Introduction
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Over the last five decades, Latina/o studies has rapidly evolved and expanded. An amalgamation of multiple disciplines, theories, and methods, Latina/o studies has generated an expansive, innovative, and ever-evolving framework to understand the experiences of persons of Latin American and Caribbean descent in the United States as well as broader sociohistorical, political, and cultural processes. By using the knowledges and methodologies of such diverse fields as American studies, anthropology, art, cultural studies, economics, education, ethnic studies, geography, history, labor, language and literary studies (particularly English and Spanish), Latin American and Caribbean studies, linguistics, media studies, medicine, music, political science, public health, religion, social work, sociology, and women’s and gender studies, among others, Latina/o studies reveals facts and truths that had previously not been visible or accessible.

In naming this book, we have chosen the term “Latina/o” with the full understanding that during the past decade a number of theoretical, epistemological, and identity projects have used “Latin@” and “Latinx” in seeking to challenge and overcome the gender binary implicit in the Spanish-language feminine and masculine endings of Latina/o (Scharrón-del Río and Aja 2015; Padilla 2016; Ramirez and Blay 2016; de Onís 2017). It is also important to point out that there have been varying forms of resistance to these terms (Taylor et al. 2012; Guerra and Orbea 2015). Some of the contributors to this book pick up and expand these discussions. Our use of “Latina/o” does not dismiss these new terms or the productive critiques they represent. Instead, we welcome and support the future evolution and transformation of multiple meanings and iterations. Our choice to use “Latina/o” is intended to honor interventions by feminist scholars to disrupt the Spanish-language masculine use of “o” as a default in “Latino” (Chabram-Dernersesian 2013). We also read the forward slash (/) as a productive tension rather than reaffirming a gendered binary.

Born out of struggles, protests, and demands for community-engaged politics and interdisciplinary methodologies, Latina/o studies emerged from conversations with knowledge models created by third-world liberation, civil rights, feminist, decolonial, social justice, LGBTQ, and immigration rights movements, to name a few, as well as in relation to critiques of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is also a field that, in interrogating definitions of citizenship, borders, territories, migrations, labor, self, language, performance, sexuality constructions, social identities, gender performance, and legitimacy, has given rise to powerful and influential theories and methods, many of which have redefined traditional disciplines.

Latina/o studies has also been defined as much by what it is not: it is neither an extension nor a corollary
of Latin American and Caribbean area studies nor a
simple fusion of Chicano, Boricua, Central American
and other similar ethnic studies fields. The major con-
tention informing this distinction is that area and in-
ternational studies funded and organized under Title VI
of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958
were part of a larger Cold War politics to stem com-
munism in the region, especially during and after the
Cuban Revolution of 1959 (Delpar 2008). This is not to
say that Latina/o studies is not influenced or shaped
by Latin American and Caribbean theories and meth-
ods or by the problematics of establishing the field of
Latin American and Caribbean studies in the U.S. acad-
emy. Early generations of scholars working in Latina/o
studies were trained in Latin American, Caribbean, and
Chicano/Boricua studies (as well as in American stud-
ies and other ethnic studies fields) and identified with
progressive Latin Americanists and Caribbeanists who
denounced United States policies and military interven-
tions in the region (Cabán 2003a, 2003b). Instead, this
is to acknowledge that Latina/o studies is a field of its
own making. With close ties to ethnic, gender, and re-

gional studies, it draws from but is distinct from other
fields. It is inventive, multidisciplinary, and grounded
in transnational and trans-American connections that
speak to the uses of territorialities, borderlands, and the
realities of shared histories, geographies, and sites that
both encompass and eschew artificial borders (Brady
2002; Gruesz 2002).

