CHAPTER 13

Mapping the Dynamic Terrain of U.S. Latina/o Media Research

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INTRODUCTION: MAPPING A DYNAMIC TERRAIN

The contemporary Latina/o media landscape is a diverse, complex, and constantly shifting terrain. Three key factors have played a role in redefining Latina/o media and the scholarship that surrounds it: (1) the demographic shifts within the U.S. Latina/o population; (2) the global visibility of Latina/o performers and cultural forms; and (3) the profitability of dual-market transnational media. Consequently, once predominantly homogenous urban media markets such as Los Angeles, Miami, and New York are now increasingly defined by the heterogeneity of their Latino populations. Latina/o musicians such as Marc Anthony and Shakira move easily, albeit problematically, across national, racial, and ethnic borders. Emerging hybrid media genres such as Reggaeton and television programs such as "Ugly Betty" are popular across diverse linguistic, ethnic, racial, and gender categories. Additionally, the successful marketing of Latinas/os as a commodity audience is drawing unprecedented attention from both general-market and Spanish-language media.

Media scholarship about Latina/o audiences and texts that capture the contradictions and tensions embedded in these contemporary shifts is emerging (Del Rio, 2006; Valdivia 2004a). However, a majority of the established Latina/o media scholarship remains grounded in traditional social scientific approaches focused around the three largest Latina/o groups: Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans (Rodriguez, 1997). Additionally, because of the dominant development of Latina/o media in the Southwest, much of the research focuses specifically on Mexican and Chicana/o media in California and Texas.

Thus, it is only recently that Latina/o media researchers have focused on other populations, such as Colombians and Venezuelans, and regions, such as the Midwest. For instance, the work of Acosta-Alzuro (2003, 2005) focusing on the cultural production and reception of Venezuelan

telenovelas and Mayer (2004) studying the racialized relationship of recent Argentinian immigrants to dominant definitions of pan-Latinidad are examples of ethnographic work stepping outside of the dominant boundaries. Additionally, scholarship by Valdivia (2000, 2002) and Cepeda (2003) on U.S. media representations of Chileans, Colombians, and Guatemalans are repositioning the borders of Latinidad within research about mainstream popular culture.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the U.S. Latina/o media and contemporary changes within that landscape. Next, it briefly outlines traditional academic approaches to studying U.S. Latina/o media and discusses the contributions of contemporary Latina/o critical media studies to understanding the industry's dynamic shifts. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing theoretical strategies for future research.

DEFINING LATINA/O MEDIA AND AUDIENCES

In a multicultural society that believes that diverse ethnic and racial groups should coexist equally, "the right to communicate" is one of the basic tenets necessary for political recognition within the public sphere: "With the increasing social complexity and mobility that characterizes late-twentieth century societies the mass media have been perceived as having an increasingly central role in facilitating dialogue among citizens" (Husband, 2000, p. 201). Not only do the ethnic media provide a space for political dialogue, but they also perform a central cultural function in defining the parameters of citizenship itself (Riggins, 1992). Cultural, political, and economic access to the public sphere is central for constructing citizenship and imagining community. Not surprisingly, Latina/o communities in the United States have a long established tradition of producing media. However, as with other media, the social and historical forces surrounding the development of Latina/o media, marketing, and advertising are thus varied and complex. The antecedents of Latina/o media rest with three primary historical developments: (1) the ongoing complex relationship between Mexico and the United States in the Southwest; (2) the Cuban revolution of 1959 that resulted in the mass exodus of Cuban media professionals to Miami and New York; and (3) "Operation Bootstrap," which encouraged and rewarded the labor migration of mostly women from Puerto Rico to manufacturing and garment industries in New York and the Midwest during the 1950s.

Latina/o Media in the Southwest

The oldest location for Latina/o print and radio media in the South and Southwest regions. Latina/o newspapers and radio stations in California, New Orleans, and Texas targeted at Mexican and Spanish citizens have existed since the 19th and early 20th century (Gutiérrez, 1977; Rodríguez, 1999). The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo further motivated the development of Spanish-language newspapers and radio in Southern California and Texas, as Mexican citizens turned U.S. residents used the media to build community in the newly acquired and racially hostile territories (Rodríguez, 1999). A second historical event, the Mexican Revolution of 1910, led to the development of prorevolutionary and antirevolutionary newspapers in the region. Media outlets produced during these two periods were primarily dependent on local and regional advertisers and specifically aimed at local, regional, and transnational Mexican and U.S. Mexican communities. Not surprisingly, 6 of the top 10 Latina/o media markets today are still in California and the Southwest: Los Angeles (3), San Antonio (4), Dallas (5), Houston (8), San Francisco (9), and Phoenix (10) (Advertising Age, 2005, p. 43). San Antonio is also home to the oldest Latina/o media market in the United States,

launching the first full-time Spanish-language radio station in the country in 1922 (Rodríguez, 1999). Some of the most prominent Latina/o newspapers also arose during the postrevolution era: Los Angeles' *La Opinión* (1926) and San Antonio's *La Prensa* (1926).

