

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical and Methodological Issues of Latina/o Research

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INTRODUCTION

Latino research has expanded dramatically since the 1980s. It has developed across the traditional social science disciplines and expanded into other fields, drawn by the rapidly growing Latino population. In contrast to studies of other populations, such as Irish studies, Latino studies is less easily defined by social and cultural boundaries. Indeed, as discussed in this chapter, Latino boundaries are fluid, not fixed, from the perspectives of objective and subjective indicators.

This chapter addresses several issues concerning the development of Latino social science in the United States. These issues concern the change in theoretical and empirical approaches, the definition of Latino, the nature of Latino social change, conceptualizations of Latino social incorporation, and the limitations of the institutional base of Latino research. The chapter concludes with brief comments on future Latino research. The discussion is developed with broad strokes, given the size limitation of the exercise. What is presented is what the author considers to be the salient patterns, admittedly from a sociological perspective, and others might reach different conclusions. A challenge in attempting an overview of Latino research is to determine the boundaries of the field. For expediency in this limited exercise, Latino research refers to studies on Latin American-origin people in the United States. Latinas and Latinos have undertaken much of this research, and members of other groups have contributed to this field of research as well.

BACKGROUND: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL APPROACHES

Researchers have conducted studies of the Latino population in the United States since before World War II (e.g., Chenault, 1938; Gamio, 1931), but it was primarily in the 1960s and early 1970s when the first phase of Latino research took off mainly from the perspectives of Mexican American and Puerto Rican studies (e.g., Galarza, Gallegos, & Samora, 1969; Maldonado-Denis, 1972). These two focuses did not share a unified identity as Latino studies, but they often shared a theoretical framework based on conflict. This framework came in the forms of internal colonialism, imperialism, dependency, racism, and mode of production analysis (e.g., Acuña, 1972; Bonilla & Girling, 1973). The main theoretical proposition of the conflict perspective was that the inferior political and economic conditions of these two groups were the results of U.S. capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. Similar to Marx's (1867/1967) writing about unrestrained, class exploitation in the developing capitalist division of labor, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and other researchers (e.g., Blauner, 1972), highlighted the structures of oppression in periods of intense racial and ethnic subordination. At times, Chicano and Puerto Rican researchers related the conditions of oppression they studied to the larger structures of imperialism and colonialism that third-world populations suffered abroad.¹

The theoretical units of analysis of these early Latino researchers involved mainly the points of contact between Latinos and the "dominant group," which became a code term for whites (non-Hispanic). No work illustrated this theoretical focus better than *Occupied America* by Acuña (1972). Chicano struggles in the educational, labor, and political arenas became the basis for theorizing about Chicano development, or the development of the underdevelopment of this population. In a similar vein, Puerto Rican struggles for equal access to institutional resources on the U.S. mainland or for independence in Puerto Rico became the backdrop to theorize about conditions of economic and political inequality in that population (Bonilla & Girling, 1973; Maldonado-Denis, 1972).

In this first phase of Latino studies, it was possible to theorize about the whole of the Chicano or Puerto Rican population because these populations were much smaller and less differentiated than the whole of the Latino population today.² Moreover, immigration was a major driving force of Latino population growth only for the smaller groups (e.g., Central/South Americans, Cubans, Dominicans, and other Caribbean Latinos). The lack of social mobility among Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, the largest groups of the Latino population, could not be explained as a function of immigrant clustering in the lower strata, because immigration levels were low.³ For the early Latino conflict theorists, the explanation existed in the conditions of oppression (e.g., Garcia, 1974; Maldonado-Denis, 1972).

The large immigration waves of Latinos starting in the 1980s caused a major shift—a second phase – in the theoretical focus of Latino research. The racial perspective of white oppression of the 1960s and 1970s lost currency, and given the methodological sophistication of the field, quantitative analyses increasingly formed the basis of theory, in the form of statistical models, to explain empirical associations in Latino populations (e.g., Borjas & Tienda, 1985; Melendez, Rodríguez, & Figueroa, 1991). In this change, the macrotheory of Latino development receded to the background, with notable exceptions.⁴ The shift also involved paying greater attention to Latino immigration, which now formed a major source of Latino growth (e.g., Chavez, 1992; Portes & Bach, 1985). If, in the pre-1980s period, Latino studies swung far into grand theories of Latino development, in the post-1980s it swung far into descriptive and causal analysis.