The emergence of what would be referred to as
“Latina/o studies” can be arguably traced to two particu-
lar social movements, the Chicana/o movimiento and the
Puerto Rican movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which
correspond to the two historically largest and oldest
Latina/o demographic groups in the United States. Both
demanded that universities establish Chicana/o and
Puerto Rican studies departments and programs and
hire more Chicana/o and Puerto Rican professors. In
April of 1969, El Plan de Santa Barbara: A Chicano Plan for
Higher Education was adopted at the University of Cali-

donia, Santa Barbara. It was drafted by the Chicano Co-
ordinating Council on Higher Education as a manifesto
for the implementation of Chicano studies throughout
the state of California (C. Muñoz 1999; Chavez 2002;
Blackwell 2011). That same year, African American and
Latina/o students, influenced by the Black Panthers and
Young Lords, demanded that the City University of New
York system create departments and hire African Ameri-
can and Puerto Rican faculty (Cabán 2003a, 2003b; Bel-
trán 2010; Kynard 2014).

The nationwide demand for Chicano and Boricua
studies departments was directly related to the shared
belief that not only did Latinas/os deserve to have their
history taught, but that this history, along with the
histories of other marginalized and silenced commu-
nities of color, is the history of the United States, spe-
cifically of U.S. imperialism and territorial expansion
(Ruiz 2006b). Moreover, by establishing a field and
pushing for recognition, early Chicana/o and Puerto
Rican scholars cultivated a critical space for knowledge
and cultural productions. This was not the first time
that Latina/o organizations called for the creation of
courses that examined and reflected the history of the
different populations and communities that constitute
what we currently refer to as Latinas/os. Formed in 1939
and led in part by the Guatemalan-born labor activist
Luisa Moreno, the delegates of El Congreso de Pueblos
de Habla Española, as the historian Vicki L. Ruiz writes,
“emphasized the importance of preserving Latina-
Latino cultures and called upon universities to create
departments of Latino Studies” (Ruiz 2006a, 226).

The movements of the 1960s and 1970s made impres-
sive gains, and within a relatively short time, Chicano
and Puerto Rican studies departments and programs
were established at a number of colleges and universities (particularly public institutions), including those created at San Francisco State University (as part of the only College of Ethnic Studies), the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Minnesota, Lehman and Hunter Colleges (CUNY), Rutgers University, and the University of Connecticut. There were also locations in the Midwest, in particular Chicago and Detroit (for example, at Wayne State University), which called for the rise of Chicano-Boricua studies to address the needs of Mexican American and Puerto Rican communities (Padilla 1985; C. Muñoz 1999, 2007). By the 1990s, a significant number of universities had established centers, programs, and departments focused on Latina/o studies. This, however, was not without controversy or difficulties. The institutional inclusion of Latina/o with ethnic studies at certain universities has been seen as a strategy to dilute the field by subsuming it under centers and programs that do not offer undergraduate majors or train doctoral students in Latina/o studies (Cabán 2003b).

The evolution and growth of the field also gave rise to Cuban American (Pedraza-Bailey 1985; Poyo 1989; Pérez Firmat 1994; Torres 2001; Ortíz 2007), Central American-American (Arias 2003; A. P. Rodríguez 2009; Stoltz Chinchilla and Hamilton 2013), and Dominican American studies (Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998; Candelario 2007; Méndez 2012; García-Peña 2016). Albeit developed through different trajectories, historical narratives, and methodologies, their inclusion within the larger discourse on Latinidad complicated the field and allowed scholars to move past singular and binary definitions of Latinidad to one that echoed the rise in population of migrants who were not from Mexico or Puerto Rico (Oboler 1995; C. Rodríguez 2000; Cabán 2003a, 2003b; Aparicio 2007; Mora 2014). The Communist Revolution in Cuba, the civil wars in Central America, the end of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, and the passage of the Hart Cel- lar Act (1965) in the United States, to name a few events, prompted a rapid and dramatic increase in the number of migrants, exiles, and refugees arriving to the United States during the late twentieth century.

