among Indigenous, “Spanish,” and “Mexican” women and their respective social location within patriarchal structures, complicated by class, race, color, public spheres, private spaces, and differing historical contexts. As a consequence, the work focusing on gender has added layers of complexity that defy easy categorization. For example, the formidable presence of the Comanche and Apache in Texas framed a situation clearly at odds from that of California in the relations between and among Spanish settlements and Indigenous communities, including the role of women – both Native and Spanish speaking. In Texas, for instance, the taking of females as captives and/or exploited labor led to women playing an influential role in the interactions that ensued in the wake of Comanche and Apache military dominance that extended as far as New Mexico. On this specific point, the prowess of the Comanche and Apache in Texas shaped gendered social

relations, as Juliana Barr argues in her excellent monograph, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (2007). She emphasizes the varying trajectories of the intricate relationships between and among Spanish-speaking enclaves and Native peoples for a period too often slighted by Chicana/o historians. And in that regard, Barr superbly utilizes gender as a lens to sunder the simplistic binary of “Indian” and “Spaniard” in the Texas borderlands during the colonial period.

In contrast to Texas, California represented a distinct story, where the missions were not as besieged or beleaguered as their Tejano counterparts. In other words, in Alta California there were no Indigenous groups that possessed the military capability of the Comanche or Apache. As a result, the missions strung along the Pacific coast and Spanish-speaking communities confronted distinct conditions in their relations with Native peoples. In *Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias* (2009), Barbara Reyes uses the mission system, its ideological basis, and its practitioners to underscore the patriarchal repression that characterized the missionary enterprise in Alta California. She presents three in-depth portraits of women with different interactions and outcomes within the workings of the mission system. Her portrayal of the women is textured by the incorporation of class, social position, and racialized status in her analysis. In this sense, in *Private Women* the author reinforces similar insights found in *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s–1880s* (2004) by Miroslava Chávez-García. In her treatment of women and intermarriage between Spanish-speaking women and Euro Americans (to use the author’s term), Chávez-García reveals the gendered stratification that marked the social order before and after 1848 in Alta California. Within this arc of time, she brings to light the ways in which women contested the masculinist structure of power as the context of male-female relations shifted towards Euro American dominance after the U.S.–Mexico War. Reyes and Chávez-García show how Spanish-speaking women maneuvered within a changing space of power and race. Thus, they provide a crucial gendered dimension to pre-1848 Alta California that counters a simplistic, essentialized view of *Californio* society. Combined with Barr’s study, the sum of these works yields a comparatively informed and much more carefully rendered picture of the early history of the borderlands and their Spanish-speaking population.

The increasing body of gender-themed historical research has also furthered the conceptualization of the WWII years and the decisive post-1945 era. Two publications exemplify the historical significance of Chicanas in the framing of that chapter of the Chicana/o past. Catherine Ramírez, in *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (2009), offers a rich, provocative portrait of *pachucas* (female zoot suiters) as reflective of two nationalist projects: that of the United States during WWII and, subsequently, their positioning as symbolic of Chicano cultural nationalism. By making gender central to her analysis, Ramírez not only demonstrates the sexist nature of those two nationalist projects, but she also sheds light on the interplay of Mexican patriarchy, gendered generational differences, and notions of femininity. In *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: the Lives of Mexican American Women in the WWII Home Front* (2013), Elizabeth Escobedo deepens the understanding of that period and its complexity, given the ambiguous racial status of young Chicanas in those years, not quite white, but not Black or Asian. Escobedo offers a fascinating episode on the successful effort of a group of Chicanas to organize a Spanish-language, Mexican-themed United Service Organization (USO) for Mexican-origin soldiers. Often criticized by the Spanish-language media as too Americanized, and portrayed in racist terms by the English-language press as dangerous female confederates of *pachucos*, Escobedo’s study demonstrates the means by which these empowered and empowering women navigated the shifting, gendered lines of race and identity.