Latino heterogeneity produced by immigration created much ethnographic interest in exploring the new Latino national-origin groups and subgroups from Central and South America and

from the Caribbean (e.g., Cordero-Guzmán, Smith, & Grosfoguel, 2001; Hagan, 1994; Mahler, 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). However, this research was conducted often without theorizing much about the development of these groups within the larger United States-dominated regional system. With the lessening of theories to explain past social development or to predict future ones, Latino research became more concerned with explaining the what and how of Latino development, especially of new immigrant groups, and less concerned with theorizing about the why of this development. One exception has been Latina studies, which has continually theorized about the unequal conditions of Latinas from the perspective of gender relations and patriarchal dominance (García & García, 1997).

A consequence of the diminishment of theory is the inability to explain the basis of transitions in Latino development. For example, did the new wave of Latino immigration that started in the late 1970s and early 1980s represent a new developmental logic or the geographical extension of an old one? Actually, the question can be asked from either a U.S. or Latin American perspective. From the U.S. perspective, for example, Central American immigration is associated with social disruptions in Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but from a Central American perspective, long-distance migration to the United States appears as a geographical extension of *historical patterns* of labor migration (Hamilton & Chinchilla, 1991). It would not be far-fetched to argue that these historical patterns were bound to reach the United States once the means of communication and transportation advanced—with or without the influences of social turmoil.

The complete answer to the question, of course, necessitates going beyond a single U.S. or Latin American perspective and taking into account new regional developments between the United States and Latin America. Failing to take these developments into consideration can lead to ironic research conclusions. For example, new, low-income immigrants are seen as forming a subordinate class in U.S. labor markets, whereas throughout many Latin American home countries, they form an upwardly mobile, new rich category (Hagan, 1994; Smith, 2006). An investigation of their economic status should take into account both conditions.

DEFINITION OF LATINO

Undoubtedly, the absence of a broad theory to explain Latino development is partly the result of the Latino term itself. Latino research implies the existence of a Latino population, but membership and identity in this population are not well defined beyond having a Latin American origin. Even this criterion is debatable for some groups. It is questionable that there is a Pan-Latino identity among the Latino people in terms of having a shared sense of common culture or community. For example, for many in the second, third, or older generation of Mexican Americans, “Latino” refers to persons who have close ties to Latin America. In Texas, the preferred ethnic group identity of many second or older Mexican American generations is “Hispanic,” not “Latino” (Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez, 2002). Although many Mexican Americans express solidarity with Mexican and Central American immigrants, many also have expressed restrictionist views toward these Latinos, and some have even taken political action to limit the involvement of non-Mexican Latinos in Mexican American neighborhoods (Rodriguez & Urrutia-Rojas, 1990). In an insightful essay, Torres-Saillant (2002) argued that Latino researchers have yet to recognize the significance of race and other social factors in existent intra-Latino borders.

Indigenous immigrants from Latin America, who collectively reach almost 200,000, also demonstrate the fuzziness of the Latino identity boundary (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). With their pre-Columbian origins, some of these immigrants maintain social distances in some arenas

from Latinos in the United States (Burns, 2000). Many of these immigrants adopt the Spanish language, but with distinctive indigenous mannerisms. In the ancestral worldviews of some indigenous cultures, the very concepts of “Latin America” and “Latino” belong to the world of outsiders. From perspectives such as these, the idea of the existence of a Latino people is not well grounded in social reality. This is not to deny that in special moments (such as in international competitions) many Latin Americans share a Latino identity, but to illustrate the fact that in any given moment, the shared definition of Latino can vary, causing fluctuations in the boundaries of Latino identities.

A challenge of Latino research is how to capture the simultaneous bonding and divisive influence of Latino identity. For example, how far do social networks and social capital formations extend among different national identity groups or among subgroups of the same national identity? Research in places of worship has demonstrated the coalescing power of religious institutions on different national identities (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000), but, as other research has shown, religious institutions also have been settings of intra-Latino divisiveness, especially among new immigrants (Hagan, 1994). Many questions remain as to how intra-Latino identity issues develop in other social institutions (economic, educational, political, recreational, etc.). One problem in answering these questions is that only a few studies have explored patterns of *intragroup* relations beyond comparisons of group profiles (e.g., Gutierrez, 1995).