Latina/o Media in the East and Midwest

The rest of the top Latina/o media markets are located in the Midwest and East coast: New York (1), Miami (2), Detroit (6), and Chicago (7) (Advertising Age, 2005, p. 43). Unlike the history of Latina/o media in the Southwest, which was predominantly influenced by the U.S. war with Mexico (1846–1848) and the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the development of Latina/o media elsewhere has been driven by other external political and economic forces. Although the development of Latina/o media in the Midwest is the most recent, established Puerto Rican and Mexican community media outlets have existed in the Midwest since the Great Western Cattle Trail of the 1800s and Puerto Rico's more recent "Operation Bootstrap" (1950s to 1960s).

However, Latina/o media growth in the East and Midwest was primarily fueled by a second wave of development during the 1960s, resulting from the immigration of exiled Cuban media professionals to the United States (Dávila, 2001; Rodríguez, 1999). Unlike the regional media in the Southwest, Cuban media professionals sought to work with national media outlets throughout the United States and Latin America. Rather than specializing in a particular region or local ethnic group, such as U.S. Mexicans in Los Angeles or Puerto Ricans in New York, U.S. Cuban media outlets specialized in selling specific ethnic Latina/o audiences to national advertisers and programmers. Thus, U.S. Cuban media firms were the first to actively market Latinas/os as a commodity audience for U.S. products through the Spanish-language media (Dávila, 2001).

Not surprisingly, it was during the 1960s that Latina/o media giant Univisión (1961) was founded by Mexican nationals in San Antonio, Texas (Rodríguez, 1999). Univisión pioneered the art of developing ethnically ambiguous programming in Mexico and Latin America and broadcasting it to Latina/o communities in the United States. Univisión is currently the fifth largest network behind ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX, and in the Los Angeles, New York, and Miami markets, it often wins the prime-time evening ratings. Univisión is the largest owner of Spanish-language television and radio stations in the United States. Telemundo, established in 1985 and owned by NBC, is its closest competitor. Both networks are currently headquartered in Miami, making Miami the transnational Latina/o media capitol of the world (Sinclair, 2003). Some critics have complained that the centrality of Miami and its U.S. Cuban community is affecting the Mexican-dominant content of the networks, and there is discussion that Univisión is planning to move its headquarters to Mexico City in order to be closer to the development of its most profitable programming, the *telenovelas*. Televisa, headquartered in Mexico City, is the largest multinational corporation producing and distributing *telenovelas* throughout the globe (Sinclair, 1990).

One of the primary forces driving changes within the Latina/o media industry is the increasing demographic diversification of the U.S. Latina/o community. Although the Latina/o population in the Southwest has historically been predominantly Mexican and U.S. Mexican, the demographics of these communities are quickly changing, forcing the local media to respond. For example, in the city of Los Angeles, although Mexicans make up 36.6% of the population, Latinas/os from El Salvador (3.1%) and Guatemala (2.2%) are quickly growing in numbers and represent Los Angeles' second and third largest Latina/o population, respectively (U.S. Census, 2005a). As the Latina/o population in Los Angeles increases and diversifies so does its media content. Thus, Los Angeles is home to six major Spanish-language stations with news bureaus in Tijuana, Mexico

and San Salvador, El Salvador. Los Angeles currently holds the highest concentration of Latina/o viewers and is the most profitable Latina/o market in television and radio.

Similar changes have occurred in the media landscapes of the East Coast. For example, in the Miami-Dade County, where Cubans are the largest Latina/o group (31.6%), Nicaraguans (4.1%), Colombians (3.9%), and Puerto Ricans (3.5%), the second, third, and fourth largest Latina/o groups, respectively, are quickly changing the county's audience makeup (U.S. Census, 2005b). Latinas/os from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America make up the largest ethnic/racial group in the county (61.1%) and consistently contribute to Univisión's number one ranking in the Nielsen ratings. Likewise, Latino radio in New York City often ranks first in audience numbers in an urban market where Puerto Ricans (9.9%) are being matched by the growth of Dominicans (6.7%) and Mexicans (3.1%) (U.S. Census, 2005c). When all Latina/o groups are combined, the ratings for Spanish-language television and radio often outpace those of its general-market competitors. Changes in the content and success of the Latina/o media in the three largest media markets (Los Angeles, Miami, New York) in the United States is representative of the diversity of Latina/o populations.

