Introduction

Over the past two decades in the United States, immigration, particularly from Latin America, has transformed both traditional centers of immigrant influxes and “new immigrant destinations” on a scale not seen since the last “great wave” of immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fry 2008; Suro and Singer 2002; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). This book looks at one facet of this transformation: Latina/o immigrant musicians and their audiences in Charlotte, North Carolina, who, through their music making, engage in processes of community formation as they debate political questions relevant to their everyday lives as working musicians and residents of a globalizing city. Musicians in Charlotte, like much of the Latino immigrant population in the United States, find themselves the subject of battles over immigration policy, debates over the role of immigrants, evolving methods of policing and surveillance, and new iterations of the American racial hierarchy that have accompanied this era of globalization.

The response to the current “great wave” of immigration is a sea change that betrays the narrative of a “nation of immigrants” and reveals instead a regime of militarization, racialization, and social segregation. This regime is built upon two legal and political developments—the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and U.S. cities through the “War on Drugs” and the implementation of intensive surveillance and policing of immigrant communities after 9/11. Emerging in tandem with these developments is xenophobia stirred up by anti-immigrant activism and stigmatization of immigrants as a social problem. As the anthropologist Gilberto Rosas argues, these developments are part of the “borderlands condition” that inscribes “exceptionality” (drawing on Agamben’s idea of “state of exception” [2003]) on immigrant bodies through everyday violence and surveillance (Rosas 2006).

Through their analyses of Latino cultural production, border studies scholars have long noted the exceptionality of law and lawlessness
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of the U.S.-Mexico border and how regimes of racial, gender, and class exploitation help shape the political subjectivity of borderlands residents (Paredes 1958; McWilliams 1968; Montejano 1987; Peña 1985; Anzaldúa 1987; Limón 1994; Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2010). It is through attention to the shifting role of the state in monitoring everyday life and focus on the transgressive and transformative power of cultural production that border studies scholarship contributes to an analysis of contemporary Latino immigration to other regions of the United States, more so since the borderlands condition has “thickened” (Rosas 2006) throughout the United States with the expansion of border exceptionality to local immigration policing efforts. In effect, the border has moved north, as local and state governments have implemented policies that target undocumented immigrants and their families, such as the 287(g) program and state laws passed in Arizona, Utah, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama. In North Carolina, several counties, including Mecklenburg (where Charlotte is located), have signed on to the 287(g) program, and the state government has restricted undocumented immigrants’ access to driver’s licenses and higher education.

With these policy changes have emerged new forms of social and structural racism, expressed in the racialization of Latina/o immigrants. For example, terms like “illegal” and “Mexican” have become common in the public discourse and are belittling catchall terms that group all Latinos as undesirable despite their varied national origins, legal statuses, and language competencies (De Genova 2005). Anti-immigrant laws and policies that lead to the everyday policing of immigrant bodies has led some to call the U.S. South’s new landscape Juan Crow (Lovato 2008). In essence, the U.S. South has responded to globalization by erecting a system that oppresses a new working class of immigrants by marginalizing them through racial labeling, policing, social exclusion, and delegitimization of their labor. Latina/o activists organizing to protest these conditions have mobilized mass marches and prominent actions, but face counterprotests, an entrenched class of policy makers who gain politically from targeting immigrant communities, and the failure of the federal government to construct a viable alternative to local devolution of immigration policy. The immigration reform movement has been unable to alter the increasing number of deportations, to rectify the status of the DREAM generation of undocumented students,
or to exert pressure to alleviate the poor working conditions and wage theft suffered by immigrant laborers.

Charlotte’s Latina/o musicians and their audiences play a vital role in defining Latino expressive culture. Moreover, their lives also reveal issues of politics, labor, community, class, division, and belonging that have become central to a globalizing region and city that are struggling to decide, as the historian David Hollinger (1993) put it, how wide the circle of “We” should be. During my research, the theme of *el sueño gris* (the gray dream) described the trajectory of the dreams and aspirations of Latino immigrants to the U.S. South. When I first came across the phrase in the liner notes of an album by the Charlotte band Dorian Gris, I immediately recognized the play on words from the Oscar Wilde novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2008) and the phrase’s significance for a band that plays punk and heavy metal. In addition to its dark playing style, in the time between the recording of a live performance and its release several months later as *Live at the Dark Room*, the band had switched bass players and saw decreasing numbers of fans coming to its shows. The band members’ dreams of staying together as a band and building an audience seemed to be fading. But it took me several months to piece together the broader significance of the “gray dream” for Latino immigrants to Charlotte and the region. The failure of efforts to pass comprehensive immigration reform and the increasing number of state and local laws targeting immigrants began to turn the skies gray. For musicians, this climate of fear coupled with the economic recession hit hard, affecting turnout at concerts and threatening the sense of community that they had built around music making.