Salvadoran and Dominican migrants are fast be- coming one of the largest Latina/o populations in the United States, with Dominican migrants possibly surpassing Puerto Ricans as the largest Latina/o population in New York City (G. López 2013; Bergad 2014). Los Angeles is the second largest Mexican-descent city in the world, second only to Mexico City. Simultaneously—and signaling the dynamic changes in who we come to define within the term “Latina/o”—in the past five years one of the largest groups of Mexicans immigrating to Los Angeles are Indigenous peoples who do not speak Spanish and contest their Mexican nation-state status. All of these demographic changes among Latinas/os are notable and have already shifted the field. Latina/o studies courses, programs, and departments are making room not only for Central American and Dominican studies, but also for the study of Afro-Latinas/os, Latinas/os of Asian descent, Arab and Muslim Latinas/os (for example the ones portrayed in the 2009 documentary New Muslim Cool), and South American migrations. We understand these dynamics as productive tensions contributing to the growth and expansion of the field itself; some of these receive more attention that others in this keywords volume.

The recent demographic changes have spurred a de- bate on whether numbers translate into political and electoral power, what many refer to as the “Latino vote.” According to 2015 Census Bureau statistics, Latinas/os make up 17 percent of the overall United States popu- lation (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). States such as California, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, New
York, New Jersey, and Florida boast the largest Latina/o populations in the United States (Pew Research Center 2013; U.S. Census Bureau 2015). These demographic shifts have compelled many to see this trend as a sign of impending Latina/o political empowerment and potential dominance (Santa Ana 2002; Beltrán 2010; Gutiérrez 2013; García Bedolla 2014; J. García 2016). At the same time, however, Latinas/os are often depicted as passive and forever foreign; they are described as a “perpetually emergent” population, one that is continually characterized as having “untapped potential” (Beltrán 2010, 4). Implicit in such a discourse is the complexity of what indeed determines a shared Latina/o identity and community, and if so, whether such a diverse community translates into a sense of common political empowerment (Beltrán 2010).

The essays included in Keywords for Latina/o Studies are part of a larger project of envisioning and defining an ever-evolving and changing field. Echoing these changes, the essays vary in theory, methodology, and scope. Some reflect the disciplinary training and interests of their contributors, while others exhibit a willingness to experiment and push traditional boundaries of what constitutes Latina/o or Latinx studies. There is no right way, just recognition that a field in transition cannot be categorized, fixed, or forced to compromise. Thus, we hope that readers will be attentive to tensions and divergences as well as commonalities and shared viewpoints and that they will also be incited to envision their own additional keywords (or rewritings or expansions of the ones in this volume) as part of the evolving conversation that we seek to foster and generate.

It was not easy choosing keywords that best captured this elusive and dynamic field. With Latina/o studies being grounded in multiplicity, dislocation, and transnationalism, one of the major challenges of the field is the need for it to be elastic and expansive enough to speak to the histories and experiences of multi-generational migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, citizens from Puerto Rico, Indigenous citizens of tribal nations who persist in their struggle for sovereignty from nation-states, and longstanding residents and communities born in territories expropriated by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, while at the same time, remaining narrow enough to denote a shared identity, movement, and politics (Oboler 1995; Aparicio 2007; Beltrán 2010).

Like Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, who cite Raymond Williams’s reading of keywords as a “record of an inquiry into a vocabulary” in their Keywords for American Cultural Studies (2007, 2), we too imagine this volume as part of a larger vocabulary, and more accurately a dialogue where contributors can and do extrapolate, reinvent, and in some cases, use specific keywords to reinterpret, challenge, contest, and complicate the field named “Latina/o studies.” We also envision this volume in critical dialogue with other Latina/o keyword projects such as Paul Allatson’s Key Terms in Latino/a Cultural and Literary Studies (2007) and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, Ben. Sífuentes-Jáuregui, and Marisa Belauste-guigoitia’s Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought: Historical and Institutional Trajectories (2016); with Latina/o keyword essays such as Juana María Rodríguez’s (2014a) “Latino, Latina, Latin@” in the second edition of Keywords for American Cultural Studies; and with the multiple Latina/o studies encyclopedias, anthologies, and readers coedited over the last decades by Frederick Luis Aldama, Frances R. Aparicio, Juan Flores, Deena González, Suzanne Oboler, Renato Rosaldo, Vicki L. Ruiz, Virginia Sánchez Korrol, and Ilan Stavans, among others.

