

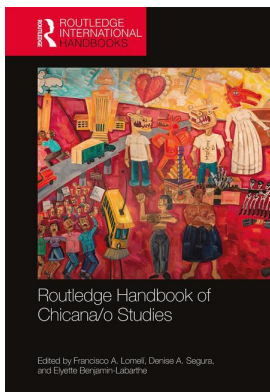
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A genealogy of Chicana history, the Chicana movement, and Chicana Studies

Miroslava Chávez-García

Chicana history is a vibrant field of study with scholars from across the disciplines working to recover and reinterpret the histories of Mexican and Mexican American women in the United States. Chicana history was not always so popular. Initially, when Chicano history emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the wake of the Chicano movement, the Mexican American civil rights movement, scholars – most of them men – virtually ignored Mexican American women in general and issues of gender and sexuality in particular. When they did study women, they portrayed them primarily as producers (laborers) and reproducers (mothers) within the context of the household and family unit. In contrast, Chicana writers, activists, and feminists, both in and outside the academy, took up the task of recovering women’s untold histories and did so collectively and creatively. It is these women to whom we owe a great debt for laying the foundations for the study of Mexican American women.

The writing of Chicana history, as Maylei Blackwell argues (2011), has not been confined by disciplinary boundaries. Today, as in the past, the field is diverse in its application of theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and source materials as well as in its focus and themes. Its interdisciplinarity, in turn, has worked to recast and expand male-centered, Chicano history, leading to renewed vibrancy and innovation in the field. This chapter explores the genealogy of Chicana history, paying attention to the early influences of its development, namely the rise of social and political movements and women-centered fields of studies. The chapter then probes the role of queer Chicanas in articulating an alternative approach to Chicana history. In doing so, they worked to complicate our understanding of Mexican American women’s experiences, including social movements. The chapter then examines the interdisciplinary nature of the field and its attention to Chicana feminist activism, youth culture, struggles for reproductive justice, and queer histories. Finally, it highlights the latest areas of research, demonstrating the continued vibrancy and innovation of the field.

The foundations of Chicana history

Prior to the 1960s, few historians studied the Mexican and Mexican American historical experience in the United States, with most finding the topic insignificant. A handful of intellectuals did, however, recognize the relevance of the Spanish-speaking population in the larger

society. Those who studied and documented ethnic Mexican experiences in the early twentieth century include Jovita González (1930), George I. Sánchez (1940), Carey McWilliams (1948), and Ernesto Galarza (1964). The precursors to these iconoclastic writers were the radical nineteenth-century newspaper editors and writers scattered across the southwest who also paid attention to Mexican-origin peoples. They include Francisco P. Ramírez, editor of *El Clamor Público*, a Los Angeles Spanish-language newspaper published from 1855 to 1859, who often represented the voices of the recently dispossessed landed class of *Californios* and *Californianas* (Ramírez 1855–1859). It was not until the rise of the Chicano movement in the 1960s and 1970s, however, with its goals of advancing social justice, educational access, empowerment, and self-determination more broadly, that the field of Chicano history burst onto the academic scene seeking to identify the class- and race-based roots of inequality. Within a few years of the field's development, Chicano scholars began producing publications, planning conferences, and building academic programs aimed at recovering the Chicano/Mexicano experience in the United States. Though narrowly focused on race and class oppression, they established a place for Chicano history in the academy (Gómez-Quñones & Arroyo 1976; Almaguer 1987; Gutiérrez 1989; Zaragoza 1988; García 1989).

The inception of Chicano history did not, however, include the experiences of Chicanas, much less focus on gender and sexuality. This new generation of Chicano scholars, many of them graduate students and the majority of them males, focused primarily on experiences of racism and class conflict, the dual wage structure, political disenfranchisement, and internal colonialism. To explain Chicanos' position in the larger society, they borrowed theoretical approaches from labor history, Marxist and colonial theory, and cultural nationalism (García 1995, p. 228). Much of this early work dealt with the Chicano community as a monolithic entity, with little attention to internal stratification along lines of gender, sexuality, class, culture, and immigrant status. To do otherwise, many argued implicitly, detracted from the notion of the stalwart Chicano family and community and invited unwanted scrutiny and fragmentation of *la gente* (the people) (Arroyo 1975; Cisneros 1975; González 1976).