Latino research methodologies that seek to explore the uniting and dividing aspects of Latino identity have to traverse through a theoretical sampling grid of national origin, race, ethnicity, and class along one dimension and Latino identity as an independent and then dependent variable on a second dimension. This theoretical sampling frame gets more complicated when one considers that a third dimension is the presence of “Latino” as identity and/or practice. There is a fourth dimension to consider; that is, what are the particular internal and external circumstances that bring a sense of being Latina or Latino to the surface, either as identity or practice, in ways that increase unity or division among Latinos? An example is helpful to illustrate this question: On the undocumented migration northward, unaccompanied Central American youth of different nationalities sometimes bond closely to survive the dangerous journey; on the other hand, Latinas and Latinos working as U.S. Border Patrol agents lay in wait on the U.S. southern border ready to apprehend them and other unauthorized entrants.

There is also an overarching gender question regarding the definition of Latino. How does gender affect the matrix of all of the above-listed dimensional variables? To give one example, how do work environments where men concentrate in large workplaces and women in smaller ones, including individual households where they work as domestics, affect the working class-based reproduction of Latino identity and practice? While Latino men occupy the summit of Latino patriarchy, it is safe to argue that Latinas generally play a more crucial role in the social reproduction of Latino cultures through their roles in the socialization of children and the administration of household activities, including the culturally loaded activities of worship and food preparation (Williams, 1990). A gender-oriented investigation of Latino cultural reproduction has yet to be fully implemented.

Finally, another issue related to attributes of researchers in Latino research involves the lack of an exploration of how the very language of research affects findings, especially the interpretation of findings. This question is in tune with the claim that the researcher is a variable in the research process (Sjoberg & Nett, 1968). In a nutshell, the question is whether English-dominant researchers of Spanish-speaking Latinos suffer a compromise in research validity due to cultural differences. This question goes beyond the issue of competent technical translations (such as backward translations of questionnaire items) to the issue of the association of worldviews with cultures.

This issue is about the sociology of social scientists, about which Gouldner (1970) had much to say in his discussion of world hypotheses and domain assumptions as background influences. Are English-dominant researchers bringing to the field sets of world hypotheses and domain assumptions different from those of the Spanish-speaking Latinos they study? This question is not meant to imply the existence of a linguistic determinism of worldviews, but to raise the point that the whole world does not think alike and thus it is logical to posit hypotheses regarding the effects of different cultural backgrounds on the interpretation of Latino social experiences. As Sjoberg and Nett (1968) explained, social scientists should be aware of the special problems of cross-cultural research and examine the social forces that might produce biases in their investigations. Adhering to the principles of the scientific method of research alone is not a sufficient safeguard against biases, because the listing of hypotheses draws from basic assumptions of relations among social units.

It is important to note that for Latino researchers, the Latino research enterprise can involve a component of intercultural negotiation even within the self. Some Latino researchers experience continual negotiations within the self as they shift from one social world to another in the course of their Latino research. For instance, some Latino researchers will immerse themselves in lengthy, detailed interviews of Latino refugees who have experienced or witnessed atrocities and then moments later return to their campuses to follow the university routine of classes and meetings. This shifting between roles requires an ongoing negotiation within the self to balance one's reactions to the inhumanity of one world with the banality of another. The high drama of one world and the sharp contrast between the two undoubtedly lead some Latino researchers to bifurcate their self-identity as a negotiated coping mechanism.

ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL INCORPORATION

Latino population growth since the 1980s is one of the focal points of the dynamism of U.S. society. More than just becoming the largest minority group in the United States, in many ways Latinos are restructuring the social landscapes in the areas where they settle. Yet, Latino research has not adequately analyzed the underlying social forces of this development. Traditionally, discussions of social development have been narrated from perspectives of human agency or impersonal structures, and these discussions have generated considerable debate (e.g., see Giddens, 1979). As academic as these debates might appear, it is fruitful to keep their principles in mind to appreciate better the limits of what we know about the driving forces of Latino development.