FROM ESTABLISHED TO DYNAMIC: THE CONTEMPORARY FIELD OF LATINA/O MEDIA STUDIES

Traditional approaches to the study of Latina/o media have focused on two areas: advertising and journalism. Research on Latinas/os and advertising explores the uses and effectiveness of Spanish-language media. Much of this scholarship has been funded by the Latina/o advertising and marketing industry, which is particularly interested in documenting the effectiveness of Spanish-language media in reaching specific Latina/o audiences, particularly Cuban, Mexican, and Puerto Rican. Most of the work conducted on advertising and media use highlights the media preferences of Mexican immigrants and U.S. Mexican consumers (Korzenny, Neundorf, Burgoon, Burgoon, & Greenberg, 1983; Roslow & Nicholls, 1996; Ueltschy & Krampf, 1997).

Nevertheless, the research in this area is not definitive, especially because issues of language and acculturation are complex and difficult to measure, particularly as second- and third-generation Latinas/os take on increasingly hybrid identity positions consuming both English- and Spanish-language media (Johnson, 2000). In a 2004 survey, the Pew Hispanic Center reported that almost 50% of the Latina/o population uses both English and Spanish-language media for information and entertainment (Suro, 2004). Language and media preferences shift from Spanish to English for U.S.-born Latinas/os, but nearly a quarter of third-generation U.S. Latinas/os reported using media in both languages (Suro, 2004, p. 43). Thus, one of the flaws of advertising research on media use is that it rarely takes a comparative approach for analyzing differences and similarities across gender, generation, and nationality, all three of which are becoming increasingly important as the U.S. Latina/o population changes.

Journalism research is the second traditional area of Latina/o media scholarship. Researchers in this area center on the history and political efficacy of Spanish-language journalism and issues of positive versus negative representations in the English-language news media. The majority of historical scholarship on Latina/o journalism emphasizes the development of Spanish-language newspapers as tools for "political and social activism; the promotion of civic duties; the defense of the population against the abuse of authorities and other organized groups" (Leal, 1989, p. 159). Again, the dominant focus of this research deals with the development of the

U.S. Mexican press in the Southwest (Di Stefano, 1985; Kanellós, 1994; Meléndez, 1997). For instance, the work of Gutiérrez (1977) and Leal (1989) examines the shift from 19th-century bilingual and Spanish-language newspapers in the South and Southwest that served primarily as forms of propaganda for upper-class Spaniards, Mexicans, and the local Anglo elite, to the politicization of Spanish-language newspapers financed and published by Mexican citizens in response to the U.S. conquest of the Southwest and California. The scholarship suggests that these more political newspapers often protested discrimination and violence against Mexicans and Mexican descendents, and newspapers such as San Antonio's *La Prensa* or Los Angeles's *La Opinión* still demonstrate this type of political content (Di Stefano, 1985; Medeiros, 1980; Rodríguez, 1999).

Although the majority of scholarly work regarding the Latina/o news media focuses on California and the Southwest, other scholars have documented how the imperialistic United States relationship with Puerto Rico spurred the migratory flow of Puerto Ricans from the island to the mainland, where they met with racial and linguistic discrimination for the first time. Scholars suggest that it was this experience with racialization that led to the subsequent development of Latino newspapers in the Northeast, with a particular political orientation targeted at Puerto Ricans living in the United States (Downing, 1992). Likewise, research on Miami illustrates how the political strength of U.S. Cuban exiles shaped the proliferation and political content of the local Spanish-language and English-language news media (Molina Guzmán, 2005, 2006a; García, 1996; Soruco, 1996).

Finally, journalism scholars have worked in two other areas: the efficacy of Spanish-language news to disseminate information and the positive/negative representation of Latinas/o in the English-language news media (Subervi, 1986, 2003). Both research traditions are heavily grounded in quantitative social science approaches. Research dealing with the quality of information or ability to disseminate information through the Latina/o news media points to a problematic finding. Although Latina/o news outlets are better able to reach Spanish-dominant audiences, the quality of information it disseminates is less accurate and helpful than information provided through the general-market news media. For example, research on the reporting of health news demonstrates that whereas first-generation Latina/o immigrants depend on the Spanish-language media for information gathering, they often receive inadequate or inaccurate health information about important health issues such as the increase of diabetes in the Latino community (Subervi, 2004; Vargas & dePyssler, 1999).

