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Knowledge from the Inside:
Latina talent on audiobooks as a window into how U.S. media's systems of (mis/dis)information shape Latine conditional inclusion

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies

by

Ruth Livier Nuñez Villanueva

2024

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2024

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Knowledge from the Inside:

Latina talent on audiobooks as a window into how

U.S. media's systems of (mis/dis)information shape

Latine conditional inclusion

by

Ruth Livier Nuñez Villanueva

Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Sarah T. Roberts, Chair

There is a significant disconnect between Latina reality and our representation in U.S. English-language media. While research tends to study this issue from a Cultural Studies lens, I shift our view and argue that addressing this problem demands a structural analysis and the insider knowledge of marginalized workers, as only they can describe what oppressive acts feel like at the moment of impact, and when and where they occur within production processes. My work asks what new insights we might gain by centering Latina talent.

My challenge was multifold. I managed my scope by looking into one under-studied yet major global growth market arena: commercial audiobooks. As an industry at the convergence of media and tech, audiobooks provide a window into legacy and digital media labor structures. While their history can be traced to Edison's invention of the phonograph (1877), digital audiobooks, as format, industry, and site of labor, are a relatively new phenomenon that represents a generative site for studying how digital labor platforms and AI are impacting workers and the future of work. I engage with braided theoretical and methodological frameworks that bring Information Studies, Latina Feminism, labor, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Political Economy of Media (CPE) into conversation. This approach reorients our focus to the humans who do the work, brings intersectional concerns into view, and opens new lines of questioning.

I conducted six in-depth *Pláticas* with Latina audiobook narrators and triangulated my findings with textual analysis, culturally intuitive observation (a method I am introducing to the Latina/Chicana feminist toolkit), and Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). My findings reveal that Latina perspectives are critical because they bring transnational, transcultural, multilingual, and intersectional views to the conversation, and highlight the power dynamics that have shaped the audiobook industry. These insights provided a window into how Latina/e exclusions from U.S. English-language media have been conditional on hegemonic imperatives, operationalized via the industry's systems of mis/disinformation and data processes, and surfaced the ways that these have historically been complicit in creating barriers to Latina/e representation and excluding us from the historical record.

The dissertation of Ruth Livier Nuñez Villanueva is approved.

Safiya Noble

Miriam Posner

Daniel Solórzano

Sarah T. Roberts, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

This work is dedicated to all of you who embody, whether
in small everyday moments and/or large-scale efforts, your steadfast belief
that equity, justice, and human rights are and must be universal.

“¡Justicia y Libertad!”
-Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza

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11. Image: A public tweet by an audiobook narrator.

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ORIGINAL METHOD

In my research process, I developed a method that I am introducing to the Chicana Feminist toolkit: Culturally Intuitive Observation (CIO). CIO is a new form of participant observation that explicitly engages with Dolores Delgado Bernal's cultural intuition.[1]

[1] Bernal, D. D. (1998). Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555–581. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is a disconnect between U.S. Latine reality, and how we are portrayed in U.S. English-language media.[2] This matters because how we are represented informs how we are perceived and treated in the world. These (mis)perceptions impact Latine lives in real, material, and measurable ways. They can impact our access to social protections, resources, benefits, labor opportunities, equitable inclusion in media, policy-making, and technological discourses, and more. Our media representation also informs our sense of identity, empowerment, and belonging. There is growing research in the field of Latina/o Media Studies on these representation issues, especially as they relate to the overlapping topics of cultural citizenship, identity politics, and authorship. In addition to making the problem and its impacts visible, addressing the problem of Latine inequitable inclusion demands that we take a closer look into media industry structures. I argue that to understand how our exclusions are operationalized requires that we broaden and shift our focus to labor structures and engage with the insider knowledge of workers who are being marginalized. This is because these workers provide a window into the structure and how power is operationalized within it, as only they can describe what oppressive acts feel like at the moment of impact and when and where they occur within production processes.

To do this mid-range power analysis and narrow my scope, I look into the U.S.-based commercial audiobook industry and center the voices of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators. I center these women's voices because they are creative workers who routinely experience

[2] Other terms that are used within our communities include Latino/a, Latinx, Hispanic. These preferences are due to generational, geographic, and political differences. Academics tend to use Latinx, where "x" signifies intersectionality. I use the non-binary term Latine in my title in solidarity with advocates, who point out that Latinx is oriented towards English-language pronunciation. Latine indicates agency, community power to self-define, and linguistic inclusivity. However, I use all of the terms interchangeably throughout my work reflecting that Latinidad is hybrid and dynamic.

marginalizing practices across intersectional axes. This results in their skewed representations and in being undervalued as creative workers throughout our U.S. culture industries. Latinas are also a growing segment of this workforce. Plus, their knowledge is continually under engaged although they bring transnational, transcultural, multilingual, and intersectional perspectives that are critical to detangling how power asymmetries are operationalized. In other words, engaging with Foucault's new economy of power relations, this work takes the form of resistance by centering Latinas' knowledge and using this "as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their positions, and find out their point of application and the methods used."[3]

My research is the first of its kind to study the commercial U.S. audiobook arena by shifting and broadening the conversation to issues of labor—along intersectional lines. To do this, I engage with braided theoretical and methodological frameworks that bring Information Studies, Latina Feminism, labor, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Political Economy of Media (CPE) into conversation. This approach reorients our focus to the humans who do the work, brings intersectional concerns into view, and opens new lines of questioning. For my methods, I conducted six in-depth *Pláticas* with Latina audiobook narrators and triangulated my findings with textual analysis, culturally intuitive observation (a method I am introducing to the Latina/Chicana feminist toolkit), and Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA).

My findings reveal that Latina perspectives are critical because they bring transnational, transcultural, multilingual, and intersectional views to the conversation. They highlight the power dynamics that have shaped the audiobook industry. These insights also provide a window into how Latina/e inclusion in U.S. English-language media is not only inequitable but has also been historically conditional on hegemonic imperatives. Our continual under and mis-

[3] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 780.

representation in U.S. English-language media is the inevitable result of misinformation and disinformation processes, and the white supremacist and neoliberal capitalist ideologies that undergird them.[4] My findings bring into focus the ways that our inequitable and conditional inclusion are operationalized via the industry's systems of mis/disinformation and data processes at all levels of the industry. They surface the ways that these systems and processes have historically been complicit in creating barriers to Latina/e representation and in excluding us from the historical record.

Inequitable media representation is mis/dis-information. Because, whether intentional or not, it is an inaccurate and misleading account of who U.S.-Latinas/es are, which shapes audiences (mis)perceptions. Though the intent of mis/disinformation may be challenging to assess, its impacts are visible and measurable. These inaccurate representations also reveal the biases and ethos of the decision-makers. That this problem has persisted since the inception of Hollywood is an act of aggression. Finally, it is widely understood that the problem of Latine inequitable inclusion in U.S. English language legacy media is a matter of social, racial, and gender justice. As this work brings into focus the ways that power is operationalized via mis/dis-information processes as experienced by one key group of historically marginalized U.S. creative workers: Latina talent, my research highlights that it is also a labor issue and an issue of data justice.

[4] To clarify, the distinction between these terms is intent. Where misinformation is unintentional and may or may not inadvertently mislead, disinformation is intended to deceive. I use mis-/disinformation to signal that intent may be challenging to assess. E.g.: Disinformation may seem like misinformation after mediation processes.

I. Background

Latines have been an integral part of the U.S. since its inception. We have a common saying in our community: "We did not cross the border; the border crossed us." We have and continue to be here. The Latine reality is that we are one diverse, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-lingual race. Today, Latines are the second largest demographic group in the United States. (Second only to non-Latine whites.) We represent 19.1% *(*62.1 million) of our country's total population.[5] Plus, our share of the U.S. population continues to grow as we are young: 25% of America's Gen Z and 30% of Gen Alpha are Latine. According to 2018 U.S. census estimates, Latines are expected to total 111 million or 28% of the U.S. population by 2060.[6] However, this reality fails to be represented in U.S. English-language media, which, again, serves to constructed global misperceptions about who we are as a people, our contributions, value, humanity, significance, and the basic fact that we exist. The impacts of our exclusion are well-documented.