Examples of this graying dream appeared in personal narratives of Latino musicians during informal conversations and recorded interviews throughout the fieldwork process. These vignettes show the intense personal impact of immigration policing and the associated anti-immigrant environment; musicians’ stories and experiences provide the inspiration for how this book is structured, with chapters following from the issues that they saw as central to their lives as working musicians. These stories are tempered by the uneven field upon which Latino immigrants act—some are documented, others are undocumented, some speak English, others are monolingual, a few are educated, with extensive social capital and resources, others not as much. For example, several undocumented
musicians relayed to me their fear of driving on well-policed routes late at night after a performance. They would drive alternate routes through residential neighborhoods to avoid police checkpoints for DUI, not because they were over the limit from drinking, but because police could ask for papers that they did not have. Immigrant musicians who had U.S. citizenship or legal status travelled with less fear, but still reported racial discrimination and unpleasant encounters because of their appearance and accent.

In addition to incidents like these, musicians expressed dismay and frustration at the social segregation of Charlotte’s music scene and their inability to “cross over” and build interracial or cross-cultural audiences. Latin bands like Bakalao Stars and Tropic Culture attempted with little success to bridge the cultural gap between English and Spanish, Latin and “American” musical styles, playing for small but loyal Latino audiences but never gathering large numbers of white or African American fans at their shows. A similar social segregation structured divisions within the Latin music scene, revealed through sharp genre divisions based on class, neighborhood, and nationality. Some bands, like the rock group Dorian Gris, worked within these divisions to build an enthusiastic audience of working-class Mexican fans, with whom they collaborated to draw up performances of stirring liveliness that have come to define a particular niche of class identity in the city. Other musicians have worked tirelessly to create genre-bending performances that question class, national, and ethnic differences within the Latino population. A local guitarist, Tony Arreaza, leads a band that blends Latin rock, pop standards, and *música tropical* to create a new pan-American canon of music. The singer Leydy Bonilla has begun to mix the styles of *merengue* and *bachata* from her native Dominican Republic with R&B and *regional mexicano* through collaborations with other musicians in Charlotte.¹

Community Formation

Bearing witness to these developments, the analysis in this book looks at how the “graying” of immigrants’ dreams has important consequences for community formation and solidarity among Latina/o musicians and their audiences in the U.S. South. I extract the implications of these political and economic developments through the music making and
common circumstances of members of Charlotte's Latin music scene. For some, these changes created internal tensions, leading to bands breaking up, disillusionment with the creative process, or a sense of stagnation. Others soldiered through difficulties and attempted to move their music forward in response to challenges.

Latina/o immigrant musicians find themselves at the center of the intersection of culture and politics, often being driven to negotiate a field fraught with political consideration and contested cultural boundaries and to define a vision of what it means to be Latino/a in a globalizing city in the South. In Charlotte, musicians have played a vital part in conceptualizing a *latinidad* that acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of immigrants to the city and that engages with the context of southern urban living, from the region's history as the font of American popular culture to the current anti-immigrant political climate. Music making illuminates one aspect of how Latino immigrants claim “cultural citizenship,” a process that the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo describes as “the everyday practices through which Latinas/os claim space and their right to be full members of society” (Rosaldo 1994). Following from studies of community formation through local artistry (Crehan 2012; Finnegan 2007), I argue that the work that Charlotte’s musicians do is political in itself. They assert a particular form of agency with audience members when collaborating on and negotiating creative expression. This collaboration uses music as the medium through which musicians and audiences synthesize disparate elements—nationalities, class backgrounds, ages, and migration experiences—into Latino identity. As such, Latin music in Charlotte is not just a collection of sounds, but a process of defining a way to live and see the world. My research demonstrates that Latinos are creating, in the face of oppressive anti-immigrant policies, group solidarity and agency. They are recognizing themselves as having a common experience as immigrants, as musically inclined people, as speakers of a shared idiom that form a group “in itself” (Thompson 1963)—a community.