Chicana writers, activists, and feminists who came of age in the Chicano movement and "second wave" white women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s faced exclusion and erasure of their roles and relations in society, leading them to take up the task of recovering Mexican American women's history and place in contemporary society (Orozco 1990). During this time, a number of Chicana activists wrote about diverse Chicana experiences and published them in Chicana- and Chicano-generated newspapers, journals, and, later, anthologies, such as *Aztlán*, *El Grito del Norte*, *Encuentro Femenil*, and *Regeneración*. Some Chicanas also published in Women's Studies venues and worked with women of color and white women activists to bring attention to the complexity of their present and historical needs. By interrogating their histories, Chicanas such as Anna NietoGómez, Enriqueta Vásquez, and Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, among others, and organizations such as Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc and Las Adelitas de Aztlán, launched the foundation of Chicana Studies and, in turn, Chicana history. In many ways, Chicana Studies, rather than Chicano history or the contemporary U.S. (white) women's history, provided the fertile ground that gave rise to Mexican American women's history (Blackwell 2011; Dicochea 2004; Oropeza & Espinoza 2006; Martínez 1998; García 1997; Brown & Chávez-García 2005).

These early writings by and about Chicanas were significant to the field of Chicano history, for they broke with the well-worn topics of political powerlessness, labor segmentation, land loss, and race and class conflict. Chicanas' approach focused on re-examining women's roles and relations in the family and their larger significance in their communities. In the 1970s, Enriqueta Vásquez, for instance, a soothsayer of sorts and fiery writer for *El Grito del Norte* (1969, 1970, 1971a, 1971b), not only offered incisive critiques of racism, corporatism, and the corruption of

the Catholic Church but also promoted an egalitarian family structure and communities where all members of *la raza* (the Mexican people), including men, participated in the love, care, and education of the young. Equality, she wrote, begins in the home. She also implored readers to shake off traditions that confined women, like herself, who had divorced, despite Catholic strictures. Rather than shun these individuals, Vázquez wrote, we should embrace them as part of *la familia* (Oropeza & Espinoza 2006).

Chicana writers not only reconceived notions of *la familia* but also worked to cast aside the traditional marker of “the” Chicano experience, namely the U.S. conquest in 1848, oftentimes referred to as the crucible of the Chicano people. In 1977, anthropologist Adelaida del Castillo was among the first to create an alternative time frame stretching to the pre-conquest period (del Castillo 1977). Chicana scholars also rejected the dominant view of their female Indigenous predecessors as traitors, *malinches* (in reference to La Malinche or Malintzin Tenepal, Hernán Cortés’s interpreter and mother of the first *mestizo* child) or conquered victims. Rather, they embraced the perspective of Chicanas and their precursors (*mexicanas* and *indias*) as resourceful and shrewd survivors who contributed to their family and community’s livelihood (Morales, S. 1979).

The writings of Chicana activists, feminists, and scholars were influenced by the broader struggles for civil rights nationally and liberation movements globally, including the Chicano movement. As discussed by Ramón Gutiérrez in this *Handbook*, the Chicano movement originated as a set of diverse local and regional struggles for social justice, civil rights, and political representation throughout the U.S. Southwest and Midwest. Activists, men and women, young and old, demanded equal rights under the law, an overhaul of the educational system, access to decent housing, community-run health care, and an end to police brutality and the Vietnam War. Signaling a break from past approaches to community empowerment, which usually focused on working with or through institutions of power for access to resources, these young people made their demands for self-determination using direct action and radical rhetoric. Taking their cause to the streets, Chicanas/os constructed an ideology of cultural nationalism with its emphasis on recovering and centering Mexican history, Indigeneity, and culture, including *la familia* (Oropeza 2005; Chávez 2002; Muñoz 1989).

Visibly absent in the production of Chicano cultural nationalism was attention to women’s issues or gender and sexuality. Chicana activists, feminists, and scholars, many of whom had experience in community activism, labor unions, politics, and the women’s movement, realized that the ideology of cultural nationalism, with its emphasis on *la familia* – a patriarchal and oppressive institution to females – relegated them to subservient and secondary roles within the movement, a condition that reflected their status in the larger community. Chicanas questioned the ideology of self-determination and the practices of Chicano male leaders and activists who preached power to *la raza* yet relegated Chicanas to “female” duties such as answering the phone, making coffee, and servicing the men with sexual favors. In her introduction to *Chicana Feminist Thought*, Alma M. García observes:

Chicana feminists produced an ideological critique of the Chicano cultural nationalist movement that struggled against social injustice yet maintained patriarchal structures of domination. Chicana feminist thought reflected a historical struggle by women to overcome sexist oppression but still affirm a militant ethnic consciousness.