In an Open Letter to Hollywood, The National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) states:

> It has long been known through academic studies that fair representation in media matters because that is where people get their beliefs as to who we are, what we are, and how much we are worth. American Latinos, other people of color, LGBTQ people and women, can only thrive in a society where we are authentically represented.[1]

Advocates argue that the media are more than entertainment and information venues, but powerful social forces that impact our individual and communal material, social, cultural,

[5] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: July 1, 2022, Population estimates. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US#.
[6] U.S. Census website: https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/hispanic-projected-pop.html

political, and affective realities.[7] Pointing to the link between legacy media exclusions and the U.S. government-crafted zero-tolerance humanitarian crisis, actress, Yareli Arizmendi, states:

> As Latinx working actors (and union members) we have become hardened to the words used to describe us in the industry, to the characters we are called to play time and time again: Murderers, drug lords, rapists, kidnappers, gang members, illegal aliens, and only sometimes, undocumented humans. But, while we are hired to bring these roles to life, the country learns. It gets used to this convenient fiction standing in the place of truth.[8]

Others frame their advocacy in market terms. They point to the growing financial power of Latinx Americans—and thus our potential to increase profit margins—as a reason why U.S. English language media should target us as viable audience/consumers.[9] Sol Trujillo, Co-founder and chairman of the Latino Donor Collaborative (LDC) states:

> If Latinos in the United States were an independent economy by themselves, they would be the fifth largest economy in the world with a GDP of $2.8 trillion and larger than the GDP of countries like France, England, India, Brazil, Russia or Canada.[10]

And Ana Valdez, President and CEO of LDC continues:

> According to media studies by Nielsen and other experts, although there has been tremendous diversity advancement in Hollywood in recent years, the Latino community lags behind at all levels of representation. A lack of strategy to include Latinos, the largest and fastest growing minority, directly translates into money being left on the table and opportunities missed. We want to help the industry solve this problem.[11]

Despite these multimodal approaches, the democratizing potential of digital media, and the growing Latine demographic share of the U.S. population, the problem of Latine exclusions—in front of cameras and microphones, behind the scenes, and in executive suites—persists.

---

[7] Referring to Mari Castañeda, Martha Fuentes-Bautista, and Felicitas Baruch, "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era: Shifting Discourses in Communications Public Policy: Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (March 2015): 139–54, https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12101.
[8] Ruth Livier, "A LOUD Response to Zero Tolerance," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 15, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.5070/D4152042645.
[9] Frances Negrón-Muntaner et al.,"The Latino Media Gap: A Report on the State of Latinos in U.S. Media," 2014, 7.
[10] LDC, "2022 LDC Media Report: Put your money where your market is." 2022, 1.
[11] LDC, "2022 LDC Media Report," 2.

While some progress towards inclusion has been made for some marginalized communities, Latine Americans continue to be egregiously under and mis-represented, relative to our numbers in the U.S. Though we are over 19% of the U.S. population, study after study find that our representation in media is less than 5%. As the image below shows, the UCLA 2020 Hollywood Diversity report by Dr. Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón finds that Latine representation in film *regressed* from 4.9% in 2018 to 4.6% in 2019.[12] And in 2022, the Latino Donor Collaborative reports, "Latinos were only 3.1% of lead actors in shows."[13]



[14]

Critically, Latina representation is unclear as our participation and experiences tend to be folded into Latino-male or white female or women of color categories.

On the other side of the discussion, those in positions of power (overwhelmingly non-Latine whites)[15] have historically rationalized Latine exclusions with claims such as: "There's not enough Hispanic talent" and "Hispanics watch Spanish-language media." Others claim, "the

[12] Hunt, Dr Darnell M, and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón. "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film." UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report. UCLA, 2022. 13-14.
[13] LDC, "2022 LDC Media Report: PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MARKET IS." 2022. 1.
[14] Hunt, Dr Darnell M, and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón. "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film." UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report. UCLA, 2022; DEADLINE; USC Annenberg
[15] Dr Darnell M Hunt and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part Two: Television," UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report (UCLA, 2022). https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2020-Television-10-22-2020.pdf; Dr Darnell M Hunt and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film," UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report (UCLA, 2022). https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2020-Film-2-6-2020.pdf; Dr Stacy L Smith, "Report Finds Popular Films Show Paltry Progress toward Inclusion," USC Annenberg, School for Communication and Journalism, September 10, 2020. Webpage. http://annenberg.usc.edu/news/research-and-impact/report-finds-popular-films-show-paltry-progress-toward-inclusion; Darnell Hunt, "Writers Guild of America, West: The 2016 Hollywood Writers Report: Renaissance in Reverse?" March 2016. http://www.wga.org/uploadedFiles/who_we_are/HWR16.pdf.

industry cannot be both racist, sexist, etc. and capitalist." Others celebrate, "there is progress towards diversity and inclusion," even as egregious Latine exclusions continue. These rationalizations are skewed narratives that "throw sand in our eyes."[16] They are rooted in neoliberal capitalist logics that place the responsibility for lack of representation on Latine communities themselves, keep our view away from systemic issues, and indicate a way of seeing Latine Americans that fails to understand our communities. By engaging in supposed "neutral" market logics, power keeps itself out of reach from accountability for its underlying white supremacist logics.[17]

Academic research, industry studies, and advocacy efforts tend to focus on the impacts of inequitable media representation. Again, my work participates in these discussions by reorienting our view to the media's labor structure. I argue that to address the problem of Latina/e U.S. media exclusion, we must, at the same time, turn our attention to how power is operationalized along the production pipeline, which then results in this inequity. And we must understand from the points of view of the workers who are being marginalized. As U.S. media is made up of many industries, systems, processes, structures, and infrastructures, to manage my scope, I focus on one under-studied, yet major growth market arena: the commercial audiobook industry.

II. The Commercial Audiobook Industry

The world of audiobooks provides an entryway into both legacy and digital media labor infrastructures. They have a rich and complex history that is both old and new. Their origins can

[16] Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.
[17] Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.

be traced back to Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877 and his recitation of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on a sheet of tinfoil.[18] And, at the same time, digital audiobooks, as format, industry, and site of labor, are a relatively new phenomenon. As an industry at the convergence of media and tech, audiobooks also represent a generative site for informing our understanding of how the future of digitally mediated creative work is being structured within the gig economy, by whom, and to what effects and affects. They afford the opportunity to interrogate what is new and what are continuities. And to look into issues of labor, creative workers, knowledge work, diversity equity & inclusion (DE&I), linguaculture, translations, publishing & copyright, disability and accessibility, transnationalism and globalization, platform capitalism, digital labor, precarious labor, digital policies, emerging technologies (including AI), and the future of work, among others.

Nonetheless, audiobooks remain relatively understudied in academia. Those studies that do exist are few and far between and tend to be told from a neoliberal perspective: They follow the trajectory of technological developments, the markets these have opened, and the growth of the industry, both in terms of capital and market segmentation. Few works look into the labor of audiobook narrators, and I have found no studies that center these workers' voices. Further, all of the studies center whiteness, positioning it as the universal, uninterrogated, and neutral "mythical norm," which is cause for concern.[19] This failure to consider intersectional registers, to acknowledge the contributions of diverse narrators and/or to interrogate their absences and erasures serves to equate whiteness with "Americanness" by default. Whether consciously or unconsciously this supports, and is an indication, of white supremacy logics, as the norming of

[18] Matthew Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1.
[19] Audrey Lorde. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 116.

whiteness participates in shaping global perceptions, perspectives, and erases diverse communities, including Latinas/x Americans from the historical record.

III. Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks: A braided approach

My braided approach or *trenza* is a conceptual framework allows me to foreground one or multiple identities—as needed—in my power analysis. It affords the opportunity to center voices historically silenced, look beyond what might seem 'natural' or 'normal' from dominant white and male lenses, and to ask new questions.[20] My braided approach helps to reveal how ideological orientations and biases are embedded along the audiobook production processes, and where and how they make themselves known. To do this work, I engage with Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPE), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latina/Chicana feminism (L/CF), as my theoretical and methodological frameworks. And Marx's Labor Theory of Value provides the context for my political economic analysis of labor. I employ culturally relevant Latina/Chicana feminist methods. These include pláticas, a Chicana interview style, and Culturally Intuitive Observations (CIO), a method I am contributing to the L/CF toolkit, and beyond to others engaging on the axis of race, ethnicity, and culture,[21] and textual analysis. I engage with André Brock's Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) to analyze audiobook platforms.[22]

[20] Sandra Quiñones, "(Re)Braiding to Tell: Using *Trenzas* as a Metaphorical–Analytical Tool in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29, no. 3 (March 15, 2016): 342, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1041168; Kenneth P. González and Raymond V. Padilla, eds., *Doing the Public Good: Latina/o Scholars Engage Civic Participation*, 1st ed (Sterling, Va: Stylus, 2008), 135.; Quiñones, "(Re)Braiding to Tell," 338.
[21] Cindy O. Fierro and Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology," 2016, 25.
[22] André Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 3 (March 2018): 1012–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816677532.