Some studies have explicitly framed aspects of Latino development (e.g., immigration) from the perspective of human agency, casting Latinas and Latinos as social actors driven by intended pursuits (e.g., Rodriguez, 1996). Many other studies appear to make this assumption as well, but only implicitly, as they focus mainly on empirical correlations using individual units of analysis (e.g., Greenlees & Saenz, 1999). Quantitative studies of this nature might include a host of contextual variables, but, ultimately, agency is implied in the final dependent outcomes. The causality of action in these studies is not what individuals are caused to do (structuralism), but what they must rationally do (agency) in a given set of empirical circumstances. In qualitative studies, agency is closer to the surface. Social actors, as subjects, think, talk, plan, and execute, as reported in these studies (e.g., see Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Menjivar, 2000).

Yet, in moments of policy formulation, studies that regard only the agency component of the population under study might play into the hands of those who wish to restrict the population. The present movement to restrict immigration, especially unauthorized immigration, is a case in

point. Restriction advocates are mustering the nativist sentiments of the day through their depictions of unauthorized migrants as deviant social actors (Dougherty, 2004). In this policy debate there is little discussion of how larger social forces, such as regional economic restructuring, are reconfiguring human economic relations across international boundaries. Even sympathizers of unauthorized migrants remain landlocked at the agency level of discussion when they present their sympathetic arguments in terms of net positive effects of unauthorized workers or in terms of humanitarian values. By not highlighting macrorelations that underpin the development of international migration—authorized *and* unauthorized—Latino research indirectly cedes the policy podium to the restrictionist movement.

The issue is not that Latino research needs to return to the days of rigid structuralism in search of a logic “out there,” but to consider the underlying, *human-made* circumstances (e.g., neo-liberalism) that shape the conditions under which foreign-born Latinos and their families attempt to make a living. The theoretical and empirical challenge here is to cast Latino development, including the aspect of unauthorized immigration, as a current of historical, social change and not simply as the aggregate outcome of individual decisions.

For scientific purposes alone, there is a need to put Latino research in a larger frame than the social-problems perspective promoted by the state through its conceptualization of Latino deviant subgroups (such as “illegal aliens,” “drug users,” “school drop-outs,” etc.). Research that stays grounded on state conceptualizations of Latino deviance might miss more central features of Latino development. In other words, the problematic Latino conditions that the state defines through its enforcement agendas and through research fundings might not be the sources that will direct Latino development in the long term. This is not to imply that state-directed research does not eventually yield findings useful for intervention (e.g., Lopez, Roosa, Tein, & Dinh, 2004), but rather that this research might remain locked in a social-problems perspective with no way out to a larger theoretical and empirical path.

In the second phase of Latino research, little explicit attention has been given to how state policies affect Latino development, in spite of the fact that across many spheres the state plays a significant role in this development (and by no means a neutral one).⁵ Conflict theories of Latino development in phase one of Latino studies placed a central focus on state actions to subordinate or control Latino populations, but in later years, Latino research seems to have changed concepts of the state to contextual variables. For example, studies of Latino access to health care sometimes implicitly consider the mediating role of the state by measuring the status variable of U.S. citizen and non-U.S. citizen (e.g., Freeman & Lethbridge-Cejku, 2006). There are notable exceptions, such as Calavita (1992), but, for the most part, what we know about the role of the state in Latino development comes more from implicit deductions rather than from explicit inferences. Immigration is a key field for researching state actions affecting Latino development because the state plays an exclusive role in legally admitting or excluding foreign-born Latinos, who are a major source of Latino growth. Yet, researchers of Latino immigration have yet to develop a full-blown theory of the role of the state in Latino migration to the United States beyond case studies of specific immigration policies. In many ways, at federal and local levels, the state affects the larger trends of Latino development, such as in the spheres of education, health, and economic development.

Latino research still appears unclear as to the nature of Latino social incorporation. In other words, what are the larger substantive patterns of Latino participation in U.S. society? Two opposing perspectives compete to answer this question. One perspective argues that Latinos and other minorities are continuing the historical process of assimilation, although into a mainstream changed by immigrants (Alba & Nee, 2003). The opposing perspective argues that Latinos not

only are not assimilating but also are incapable of assimilating given their different non-European origins and value systems (Huntington, 2004). Indeed, according to the latter perspectives, Latinos endanger the very survival of U.S. society, as it is known today.