(García 1997, p. 1; Orozco 1986; Nieto Gómez 1976; Sosa-Riddell 1974)

The contemporary Euro American women’s movement (though composed of different, sometimes diametrically opposed, branches), with its attention to gender inequality, sexism, and,

homophobia, appealed to Chicanas but did so in a limited way. Early on, in the 1960s and 1970s, many Chicanas – queer and cisgender – participated in the white-dominated radical, lesbian, and mainstream organizations that comprised the white women’s movement. Like the activism they experienced in the community and Chicano movement, women-identified spaces became an important training ground for shaping and giving meaning to Chicana feminist and *lesbiana* consciousness. The work of queer critic Gloria Anzaldúa with the Feminist Writers Guild helped shape her writing and future career, while Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez, activist, founder, and editor of *El Grito del Norte*, found a space with New York Radical Women.¹ Likewise, in the 1970s, as a graduate student, Emma Pérez, a queer Chicana writer and historian, turned to Women’s Studies and the Women’s Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). There, she said in an interview, she found a “safe space” (Anderson 2000, p. 13).

In those spaces, Chicanas recognized a lack of self-reflexivity in the approach to gender, sexual, class, racial, and ethnic oppression. Chicanas argued that they, unlike their white counterparts, suffered from race, class, and gender oppression, including homophobia, or what they called triple oppression (Segura 1986). Chicanas saw themselves rooted in the collective Chicano/a community struggle and dealt with issues such as poverty, welfare, child and elderly care, race discrimination, health care, the farmworkers’ struggle, and prison reform, most of which the second wave women’s movement often overlooked. Many Chicana activists saw the women’s movement as largely composed of middle- and upper-class white females with individualistic goals that often depended on the domestic labor of Black, Brown, and working-class women and clashed with cultural beliefs and practices among women of color. Thus, to Chicanas the idea of a universal sisterhood – as espoused by many white, middle-class feminists – erased the power differentials among women as well as the specificities of their social location. As such, they viewed themselves and their concerns ignored and overlooked by white feminist writers and feminist theorists largely because of exclusionary practices that silenced the lives of women of color (García 1997, pp. 192–264).

A few years later, the exclusion of Chicanas from white women’s scholarly pursuits had not changed much. In 1992, Tey Diana Rebolledo, one of the first Chicanas to direct a Women’s Studies program, found strong resistance to integrating Chicana and Latina intellectual work into Women’s Studies’ “mainstream books, journals, and collections” (Rebolledo 1992, p. 32). When asked to submit their work for Women’s Studies anthologies or similar collections, she argued, too often it was done as an afterthought to fill a need for “diversity” or as a form of tokenism. The result of such practices was (and is) to limit the voices of Chicanas in academia. Another equally pernicious consequence of tokenization Rebolledo articulated was (and is) the appropriation of Mexican American women’s work with little acknowledgement of authorship or the recognition of the existence of a larger cohort of Chicana scholars, activists, and writers.

A 1992 study, conducted by Denise A. Segura and Beatriz Pesquera, of highly educated Chicana feminists, activists, and scholars found that such exclusionary practices among white, middle-class women made Chicanas reluctant to work with them. Segura’s and Pesquera’s survey of the members of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (MALCS), founded by “Chicana faculty and graduate students as a support and advocacy group and a forum for sharing research interests,” demonstrated that the majority of Chicanas continued to criticize the racial and class biases and the lack of attention to their needs within the second wave women’s movement (Segura & Pesquera 1992, p. 76.). Chicanas and Latinas, Pesquera and Segura concluded in a related study (1993), were less concerned with findings ways to incorporate women in male-dominated society and expressed more interest in developing ways to alter systems of inequality and exploitation engendered by capitalism vis-à-vis their white counterparts.

As Segura and Pesquera remind us, the writings of Chicanas and Latinas have been at the forefront of emerging feminist scholarship and have made their way into Women's Studies circles. As Tey Diana Rebolledo has observed, new courses dealing with race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality have been developed in Women's Studies programs, centers, and departments. The literary-activist production of Chicanas, African American, and Third World women in general, in turn, has led some white women scholars to interrogate feminist theory and praxis and to rethink and redefine their conceptual, pedagogical, and curricular frameworks. As such, mainstream feminists and Women's Studies scholars have paid increasing attention to the "isms" as well as privileges inherent in whiteness, middle-class status, and heterosexuality.