Community has been an important object of study among social scientists for some time, and an important theme for southerners’ sense of belonging and place. My analysis takes guidance from theorists who have discussed the meaning of community in an age of industrialization and imperialism, from Tonnies’s comparison of *Gemeinschaft* and
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Gesellschaft (1887) and Marx’s analysis of alienation of labor power and class formation (1976), to Durkheim’s concept of collective consciousness (1997). I also take notice of the findings of early anthropologists, from Malinowski to Boas, and Evans-Pritchard to Lévi-Strauss, who saw other forms of community that did not fit neatly into Western, modernist theories. A conceptualization of community also must account for how the state encourages, regulates, prohibits, surveys, and interacts with communities. While new forms of postindustrial and postmodern community are forming in “virtual” and transnational settings, the state continues to affect how and to what extent groups formulate a sense of community and shared understandings of the world.

Musical Community

Because affiliations among the individuals I studied center on music making, I use the term “musical community” to describe this process of community formation I explored—acknowledging that community in this sense is temporal, threatened by outside forces, and often incomplete. For this book, I have defined “musical community” as a sense of belonging and shared affiliation around notions of class, ethnicity, language, style, and taste expressed through music and other creative cultural expressions. For Charlotte’s Latinos, “musical community” is about asserting autonomy in the face of social and structural forces that marginalize them as surveilled subjects of immigration enforcement and racial stereotypes. I divide Charlotte’s Latin music scene into three distinct musical districts that each host bands and audience members who attempt to form musical community. These areas—Eastside, Intown, and Uptown—correspond to geographic and genre differences in music making. The Eastside hosts regional mexicano and punk/heavy metal bands that perform for working-class Mexican and Central American immigrant audiences. The Intown area consists of Latin rock bands playing for “multicultural,” often middle-class, audiences of South American immigrants and second-generation youth. The Uptown area hosts bands performing música tropical and Brazilian music for audiences of Caribbean and Brazilian residents of Charlotte. While there is some occasional overlap between these districts, “musical community” usually formed in very specific contexts—around one band playing in a
favorite club, for example—and rarely transferred to other areas outside their neighborhoods, where bands and audience members felt uncomfortable or did not dare to venture because of immigration policing.

Within these musical communities, I observed a dialectical relationship form between musicians and audience members, with musicians performing and then responding to feedback from fans by implementing the fans’ views through changes in the music. Musicians (and some nonmusicians) thus pursue the intellectual work of developing folk theories concerning the meaning of their music based on dialogue with their audiences. These individuals take on a role of “grassroots intellectual” (Forgacs 2000), outlining theories that explain the values and group identities of the band and its audience. They analyze the process of music making and reflect on the significance of performances, and, through this analysis, theorize about the political significance of their music in the context of immigration, the globalizing city, and anti-immigrant politics.

Charlotte’s musicians also connect to global and transnational networks. Musicians are constantly referencing and interpreting music from the global scene, at least in their genre, but often from related and unrelated popular genres, because this is what fellow musicians and fans demand of them in their work. This is why I found bands covering hit songs, introducing new instruments to their orchestration (auto-tune, keyboards, timbales), and attempting to blend and bend genre to suit the desires of their audiences. When bands open for an international touring group or share the lineup at a festival, they are grounding the visiting group’s music in the local musical community by introducing it or providing local context and commentary through their own performance. Musicians point to the success of a concert, the strong bonds they forge with visiting musicians, and the hospitality they show to touring groups as evidence that Charlotte is a place where Latin music is viable.