Undoubtedly, addressing the nature of Latino social incorporation is one of the most difficult challenges facing Latino research because of the great variety of Latino groups and experiences. The groups and experiences range from U.S.-born Latinos who have completely integrated into white society and culture to foreign-born Latinos who live in traditional barrios and maintain strong ties to their countries of origin. The larger question, however, is not whether Latinos are assimilating, but what does assimilation mean today in the context of increasingly diverse social environments, in which the white population is losing (if not already lost) its role as the referent group? Given the prevalence of Latino ethnic enclaves and segmented forms of assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996), is it valid to conclude that Latinos have developed enduring, alternative paths to participation in the social structure? Certainly for many Latino youth in inner-city environments, these conditions constitute competing avenues of adaptation, even for some second- and third-generation youth (Valenzuela, 1999).

Some studies have characterized the adaptation of immigrant populations as different forms of assimilation or acculturation (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, chap. 3), but it is not clear what the substance of this assimilation or acculturation is. Are the end results of these processes what Gordon (1964) envisioned in his model of multistage assimilation (i.e., assimilation into a [non-Hispanic] white society)? Or are the end results significantly different from Gordon's prediction because the mainstream has changed significantly?

It is logical to assume that in settings where Latinos and other populations of color constitute the majority of the population (such as in the five largest cities) whites are becoming less significant standards of assimilation and acculturation. In these settings, first-generation Latino immigrants might be experiencing levels of assimilation and acculturation as they increasingly become English dominant and take on mainstream institutional roles (teachers, lawyers, health care workers, etc.), but many might not be making the attitudinal and identity transitions as completely as assimilation theorists predicted. Still, for older generations of Latinos, a Latino identity might linger in a latent state and reemerge under particular circumstances. Identity is typically considered to be a micro-level formation within contexts of primary groups and significant others (Mead, 1934). Yet, changes in the larger social environment can influence the development of collective identities, which can nourish the individual self-concept (Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000). From this perspective, the question of what the substance of assimilation is becomes more meaningful as Latino social environments become more salient. The challenge for Latino research is to go beyond check-off measures of identity and to try to assess the occurrences of identity from the perspective of social situations. Underlying this challenge is the assumption that identity is not a hard and fixed self-designation, but a fluctuating self-perception that increases or decreases the weight given to individual qualities (gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, occupation, etc.) according to changing social conditions.

Conditions of binationalism found among Latinos also raise questions concerning the significance of social incorporation among Latinos. The established models of assimilation in U.S. society did not address how activity in two (or more) societies can affect assimilation. Indeed, Gordon's assimilation model seems to limit assimilation to a one-dimensional plane with his claim that assimilating individuals develop a sense of peoplehood "based exclusively on [the] host society" (1967:71). Yet, millions of Latinos maintain active binational lives, as do a proportion of second-generation Latinos. What is missing from Latino research is a greater understanding of how binational existence affects conditions of assimilation. Does continuing attachment to the

home country subtract from social incorporation to the host society, or does it add to this process? It is likely that the answer varies by class, as higher-class immigrants might be better able than lower-class immigrants to transfer formal institutional resources from the home country to the United States, but a complete understanding of this phenomenon requires a focused study.

INSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS OF LATINO RESEARCH

The institutional base of Latino research has been mainly the U.S. academy. A question for the future of Latino research is whether this institutional foundation is sufficient or whether increased collaboration with researchers in Latin America will enhance the power of Latino research, as the U.S. Latino population becomes more international. The answer to this question will affect the answers to the questions of the theoretical and methodological issues of Latino research.

With some exceptions, the institutional base of U.S. social science has remained strongly attached to assumptions of the order perspective (Ross, 1991). In sociology, the European origins of social theory assumed a continuing social order, such as in the works of Durkheim and Weber, even if at times the social order experienced major transformations (e.g., industrialization and in the rise of Protestantism). Even Karl Marx, the great conflict theorist, derived his concepts of class conflict from an order perspective of the economic relations of production.⁶ Talcott Parsons, a major purveyor in the United States of the European classical order orientation, placed the order perspective firmly in his theory of the social system (Parsons, 1951).