Notwithstanding the strides in Women's Studies, Margaret Villanueva and Rachel Lee have argued, in separate works (1999 and 2000, respectively) that women of color and their scholarship continue to be tokenized and marginalized (Villanueva 1999; Lee 2000). In working with young Chicanas and Latinas at Northern Illinois University, Villanueva has observed the ambivalence of Latinas to engage with white, middle-class feminists, a reluctance largely stemming from their invisibility in the research, teaching, and workshops in the Women's Studies program. These and other experiences led Villanueva to conclude that Women's Studies "ha[d] yet to be transformed" (Villanueva 1999, pp. 51–55). For the transformation to take place, Villanueva suggested the inclusion of Chicana and Latina scholarship in Women's Studies, the recruitment and retention of Latina scholars and students, and the "transformation of the underlying premises, assumptions, and canonical texts in the field" (Villanueva 1999, pp. 66–68).

Lee, in her experience teaching the only women of color class in the Women's Studies Program at UCLA at the time, which formed part of the core of the curriculum, came to a similar conclusion. While she observed an investment in "colored women's bodies" – that is, in having a woman of color teach the course, she noted a disinvestment in integrating and teaching the scholarship of women of color in general. As such, the scholarship (and bodies) of women of color had been confined to one course. Lee concluded by stating that, while Chela Sandoval's conception of an oppositional ideology allowed us to be highly mobile and to enter and exit feminist circles at will, it also relegated us to the margins, at best, and rendered us invisible, at worst, with no real space in which to cultivate our research and writing. Lee concluded by urging women of color to claim a territory, to move from the borderlands to the center of scholarly inquiry – whether in or outside of Women's Studies. Or else, Lee warned, we faced the possibility of disintegration (Lee 2000, p. 96; Sandoval 1991).

Lee's call, while productive, had not anticipated the backlash and increased antagonisms in larger Women's Studies circles. Since the late 1980s, Women's Studies feminists have identified a "crisis" in the field, with some implicitly arguing that the critiques of racism by women of color have led to the questioning of the basic premises and future of Women's Studies (Zimmerman 2002). In Villanueva's own experiences, when white, middle-class feminist scholars are confronted with racist practices, the latter often react with "denial, explanations of improvements already made, or entrenched defensiveness" (Villanueva 1999, p. 55). In Lee's essay, she noted the defensive posturing from several Women's Studies scholars, who lashed out against the "guilt" and "anger" assailed by women of color. These Women's Studies scholars, Lee stated, had displayed "outright hostility" and attacked not only women of color scholarship but also their pedagogy in feminist journals.² Ultimately, Lee believes, "the question of race and women of color in women's studies has deepened the uncertainty of women's studies and feminism," a proposition that had left many Women's Studies and Third World women scholars concerned about future prospects (Lee 2000, pp. 96–97).

Such challenges in working with white, middle-class women and the second wave women's movement led Chicanas in earlier years, in the 1960s and 1970s, to turn their attention away

from their white sisters to their Brown brothers and to the Chicano movement specifically. Hunger for fundamental changes to the gender, racial, ethnic, and class order of the larger society as well as in the Mexican American community, Chicanas organized meetings and held conferences on the role of *la Chicana* in *el movimiento*, with some arguing that Chicano liberation from white oppression was not possible without Chicana liberation. Not all Chicanas agreed, however. In an effort to distance themselves from what they critiqued as *gringa* (white) feminist agendas, a group of Chicana “loyalists” argued that they did not want to be “liberated” but, rather, supported *la causa*. The enemy was the *gabacho*, not the *macho*, they argued. Such ruptures among women emerged most visibly at the first national Chicana conference, *La Conferencia de Mujeres Por La Raza*, which took place in Houston in 1971 with nearly 600 in attendance. In one of the sessions, differences over Chicana feminist politics led to many women leaving the venue in protest. While the details leading to the schism remains controversial, with some attendees recalling similar events with differing details, the walk-out underscored the diversity of experience and thought among Chicanas as it pertained to personal and community liberation (Blackwell 2011; Ruiz 2000).