My work is transdisciplinary, yet I ground my study of this media arena in my field of Information Studies (IS). A critical Information Studies lens pushes back against so-called "neutrality" and interrogates the power dynamics embedded in information processes and knowledge-making. It brings into focus the critical role of information in shaping how we come to know what we know, how we come to understand each other, the world, and our place within it. IS can orient our view into considering how (mis/dis)information is created, how information is distributed, how it transverses time and cultures, how it is stored, organized, analyzed, and made accessible, to whom, and why.[23] Our field of Information Studies, as Leung and López-McKnight tells us, plays a significant role in determining what is and is not regarded as knowledge.[24] And, whose knowledge matters as we examine our past, determine our present, and construct our future. As such, (mis/dis)information serves as a tool and strategy to shape our perceptions and perspectives. Whether consciously or unconsciously, mis- and dis-information serve to rationalize exclusionary, hierarchal, racist logics.

From a critical IS lens, the world of audiobooks is a large-scale information system that is organized upon a media production structure. As such, Latine (in)equitable inclusion is not accidental, but a result of the design of both of these layers. It is, in other words, the result of the power dynamics, ethos, values, biases, and orientations embedded in their designs. Referring to Langdon Winner, these layers are "designed and built in such a way that it produces a set of consequences logically and temporally *prior* to any of its professed uses…. If our moral and political language… does not include attention to the meaning of the designs and arrangements

[23] Gilliland lecture, October 9, 2017.
[24] Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight, eds., *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* (The MIT Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11969.001.0001; Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho, eds., *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS* (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018).

of our artifacts, then we will be blinded to much that is intellectually and practically crucial."[25] Therefore, if our goal is to construct an industry that is authentically diverse, equitable, and inclusive, then we must understand how inequity is built-in, so we can disrupt it, reconceptualize, and reconstruct it as an authentically inclusive and equitable design.

From an IS lens, looking into a medium's structure means identifying its information systems. This orientation brings into focus the role of (dis/mis)information in how knowledge is created: In how we come to know what we know. At task is detangling how (dis/mis)information is created and distributed via unique information processes such as data collection practices, categorizing schema, and the ways in which resources are made (in)accessible, for example. These information systems and the ways they are linked and organized reveal ethos, values, goals, and power dynamics. They are, in other words, value laden. By engaging with an IS lens, this work emphasizes how power is operationalized within a particular information system, and how this impacts authentic DE&I efforts. By pointing and naming how and where power makes itself known, we can redesign a more equitable system. [26] An IS lens brings into focus the relationship between power and (dis/mis)information in the the inequitable inclusion of Laine Americans in U.S. English language media.

However, *where* instances of information asymmetries are located, what they look and feel like, and *how* they are operationalized in the service of power are insights that came to light during my pláticas with my participant Latina creative workers. (Both during my data collection and analysis stages.) These insights underscore that U.S.-Latina talent insider knowledge is critical to detangling how power asymmetries, which result in the marginalization of Latinas/Latinx communities, are operationalized throughout the production pipeline.

[25] Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109, no. 1 (1980): 125.
[26] Star, 474-476.

It is important to note that, while IS brings this into focus, our field has historically been problematically complicit with white supremacy via concepts as "neutrality," as well as by other means. And, mirroring the entertainment industry, while there is significant growth in critical Information Studies research, Latine and Latina feminist frameworks and perspectives continue to be egregiously underrepresented in our discipline. Thus, it became increasingly clear that to do this work and engage with a relevant analytical toolkit to center the voices of Latinas, required that I bring additional fields into the conversation. Interrogating how Latine marginalization are operationalized within the audiobook infrastructure is difficult without the right tools and vocabulary with which to identify and analyze power asymmetries, and without stepping out of imperialist neoliberal capitalist logics. I developed my theoretical and methodological frameworks and toolkits by bringing the fields of Education, Media Studies, Latina Media, and Labor Studies into the conversation.

Next, I share how I came to this work, as it informs my research process and how I developed my transdisciplinary toolkit.

IV. How I Come to this Work

I come to this work as a Latina community member, union actress (SAG-AFTRA, AEA), content creator (WGAw), digital policy advocate, and audiobook narrator myself.[27] In addition to my intersectional lens and critical frameworks, what I uniquely bring to these conversations is an insider's view into the media industry. My lenses create the opportunity to interrogate power from multiple angles, which opens up robust, dynamic, and holistic lines of inquiry.[1]

[27] Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) "represents approximately 160,000 performers and media professionals." https://www.sagaftra.org/membership-benefits

My journey into audiobook narration began after audiobook producers approached me at the wrap party for a project in which I worked that received a Grammy nomination in 2012. I thought of this job, as many gig workers are encouraged to see their labor, as an occasional source of additional income. Neither the pay rate nor the opportunities to work were significant enough for me to consider it otherwise. Yet, as a book lover, I figured, "Why not get paid to read books from time to time?" (More and more, such "side hustles" are actually necessities.) After experiencing a series of workplace frictions, however, I paused and took a closer look. Realizing that what I considered to be a "side job" is actually a key component to a growing global multi-billion-dollar industry, it became clear that the media's celebratory discourses did not align with what I had experienced at work.[28] Instead, their framings served to obfuscate the ecosystem and. orient our view away from labor concerns.

I approach this work mindful of my insider/outsider subjectivities and contractions. Like any other researcher, my positionality informs my research process, from what questions I ask, to where I look, and how I analyze and interpret the data. My position gives me access to my participants, and to union and industry spaces. Plus, as a Latina, I am able to code switch, not only linguistically, but culturally. I bridge cultures while also occupying the liminal spaces in between.[29] Of course, each Latin American nationality and culture is unique. Nonetheless, our Latinidad provides a generative scope for analysis. Our Latinidad is not problematic; what is problematic is when it is appropriated and used to subjugate. My positionality provides me with insider knowledge that shapes my approach and affords me the insight to recognize and push

[28] John Maher, "Audiobook Revenue Jumped 22.7% in 2018," PublishersWeekly.com, accessed December 18, 2018, https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/audio-books/article/77303-audiobook-revenue-jumped-22-7-in-2018.html.
[29] Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 4 (December 1998): 4, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48.

against the "god trick" of so-called "neutrality" and "objectivity," and embrace the strength of my situated and embodied knowledge, which allows me to contribute my "bit to the table."[30]

In this study, I focus on English and Spanish languages. However, Latinidad also includes indigenous peoples that communicate in indigenous languages throughout LatinAmerica, and Brazilians who speak Portuguese. It is a pan-ethnic, multiracial, multiculture, multilingual peoples with shared hemispheric (including ancestral-hemispheric) roots.

Next, are the research questions that guide and orient this work:

V. Research Questions

I enter the conversation on Latina/e inequity in U.S. media by focusing my scope of analysis on the U.S. commercial audiobook industry. My research questions bring into focus the knowledge and experiences of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators and their working conditions:

> **RQ1: Are there connections between the exclusionary structures of legacy media and the exploitation of Latina narrators in digital environments?** If so, what are the impacts on these workers?
>
> **RQ2: Is audiobook narration being constructed as a form of precarious labor in today's gig economy?** If so, how? How is precarity distributed across racial, gender, linguistic lines? What are its transnational dimensions?
>
> **RQ3: How and where are Latinas participating in the construction of our digital futures?** What types of alternative inclusive worker-centered labor structures are being (re)imagined, if any?

[30] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."; Malcolm Perry, theoretical physicist in Black Holes: The Edge of All We Know @41:20

I am interested in understanding what this labor arena looks and feels like from these women's perspectives. Plus, centering these workers has brought into focus the role of the union as critical support mechanism. Research question #3 focuses our attention on digital policy, and on if/how Latinas are participating in shaping the future of creative work. This is crucial because whose voices are heard politically impacts what concerns are centered, how they are understood, and what solutions and consequences are considered, which impacts who gets to work and under what conditions.