Readers of Keywords for Latina/o Studies will be struck by the juxtaposition of general critical terms along with highly specific ones (such as Barrio, Chicana/Chicano/Chican@/Chicanx, Latinidad/es, Maquiladoras,
Mestizaje, Rasquache, Raza, and Spanglish), by the dialogue between many of the pieces, and by the shared bibliography, as well as by striking differences. Particularly interesting are the relational links or thematic groupings that appear among clusters of essays, for example around Culture (including Art, Culture, Food, Language, Literature, Music, Performance, Poetry, Popular Culture, and Theater, among others), Decolonial (including Citizenship, Decolonial, Modernity, Nationalism, and Sovereignty), Gender (including Decolonial, Gender, and Feminisms), Health (also including Sterilization), Housing (also including Barrio), Language (also including Spanglish), Media (including Film, Media, Radio, and Television), Labor (including Capitalism, Labor, Maquiladoras, and Poverty), Politics (including Illegality, Incarceration, Law, Politics, Social Movements, and Sovereignty), Race (including Afro-Latinas/os, Brown, Indigeneity, Mestizaje, Race, Raza, and White), Religion (also including Spirituality), Sexuality (also including Gender, Feminisms, and Sterilization), and Territoriality (also including Americas, Barrio, Borderlands, Diaspora, Exile, and Transnationalism). There are many additional possible, overlapping clusters, and it is our hope that readers will make these connections.

Readers might also be struck by missing terms: some of these correspond to limits of space, others to invited authors’ inability to complete their requested essays. It is absolutely incorrect to assume that the absence of a term in this volume indicates the editors’ lack of interest in specific discussions, and it is our hope that a future edition will include additional terms such as AIDS, ageing, archive, Boricua, Central American-American, DominicanYork, DREAMer (which is extensively discussed by Randy J. Ontiveros in his entry on “Social Movements”), hemispheric, Latinx, migration, Nuyorican (and/or Diasporican), queer, revolution, sanctuary, UndocuQueer, and youth. Because this book is meant for a general readership as well as for college students, scholars, and professors, the list of works cited includes multiple sources and is designed to expand and complement the discussions in our book. As co-editors who approach our work from an interdisciplinary perspective, we also acknowledge that our approach to this book project is situated in and credits feminist, women of color, third world women’s, and queer studies.

It is never a good idea to define a dynamic field, to decide what it is and what it is not, given its very engagement with a rapidly changing world and the various modes of accountability scholars in the field have to changing questions and shifts in power. Thus, we acknowledge and embrace our role as co-editors who may have fallen short or been short-sighted in compiling this text. Yet, we embrace the places where there are gaps and the need to reexamine, seeing them as a reminder that Latina/o studies should never be understood as a closed, finite, or cohesively established field. Its dynamism, pliability, and promiscuity are, after all, where its political potential lies.

The authors assembled here, we believe, provide us with an extremely powerful start to new conversations about the project and future of Latina/o studies, especially given changes to the U.S. academy in an era of neoliberalization, increased xenophobia, anxieties about immigration, massive deportation campaigns such as those experienced under the Obama and Trump presidencies, which have included those of youth and young adults protected under the Obama administration’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), unspeakable numbers of tragedies at the border (de León 2015), and rising levels of social violence and intolerance, including President Trump’s efforts to build a wall on the Mexican and United States border.

Under these conditions, it was critical for us, the editors, to compile a volume that speaks to multiple
politics of resistance and resilience and includes the dreams of DREAMers, UndocuQueers, antiracists, and immigration activists. It follows the models of past civil rights struggles in an effort to present empowering critical concepts that can bring about social justice, something that is extraordinarily challenged currently in the United States. This book is then our invitation to reach across fluid constellations of possibilities, desires, and potential and allow the critical thinkers among us to speak and reveal their thoughts of where the field of Latina/o studies, as archive and political project, is intellectually imagined, knowing full well that that too will change.