As Sjoberg and Vaughan (1971) have explicated, implicit in the European origins of Western sociology is the primacy of the nation-state as an empirical and moral unit of analysis. From Durkheim to Weber, the nation-state looms as the foundation of society. In the United States, several founders of U.S. sociology, such as Parsons, explicitly or implicitly used the nation-state as a central unit of analysis in their sociological conceptualizations (Sjoberg & Vaughan, 1971). More often than not, the order perspective and the primacy of the nation-state as a unit of analysis are passed on to new generations of students of U.S. social science.

Given the particular exigencies and popular responses in Latin American societies (e.g., Eckstein, 2001; Winn, 2006) it is logical to conclude that Latin American populations in general have followed a less stable course than U.S. society in the post-World War II era.⁷ This is not simply an observation of high-profile social unrest, but of fluidity, discontinuities, and transitions in the everyday lives of millions of poor Latin Americans who struggle in the periphery of their societies (see, Kowarick, 1994; Lomnitz, 1977; Winn, 2006).⁸ For many Latin Americans, it is a life of survival in simultaneous premodern, modern, and postmodern hybrid forms (García Canclini, 1995; also see Portes & Hoffman, 2003)—in sharp contrast with the assumptions of the order perspective in which individual progress is propelled by the rationalism of modernity. Given the major penetrations of Latin American populations in U.S. society, a challenge for Latino research is to investigate how Latino newcomers live in the incongruities of the social forms they bring and the ones they encounter in their settlement *and how their adaptations reverberate throughout the larger social structure*. Social science offers the qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the attitudinal and behavioral traits of these adaptations, but it might require additional methods from the humanities and phenomenology to investigate the inner-sensate-based drives to succeed in the social and individual campaigns of adaptation.

Researchers of Latino immigration have already established the limitations of the nation-state as a unit of analysis and responded with the methodological concepts of binational or

transnational units (e.g., Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1992). This is a distancing from the state-direct conceptualization of “national” units in which geographical lines literally divide populations. Latin American expansion into the United States is not occurring by a shift of geographical lines but by a change of social and cultural boundaries, with and without authorization. This development necessitates a multidimensional research approach that takes into account not only how Latino social relations transcend geographical spaces (binationalism or transnationalism) but also how they expand across Latino and U.S. social spaces in the same settings. The challenge is more than measuring conditions of acculturation or assimilation. Similar to studies of linguistic code switching among Latinos (e.g., Aguirre, 1988), Latino research needs to reach for a better understanding of how Latino newcomers and their descendents combine internal and external social forms and worldviews to operate in their multilayered social–spatial environments. The issue is not to dispense with the nation-state as a unit of analysis but to investigate how the coexistence of different social spaces simultaneously produces opportunities and limitations for many Latinas and Latinos.⁹

FUTURE OF LATINO STUDIES

Two present-day developments are having major impacts on the future of Latino studies. One development is the changing demography of the Latino population and the second is the growing intellectual and methodological sophistication of Latino researchers. Of the many characteristics of the changing Latino demography in the United States, two of the most salient are the large growth of the population and the large proportion of first-generation immigrants.

The Latino population reached 42 million in 2005 and is projected to reach over 100 million by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, 2006). Latinos now constitute the majority or the largest proportion of the population in some of the largest U.S. cities. Although they will be less than 50% of the population even through mid-century, in significant ways they no longer fit the model of an isolated minority. A research issue that large Latino population growth is creating in many settings is how to explore the effects of Latino social identities (gender, race, national origin, etc.) in U.S. milieus of increasing social pluralism, which includes nationalities from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and other world regions. This will require exploring how new social relations in restructured environments affect Latino development across different arenas. For example, do the new linkages of Asian capital and Latino labor in small businesses across U.S. cities affect the established patterns of Latino social incorporation? If yes, in which meaningful ways, across which domains (social, cultural, political, etc.), and how do the new conditions promote or limit Latino development?