Likewise, most of the research on general-market news representations of Latinas/os point to troubling trends. The Annual "Network Brown Out Report" conducted by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists shows that general-market news outlets continue to underreport news about Latinas/os (Méndez-Méndez & Alverio, 2001, 2002, 2003, Montalvo & Torres, 2006; Subervi, 2003, 2004). From 2000 to 2006, the major networks devoted less than 1% of their news coverage to Latinas/os. When Latinas/os are reported about in the network news, the focus is often on crime, personalities, immigration, and sports (Montalvo & Torres, 2006). Furthermore, research by Molina Guzmán (2005) and Vargas (2000) also shows that when Latinas/os are the focus of general-market news coverage, they are often constructed in racialized and gendered ways that marginalize the community. For instance, with regard to network reporting of the Elián González custody case, which is the most reported Latina/o news in the history of network news, the U.S. Cuban community was often depicted as extremely religious and hyperemotional, both attributes associated with femininity. Additionally, U.S. Cubans were often represented as hot-headed, violent, and irrational, racially marked characteristics (Molina Guzmán, 2005).

Critical Roots of Latina/o Media Studies

The release of the 1980 U.S. Census documenting the rapid increase of the Latina/o community created a watershed moment for Latina/o media production and scholarship (Goodson & Shaver, 1994; Kramer, 2002). Latina/o media, advertising, and marketing agencies have extended their reach in both English- and Spanish-language media by moving away from ethnic-specific Latina/o marketing/programming to pan-ethnic Latina/o marketing/programming (Dávila, 2001; Santiago & Valdés, 2002; Garza, 1994). Prior to 1980, media strategies that emphasized the cultural differences among Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans prevailed within the industry. Contemporary Latina/o media, advertising, and marketing campaigns have shifted away from ethnic-specific audience constructions toward a pan-ethnic and unified image of Latina/o consumers, emphasizing the similarities, rather than differences, among the more than 50 Latina/o groups that currently live in the United States. Latina/o marketing and advertising agencies have turned the focus away from nationality-specific programming targeted at particular groups or regions toward the notion of Latinas/os as one unified pan-ethnic market that share common cultural values and norms. At the center of this strategy is the use of English and nonaccented Spanish, Anglo-appearing models with stereotypical black hair and dark eyes, and generic appeals to Latino values, traditions, family, and other community structures. The result is a problematic trend toward economic, racial, and ethnic homogenization, where Latinas/os are increasingly represented as white and Latinidad in the general-market and Spanish-language media is expressed only through stereotypic notions of food, music, sexuality, and gender.

Shifts in the industry's orientation from ethnic-specificity to pan-ethnicity demand new lines of academic inquiry (Valdivia 2004a). Contemporary critical Latina/o media research has worked to open emerging areas of research and capture this dynamic terrain filled with tensions and contradictions. One of the primary tensions surrounds the definition of Latina/o media. Several scholars define Latina/o media as that which is produced by Latina/o media professionals for Latina/o audiences. Given this definition, Latina/o access to institutions and institutional resources plays an important political role. Thus, Noriega's field-defining work documented the political activism of Chicana/o activists during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s targeting the general-market television and film media (Noriega, 1992, 2000; Noriega & López, 1996). Noriega demonstrates how Chicana/o political organizations, such as the National Council of La Raza, helped to open the industry doors for some Latina/o media professionals but did little to change the quantity or quality of representations about Mexicans and other Latinas/os in television and film. Similar political work by the National Associations of Hispanic Journalist (NAHJ) has had mixed results. NAHJ surveys show that the numbers of Latina/o journalists in general-market news outlets hovers at less than 5% (Montalvo & Torres, 2006).