By analyzing emerging transnational networks of Latino musicians, this book demonstrates how these networks help define a southern latinidad that Latino residents of Charlotte use to position themselves in opposition to but fully embedded in the local constraints of immigration enforcement and urban social segregation. The everyday act of making music, whether as a musician or audience member, entails participating in this latinidad; thus music becomes political because it
facilitates community formation and spaces where Latino immigrants feel at home. However, interactions within the Latino population between groups of different origins can be contentious (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003), and my analysis complicates simplistic versions of *latinidad*. Often, community does not form out of these differences. But at times, the Latin music scene in Charlotte does produce moments of solidarity, where band and audience join together as one body. “Musical community” formation, then, is a democratic and cosmopolitan process and helps Latino immigrants identify themselves as transnational actors.

On an even smaller scale, the personal relationships formed among musicians within bands often foster communal ties through fictive kinship. The band, particularly for young musicians who have left family back in the home country, becomes a second family. Fellow band members call each other *hermano* (brother), *pana* (friend), or *marico* (dude), share private details of their lives, and support each other during personal hardships and setbacks. Young musicians become apprentices to older, more experienced band members. There are disagreements and conflict, but musicians cherish the camaraderie and experiences they share with fellow band members. These relationships become a prism through which musicians interpret the city. As Juan Miguel Marín, drummer for La Rúa, recalls about his experience with the band, “La Rúa, for all of us, was like our first girlfriend. It was very important to our lives in Charlotte. I could not imagine my life in Charlotte without La Rúa and everything that came around what we were doing with La Rúa.”

Musicians’ experience with the city varies, in large part based on which of Charlotte’s three musical districts they perform in and how their band positions itself in terms of labor conditions, politics, genre boundaries, and moral and ethical questions. The music venue becomes a place where people debate what it means to belong in the city. Facing residential and social segregation, some musical districts, such as the Eastside, have set up venues that cater exclusively to Latinos, while other audiences, for example Uptown salsa enthusiasts, because of their more secure legal status and affinity with non-Latino musical forms, have chosen (and find easier paths) to participate in music venues that offer space for Latin and non-Latin music side by side. Musicians and audiences put forth a vision of their Charlotte that asks whether the city
should have segregated or integrated music spaces, stress mainstream or marginal voices, and allow Spanish-speaking voices to express popular performance practices.

Charlotte as Case Study

Charlotte is a site that can be an important case study of issues around immigration, cities, and music. By studying Charlotte residents, particularly Latina/o immigrant musicians and their audiences, this book looks at the interactions between a specific place and general processes that are affecting urban life under globalization. Charlotte is compelling for several reasons. As a banking center, it embodies the trajectory of a neoliberal economic transformation that has shifted the city’s economic base from textiles to finance. While globalization decimated much of the industrial base erected from the 1890s onward, it also allowed Charlotte to entice financial institutions to build headquarters in the center city. Charlotte is a “globalizing city” (Graves and Smith 2010) striving to join the ranks of other financial capitals but also to retain its southern roots. Charlotte’s bankers and other corporate elites have pushed for intensive construction in the center city—building skyscrapers and attempting to create urban density that, at least on a small scale, mimics Manhattan. Neither center nor periphery, Charlotte is both enveloped in circuits of global capital flows and labor migrations and struggling to retain its unique regional, southern identity.

Charlotte’s growth has been based on a permissiveness and “progressive” vision of political liberalism that often accompanies the rise of a financial sector, but this stance is in decline, or is at least being complicated by the city’s implementation of anti-immigrant policies. A vast divide of class, access to rights, and race separates the city’s elites from its immigrant working class. While the city’s elites may celebrate the supposed global diversity of Charlotte through sponsorship of the arts, meals at Brazilian steakhouses, or promotional materials celebrating foreign companies with branch offices or factories in the metro areas, the actual global diversity of Charlotte takes place in immigrants’ neighborhoods, music venues, nonprofits, and places of worship. Moreover, elites’ celebration of Charlotte’s global culture neglects to mention the daily grind of police stops of Latino drivers, unpros-
executed wage theft, dismal housing conditions, and uncertain future for undocumented students. While they sell Charlotte by directing global circuits of capital toward Uptown and displaying the city’s worldliness, Charlotte’s elites have erected structural barriers that segregate and contain immigrant working-class global culture to the margins of the city. Latina/o immigrant musicians are well aware of their secondary status in this hierarchy, but also take pride in what they see as their markedly greater sense of cosmopolitanism and connection to global cultural trends, while retaining groundedness in their local, southern community. They struggle to make ends meet playing for small audiences in segregated clubs, but also take advantage of openings (at Latino cultural festivals, for example) where they can market their music to a wider audience.