Despite the fissures among Chicanas, the gathering in Houston pushed women’s issues to the forefront of the Chicano movement, leading feminists to continue to advocate for their empowerment, both within and without the movement and community. In carving their own spaces, Chicanas argued that they did not want to separate themselves from *el movimiento* but wanted to focus on issues of *la mujer* in order to strengthen *la causa*’s overall goals. Chicanas’ interrogation of the gender politics and practices of the Chicano movement fueled, in turn, Chicana activists, feminists, and scholars to issue scathing critiques of what they saw as contradictions and to form their own organizations, to publish their own newsletters and journals, and to develop their own theoretical models and paradigms for analyzing and examining the historical and contemporary experiences of Chicanas (Pesquera & Segura 1992). Among those who led the efforts to establish their own literary and intellectual venues were Adelaida del Castillo and Anna NietoGómez who founded and edited *Encuentro Femenil*, at California State University, Long Beach. At the same time, politically mobile and well-established Chicanas in southern California, led by Francisca Flores, formed Comisión Femenil Mexicana and opened the Chicana Service Action Center – a grassroots organization designed to assist impoverished women, men, and children in the *barrio*.

Not surprisingly Chicanos and some Chicanas labeled the women who criticized the movement as counter-revolutionary *vendidas* (sell outs), *agringadas* (assimilated to the white American mainstream), *malinchistas* (as “La Malinche,” traitors to their race), *feministas* (like white, middle-class feminists), and *marimachas* (lesbians). The accusations, in turn, heated up debates among politicized Chicana feminists as well, some of whom attempted to distance themselves from those whom they saw as “white-identified feminists,” including many queer Chicanas. Queer Chicanas, in contrast, sought to articulate sexuality, as well as race, class, gender, and culture, as the sources of their identity and oppression. Rampant homophobia in the Chicano community was difficult to contain, however, even infecting some Chicana feminists, who sometimes isolated and marginalized queers (Ruiz, 2000).

Queer Chicanas, in turn, drew strength from their isolation in the Chicana and Chicano movements. Initially, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Chicana lesbians had gravitated not to the Chicano movement but to the women’s movement, particularly to the vibrant and vocal queer movement, which professed to embrace Third World lesbian women and U.S. women of color. There, in women’s writing groups, national women’s organizations, and Women’s Studies programs, Chicana lesbians sharpened and focused their critique of homophobia and sexism (Keating 1993; González 2002). But, in time, many became disillusioned with the white women’s movement and dominance of white middle- and upper-class women, particularly

those in leadership positions, who often marginalized and silenced them, despite the rhetoric of inclusion. Chicanas experienced racism and classism in the lesbian movement and, in response, like queer Black women, organized collectives and published their writings in separate venues (Hull, Scott & Smith 1982; Joseph & Lewis 1981; Dill 1983; The Combahee River Collective 1986; Christian 1989).

The result of the flurry of writings, publications, and organizations by queer and cisgender Chicanas was the emergence of Chicana Studies alongside the Chicana movement and Chicana history. As Chicana historian Cynthia Orozco argues, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the publication of *Chicana Voices* – a collection of essays produced as a result of the 1984 National Association of Chicano Studies conference dedicated to the “*voces of la mujer*” – the field of Chicana Studies had come into its own and, by extension, so had Chicana history (Orozco 1990, pp. 57–58). The fields of Chicana and Chicano history expanded, as well, in scope and depth with the movement and placement of Mexican-origin historians and scholars in general in colleges and universities across the country. Chicano history and Chicano Studies remained, however, male-dominated fields.

As significant numbers of Chicanas entered graduate programs and obtained their doctorates in history, sociology, literature, and related fields in the late 1980s and 1990s, they began publishing groundbreaking studies, many of them interdisciplinary in nature, expanding the scope and including themes such as cross-cultural relations, political and feminist activism, and theater. Among the most significant works of history was Vicki L. Ruiz’s *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*. Published in 1987, Ruiz brought together (for the first time) labor history, feminist theory, and culture as well as oral history to study the lives of Chicana cannery workers and their ethnic coworkers. This story of Mexican and Mexican American women coming together across ethnic lines recast Chicanas, and Chicano peoples more generally, from being victims of industrial capitalism. Rather, Ruiz portrayed a dynamic group of women who drew strength from their families as well as from their own sense of just and fair working conditions to improve the lives of their communities. Ruiz’s work illustrated that Chicano historians could no longer ignore gender as a category of analysis and gave many scholars of Mexican American women’s history useful tools for recovering and reinterpreting their overlooked histories (Ruiz 1987).