However, as Noriega (2000) noted, one of the primary consequences of Latina/o media activism has been an increase in independent film and television production. Emerging scholarship in this area documents how Chicana/o and Latina/o film producers are creating hybrid genres of cinematic texts that often explore the fluidity of the symbolic and geopolitical U.S.-Mexico/U.S.-Puerto Rican borders and transnational border citizens—citizens who occupy multiple spaces and positions of identity (Fregoso, 1993, 2003; Ramírez-Berg, 2002; Valdivia, 2000). As a consequence, defining Latina/o media texts is increasingly problematic as both audiences and production are situated transnationally. Often times, such as in the case of *Real Women Have Curves* (2002) or *Frida* (2002), the movies, although produced by Latinas, are performed in English for an international market. In other cases, such as in the work of director Lourdes Portillo, the work is produced in Spanish but for an international and transnational U.S./Mexican/Chicana/o audience (Fregoso & Portillo, 2001).

New Directions in Latina/o Media Studies

One of the central goals of critical Latina/o communication scholarship is exploring the hybrid nature of contemporary media production and reception in order to analyze how these texts speak to the always changing and increasingly unstable positions of Latinidad, Latina/o and Latin American audiences (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003, 2005; Mayer, 2003; Rojas, 2004). Within critical Latina/o communication studies, hybridity is defined as part of the process of cultural formations produced from the unstable dynamic mixing of ideologically established systems of classifications. As a theoretical concept, it draws into question notions of purity, authenticity, and the historical stability of categories in the era of globalization (Garcia Canclini, 1995; Levine, 2001; Shome & Hedge, 2002; Valdivia, 2004b). Consequently, critical Latina/o communication scholarship problematizes notions of authenticity, homogeneity, and ethnic essentialism.

For instance, critical scholarship on Latina/o produced television such as Univisión and Telemundo programming foreground the transnational and conglomerated nature of its production base. Both networks depend on Mexico for the production of its most popular programming, the *telenovelas* (Sinclair, 1990). Although the networks are headquartered in Miami, most of the creative and production labor is outsourced to Latin America. Ironically, little of their programming content is produced in the United States for the specific consumption of U.S. Latina/o audiences (Sinclair, 2003). Thus, Latina/o audiences in the United States are often watching content produced in Mexico for Mexican audiences or produced in Mexico for pan-Latina/o audiences. In addition, media conglomeration within places such as Puerto Rico is creating a situation in which locally produced content is decreasing and multinational pan-ethnic programming is increasing (Rivero, 2005). Further problematizing definitions of Latina/o media content are forays by general-market outlets into Latina/o themed network programming. The ABC network has led the way with two popular shows: "The George López Show" (2000–2007), based on the life of comedian George López, and "Ugly Betty," based on the globally popular Colombian telenovela "Yo soy Betty, La Fea" (1999).

Within the area of critical Latina/o media studies, some of the most interesting work is being conducted on television. Scholarship on television has focused both on transnational U.S. Latina/o audiences and audiences located in the Caribbean and Latin America, particularly Venezuela, Mexico, and Puerto Rico (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003, 2005; Rivero, 2005; Rojas, 2004). Work in this area generally centers on understanding the relationship among media texts, audiences, and the construction of national and ethnic identities. Moreover, it foregrounds how television programs speak to audience negotiations over national identity as they intersect with issues of class, gender, and race. For scholars studying transnational Latina/o audiences living in the United States, the process of racialization is often highlighted, especially with regard to how racialization makes issues of cultural representation and identity particularly problematic (Molina Guzmán, 2006b; Rojas, 2004); that is, for second- and third-generation Latinas/os, the consumption of Spanish-language Latina/o programming is sometimes marked as a source of difference, whereas for more recent Latinas/os, it is used as a transnational symbolic link to their home countries. U.S. Latina audiences specifically perceive the hypersexualized, hyperfeminized representations of women in Spanish-language programming as contributing to their stigmatization in the United States (Rojas, 2004).

Moving to a different mode of communication, the transnational fluidity of texts and audience reception is central to critical Latina/o media scholarship dealing with popular music. For instance, the scholarship surrounding Tejano music and Puerto Rican reggaeton is grounded in an understanding of how multiple cultures come together to produce innovative hybrid texts that are then consumed by audiences across a multiplicity of national borders with sometimes competing interests and interpretations (Aparicio, 1998; Báez, 2006; Mayer, 2003; Rivera, 2003; Valdivia, 2001). For example, work on reggaetón documents its roots in the flow of people

and cultures through its hybrid intersection in Jamaican dance hall, Dominican merengue, and Nuyorican salsa (Rivera, 2003). The cultural flow of reggaetón allows it to communicate differently to multiple audiences in disparate spaces. Thus, it signifies a classed-based identity on the island while communicating an ethnic/racial community identity in the United States.