Music and Politics

One research hypothesis with which I began was that musicians, as public performers of Latino culture in Charlotte and fellow immigrants, would insert political commentary into their music and be a vital part of social movement organizing for immigration reform. What I found instead was that many musicians avoided overt political statements and did not actively participate in the organized politics of immigrants’ rights struggles, instead holding an ambivalent and cautious view of political engagement. Throughout this book I attempt to explain this politics of ambivalence through examinations of musicians’ everyday lives and their precarious existence as working musicians, through analysis of the music-making process, and through brief overviews of the organization of the immigration reform social movement.

While musicians share a sense of vulnerability with many immigrants in their audiences and neighborhoods, I found that it is musicians’ unique public role as performers that has led them to pursue a strategy of self-censorship and political avoidance. They prefer to focus their attention inward, toward their musical community. This self-censoring attitude contrasts with that of immigration reform activists and other political leaders (pastors, community organizers, students, and businesspeople) in the Latino community who lead public lives in a different, more overtly political way. Musicians are in a complex and
conflicted position—of supporting the immigration reform movement in private but curtailing their public involvement in politics—which may be why there have been no protest songs to accompany the immigration marches.

Yet, I argue, Latina/o musicians and audience members do engage in a political process through their performances and everyday interactions. One Charlotte journalist called this type of interaction the “collective circle,” aptly describing a style of dancing, jumping, and thrashing that occurs at heavy metal and punk concerts on Charlotte’s Latino Eastside (Strimling 2010). Through performance, the music pulls people together and provides a space for working out social issues. Moreover, music making takes on a larger, representational role as musicians connect to each other and transnational networks of Latino expressive culture as a part of identity formation. Musicians use music as a medium to act as grassroots intellectuals by expressing class and ethnic identity, negotiating ethical quandaries, and staking a claim to belonging to a neighborhood, city, and region of the United States. Some of this performance reinforces tradition (for example, the continuation of music making as a male-dominated profession and patriarchal gender roles in song lyrics and performance practices), while some signals new beginnings, like collaborations that attempt to break down national and genre boundaries between bachata and regional mexicano music and forge an intra-class alliance between working-class Mexican and Dominican immigrants.

Internal discussions among musicians display not just an awareness of their vulnerability as immigrants, but a nascent consciousness about collaborating to change their working conditions as musicians. Dorian Gris, drawing on interactions between band members and working-class fans, has shifted musical direction to a harder sound that represents a collective response to harsh working conditions, immigration policing, and economic insecurity. Other bands have begun to channel the bilingual and multicultural sentiments of young, second-generation Latina/o residents, through mixtures of African American and Afro-Caribbean song forms, such as R&B, reggaetón, rap, merengue, and bachata. Musicians—by singing in Spanish and English, by constructing genealogies of musical taste that span Latin American and U.S. styles, and by promoting Charlotte as a place of cosmopolitanism and intense
cultural production—are laying the groundwork for a music scene that may truly express the diversity of latinidad in one place.

This book challenges a number of common concepts. Many works on popular music focus on famous musicians (Keil 1966; George 1988; Rose 1994; Wald 2001; Kemp 2004; Gordon 2002). While these types of studies can reveal much about music and music making, they also reinforce the well-worn narrative of fame and reconstitute the inaccurate correlation between financial success and musical skill. This book focuses on ordinary musicians who seek but often fail to find fame, and their daily struggles to make music and make a living while being musicians. Other works focus on the music as text, analyzing song lyrics and/or notation by themselves as a way to understand a culture or social group (Zavella 2012; Paredes 1958; Edberg 2004). While this method can be useful (I have used it in the past), the ethnographic evidence presents a more striking and complete picture of the lives of Charlotte’s Latina/o musicians. Therefore I use lyrics sparingly, and primarily to support points musicians have made in describing their music or to illuminate my analysis of performance. Many books about Latin music focus on one genre, laying out the history and current iterations of bachata, salsa, banda, or rock en español as separate musical forms (Pacini Hernández 1995; Washburne 2008; Simonett 2001; Zolov 1999). But in Charlotte, I found all of these genres side by side, often undergoing processes of transformation, with musicians and audiences negotiating new roles while debating the genealogies of their musical knowledge. By focusing on the everyday lives of ordinary musicians, accounting for the interplay of text and performance, and situating genres within the context of the entire Latin music scene, this book seeks a deeper understanding of musicians’ lives and the process of making music. I also build upon studies that evaluate musicians as political actors engaging with structural forces, social dynamics, and personal struggles and that show how their music and creative process reflect this agency (Fox 2004; Lipsitz 1994; Erlmann 1996; Spellman 1966). By documenting the lives of musicians through ethnographic analysis, interviews, photographs, and their own narratives and discourse about music, this book documents what it means to be a Latina/o musician in Charlotte and analyzes how such musicians are central to the formulation of southern latinidad.
Chapter Outline