Thus, both of these works add important nuance for those years rather than reducing wartime Chicanas to “Rosie Riveters” with Spanish surnames. If these women were becoming

“Mexican American,” they were likely at the forefront of that move. On the other hand, the insistence of these women to organize a *Spanish-language USO* (my emphasis) complicates the linearity of “becoming Mexican American.” These women clearly held a sense of identity that speaks to the fluidity, rather than the rigidity, of self-identification into binary categories “Mexican” or “Americanized.” These women furthered the blurring of the sociocultural workings within and among Chicana/o families, countering the notion of static, traditional patriarchal “familism” of that era. In brief, the research of Ramírez and Escobedo have problematized past generalizations of that era for Chicana/o history. One can easily imagine that many of these women after the war shed their aprons every morning to go to work and/or to walk precincts for Edward Roybal when he won election to the Los Angeles city council in 1949 – and why these women were more than capable of taking leadership positions in the Community Services Organization, as Julie Leininger Pycior underlines in her *Democratic Renewal and the Mutual Aid Legacy of U.S. Mexicans* (2014).

Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, author of *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (2011), merits particular attention for her work’s breadth, depth of analysis, and provocative conceptual formulations. Her conclusions focus on the 19th and early 20th centuries, but they hold implications for the writing of Chicana/o history generally. The author, for example, argues that the experience of Mexicans and Native peoples reflected “a narrative of systematic patterns of violence” where “regional identities, government policies, and economic conditions . . . drastically affected how one’s citizenship, or lack thereof and racial positioning as Anglo, Mexican, or Indian were perceived” (Guidotti-Hernández 2011, p. 3). On this point, Chávez-García and Reyes resonate with her view on this aspect of early borderlands history, where the specificity of space and the “configurations of power” in those sites are crucial to understand the “violent processes of social differentiation” (Guidotti-Hernández 2011, p. 9). Guidotti-Hernández argues that “racial positioning, gender, and class alliances were fragile and shifted according to need and economic conditions” (2011, p. 3). Accordingly, in *Married to a Daughter of the Land: Spanish-American Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820–80* (2007) by María Raquel Casas, the motives of Spanish-speaking women in marrying Euro Americans represents but one example of Guidotti-Hernández’s argument. In this sense, the author of *Unspeakable Violence* offers a convincing corrective to Chicano-themed historical writing: “Chicano nationalist and Chicana feminist scholarship have primarily and to a degree understandably posited Mexican racial and even gendered identification as a refuge from Anglo-American nationalist violence” (Guidotti-Hernández 2011, p. 8). Instead, she proposes that it is important to show “how and why multiethnic communities enacted violence against each other” (Guidotti-Hernández 2011, p. 6). Mexicans inflicted terrible forms of violence against Native peoples; and certain Native tribes similarly violently treated the Spanish-speaking as well as other Indigenous groups. As a consequence, Guidotti-Hernández casts a convincing caveat on the facile, idealized embrace of Indigeneity by Chicanos, as such celebratory associations may serve to silence “unspeakable violence.” Given Guidotti-Hernández’s work and that of her counterparts, Chicana/o historians can no longer depict the 19th-century period of Chicana/o history as primarily a narrative of resistance to Euro Americans and their capitalist interests.

In brief, the understanding of relations among the Spanish-speaking, Euro Americans, and Native peoples must contend with the centrality of women in the interface with government, economic conditions, social differentiation, and notions of identity. Towards this end, the recent literature underscores the fundamental importance of taking into account the fluid, tangled contours of place/space, racial status, and class positionality – and that in those specific intersections, women held a definitive role. Thus, the colonial and the Mexican era of the borderlands cannot be reduced to a prelude to the U.S.-Mexico War for the purposes of Chicana/o history.

The historical scholarship on gender and sexuality has also served to add substantially to the narrative of the Chicano movement, where outspoken criticism of patriarchy held important consequences, among them a trenchant critique of cultural nationalism and its implicit if not explicit romanticizing of the patriarchal “*familia*.” The nationalist notion of familism constrained if not opposed the ascendant position of Chicanas, generally repudiated an openness to LGBTQ participants, and often limited the ideological framing of the *movimiento*. On the question of gender and the *movimiento*, Maylei Blackwell in *Chicana Power: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (2011) makes evident that women were in the thick of the movement and its multifaceted manifestations as well as involved in extending the intellectual and cultural boundaries of Chicano activism. These efforts, however, were frequently rebuffed, minimized, and/or restrained by the sexism that too often characterized activist organizations, pushing women and queer participants to forge their own space within the *movimiento* and in the writing of Chicana/o history. The story of LGBTQ communities has particularly served to accentuate the complex, manifold aspects of the *movimiento*, but also the movement’s propensity to muffle questions of sexuality and gender outside of normative boundaries.