VI. Statement of Significance

My research contributes to different fields along different registers. The significance of this work to audiobook scholarship is that it centers the voices of narrators and contributes an intersectional look into the audiobook labor structure and to audiobook history. To Information Studies it contributes to digital labor, platform economy, and the future of work literature by critically interrogating an under-studied digital labor structure. It also introduces a Latina/Chicana feminist toolkit to IS. This work contributes to Latina Media Studies by bringing audiobooks into focus and reinstates Latinas into this history. And it contributes to Labor Studies literature as a study that centers the experiences of workers and the important role of unions.

Beyond audiobooks, this study looks at how Latina marginalization in media industries has historically been constructed, maintained, reinforced, and how it is being transferred onto digital spaces. My work foregrounds structure to highlight the different ways in which power is operationalized to discipline particular types of workers into being, and how these oppressive systems are maintained and kept out of reach from accountability. I study how ideology (imperialist neoliberal capitalism and white supremacy) orients our view and shapes how we

come to know what we know about the media industry(ies). It also bring into focus the role of support mechanisms (union, archives, academia), and how these participate in creating the context for the continued inequitable exclusion of Latine Americans from U.S.-English language media industries. Importantly, my work brings to light that our inclusion in not only inequitable, but that it is also conditional. While not generalizable, findings are transferable and thus this work can serve as a methodological model for interrogating other media arenas.

Finally, mine is a work of activist scholarship that pulls back the veil on a media labor structure by centering the voices of women who have historically been silenced, in order to understand, from their perspectives, how power operates along intersectional axes, which result in the under-employment of Latina and Latine talent. My work makes Latina workers' experiences visible. Weaving Latina narratives is an important site of resistance, which makes this a work of activist scholarship.[1] As such, mine is a political move that highlights U.S.-Latinas as a generative sources of insider knowledge that has historically been under-engaged not only in the media, but also in scholarship, archives, and policymaking. This matters because media representation and political representation are mutually constitutive.[1]

My hope is that this work will serve as an evidentiary record for advocates, as a methodological toolkit for researchers, and, for Latina creatives, my hope is that this work can serve as context and framework for pointing to and articulating the instances of marginalization and microaggressions as we experience them on the job, and in doing so support our union's efforts towards equitable representation.

VII. How the Dissertation is Organized

Chapter 2 is my Literature Review. As my research is transdisciplinary, my literature review focuses on two main fields: Critical Information Studies and Latina/o Media Studies. I present an overview of audiobook literature. Second, I analyze Critical Information Studies literature. This includes a subsection for "platform economy, digital labor, and digital policy" works. Then, I review key Latina/o Media Studies literature. Finally, I take a closer look at the expanding subfield of Latina Media Studies.

In chapter 3, I explain my conceptual and theoretical frameworks. These frameworks convey how we make sense of the world. They orient our views as researchers. As an activist scholar, entertainment media professional, and mestiza, I engage with trenzas as my conceptual framework because it is relevant to how I experience the world and creates the space for theorizing my intersectional experiences in my academic work. Trenzas creates the opportunity to interrogate power from multiple angles, which opens up more robust, dynamic, and holistic lines of inquiry. For my intersectional power analysis, I engage with Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPE), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latina/Chicana Feminism (L/CF), and Marxism. In this chapter, I review each of these frameworks and clarify how their braiding allows for a more critical, intersectional, and holistic power analysis of the audiobook labor structure, especially as it relates to U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators. This approach reveals how ideological orientations and biases are embedded along the audiobook infrastructure, and where they make themselves known.

Chapter 4 is my methodology and methods chapter. To develop my methodological toolkit, I also engage with Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPE), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latina/Chicana feminism (L/CF), and labor (with Marx's Labor Theory of Value

provides the context for analysis) as my methodological frameworks. For an industry relevant methodological toolkit, I first turned to the field of Media Studies. Its critical political economy of the media literature is key to my work. This is because CPE focuses our view onto examining, "how the political and economic organization ('political economy') of media industries affects the production and circulation of meaning."[31] In my search, I was also introduced to John Caldwell "Cultures of production methodology."[32] This approach, as Denise Mann states, refocuses critical attention to "the social, ideological, and hegemonic strains imbuing the organizations and their production processes."[33] However, as in IS, I found a dearth of Latina/e centered frameworks in Media Studies. I found the needed critical frameworks, CRT and L/CF, via Professor Daniel Solórzano in our sister field of Education. CRT and L/CF are key to my approach as they highlight the ways that power operates as experienced, understood, and identified from the diverse standpoints of U.S.-based Latinas.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on my findings. In chapter 5, "An Intersectional Audiobook History," I offer a history of commercial audiobooks. I track the history of audiobook technological developments as a way to disentangle uninterrogated structural whiteness that has been operationalized to construct vicious cycles of racial and gender exclusions in this culture industry. The history of audiobooks transverses Library history as well as the history of U.S. transnational and transcultural media production. Their history is both old and new; beginning with the invention of the phonograph and it continues into today's digital space as a new format, and with labor platforms as production worksite.

[31] Jonathan Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 9.
[32] Caldwell, John Thornton, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press Books, 2008).
[33] Mann FTV201B syllabus, 2019.

In chapter 6, "Understanding Audiobook Narration (the work)," I define audiobook narration, the audiobook narration production process, and detail how the work is organized along its pre-production, production, and post-production processes. Understanding how this labor is structured, serves to identify the political and economic influences that are shaping the industry, their impacts on labor, and how this shapes the values embedded in the audiobook as cultural artifact. My findings surface the ways that Latina narrators navigate and emotionally negotiate an infrastructure and information system that are value laden. They bring into focus how Latina/e inequitable inclusion is not just a 'market' consequence, but a result of the white supremacist and neoliberal capitalist logics that are embedded in their organization and design. These logics make themselves knows via in casting categories, conceptual linguistic hierarchies, and the ways in which whiteness is equated with "Americanness" throughout the process, for example. As such, this chapter brings to light how different workers experience the same work differently. This consideration matters as we develop labor policies aimed at protecting *all* workers.

Chapter 7, "The Workers," is divided into three sections each focusing on a different theme and set of findings. In 7.1: "Journeys into Audiobook Narration," three of my participants share how they entered the audiobook industry. In analyzing their journeys, three key findings came into focus. First, their transborder journeys inform their complex views. Second, historical memory and workers' experiences with their union, SAG-AFTRA, work together to shape particular types of disciplined workers into being. Third, power is operationalized within the infrastructure via two key forms of microaggression: information asymmetries and unilateral communication. In 7.2, "How employers infuse opacity and precarity into the labor structure," our pláticas bring to light some of the strategies that employers deploy to infuse opacity and

precarity into the audiobook labor structure, while keeping themselves out of reach from accountability. We also discuss some of the affective dimensions of these women's labor.

In 7.3: Digital technologies, language hierarchies, wage differentials We discuss their views on differential pay rates for Spanish language work and the impacts of digital technologies. Importantly, throughout our conversations, it became clear that U.S.-based Latinas' perspectives are key to future of work conversations because they bring transnational, intersectional, and multi-linguacultural lenses to the table. Across all of our pláticas, these women continually keep within view—and at the same time—individual, local, and global concerns. Chapter 8 is my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

My transdisciplinary Latina feminist study is in conversation with critical work at the forefront of Critical Information Studies and Latina Media Studies. Christian Fuchs explains that the fields of information science and media and communications studies tend to converge due to the rise of digital media.[34] Because audiobooks are an industry at the convergence of media and tech, a critical analysis of them, thereof acquires a transdisciplinary character in the space between these fields. My work focuses ontologically on the analysis of this industry in the context of asymmetrical power relations, exploitation, and control, by employing Latina feminist frameworks and centering Latina talent. This contributes participant narrators' perspectives towards a more holistic understanding of this industry and towards the establishment of a participatory society.[35]

In this chapter, I present an overview of audiobook literature. Next, I take a closer look at Critical Information Studies literature, which includes platform economy, digital labor, and digital policy, subsections. Then, I review key Latina/o Media Studies literature.

I. Audiobooks

Audiobook histories tend to be told from neoliberal perspectives: following the trajectory of technological developments, the markets these have opened, and the growth of the industry, both in terms of capital and market segmentation. In *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, Matthew Rubery divides the recorded book's history into three parts:

[34] Christian Fuchs, *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2011), 133, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203830864.
[35] Ibid.