Chapter 1, “Charlotte, a Globalizing City,” introduces Charlotte, North Carolina, as a city and a place where Latina/o immigrants have settled. Starting with recent studies that position Charlotte as a “globalizing city” (Graves and Smith 2010; Smith and Furuseth 2006) in a region (the U.S. South) experiencing globalization (Peacock, Watson, and Matthews 2005), it presents a brief labor history of the city and region and then focuses on the Central Avenue corridor, a thoroughfare that passes through several Latino neighborhoods and a place of concentrated ethnic businesses, including music venues. The contemporary southern U.S. city must be understood in terms of struggles over immigration and the “right to the city” that have come to the forefront of current politics, the vulnerability of immigrant populations within this setting, and the momentous economic shifts that have occurred over the past decades resulting in Charlotte’s rise as a center of financial industry.

Chapter 2, “The Latin Music Scene in Charlotte,” reconstructs, through oral history and personal networks observed in study, the brief history of Latino musicians in Charlotte. Relying on scholarship on music and cultural studies, it also examines the threads connecting U.S., southern, and Latin American music(s) together up to the early twenty-first century. It outlines the bands that are the focus of this book and describes their musical style.

Chapter 3, “Bands Making Musical Communities,” documents how bands and their audiences engage in a process of community formation around music. Working together to create music, they establish their political agency through negotiations of genre, style, and outlook, and through performance of music. The Latin music scene in Charlotte consists of the Eastside, Intown, and Uptown districts, each loosely corresponding to a geographic area of the city. Band-made communities within these districts highlight class divisions and tensions around race and ethnicity within the Latino community and between Latinos and non-Latinos.

Having set the scene for Latin music in Charlotte, the following chapters each engage with a specific issue related to music making, labor, and immigration status among Latina/o immigrants. Chapter 4, “Thursday Is Bakalao’s Day! Bands at Work and Play,” analyzes how musicians see
their work: as freelance work, a full-time profession, a leisurely hobby, or a craft. Defining and analyzing the concept of “working musician,” it positions musicians’ labor in the context of immigration and class-based views on training and professionalism. The vulnerability of musicians as immigrant laborers plays a vital part in how they approach music making and relate to fellow musicians. It shows how musicians deal with the norm of low-paying, contingent music jobs and strategize about how to best pursue lives as working musicians. The work experience of Latina/o musicians in Charlotte highlights how globalization has brought a new vibrancy that provides some (limited) avenues for economic mobility through capital flows and migration, but also promotes a labor regime that depends on contingent, flexible labor and facilitates a growing divide between rich and poor.

Chapter 5, “The ‘Collective Circle’: Music and Ambivalent Politics in Charlotte,” examines how Latino immigrant musicians and audience members, through their music making, debate political questions relevant to their everyday lives as working musicians and residents of a globalizing city. My research found that musicians and their audiences negotiate their political stances through a physical and intellectual process that one Charlotte journalist called the *circular colectivo* (collective circle; Strimling 2010). The collective circle describes the circle of dancers that often form at Eastside rock concerts in Charlotte, in which dancers slam into each other in dances where jumping and shoving serve to unite band and audience in a collective music-making strategy. But the term has an additional meaning—the collective circulation of ideas through music as bands, audience members, and journalists engage in debates about the political and social importance of what they are performing, how they perform it, and its meaning in the context of a politicized immigrant presence in the U.S. South. However, musicians maintain a cautious skepticism toward public activism in the form of organized protests around immigration reform, a stance that reflects a politics of ambivalence that is evident in the subject of songs and musicians’ everyday lives.