The gendering of the Chicano past clearly extinguishes the tendency of making the subject an additive rather than an integral element in Chicana/o history. Indeed, two eminent Chicana/o scholars, for example, have organized a new collection of essays with a separate section on gender and sexualities, a testament to the recognition of the significance of that topic to the field. On this note, the memoir of lesbian Jeanne Córdova, *When We Were Outlaws: A Memoir of Love & Revolution* (2011), offers a fascinating, at times wrenching insight into the gendered crosscurrents of 1970s Los Angeles by a woman of a Mexican father and Irish mother who had at one time considered becoming a Catholic nun. She not only became an outspoken lesbian activist, but she was also heavily engaged with Democratic Party progressive circles. Thus, her memoir brings to bear the tense interactions involving LGBT politics and changes in the mainstream political parties in the midst of the *movimiento* in Los Angeles. The surge of scholarship on women, women’s roles, and LGBTQ communities has opened distinct avenues of research and a rethinking of the Chicano past. On the other hand, this shift raises the question of how best to weave gender and sexuality into a narrative intent to incorporate Chicanas/os into the mainstream of “the making of America.”

Shortcomings

What is the matter with Texas? In his incisive study of the Chicano movement in San Antonio, David Montejano in *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (2010) ends his book with cautious optimism. The election in 1981 of Henry Cisneros as mayor signaled the toppling of the old, white-dominated political and business elite of the city. Nearly four decades later, the picture is less than hopeful of the durability of the meaning of Cisneros’s electoral victory. Three of the top 10 most segregated cities in the United States are in Texas; the state’s poverty rate is among the highest of the 50 states; its public schools are among the worst in the country. Moreover, the state’s voting redistricting plan of 2011 had been rejected more than once by the federal courts for evident bias against minorities; the Republican attorney general has moved forward on the implementation of a manifestly voter suppression law that had been passed by the GOP-dominated Texas legislature also in 2011; and it was the Republican attorney general of the state who led the court fight against President Obama’s executive order authorizing DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)/DAPA (Deferred Action for Parental Accountability) in 2015. Nonetheless, 44% of Latinos (overwhelmingly of Mexican descent) voted for a Republican governor in 2014.

The story of Texas politics after 1981 points to a major gap in the writing of the Chicana/o past: the political history subsequent to the movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Chicano historians have been slow to connect the broad, national right-wing move since those years and its fallout below the federal level to Chicana/o communities. A fundamental aspect of post-1960s American conservatism has been the successful effort of the Republican party to take control of state legislatures and thereby be in a position to draw the lines of electoral districts so as to undermine the representation of Chicanos and other racialized groups (Daley 2016). In this respect, Montejano's finely grained, brilliant analysis of the *movimiento* in San Antonio underscores an attendant shortcoming in Chicano historiography: *Quixote's Soldiers* is an intensely localized analysis, but the larger trends and forces within and outside of Texas that converged after 1981 to make San Antonio arguably a political island surrounded by a red (Republican) sea awaits a historian's hand. Thus, a stark question hovers over the enduring consequences of the *movimiento*, given the statistics on the contemporary social and economic status of Chicanas/os in Texas and elsewhere in the country.

The gap in post-civil rights Chicana/o political history, however, cannot be reduced to a narrative that focuses mainly on the Republican party. The story of the strength and characteristics of contemporary conservatism possesses an important corollary: historians have also skirted the role of the Democratic Party in the post-civil rights era, particularly its relations with Chicanas/os. The erosion of the liberal, progressive wing within the Democratic Party holds significant implications for Chicanos. The formation of the Democratic Leadership Council in 1985, led by Bill Clinton and Al Gore, Jr., represented a decisive shift within the party (to the center or to the right, depending on one's meaning of "left" and "right" in U.S. political parlance). Neil Foley, for example, in four pages or so of his survey text, hardly mentions the Democratic president who signed off on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), on Operation Gatekeeper, and on the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. (And President Bill Clinton also signed off on legislation that contributed to the financial origins of the Great Recession of 2007–2012; a recession in which Latina/o median net worth declined by over 60% and where Latinas/os were disproportionately negatively impacted by the home foreclosure crisis. Subsequently, President Obama supported the so-called Dream Act, but he also enabled large-scale deportation drives to the dismay of immigrant rights advocates.)