"experimental phonographic books, talking books for people with vision impairments, and the commercially oriented audiobooks."[36] And in "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," Sarah Kozloff offers historical survey that traces audiobooks along three main tracks: a tradition of reading books aloud, radio dramas, and the sub-culture of recording books for the blind.[37] General histories of recording technologies that have impacted audiobooks include, David Morton's, *Sound Recording: The Life Story of Technology* and *Off the record: the technology and culture of sound recording in America,* Greg Milner's, *Perfecting Sound Forever*, and Jonathan Sterns *The audible past: cultural origins of sound reproduction and MP3: The Meaning of a Format (Sign, Storage, Transmission).*[38]

Other historical accounts of audiobooks include The Audio Publishers Association, which traces the audiobook history by highlighting technological developments.[39] Audiobook archives include the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), whose Cylinder Audio Archive contains a rich collection of cylinder recordings that "spanned a half-century of technological development in sound recording [and serve as] documents of American cultural history."[40] The Library of Congress (LoC) traces their history via the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.[41]

Works that incorporate cultural analysis to their study of audiobook sound

[36] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 20.
[37] Sarah Kozloff, "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," *Journal of American Culture*, 1995, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1542-734X.1995.1804_83.x.
[38] Morton, D. (2004). *Sound recording : the life story of a technology / David L. Morton, Jr.* Greenwood Press.; Morton, D. (2000). *Off the record : the technology and culture of sound recording in America / David Morton.* Rutgers University Press.; Milner, G. (2012). *Perfecting sound forever: the story of recorded music*. Granta.; Sterne, J. (2003). *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (1st ed., pp. xvi–xvi). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822384250
[39] APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.
[40] Ibid.
[41] "National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled," Library of Congress. Website. https://www.loc.gov/nls/about/organization/history/.

technology include Paul Du Gay et al.'s seminal book, *Doing Cultural Studies, the Story of the Sony Walkman.* The authors use the Walkman as a case study to "set up an approach of the study of culture."[42] They compare "the cultural practice associated with the Walkman with the practices related to modern Web-based mobile devices."[43] Deborah Philips traces the history of Talking books in the UK by pointing to the UK's Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and the shellac discs sound technology they developed "in response to blinded soldiers returning from the front after the First World War,"[44]and offers a cultural analysis by using the "talking book as a case study in the transition of cultural forms into new media."[45] And Shawn Vancour's, *Making Radio: Early Radio Production and the Rise of Modern Sound Culture,* where the author explores the role of creative labor in shaping sound media.[46]

Works that provide theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing sound and orality include Walter J. Ong's, *Orality and Literacy,*[47] Iben Have and Birgitte Pedersen, "Conceptualising the audiobook experience,"[48] and Jacob Smith's, *Eco-sonic Media*.[49] However, few works focus on the labor of audiobook narrators, which is a key gap that my work addresses. A key exception is Lucy Bednar's, "Audiobooks and the Reassertion of Orality," where she asks whether

[42] Paul Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 5.
[43] Du Gay, xii.
[44] Deborah Philips, "Talking Books: The Encounter of Literature and Technology in the Audio Book," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 13, no. 3 (August 2007): 294, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856507079180.
[45] Philips, 293.
[46] Shawn VanCour, *Making Radio: Early Radio Production and the Rise of Modern Sound Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[47] Walter J. Ong and John Hartley, *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2012).
[48] Iben Have and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen, "Conceptualising the Audiobook Experience," *SoundEffects - An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience* 2, no. 2 (December 31, 2012): 79–95, https://doi.org/10.7146/se.v2i2.6967.
[49] Jacob Smith, *Eco-Sonic Media*, 2015.

audiobooks are heralding in a "new age of orality" and she points to the importance of the audiobook narrator.[50] Audiobook histories also tend to center white American and European voices and experiences. This means that whiteness is positioned as the universal and neutral "mythical norm."[51] I have found no works that center intersectional concerns like gender, racial, ethnic absences and erasures and linguacultural diversity in audiobook history. My study participates in audiobook conversations by addressing these gaps. To my knowledge, it is the first of its kind to center the experiences of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators. By doing so, I participate in inscribing us into audiobook history; a political move that makes this a work of activist scholarship.

II. Critical Information Studies

My analysis of audiobook narration is grounded in–and contributes to—the field of Library and Information Studies along multiple registers. It highlights the ways that audiobook history intertwines with library history. It detangles the power dynamics at play in Latina erasures by bringing into focus the problematic role of structural whiteness in archival and recordkeeping processes and categorizing schema. It engages with IS research at the forefront of platform economy, digital labor, and digital policy to bring to light the experiences of audiobook narrators as digital workers. Importantly, despite the growing critical LIS literature, Latina feminist frameworks are still under-represented. My work participates in addressing this gap.

[50] Lucy Bednar, "Audiobooks and the Reassertion of Orality: Walter J. Ong and Others Revisited," *CEA Critic* 73, no. 1 (2010): 74–85.
[51] Audrey Lorde. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 116; David J. Hudson, "The Whiteness Of Practicality," in *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Studies* (Sacramento: Library Juice Press, LLC, 2017), 213,

Critical Information Studies

Defining the field has been an ever-evolving process. Canonical Information Studies literature that focus on social epistemology include the works of Pierce Butler, Birger Hjorland, and John Budd.[52] As Blaise Cronin explains in this article, "The sociological turn in information science, "Although the starting points and interpretative frameworks favored by different scholars and schools of thought in what is sometimes referred to as information society studies may vary, the common intent has been to turn the spotlight on the social dimensions and ramifications of informatization."[53] Daniel Bell, Manuel Castells and Frank Webster are among key sociologists that are regularly cited in our field include.[54] In "Information Studies without Information," Jonathan Furner takes an incisive look at how we define the concept of information, and in "Information Science is Neither," he offers data studies, knowledge studies, metadata studies, representation studies, relevance studies and (as a branch of cultural studies) collection, preservation, and access studies as areas of focus without our field's five core subfields; information behavior, information retrieval, infometrics, information organization, and information ethics.

In Critical Archival Studies, the landmark 2002 *Archival Science* special issue on *Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory*, edited by Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook is foundational. This work is continued by Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and

[52] Butler, P. (1933). *An introduction to library science / by Pierce Butler*. University of Chicago Press; Birger Hjørland, "Epistemology and the Socio-Cognitive Perspective in Information Science," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 53, no. 4 (2002): 257–70, https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10042; Budd, J. M. (1995). An Epistemological Foundation for Library and Information Science. *The Library Quarterly (Chicago)*, *65*(3), 295–318. https://doi.org/10.1086/602799.

[53]Blaise Cronin, "The Sociological Turn in Information Science," *Journal of Information Science* 34, no. 4 (August 2008), 467.

[54] Furner, J. (2004). Information studies without information. *Library Trends*, *52*(3), 427–446.
Furner, J. (2015). Information Science Is Neither. *Library Trends*, *63*(3), 362–377. https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2015.0009

T-Kay Sangwand in the 2017 *Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction*. In their volume, Caswell et al., "examine the ways in which records and archives serve as tools for both oppression and liberation.[55] They point to the works of Wendy Duff, Anthony Dunbar, Eric Ketelaar, and Mario Ramírez, among others, as key contributors to the critical archival discourse.[56]

In "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris interrogate archival description and their call is to "create a space for a liberatory approach which engages creatively the many dangers of standardization."[57] Anthony Dunbar introduces Critical Race Theory to archival discourse in his 2006 article, "Introducing critical race theory to archival discourse: getting the conversation started."[58] In "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," Eric Ketelaar discusses the ways that archives function as sites of surveillance. power, discipline, and control, and serve to maintain the power of the archives and the archivist. Ketelaar argues that "to be useable as instruments of empowerment and liberation, archives have to be secured as storage memory serving society's future functional memories."[59] Mario Ramirez brings into focus the problematic and emblematic whites of IS in his work, "Being Assumed Not to Be: A

[55] Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T.-Kay Sangwand, "Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (June 27, 2017), http://libraryjuicepress.com/journals/index.php/jclis/article/view/50.
[56] Wendy M. Duff et al., "Social Justice Impact of Archives: A Preliminary Investigation," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (December 2013): 317–48, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9198-x; Anthony W. Dunbar, "Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse: Getting the Conversation Started," *Archival Science* 6, no. 1 (October 31, 2006): 109–29, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-006-9022-6; Eric Ketelaar, "Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (September 2002): 221–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435623; Mario H. Ramirez, "Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative," *The American Archivist* 78, no. 2 (2015): 339–56.
[57] Duff, W. M., & Harris, V. (2002). Stories and names: Archival description as narrating records and constructing meanings. *Archival Science*, *2*(3–4), 263. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435625
[58] Dunbar, A. W. (2006). Introducing critical race theory to archival discourse: getting the conversation started. *Archival Science*, *6*(1), 109–129. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-006-9022-6
[59] Ketelaar, E. (2002). Archival temples, archival prisons: Modes of power and protection. *Archival Science*, *2*(3–4), 221–238. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435623

Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative."[60] Ramírez surfaces the "problematic implications of efforts to continuously assert the neutrality, if not objectivity, of archival space… and how [this] helps reinforce social and political inequalities that curb nascent organizational efforts at diversity and inclusivity."[61] And in "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives," Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor propose "a shift in the theoretical model used by archivists and archival studies scholars to address social concerns—from that based on individual rights to a model based on feminist ethics… shifts in… archival relationships, based on radical empathy."[62]

Literature that highlight the role of archives as evidence, sites of power, and memory formation are key to contextualizing U.S. Latina exclusions in U.S. media and U.S. media history (historical memory). In "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community," Terry Cook states, "beyond evidence, archives also preserve memory. And they create memory…. With Memory comes the inevitable privileging of certain records and records creators, certain functions, activities, and groups in society, and the marginalizing or silencing of others. Memory, and forgetting, can serve a whole range of practical, cultural, political, symbolic, emotional and ethical imperatives and is central to power, identity and privilege."[63] Key works that focus our attention on these concerns include Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook's "Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," Jonathan Furner's "Conceptual Analysis: A Method for Understanding Information as Evidence," Sue McKemmish's "Evidence of Me," *Archival*

[60] Ramirez, M. H. (2015). Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative. *The American Archivist, 78*(2), 339–356. https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.2.339
[61] Ramírez, 339.
[62] M. L. Caswell, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives," 2016.
[63] Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 101, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7

and Recordkeeping Research: Past, Present and Future by Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, and "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa" by Verne Harris.[64]

Importantly, in her work, Michelle Caswell highlights the importance of community archives in addressing institutional archival erasures and gaps. These include "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives in the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," "To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise': Community Archives and the Importance of Representation," and "To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives.[65]

Beyond inclusion, archives must be accessible to all communities. Information accessibility requires an understanding of information behavior and retrieval practices of diverse communities. Key literature that interrogate the ways that power is embedded in organizational knowledge and how categorization scheme impacts access includes Hope Olson's "The Power to name: Representation in library catalogs," Sandra Littletree and Cheryl A Metoyer's "Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective," Melissa Adler's Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge," Wendy Duff and Verne Harris' "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meaning," and Emily Drabinski's "Queering the catalog," and Jonathan Furner's "Dewey Deracialized: A

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[64] Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." (Archival Science 2, 2002); Jonathan Furner, "Conceptual Analysis: A Method for Understanding Information as Evidence, and Evidence as Information," *Archival Science* 4, no. 3–4 (December 2004): 233–65, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-005-2594-8; Sue McKemmish, "Evidence of *Me*," *The Australian Library Journal* 45, no. 3 (January 1996): 174–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/00049670.1996.10755757; Sue McKemmish and Anne Gilliland, "Archival and Recordkeeping Research: Past, Present and Future," *Research Methods: Information Systems, and Contexts*, 2013, 79–112; Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (March 2002): 63–86, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435631.

[65] M. L. Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives in the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian: A Journal of Public History*, August 4, 2016, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9gc14537; Michelle Caswell et al., "'To Be Able to Imagine Otherwise': Community Archives and the Importance of Representation," *Archives and Records* 38, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 5–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2016.1260445; Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *The American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56–81.

Critical Race-Theoretic Perspective." [66] There is a dearth of literature that highlight Latinidad in this context. Progress towards equitable inclusion in the archival multiverse cannot be achieved until all historically marginalized communities have equitable access to institutional archives.

There is growing feminist and intersectional literature in our field. In *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, editors Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho, feature some of these key scholars, with a primary focus on librarianship.[67] IS scholars that center Black feminist voices and frameworks include Safiya Noble, Nicole Cooke, Teresa Y. Neely, LaVerne Gray, April Hathcock, among others.[68] While Black and South Asian scholars, LGBTQ, and indigenous voices are diversifying our field, Latine and Latina scholarship continue to be under-represented. Indeed, in their book, Chou and Pho point to the absence of Latinx

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[66] Jonathan Furner, "Dewey Deracialized: A Critical Race-Theoretic Perspective," *KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION* 34, no. 3 (2007): 144–68, https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2007-3-144; Birger Hjørland, "The Paradox of Atheoretical Classification," *Knowledge Organization* 43, no. 5 (2016): 313–23; Hope A. Olson, "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2001): 639–68; Sandra Littletree and Cheryl A. Metoyer, "Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5–6 (July 4, 2015): 640–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1010113; Melissa Adler, *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge* (Fordham University Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1xhr79m; Duff and Harris, "Duff&Harris.Pdf," accessed February 12, 2018, http://yalearchivalreadinggroup.pbworks.com/f/Duff&Harris.pdf; Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *The Library Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2013): 94–111.

[67] Chou and Pho, *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*; "Series on Critical Race Studies and Multiculturalism in LIS," *Litwin Books & Library Juice Press* (blog), accessed November 14, 2021, https://litwinbooks.com/series-on-critical-race-studies-and-multiculturalism-in-lis/; Ana Ndumu, ed., *Borders and Belonging: Critical Examinations of Library Approaches toward Immigrants*, Series on Critical Race Studies and Multiculturalism in LIS, number 4 (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2021).

[68] Safiya Umoja Noble and Brendesha M. Tynes, eds., *The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class and Culture Online*, Digital Formations, vol. 105 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc, 2016); Safiya Umoja Noble, "A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies," *The Scholar & Feminist Online*, no. 13.3-14.1 (2016),; Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Teresa Y. Neely and Lorna Peterson, "Achieving Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Academic and Research Librarians: The Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Librarians of Color—A White Paper," *College & Research Libraries News* 68, no. 9 (October 1, 2007): 562–65, https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.68.9.7869; LaVerne Gray, "Case Study Inquiry & Black Feminist Resistance: Reflections on a Methodological Journey in the Furtherance of LIS Social Justice Research," *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion (IJIDI)* 5, no. 2 (May 25, 2021): 71–83, https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v5i2.34913; April Hathcock, "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS," *The Library with the Lead Pipe* (blog), October 7, 2015, https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/; Nicole A. Cooke, Miriam E. Sweeney, and Safiya Umoja Noble, "Social Justice as Topic and Tool: An Attempt to Transform an LIS Curriculum and Culture," *The Library Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (January 2016): 107–24, https://doi.org/10.1086/684147.

scholars even within their volume.[69] It is worth noting that much of our field's Latina-focused literature is concentrated in area of librarianship. This includes the works of Melissa Villa-Nicholas, "Latina/o Librarian Technological Engagements: REFORMA in the Digital Age" and "Ruptures in Telecommunications: Latina and Latino Information Workers in Southern California,"[70] and Rosalinda Hernandez Linares' "Small Brown Faces in Large White Spaces" in *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*.[71]

As the largest ethnic group in the U.S., second only to non-Latine whites, without equitable Latina/e inclusion in IS, we are failing in our social justice mission. We cannot provide equitable access to information nor have a broad understanding of the impacts of power imbalances in information collection, organization, and accessibility processes without Latine/Latina cultural perspectives. We cannot understand how power impacts Latinas specifically without Latina and Chicana Feminist frameworks. There is also a dearth of Latina-focused IS literature in technological discourses. Our under-representation in the field needs critical attention. My work brings a Latina lens to IS generally, and to platform economy, digital labor, and digital policy conversations specifically.