Chapter 6, “Shifting Urban Genres,” examines the political history of Latin genre categories, showing how genre emerges out of the contested spaces of nationalism and ethnic identity formation in Latin America and the United States. Genre categories mark musical expressions and
provide distinction between social groups (Bourdieu 1984). By providing a set of rules and common assumptions, genre boundaries help to foster musical community through a sense of belonging, but also exclude others through difference. A major part of the agency of Latino musicians and their audience is how they negotiate genre boundaries together in a dialectical process, often through direct feedback during performances but also through informal conversations and online social networking sites. This process creates grassroots intellectuals who act as leaders guiding new musical developments. By deploying and, at times, bending genre rules, musicians enact and embody the common circumstances they share with their audience; they claim ownership over a method of making music. Drawing on numerous instances in which distinct genre performances butted against one another, this chapter analyzes how musicians justified these boundaries as necessary for distinguishing between diverse strains of *latinidad*, but also a trend toward musicians collaborating across genre in an attempt to construct a pan-Latino vision of belonging to the city.

Chapter 7, “Race and the Expanding Borderlands Condition,” situates Latin music in the context of new forms of social and structural racism, expressed in the racialization of Latina/o immigrants and the exceptionality of immigration enforcement seemingly exempt from civil rights law oversight. After briefly outlining the legacy of racial segregation and violence in the U.S. South, along with Latin American racial projects, it analyzes the racialized experience of Latina/o immigrants to Charlotte. It highlights three themes that came to the forefront during my research: (1) how southern *latinidad*, particularly in music, informs how Latina/o immigrants see themselves as racial subjects—from being “Mexican” to notions of whiteness and blackness within the Latino community; (2) the detrimental effects of racial profiling in immigration policing and the geography of racism in Charlotte; and (3) how Latino residents see Charlotte in the context of the U.S. South as a haven from racism and a site for creating antiracist and nonracist community in the face of anti-immigrant oppression.

Chapter 8, “The Festival: Marketing *Latinidad*,” analyzes the significance of the Latino cultural festival in relation to the production of southern *latinidad*, while also examining how festivals are essential to the process through which Charlotte’s Latina/o musicians forge
global connections with visiting musicians and promoters. It provides a behind-the-scenes look at how Latino festivals are organized and the relationship between organizers and corporate sponsors, and it explains how these global connections allow musicians to “jump scales” (Smith 1992) and create opportunities for their bands to tour or to advance other creative projects such as filmmaking. This chapter also critically examines how festivals at times produce a distorted and inaccurate picture of *latinidad*, while paying close attention to the structural and organizational limitations that influence this presentation. I argue that Latino festivals in Charlotte are sites of contestation where different groups negotiate what it means to be Latino, Mexican, Latin American, immigrant, and American. In addition, festivals contribute to a broader process of the commercialization and marketing of Latino identity, what might be termed, after the anthropologist Arlene Dávila (2012), Latin Music, Inc. I situate Latino cultural festivals in the context of ongoing attempts to define (and sometimes redefine) Latino culture.

Chapter 9, “Musicians’ Ethics and Aesthetics,” demonstrates how the festival facilitates communication between Latina/o musicians across genre boundaries and between musical communities. During and after their participation in these events, musicians engage in heated intellectual debates about the best way to organize festivals and treat performers, constructing social rules that guide their sense of ethics and their judgments about the “success” of an event. These ethical sensibilities stem from musicians’ training and their relationships with fellow musicians and audience members that shape what constitutes “professional” behavior. By situating musicians’ labor in the nexus of cultural production and consumption practices associated with festivals, the analysis shows how working musicians face many of the same political and economic limitations that dull to gray the immigrant dream.

The conclusion teases out insights gleaned from the Latin music scene for reexamining national and regional struggles over immigration policy. It reiterates how making music constitutes a form of political action and builds community through dialectical collaboration between musicians and audience members; in addition, it analyzes what this research means for a conceptualization of the city as a cultural center and for the future of Latino music in the U.S. South.