Because Latino immigrants constitute 45% of the Latino population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), their presence requires a greater attention to transnational developments in order to understand fully the dynamism of the Latino population in the United States. Latino immigrants provide many bidirectional influences between U.S. and Latin American settings (e.g., Levitt, 2001; Smith, 2006). Directly or indirectly, they have influenced policy and institutional developments in local, national, and international arenas far beyond the economic sphere in which they are commonly perceived by policy makers. They are also major agents of socialization for the second generation they produce. Over the past two decades, immigrants have played major functions in the social reproduction of Latino communities and institutional cultures, but the effects of this influence have yet to be fully explored.

In the 1990s, Latino studies began a third phase characterized by enhanced intellectual and research sophistication. The phase partly involves a strengthening of poststructuralist, critical theory and analysis and a deepening of the perspectives of women, gender, and sexuality beyond the traditional empiricism of social science (Anzaldúa, 1990; Yosso, 2005). Drawing partly from postmodernism and postcolonial theory, and with precursors that extend back several decades, these critical perspectives criticize one-dimensional approaches of past research and earlier Latino intellectual traditions. This evolving phase includes a plethora of humanist and historical subfields, such as critical literary theory, critical race theory, cultural studies, Latina feminist studies, and Latino/a gay/lesbian studies, which delve deeply into Latina and Latino subjective experiences (e.g., Yarbo-Bejarano, 1999; Alarcón, 1993). These evolving poststructuralist perspectives represent the growing involvement of Latinos in larger intellectual genres, albeit from a Latina or Latino standpoint.

Poststructuralism plays a significant role in the evolving third phase of Latino studies, but not a defining one. Indeed, a key characteristic of the emerging phase seems to be the absence of a dominant theoretical or methodological paradigm. A variety of empirical and humanist perspectives are generating studies and conceptualizations of Latinos at various levels. Yet, the original research questions raised by Latina and Latino scholars in the 1960s continue to frame the Latino research enterprise; that is, what is the significance of the Latino population within the larger social context and what is the meaning of this significance for Latina and Latino individuals?

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NOTES

1. "As my research progressed, I became convinced that the experience of Chicanos in the United States parallels that of other third-world peoples who have suffered under the colonialism of technologically superior nations" (Acuña, 1972:iii).
2. In 1960, the number of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the United States, who accounted for most Latinos, was about 13% of the 35.3 million Latinos in 2000 (Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). By 1969, the Latino population reached 26% of the Latino population in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1971, Table 30).
3. In 1969, the reported foreign-born rates of the 9.2 million Latinos for selected Latino groups were as follows (U.S. Census Bureau, 1971: Table 30): Mexicans, 17.1%; Puerto Ricans, 0.5%; Cubans, 82.5%; and Central and South Americans, 63.7%. Mexicans and Puerto Ricans accounted for 71% of the total Latino population, and Cubans and Central/South Americans accounted for 12%. "Others" accounted for the remainder.
4. The notable exceptions include works such as Gómez-Quíñones (1990), Almaguer (1994), and Gonzalez & Fernandez (2003). The point is not that the grand conflict theory of Latino development has vanished, but that it is no longer the dominant frame of Latino research as it was in phase one of Latino studies.
5. This is not the place to engage in a full discussion regarding the definition of the state. Suffice for the moment to say that, in theory, in the democratic system of U.S. society, the state represents the political will of the people and is materialized in the bureaucratic apparatus that implements it or contracts for its discharge. At times, a large variance exists between the will of popular sectors and state actions.

6. The tone of orderly development is clear in Marx's characterization of social development: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production *which correspond to a definite stage of development* [italics added] of their material productive forces" (1867/1969:503).
7. This is not meant to imply that the problems of Latin Americans are completely of their own making. For discussions of how the United States has played a systematic role in supporting Latin American state repression, see Menjivar & Rodriguez (2005).
8. According to the Population Reference Bureau (2006), 24% of the Latin American/Caribbean population lived on less than US\$2.00 per day, measured in 1993 purchasing power parity (PPP) rates. Three countries in Central America, a major region of U.S.-bound emigration, had particularly high percentages: Nicaragua, 80%; El Salvador, 41%; Honduras, 44%. The Population Reference Bureau does not list the rates for all the countries in the region. A report by Portes & Hoffman (2003) on Latin American class structures finds that income inequality is increasing in the region.
9. There are works that give us insights into how this works out; for example, see M. P. Smith (2001) and R. C. Smith (2006).

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