This is not to suggest that the Republican and the Democratic parties are indistinguishable. Still, for an understanding of Chicana/o history, it is important to ask why, 50 years after the apogee of the *movimiento*, the Republican Party fielded a race-baiting presidential candidate in 2016 who won the White House; and where the other party's candidate had an unimpressive record on immigration reform and whose policies as secretary of state towards Latin America were described by an eminent scholar of the region as a complete failure (Grandin 2016). In short, Haney López's aforementioned *Dog Whistle Politics* is a rare exception to the scant historical scholarship on the relations between Chicana/o communities and the two major parties, especially since the heady days of the *movimiento*.

The lack of concerted historical attention to the social history of the post-civil rights era represents another shortcoming in recent Chicana/o scholarship. Two related issues in particular underline this gap: first, class formation and stratification among Chicanas/os, and second, the resegregation of Chicanas/os and its implications, including its political consequences. As José Limón has observed, despite the general perception of Chicanas/os as a low-income population, such a portrait disguises the substantial size and growth of a middle and upper-middle class (Limón 2012). The political fallout of the *movimiento*, in conjunction with so-called Great Society policies of the 1960s and 1970s, contributed to a wave of federal, state, and municipal programs to boost the economic mobility of minorities, however uneven in its results.

As a consequence, compared to the past, a notable increase took place in Chicana/o college graduates, professionals, skilled office personnel, and related occupations that supplemented an established small middle class. Mexican-descent public sector employment multiplied, especially where Chicanas/os were able to exert pressure on school, city, county, and state bureaucracies and office holders to diversify the workforce.

Furthermore, with the surge in Mexican (im)migration in the 1980s and into the following decade, businesses emerged or expanded that catered to the newcomers, not to mention the businesses that initiated and/or expanded their efforts to attract Chicana/o customers – which in turn led to the hiring of more Chicanas/os. And with the increasing numbers of (im) migrants, the demand for Spanish-speaking service providers, for instance, accelerated the ability of Chicanas/os to gain a measure of mobility as supervisors, foremen, mid-level managers, and related positions – in short, to become members of the middle class. Nonetheless, very few historians have focused on the politics, cultural orientations, or social life of this strata, though the Chicana/o middle class has constituted a growing, important corpus of civic actors (e.g., the increasing number of Chicano-elected officials, including a substantial number of women).

Moreover, historians have also generally shunned the labor history of the post-*movimiento* era in the wake of the dramatic decline in union membership, impacts of deindustrialization, the expansion of the service sector, and the implications of globalization. While social scientists such as Manuel Pastor and Enrico Marcelli (2000) have provided a general picture of the contemporary Latina/o workplace, there has been relatively meager historical research on the Chicana/o working class. In this regard, Zaragosa Vargas has been a singular presence in the field of Chicana/o labor history with very few fellow travelers. Tellingly, the *Pacific Historical Review* special edition on Chicana/o history did not contain an essay on labor, although the overwhelming majority of Chicanas/os are in the working class.

The expanding stratification among the Mexican-origin population punctuates their resegregation by class and race – a process framed by the concerted efforts of conservatives to undermine the gains of the civil rights era, including the policies that have led to racialized income and wealth disparities since the late 1970s. The results hold well-documented negative social consequences (e.g., Chicana/o children disproportionately pushed into subpar-performing schools). Still, despite the volumes of contemporary data on the Chicana/o working poor, the history of this social strata has generally escaped the gaze of historians – and holds an important corollary for Chicana/o politics. The gerrymandering process in Texas, for example, has been facilitated by the resegregation of the large metro areas of the state, which has led to the underrepresentation of Chicanas/os. Texas is far from unique in that regard, and this story demands greater attention by historians.

A major asset of the transnational/structural approach to history is the attention given to international forces and events that impinge upon the Chicana/o experience. For David Gutiérrez, globalization plays a key role in understanding the contemporary economic situation of people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border (2013). Unfortunately, recent Chicana/o historiography has generally slighted the call of the Organization of American Historians for the internationalization of the writing of U.S. history, which represents another challenge to the field. If Chicanas/os are to be mainstreamed into American history, the transnational/structural dimension must be taken into account, such as the move of foreign-based companies to low-wage regions in the United States (in which American companies also participated).