Tejano, reggaetón, and salsa as hybrid cultural "Latina/o" forms also contribute to transnational community formations. For instance, the popularity of tejano music in the Southwest and northern Mexico and salsa in New York, Puerto Rico, Miami, and Los Angeles, among other places, help to create an imagined transnational community of listeners (Mayer, 2003). At the same time, contemporary scholarship demonstrates the ways music functions as a fluid ethnic signifier across Latina/o communities. For instance, salsa music crosses ethnic-specific borders, spawning the popularity of salsa nights in predominantly Mexican communities in the Midwest, Southwest, and California (Valdivia, 2001).

Finally, critical Latina/o communication studies analyze the tension between invisibility and the iconic hypervisibility surrounding particular Latinas/os, specifically women's bodies, within general-market U.S. popular culture (Molina Guzmán & Valdivia, 2004). As the U.S. Census continues to document the changing demographic position of Latinas/os, Latina/o bodies, music, and other cultural elements of Latinidad are increasingly used to sell a myriad of media programming, products, and services. Consequently, while Latinas/os remain invisible and marginalized within news narratives, film, and television, Latina/o bodies are harnessed in the service of global consumption. With regard to advertising, among the most visible Latina spokespeople are Penélope Cruz (Ralph Lauren), Salma Hayek (Lincoln Continental), Jennifer Lopéz (Pepsi), and Christina Aguillera (Versace). In addition, Jessica Alba, Salma Hayek, and Jennifer Lopéz have all been awarded coveted contracts as L'Oreal spokeswomen. Advertising campaigns from Bacardi Rum to Cuervo prominently feature Latina and Latino models dressed seductively in stereotypically bright colors with salsa background music. Among companies recently targeting Latinas/os are LEVI'S, Adidas, Target, Wal-Mart, and Blockbuster.

While increasing levels of media targeting Latinas/os and using elements of Latina/o culture to sell products denote a superficial change from the social periphery to the social center, it is also cementing the use of stereotyped racial representations and homogenizing ethnic images to sell products across a diversity of audiences. Critical Latina/o media scholarship on general-market media representations theorizes through the commodification of pan-Latinidad to problematize the discourses of authenticity, ethnic essentialism, and homogenization, predominantly but not exclusively circulated by the Latina/o marketing industry (Molina Guzmán, 2006b). Because of the contemporary dimensions of globalization and transnational immigration driven by gendered labor, the politics of representation surrounding women and women's bodies has been a primary focus for critical communication scholars examining Latinidad in U.S. general-market popular culture (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Aparicio, 2003a; Báez, 2006; Beltrán, 2002; Cepeda, 2003; Molina Guzmán, 2005, 2006b; Molina Guzmán & Valdivia, 2004; Rojas, 2004).

FUTURE RESEARCH IN CRITICAL LATINA/O MEDIA STUDIES

Latina/o media scholarship illustrates a field with depth across a variety of methodological approaches and empirical foci (Aparicio, 2003b). Interpretive projects in Latina/o media history and quantitative work on Latina/o media use and representations in the general-market media have established the foundational terrain for contemporary critical scholarship. However,

contemporary critical scholarship in Latina/o media studies have turned away from quantification to a qualitative analysis of complicated cultural issues: What is Latina/o media in the context of globalization and multinational media corporations? How is Latinidad signified for ethnic-national communities historically characterized by the remnants of colonialism, imperialism, cultural syncretism, and racial fluidity? Why do cultural representations still matter? What are the social and political consequences of Latina/o cultural invisibility or hypervisibility?

Critical Latina/o media scholars are participating in a project that, in Poblete's words, provides "an analytical space where borders themselves can be investigated and with them all kinds of transnational, translingual, and transcultural phenomenon" (2003, p. xv). Of the most theoretically interesting borders to explore are those dealing with the cultural politics of identity—in particular, issues dealing with the intersection of Latinidad and gender, race, and class. Thus, like the field of Latina/o Studies at large, critical media scholarship ultimately seeks to (1) destabilize notions of nationality, citizenship, and the nation, (2) engage in a comparative ethnic and racial analysis that captures the increasing diversity and complexity of Latina/o life in the United States, and (3) position the United States as a site for postcolonial cultural analysis (Aparicio, 2003b; Valdivia, 2003). Given that it is more difficult today than ever before to neatly define the borders of a Latina/o media that is increasingly crossing over into the general market, being consumed by audiences in the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America, and increasingly produced by multinational teams and corporations, I argue that an understanding of the contemporary dynamics of Latina/o media demands critical analysis.

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