Queering Chicana history

At the same time that Chicana scholars explored deeply and widely gender as well as race, ethnicity, and class as categories of analysis, Chicana writers, poets, and artists turned their attention to one of the most marginalized themes in Chicana (and Chicano) history, namely sexuality. Until then, sex and sexuality, particularly homosexuality and queer identities, were taboo subjects in Chicana and Chicano history, while many radical, U.S. white women and women of color had made it an area of primary focus. Chicanas’ self-censorship around sex, sexuality, and queer identities was a result partly of religious (Catholic) strictures, patriarchal ideologies, and cultural mores that taught against naming and engaging in such practices. Nearly silenced in the Chicano movement by Chicano cultural nationalist ideology, queer Chicanas wrote prose and poetry, among other modes of self-expression, about their struggles in *el movimiento*, *la familia*, and *la comunidad*. These works, in turn, led to the emergence of groundbreaking books, including *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which was published in 1981 and edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, among the best-known queer Chicana writers at the time. As Alicia Gaspar de Alba, a queer Chicana literary scholar, observes, the book captured the “voices of Third World feminist politics in action . . . and reaction” to dominant narratives as it critiqued sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia in communities of

color and in the larger society (Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981; Gaspar de Alba 1993). *Bridge* was then followed by Cherríe Moraga's autobiographical account, *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*, in which she (along with other Chicana queer writers) reclaimed and redeployed the meaning of being a *vendida*, a traitor to her own people (Moraga 1983). These Chicanas understood first-hand the impact of rejection based on their sexuality much as La Malinche was vilified in Mexicano and Chicano culture and history for giving in to the "other side," the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés. As Ramón Gutiérrez writes, Chicana lesbian writers produced powerful essays, poetry, and artwork critiquing Mexicano/Chicano cultural and patriarchal attitudes towards sexuality, love of the Chicana self, and mother-daughter relationships. In the process, they unearthed the multiple ways in which systems of male and heterosexual power operated at all levels of society, including the Chicano/Mexican family and community. These works demonstrated decisively that Chicano history was no longer focused exclusively on issues of race and class but also gender and sexuality as they operated in multiple structures and levels (Gutiérrez 1993).

Following on the heels of Moraga's work, two seminal works in queer Chicana Studies emerged: *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, also by Gloria Anzaldúa, the brilliant thinker and theorist mentioned earlier, and *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* by Carla Trujillo, an articulate iconoclast in the field of sexuality studies. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* had a profound impact on Chicana (and Chicano) literature as well as in Chicana (and Chicano) history, for she reconceived early Native history in the Americas, specifically in Mexico. In the process, she reinterpreted and gave new meaning to the concept of "borderlands." More than simply a political or national divide, Anzaldúa wrote about the conceptual and material borders she straddled as a poor Tejana, Chicana, Mexicana, lesbiana, mujer, and writer living in South Texas. In the process, Anzaldúa gave Chicanas and Chicana lesbians in particular a powerful new theoretical tool – the concept of *la nueva mestiza* – to describe the multiple borders and identities they straddled and inhabited, respectively, in their everyday lives. Chicanas, she argued, were not only mothers, wives, and workers but also lovers, writers, and thinkers. Since the book's first appearance in 1987, Anzaldúa's seminal work has been reissued several times, with a fourth edition appearing in 2012 (Anzaldúa 2012; Trujillo 1991).

Four years later, in 1991, Carla Trujillo published *Chicana Lesbians*, an impressive work for its bold crossing of disciplinary boundaries and brave disruptions of the silences imposed on Chicana sexuality and, specifically, on Chicana lesbians. An eclectic collection of poetry, short stories, and narratives from more than two dozen writers, the book mapped the experiences of Chicana lesbians by addressing themes of everyday experiences, sexuality, ethnicity, and homophobia in "The Life," "The Desire," "The Color," and "The Struggle," respectively. Described as a multi-disciplinary, multilayered, and multivocal text, Trujillo's book nevertheless wove the collection into a cohesive whole, a feat not often easily achieved. As María C. González notes: "Unafraid to challenge traditional conceptions of sexuality, *Chicana Lesbians* also challenge[d] traditional conceptions of scholarship" (González 1993). This was not Trujillo's final word on gender, sexuality, and lesbianism. In 1998 Trujillo developed another collection of essays on queer Chicanas that broadened the focus to women in and outside the academy. Incorporating the voices of artists, comedians, historians, poets, and psychologists, among others, the narratives explored themes of "cultural identity, sexuality, spirituality, and the ever-present problems created by hierarchies of power" (Wheatwind 1998). As a testament to the significance of the collection, *Living Chicana Theory* included leading Chicana thinkers and writers, including Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Sandra Cisneros, among others. What made it unique, as Marie-Elise Wheatwind observed the year it was published, were the "personal accounts and unconventional approaches to Chicana feminist theory" (Wheatwind 1998, p. 20).