The development of foreign-based auto manufacturing sectors in the south, for example, has led to a remarkable increase of Chicanas/os in specific southern counties and cities, among them Shelby County, Alabama. The county, a predominantly white, affluent suburban area of Birmingham, has undergone a dramatic demographic shift: between 1990 and 2000, the Chicana/o

population increased by more than 400%, and between 2000 and 2010, by about 300%. Not by coincidence, Shelby County in 2010 challenged the preclearance provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Although two lower courts had upheld that section of the legislation, the conservative-dominated Supreme Court at the time (before Justice Scalia's death) decided to hear the case. The Court's decision in *Shelby County v Holder* not surprisingly ruled against the preclearance provision. As Ian Haney López has concluded, "the Supreme Court effectively gutted the core enforcement mechanism of the Voting Rights Act, the federal statute that . . . had proved critical in blocking the efforts of Republican-controlled legislatures to disenfranchise minority voters" (2014, p. 161). The Shelby case constitutes a local example of racism that possesses an underlying but not insignificant international dimension – an affirmation of David Gutiérrez's argument on the demographic and structural aspects of Chicana/o history. It should be noted that immediately following the *Holder* decision, Texas went forward on the implementation of its voter ID law with its obvious intent to inhibit the voting of minorities, Chicanas/os most specifically (as of 2010, Blacks represent about 11% of the population of Texas, whereas about 38% is Latino, of which nearly 90% are considered of Mexican origin).

Space constraints do not permit further examples of the gaps in Chicana/o historiography, though one issue merits comment, albeit briefly. There is a dearth of scholarship on the articulation between historical change and popular Chicana/o cultural expression, especially for the post-*movimiento* era. The impact of Mexican immigration in the 1980s and 1990s contributed not only to the so-called Latin boom in popular music, but also to the amplification of cultural circuits that reflected the expanding size and the concomitant diversity of the Chicana/o population by gender, class, age, generation, and geographic origin. Yet, the history of the lack of Latinas/os in general, Chicanas/os in particular, in the mainstream media of the United States has basically eluded the consideration of historians (Negrón-Muntaner 2014).

Challenges to Chicana/o historiography

Fundamental challenges face contemporary Chicana/o historical scholarship, and the first is its production. Relatively few historians have ventured into the field; and this trend is compounded by the fact that Chicana/o student college enrollments lag notably. For those who do graduate from college, only a small number continue to post-graduate study in history – a point made emphatically by historian George Sánchez in the *Journal of American History* in 2010. Since then, the concerns expressed by Sánchez have not changed in any substantive way.

The production of Chicana/o historical scholarship points to a second concern, the consumption of that work. The readers of Chicana/o history appear to reside primarily in colleges and universities. Though Chicana/o college enrollments have increased, about half of those students are in two-year colleges; more importantly, only a small proportion continue to four-year academic institutions and lesser still to graduate study. Most high schools do not offer courses on Chicana/o history, much less require them for graduation. Although California, for instance, recently facilitated the creation of "ethnic studies" courses for K-12 curricula (presumably allowing for Chicano historical content), most school districts have yet to develop courses of that sort. In Texas, as of this writing, a controversy has arisen over a textbook for Mexican American Studies classes. The criticism of the book over its depiction of Chicanas/os sustains a simmering debate over the state's social studies curriculum approved by the conservative majority of the Texas Board of Education in 2010. Ironically, the banning of Mexican American Studies in Tucson, Arizona high schools in 2010 in fact fueled a counter move that spread from Arizona to its neighboring states. Still, to what extent Chicana/o content in pre-college-level

courses will reflect recent trends in the literature remain unclear, as well as the training of the teachers who will offer such courses.

The consumption of Chicana/o-related narratives must also recognize the significance of public history: the multitude of historic sites, parks, exhibits, museums, visual materials, and their collective representation of the Chicano past. This is not an insignificant matter. At the cost reportedly of \$540 million dollars, the African American National History Museum opened in Washington, D.C. in September 2016. In the case of Chicanas/os, a similar exposition summons a basic question over the use of a pan-Latina/o approach as a means to present the specific experience of people of Mexican descent in the United States. The National Park Service, for example, commissioned a stellar group of scholars to produce a Latina/o “theme study” composed of several essays on diverse topics. Published in 2013 in a beautiful volume entitled *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*, the text encompasses the discrete historical trajectories of the main Latin American-origin populations in the country. The authors of the introduction of the collection, Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, strive to bridge the diversity of Latinos in the United States; they explain that the term Latino “is less a marker of a single cultural or ethnic identity than a *concept*” (2013, pp. 5–6; emphasis in original). The authors claim that the concept implicates “a long historical process through which those perceived as Hispanic and/or Latino were thought of a different kind of people . . . than the truly ‘American’” (Negrón-Muntaner & Sánchez-Korrol 2013, p. 6). The authors conclude this argument by stating: “Latino history is American history with an accent – on the experiences and geographies extensively shaped by the Spanish Empire in the Americas and by the rise of the U.S. as a global power beginning in the 19th century” (Negrón-Muntaner & Sánchez-Korrol 2013, p. 6).