Platform Economy, Digital Labor, and Digital Policy

The work of audiobook narrators is increasingly done within digital spaces. It is thus key to understand the reorganization of our economy around the digital platform, which is given

[69] Chou and Pho, *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*; "Series on Critical Race Studies and Multiculturalism in LIS"; Ndumu, *Borders and Belonging*.
[70] Melissa Villa-Nicholas, "Latina/o Librarian Technological Engagements: REFORMA in the Digital Age," *Latino Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 2015): 542–60, https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2015.43; Melissa Villa-Nicholas, "Ruptures in Telecommunications: Latina and Latino Information Workers in Southern California," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 42, no. 1 (2017): 73–97.
[71] Linares, Rosalinda Hernandez, and Sojourna J. Cunningham. "Small Brown Faces in Large White Spaces." In *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, edited by Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho, 253-271. Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2018.

various names. Martin Kenny and John Syzman refer to it as the Platform Economy in "The Platform Economy: Restructuring the Space of Capitalist Accumulation" and "The Rise of the Platform Economy."[72] Others name it Platform Capitalism,[73] the Gig Economy,[74] the Sharing Economy.[75] The label we use matters because it frames our view of this space and "influence[s] how we study, use, and regulate these digital platforms."[76] And, in the latest edition of *Culture Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh, analyzes the impacts of digital technologies on culture industries.[77]

I locate audiobook narration at the intersection of creative work and digital labor. Key works that historizes and offer definitions of digital labor include: *Digital Labour and Karl Marx,* by Christian Fuchs,[78] Mark Graham and Amir Anwar's "Digital Labour" chapter in *Digital Geographies* in which the authors point to two waves of digital labor by identify the severing of 'distance and time'.[79] In "Platform labor: on the gendered and racialized

[72] Martin Kenney and John Zysman, "The Platform Economy: Restructuring the Space of Capitalist Accumulation," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 13, no. 1 (May 15, 2020): 55–76, https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsaa001; Martin Kenney and John Zysman, "The Rise of the Platform Economy," *Issues in Science and Technology* (blog), March 29, 2016, https://issues.org/the-rise-of-the-platform-economy/.Florian Schmidt, *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy: Mapping the Political Challenges of Crowd Workand Gig Work*, 2017.

[73] Nick Srnicek and Laurent De Sutter, *Platform Capitalism*, Theory Redux (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2017); Ivana Pais and David Stark, "Power and Control in Platform Monopoly Capitalism," *Sociologica*, January 29, 2021, https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.1971-8853/12329.

[74] Clara Hendrickson, "The Gig Economy's Great Delusion," Text, Boston Review, January 8, 2018, https://bostonreview.net/class-inequality/clara-hendrickson-gig-economys-great-delusion; Carles Muntaner, "Digital Platforms, Gig Economy, Precarious Employment, and the Invisible Hand of Social Class," *International Journal of Health Services* 48, no. 4 (October 2018): 597–600, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731418801413; Austin Zwick, "Welcome to the Gig Economy: Neoliberal Industrial Relations and the Case of Uber," *GeoJournal* 83, no. 4 (August 2018): 679–91, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-017-9793-8; Mark Graham, Isis Hjorth, and Vili Lehdonvirta, "Digital Labour and Development: Impacts of Global Digital Labour Platforms and the Gig Economy on Worker Livelihoods," *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 23, no. 2 (May 2017): 135–62, https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258916687250.Zwick, "Welcome to the Gig Economy."

[75] Lizzie Richardson, "Performing the Sharing Economy," *Geoforum* 67 (December 2015): 121–29, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.11.004.

[76] Kenney and Zysman, "The Rise of the Platform Economy."

[77] Hesmondhalgh, D. (2012). *The cultural industries / David Hesmondhalgh.* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

[78] Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 3.

[79] Graham, Mark and Anwar, Mohammad Amir, Digital Labour (May 21, 2017); Graham, M. and Anwar, M. A., Labour, in Ash, Kitchin and Leszczynski (eds) "Digital Geographies," Sage: London (2018). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2991099

exploitation of low-income service work in the 'on-demand' economy," Neils van Doorn analyses the "distribution opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with digitally mediated service work," which he calls *platform labor*.[80] In "Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy: Mapping the Political Challenges of Crowd Work and Gig Work," Florian A. Schmidt further differentiates between platform types.[81] He offers a list of six platform types—three cloud work and three gig work—and clarifies that "more research is needed, especially on the newer types of platforms."[82]

In "Digital Labor Studies Go Global: Toward a Digital Decolonial Turn," Antonio A. Casilli examines the "global dimensions of digital labor and argues for a "digital decolonial turn" where the main objective of digital labor studies ought to be "making invisible work visible."[83] Key works that answer this call include: *Behind the Screen*, Sarah T. Roberts' groundbreaking study into the world of commercial content moderation revealing "a complex and problematic underside to the social media economy and the broader notions of internet culture and policy."[84] In *Working the phones* Jamie Woodcock analyses the "pressure of having to perform emotional labour to meet targets" as key to the labor of call center employees.[85] In "Digital presumption labour on social media in the context of the capitalist regime of time," Christian Fuchs contextualizes labor time on social media.[86] My work participates in answering Casilli's call by

[80] Niels van Doorn, "Platform Labor: On the Gendered and Racialized Exploitation of Low-Income Service Work in the 'on-Demand' Economy," *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 6 (June 3, 2017): 898–914, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1294194.
[81] Schmidt, *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy*.
[82] Schmidt, 5.
[83] Antonio Casilli, "Digital Labor Studies Go Global: Toward a Digital Decolonial Turn," *International Journal of Communication* 11 (2017): 3934–54.
[84] Sarah T. Roberts, *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media* (Yale University Press, 2019), kl. 229.
[85] Jamie Woodcock, *Working the Phones: Control and Resistance in Call Centers.* (Pluto Press, 2016), 7.
[86] Christian Fuchs, "Digital Prosumption Labour on Social Media in the Context of the Capitalist Regime of Time," *Time & Society* 23, no. 1 (March 2014): 97–123, https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X13502117.

making the labor of audiobook narrators visible. I broaden the focus to include the hidden work of creative workers in the entertainment industry and bring a Latina feminist lens to digital labor discourses.

Other works look at digital policy, or the developing political, legal, and regulatory frameworks of digital labor. In *Digital Geographies* edited by James Ash, Rob Kitchin, and Agnieszka Leszcynski wherein the editors map out the distinct geographies associated with digital media with part five of the book dedicated to Digital Politics. In ""Dependent Contractors" in the Gig Economy: A Comparative Approach," by Miriam A. Cherry and Antonio Aloisi, the authors look at the importance of employee status because it "is a gateway to many substantive legal rights."[87] In the recent JRC Science for Policy Report, "European legal framework for "digital labour platforms," by V. De Stefano and A. Aloisi, the authors look at how the changing organization of work "fuelled by digitalisation, flexibilisation, restructuring, and demographic dynamics," impact the employer-employee relationship. [88] And, in "Politicizing Contingent Work: Countering Neoliberal Labor Market Regulation … from the Bottom Up?" Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore study the contingent economy—a la gig work—as a generative site for exploring "radicalized reform and political possibility."[89]

Works that bring a Latina lens to Platform economy, digital labor, and digital policy discourses include the work of Martha Fuentes Bautista. In her paper, "Mapping "Diversity of Participation" in Networked Media Environments," she argues for "a participatory community development approach to the redefinition of these public interest policies in networked

[87] Miriam A. Cherry and Antonio Aloisi, "'Dependent Contractors' in the Gig Economy: A Comparative Approach," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2016, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2847869.
[88] Cherry and Aloisi; "Aloisi et al. - 2018 - European Legal Framework for Digital Labour Platf.Pdf," n.d.
[89] J. Peck and N. Theodore, "Politicizing Contingent Work: Countering Neoliberal Labor Market Regulation... from the Bottom Up?," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 743, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1724165.

scenarios."[90] And in "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era: Shifting Discourses in Communications Public Policy," Mari Castañeda, Martha Fuentes-Bautista, and Felicitas Baruch examine the "representation of racial and ethnic minorities in contemporary U.S. broadband policy, an emerging area of communications policy that attempts to address media and communications competition, diversity and inclusion for the digital age.[91] In this work, the authors argue that "the emerging media governance framework is both influenced by the problematic history of media diversity as well as a discursive and material shift that emphasizes market orientations."[92]

Researchers have been exploring ways of making the digital workplace a fairer environment. In, "Towards a Fairer Platform Economy," Mark Graham and Jamie Woodcock, present the Fairwork Foundation as a model for evaluating whether platforms are offering workers a fair deal or not.[93] Trebor Scholz presents the concept of Platform Cooperativism.[94] And, in *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet* edited by Scholz and Schneider, the authors expand on the idea of worker-owned cooperatives.[95] This model is in stark contrast to audiobook status quo.