In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez also recast the agency of Mexican women but did so through the use of a new framework and a relatively new setting south of the border: turn-of-the-twentieth-century Yucatán, Mexico (Pérez 1999). Drawing upon postmodernism and feminist theory, Pérez constructed “the decolonial imaginary” as a paradigm through which to interpret the voices of Mexicanas/Chicanas who had been silenced and relegated to the margins, to passivity, and to interstitial spaces (as she calls it, to “third spaces”). Along with third-space feminist practice, which recognized the mobility of identities between and among varying power bases, the decolonial imaginary, she argued, allowed for the recovery of Chicana agency. By paying attention to the disruptions and disjunctures in the sources and the archives more generally, Pérez recovered and reclaimed the early political activity of Mexican feminists and their significance in national and revolutionary politics.

Yolanda Chávez Leyva, in “Listening to the Silences in Latina/Chicana Lesbian History,” also provided a new approach to recovering the voices of Mexicanas, Chicanas, and lesbians, in particular, in history and in the contemporary period. Rather than assume that silence is the absence of knowledge or information, Chávez Leyva suggested that we treat silence as a language itself and pay attention to the multiplicity of unspoken and visual messages imparted in and through the unspoken. These and other historical and literary studies in Mexicana/Chicana/Latina history laid the foundation for a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship detailing the multiplicity of historical experiences of Spanish-speaking women who chose to defy conventions of gender and sexuality as well as of race and class (Pérez 1999, 2003; Chávez Leyva 1998). Yet, as the growing literature suggests, queer Chicana (and Chicano) history remains largely untapped, as researchers have only recently begun to recover and write about the ordinary and extraordinary lives of gay and lesbian Chicanas/os and the ways in which they shaped their varied communities.

Interdisciplinarity in Chicana history

Much of the innovation in Chicana history has come from interdisciplinary scholars who have mined historical as well as literary, cultural, sociological, and anthropological sources for insight on Chicanas and Mexicanas in history and the ways in which gender and sexuality have shaped the histories of the Chicana/o peoples. Most recently, Catherine Ramírez, Maylei Blackwell, and Elena Gutiérrez, among others – scholars from diverse disciplinary training and backgrounds – are bringing to life the richness of women’s experiences in the twentieth century. They demonstrate the renewed vitality of Chicana history and its inextricable links across the disciplines. In many ways, Chicana history serves as a model for scholars in related fields, such as in U.S. Western history, seeking to reinvigorate and refresh modes of inquiry.

Ramírez, a literary scholar, uses poetry, prose, oral interviews, performance art, and visual art to explore the oppositional nature of *pachucas*, young Mexican American women of the 1940s and 1950s who chose to defy their parents’ conservative Mexican culture as well as the norms of the American mainstream. By sporting oppositional attire and hairstyles, speaking an alternative male-centered, language (*caló*), and mingling with pachucos (their male equivalents), they called attention to their “dangerous” sexuality and the need for authorities to police their social activities. Ramírez’s *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* demonstrates that, while mainstream society in the World War II era viewed pachucos and pachucas as antithetical and key to shaping American nationalism, by the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s young Mexican Americans had reclaimed and repositioned zoot suit-clad males, along with other male-identified symbols, such as the Aztec warrior, as icons of *la causa*. Pachucas, however, with their seemingly charged sexuality, malinchista affinities, and gender-bending practices (they integrated “men’s” clothing into

their attire), did not enjoy such a reclamation in the movement. Instead, Chicano activists either marginalized them as insignificant helpmates or misinterpreted them as sexually promiscuous delinquents. These opposing viewpoints, as Ramírez points out, reflect the lack of acceptance by some scholars regarding how pachucas challenged the cultural nationalist ideology of the movement with its emphasis on ethnic unity based on pride in the Chicano patriarchal family, history, and culture.³

Maylei Blackwell, an interdisciplinary scholar, pays close attention to the lives of the Chicanas, as well, who followed in the wake of the pachucas. Blackwell focuses on the experience of Anna NietoGómez and Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, a feminist group founded at California State University, Long Beach, in 1968 that drew its name from a turn-of-the-twentieth-century Mexican feminist civil and political organization opposed to the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship in Mexico. Blackwell uses NietoGómez and Las Hijas's collective experience as a window onto the larger development of Chicana feminism and the Chicano movement, demonstrating that they were among the first to articulate a Chicana feminist consciousness – in speeches and print – that questioned the gender and sexual practices in the movement. The narrative weaves the stories of NietoGómez and Las Hijas with those of other Chicana feminists who served in parallel organizations, such as the East Los Angeles Chicana Welfare Rights Organization and the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional, in a vibrant and broad account of these women's hopes and dreams as well as their disappointments and accomplishments in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴

At the same time that Chicanas struggled for recognition of their rightful place in the Chicano movement, they fought for their reproductive rights in an increasingly hostile, anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican climate. In an insightful and powerful study, anthropologist Elena R. Gutiérrez revisits the well-known 1970s case of the forced sterilization of Spanish-speaking Mexicanas at the Los Angeles County-University of Southern California hospital. The case made headlines when 10 Mexican-origin women – under the legal guidance of Antonia Hernández, then a freshly minted lawyer from UCLA – brought a lawsuit against the county hospital, charging that they had been sterilized under duress. Although fewer than a dozen Mexicanas officially sued the hospital, and Hernández and her team could not bring more women forward, it is likely that many, perhaps hundreds, of other women also faced forced sterilization but did not file their grievances for various reasons, including the statute of limitations. The sterilizations occurred, Gutiérrez explains, within a context of growing resentment against “undeserving women” who profited from U.S. economic assistance programs such as welfare. Along with growing fears of worldwide overpopulation, the public and politicians scapegoated poor, immigrant women in particular for allegedly draining resources from deserving U.S. citizens. The sterilization of these foreign, non-English-speaking women, Gutiérrez argued, revealed the intense debates about who was entitled to citizenship (and the privileges it brings) and who was not. It also reflected, as she notes, the much broader and pernicious warfare against immigrants (non-citizens) that re-emerged in the 1970s with great force, which, arguably, remains to this day (Gutiérrez 2003, 2008).

This chapter only scratches the surface of the rich and diverse histories that have been told and point to others that have yet to be told, but to those of us committed to furthering the project of Chicana history, and by extension Chicano history, to grow in new and exciting ways, we must continue to take a more creative and interdisciplinary approach to our work. We must continue to look to other fields for new methodological tools and theories, and we must read and learn about what our colleagues are doing in similar fields to enrich the cross-disciplinary networks that have been previously established, such as in the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies and the American Studies Association. At the same time, we must continue to open doors and prepare and guide young scholars, particularly the slowly

increasing numbers of Chicanas and Chicanos we encounter in our careers, as well as others interested in the historical experiences of Spanish-speaking peoples and how their lives intersected with those from other ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Only then will we see a more accurate and widespread representation of Chicana and Chicano history and U.S. history more generally.

Notes

- 1 For insight on Anzaldúa's experiences with white women, see AnaLouise Keating, "Writing, Politics, and las Lesberadas: Platicando con Gloria Anzaldúa" *Frontiers* 14:1 (Fall 1993), 105–131; and for that of Elizabeth Martínez's, see Martínez, "In Pursuit of Latina Liberation" *Signs* 20.4 (Summer 1995), 1019–1028. Martínez was also a member of the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Black Panther Party. Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds.), *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (Rutgers University Press, 2007), 520.
- 2 Lee, "Notes from the (non)Field," 90–96. See, for instance, Wendy Brown, "The Impossibility of Women's Studies," *Differences* 9 (Fall 1997); and Susan Gubar, "What Ails Feminist Criticism?" *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Winter 1998).
- 3 Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). For more on pachucas, see Elizabeth Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 38 (2007), 133–156. For more on Mexican American women in the World War II era, see, for instance, Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zootsuits: Mexican American Women and World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
- 4 Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!*, For more on Chicanas in the Chicana movement, see Rosie Bermudez, "Alicia Escalante, The Chicana Welfare Rights Organization and the Chicano Movement," in Mario T. Garcia, ed., *The Chicano Movement: Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Routledge Press, 2014); Dionne Espinoza, "'Revolutionary Sisters': Women's Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967–1970," *Aztlán*, 26 (Spring 2001), 17–58; Angie Chabram-Dernerseian, "I Throw Punches for My Race, but I Don't Want to Be a Man: Writing Us – Chica-nos (Girl, Us)/Chicanas – into the Movement Script," in Lawrence Grossberg, Gary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York, 1992); and Marisela R. Chávez, "'We Lived and Breathed and Worked the Movement': The Contradictions and Rewards of Chicana/Mexicana Activism in el Centro de Acción Social Autónomo–Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT)," in Vicki L. Ruiz, ed., *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family* (Los Angeles, 1993), 83–106.

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