In an opposing view, Ernesto Chavez has argued that Latina/o history is not a cohesive field “simply because the Latino/a community in the United States is not a singular group with a historical experience” (2013, p. 515) – in contrast, the coherence of Chicana/o history is based on “a racialized people with a unique and fundamentally common history” (Chávez 2013, p. 515). By comparison, in her presidential address of 2006 to the Organization of American Historians, Vicki Ruiz conflated Chicana/o history with that of other Latin American-descent groups into the mainstream of American history, an obvious rejoinder to Chávez’s contention. Most recently, two eminent Chicano scholars, Ramón Gutiérrez and Tomás Almaguer, have edited *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twentieth-First-Century Perspective* (2016), a collection of essays that essentially supports Ruiz’s viewpoint on the question. Still, in their introduction they very carefully acknowledge the manifest diversity among Latinos in the United States.

Concluding remarks

The recent Chicana/o historical scholarship has produced a much more capacious and complex archive that holds evident rifts. In 1960, the great majority of people of Mexican descent in the United States were native born and were becoming decidedly Mexican American. The increase in (im)migration from Mexico after the 1960s, combined with the wave of the 1980s and 1990s, redefined the “Chicana/o” population in several ways (Sandoval-Strausz 2014), such as the sharp generational differences over the use of the Spanish language. Until the Great Recession of 2008–2012, the four decades of persistent Mexican immigration has vexed the notion of a collective historical experience. Thus, among those of Mexican descent, the expansion of class-inflected distinctions, as well as apparent political and cultural fissures, have deepened and widened the dissimilarities to be reconciled in the writing of the Chicano past. And, cutting across discrete lines of historical analyses – the relational, the borderlands/transnational, and the

structural – questions of gender and sexuality have served decisively to provoke a further reconsideration of previous treatments in the writing of Chicana/o history.

In this sense, it may be that Chávez's claim of the coherence of the Chicana/o experience may prove to be increasingly debatable. As Alexandra Minna Stern has concluded, the challenge for future Chicana/o historians "will be to maintain a center of gravity for the field as it continues to diversify centripetally in exciting directions" (2013, p. 584). If this assessment can be applied to Chicana/o history, it is perhaps more true of the field currently encompassed by the rubric of "Latina/o history." The proliferation of historical research from around 2000 to 2015 clearly points to a continuing discussion over the conceptualization, interpretation, and scope of the story of Mexican-origin people in the United States. In spite of the shortcomings and the challenges involved, however, the recent historical scholarship has enormously enriched the understanding of the Chicano past, but much more work remains to be accomplished.

References

For an extensive listing of academic materials related to Chicano history, see the online Chicano database at: www.ebscohost.com/academic/chicano-database.

- Acuña, R. 2011, *The making of Chicano studies: in the trenches of academe*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ.
- Barr, J. 2007, *Peace came in the form of a woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas borderlands*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Bebout, L. 2011, *Mythohistorical interventions: the Chicano movement and its legacies*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Blackwell, M. 2011, *Chicana power: contested histories of feminism in the Chicano movement*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Camarillo, A. 2013, 'Looking back on Chicano history: a generational perspective', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 82, pp. 496–504.
- Casas, R. 2007, *Married to a daughter of the land: Spanish-Mexican women and interethnic marriage in California, 1820–1880*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV.
- Chávez, E. 2002, *Mi raza primero (my people first): nationalism, identity, and insurgency in the Chicano movement in Los Angeles, 1966–1978*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Chávez, E. 2013, 'Chicano/a history: its origins, purpose, and future', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 82, pp. 505–519.
- Chávez-García, M. 2004, *Negotiating conquest: gender and power in California, 1770s to 1880s*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AR.
- Córdova, J. 2011, *When we were outlaws*, Spinsters Ink, Tallahassee, FL.
- Daley, D. 2016, *Ratf**ked: the true story behind the secret plan to steal America's democracy*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York.
- Escobedo, E. 2013, *From coveralls to zoot suits: the lives of Mexican American women on the WWII home front*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Foley, N. 2014, *Mexicans in the making of America*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- García, M. (ed.) 2014a, *The Chicano movement: perspectives from the twenty-first century*, Routledge, New York.
- García, M. 2011, *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the struggle for educational justice*, p. 46, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Gómez-Quiñones, J. & Vásquez, I. 2014, *Making Aztlán: ideology and culture of the Chicana and Chicano movement, 1966–1977*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.
- Grandin, G. 2016, 'Voter's guide to Hillary Clinton's policies in Latin America', *The Nation*, April 15, 2016. DOI: <https://thenation.com/.../a-voters-guide-to-hillary-clintons-policies-in-latin-america>.

- Guidotti-Hernandez, N. 2011, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Gutiérrez, D. 1999, 'Migration, emergent ethnicity, and the "third space": the shifting politics of nationalism in greater Mexico', *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, pp. 481–517.
- Gutiérrez, D. 2004, 'Globalization, labor migration, and the demographic revolution: ethnic Mexicans in the late twentieth century', in D. Gutiérrez (ed.) *The Columbia history of Latinos in the United States since 1960*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Gutiérrez, R. 2012, 'New Mexico, mestizaje, and the transnations of North America', in J. Tutino (ed.) *Mexico and Mexicans in the making of the United States*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Gutiérrez, D. 2013, 'An historic overview of Latino immigration and the demographic transformation of the United States', in National Park System Advisory Board (ed.) *American Latinos and the making of the United States: a theme study*, National Park Service, Washington, DC.
- Gutiérrez, R. & Almaguer, T. (eds.) 2016, *The New Latino Studies Reader*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Haney, López I. 2014, *Dog whistle politics: how coded racial appeals have reinvented racism & wrecked the middle class*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Journal of American History*. 2010, 'Latino history: an interchange on present realities and future prospects', vol. 98, pp. 424–463.
- Leininger, Pycior J. 2014, *Democratic renewal and the mutual aid legacy of U.S. Mexicans*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Limón, J. 2012, 'Transnational triangulation: Mexico, the United States, and the emergence of a Mexican American middle class', in J. Tutino (ed.) *Mexico and Mexicans in the making of the United States*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Mariscal, J. 2002, 'Left turns in the Chicano movement, 1965–1975', *Monthly Review*, vol. 54, pp. 59–68.
- Molina, N. 2014, *How race is made in America: immigration, citizenship, and the historical power of racial scripts*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Montejano, D. 2010, *Quixote's soldiers: a local history of the Chicano movement, 1966–1981*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- National Park System Advisory Board. 2013, *American Latinos and the making of the United States: a theme study*, p. 54, National Park Service, Washington, DC.
- Negron-Muntaner, F. & Sanchez-Korrol, V. 2013, 'Introduction: American Latinos in the Making of the United States', in *National Park System Advisory Board*. 2013, *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*, National Park Service, Washington D.C.
- Negrón-Muntaner, F. 2014, *The Latino media gap: a report on the state of Latinos in U.S. media*, Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University, New York.
- Pastor, M. & Marcelli, E. 2000, *Social, spatial, and skill mismatch among immigrants and native-born workers in Los Angeles*, Working paper 1, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego.
- Ramírez, C. 2009, *The woman in the zoot suit: gender, nationalism, and the cultural politics of memory*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Reséndez, A. 2005, *Changing national identities at the frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Reyes, B. 2009, *Private women, public lives: gender and the missions of the Californias*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Ruiz, V. 2006, 'Nuestra América: Latino history as United States history', *Journal of American History*, vol. 93, pp. 655–672.
- Sandoval-Strausz, A. 2014, 'Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of the New Urban America', *Journal of American History*, vol. 101, pp. 804–831.
- Stern, A. 2013, 'On the road with Chicana/o history: from Aztlán to the Alamo and back', *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 82, pp. 581–587.
- Tutino, J. (ed.) 2012a, *Mexico and Mexicans in the making of the United States*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Tutino, J. 2012b, 'Capitalist foundations: Spanish North America, Mexico, and the United States', in J. Tutino (ed.) *Mexico and Mexicans in the making of the United States*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Vargas, Z. 2010, *Crucible of struggle: a history of Mexican Americans from colonial times to the present era*, Oxford University Press, New York.