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[90] Martha Fuentes-Bautista, "Mapping'Diversity of Participation'in Networked Media Environments," 2012.
[91] Mari Castañeda, Martha Fuentes-Bautista, and Felicitas Baruch, "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era: Shifting Discourses in Communications Public Policy: Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (March 2015): 139–54, https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12101.
[92] Castañeda, et al., 139.
[93] "Towards a Fairer Platform Economy: Introducing the Fairwork Foundation | Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research," 249, accessed April 24, 2019, http://www.alternateroutes.ca/index.php/ar/article/view/22455.
[94] "Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy | Grassroots Economic Organizing," accessed May 7, 2019, http://www.geo.coop/story/platform-cooperativism-vs-sharing-economy.
[95] Trebor Scholz and Nathan Schneider, eds., *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet* (OR Books, 2017), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv62hfq7.

III. Latina/o Media Studies

Studying the audiobook industry from a Latina feminist lens brings my work into the purview of Latina/o Media Studies and Latina/o Feminist Media Studies. Both of these fields emerged in the 1980s.[96] Historically, Latina and Latinx(e) experiences in media industries have been conflated into a Latino/a or the single male-Latino category of analysis.[97] Pointing to Rivero 2009,[98] Arlene Dávila defines "Latino media" as a "product of transnational processes," which requires the analysis of "at least two industries: one with roots in Latin America and the other with roots in Hollywood, not to mention two industries that are also linked to at least three distinct language media worlds in Spanish in English, and in Portuguese (translated into Spanish)."[99] Dávila also warns that the "very category of 'Latino media' constraints our analysis as it limits it "to media that are supposedly marketed and packaged to Latin@s, in isolation from all the different media to which they are exposed and which they consume.[100]

In addition to this problematic of categorization, Latina/o Media scholars bring into focus the challenges of Latinidad as a unifying subject of analysis that the broad scope of the field of Latina/o Media Studies poses. In other words, Media scholars point to challenges regarding the

[96] María Elena Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap': The State and Status of Latina/o Feminist Media Studies," *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 2 (March 3, 2016): 347, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1052005.
[97] Vittoria Rodríguez and Mary Beltrán, "From the Bronze Screen to the Computer Screen," in *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media*, ed. María Elena Cepeda and Dolores Inés Casillas, 1st ed. (New York : Routledge, 2017.: Routledge, 2016), 156–70, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858005-12; Mary C. Beltrán, *Latino TV: A History*, Critical Cultural Communication (New York: New York University Press, 2021).
[98] Rivero. (2009). Havana as a 1940s-1950s Latin American Media Capital. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *26*(3), 275–293. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030903015070
[99] Dávila, & Rivero, Y. M. (2014). *Contemporary Latina/o media : production, circulation, politics / edited by Arlene Dávila and Yeidy M. Rivero.* New York University Press, 2.
[100] Dávila, 3.

conceptualizations of race and ethnicity,[101] gender,[102] and language.[103] Key among these are the works in the 2017 *Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media,* edited by María Elena Cepeda and Dolores Inés Casillas.[104] The works of Angharad N. Valdivia, Arlene Dávila, and Esteban del Rio, who analyze the bifurcated affordances and challenges of Latinidad.[105] And, in *Keywords for Latina/o studies* edited by Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, scholars contribute to this collection "established and emergent terms, categories, and concepts that undergird" the "rapidly growing and changing field" of Latina/o studies.[106]

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[101] Esteban del Río, "Authenticity, Appropriation, Articulation," in *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media*, ed. María Elena Cepeda and Dolores Inés Casillas, 1st ed. (New York : Routledge, 2017.: Routledge, 2016), 9–21, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858005-2; Isabel Molina-Guzmán, "Commodifying Black Latinidad in US Film and Television," *Popular Communication* 11, no. 3 (July 2013): 211–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2013.810071; Claudia Anguiano and Mari Castañeda, "Forging a Path: Past and Present Scope of Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Race Theory in Communication Studies," *Review of Communication* 14, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 107–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2014.951954; Angharad N. Valdivia, *Latina/Os and the Media*, Media and Minorities (Cambridge [England] ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010); Arlene M. Dávila, *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Frederick Luis Aldama, *Latinos and Narrative Media: Participation and Portrayal / Edited by Frederick Luis Aldama.*, First edition. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Rosa Linda Fregoso, *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[102] Angharad N. Valdivia, *The Gender of Latinidad: Uses and Abuses of Hybridity*, First Edition (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019); Angharad N. Valdivia, "Latina Media Studies," *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 2 (April 1, 2018): 101–6, https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2018.4.2.101; Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw, eds., *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*, 1st ed. (I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350987012; Jillian M. Báez, *In Search of Belonging: Latinas, Media, and Citizenship* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.5406/j.ctt21h4z2j; Mary Beltrán and Mirasol Enríquez, "Editors' Introduction," *Feminist Media Histories* 7, no. 4 (October 1, 2021): 1–6, https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2021.7.4.1; Frances R. Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures*, Music/Culture (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

[103] Christopher Chávez, *Reinventing the Latino Television Viewer: Language, Ideology, and Practice / Christopher Chávez* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015); Christopher A. Chávez, "Whose Is the Voice of the American Public? Latinx Speech and the Standard Language Ideology of Public Radio," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 16, no. 4 (2019): 308–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2019.1665194; Christopher A. Chávez, "'News with an Accent': Hispanic Television and the Re-Negotiation of US Latino Speech," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (2015): 252–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2015.1037778.

[104] María Elena Cepeda and Dolores Inés Casillas, *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media*, 2017.

[105] Valdivia, *Latina/Os and the Media*; Dávila, *Latino Spin*; Esteban Del Río, "The Latina/o Problematic: Categories and Questions in Media Communication Research," *Annals of the International Communication Association* 30, no. 1 (January 2006): 387–429, https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2006.11679062; del Río, "Authenticity, Appropriation, Articulation."

[106] Vargas, Mirabal, N. R., & La Fountain-Stokes, L. M. (2017). *Keywords for Latina/o studies / edited by Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes.* (Vargas, N. R. Mirabal, & L. M. (Lawrence M. La Fountain-Stokes, Eds.). New York University Press.

Academic literature in the field tends towards a cultural analysis via issues of representation or what Esteban del Rio terms, "traditional Latina/o media studies."[107] Stuart Hall points to representation as a central concept in cultural studies, an approach to media studies. He tells us that "representation is the way meaning is somehow given to the things which are depicted through the images or whatever it is … which *stand* for what we are talking about."[108] Representation in the media matters because it is tied to issues of power. Industry reports also analyze the problematic image and under-representation of Latinas/os/x on screen. Among these are: the SAG studies titled "Missing in Action" (1999) and "Still Missing" (2000), *The Latino Media Gap,*[109] USC Annenberg's 2016 *Report on Diversity in Entertainment,*[110] *Latinos in Film: Erasure on Screen and Behind the Camera,*[111] UCLA's 2020 Hollywood Diversity Reports.[112] While reports point to an over-representation of whiteness, we need to expand our analysis to point to the ways that this problem of structural whiteness is operationalized along the production pipeline's infrastructure, and how it impacts the workers—from their points of view.

Language, audience, and citizenship are interrelated topics of analysis. Language is used as a metric for belonging. Christopher Chávez, Mari Castañeda, Arlene Dávila, Christopher Joseph Westgate, and Jillian Báez point to the ways that language is used to marginalize U.S.-Latinos/as/e. In *Reinventing the Latino Television Viewer: Language, Ideology, and Practice,* Chávez looks into how "Latino audiences are assimilated into the dominant culture and

[107] Río, "The Latina/o Problematic."
[108] Hall, Stuart. "Representation-and-the-Media-Transcript.Pdf," 6, accessed April 26, 2019, https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Representation-and-the-Media-Transcript.pdf.
[109] Frances Negrón-Muntaner, "A REPORT ON THE STATE OF LATINOS IN U.S. MEDIA," n.d., 44.
[110] Stacy L. Smith, Marc Choueiti, and Dr Katherine Pieper, "Inclusion or Invisibility? Comprehensive Annenberg Report on Diversity in Entertainment" (USC Annenberg, 2016), https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/2017/04/07/MDSCI_CARD_Report_FINAL_Exec_Summary.pdf.
[111] Dr Stacy L Smith et al., "ERASURE ON SCREEN & BEHIND THE CAMERA ACROSS 1,200 POPULAR MOVIES," n.d., 20.
[112] Hunt and Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film"; Hunt and Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part Two: Television."

"reframed as English speaking… [where] English is constructed as normative, while Spanish is the inferior other." [113] In, "La Lucha Sigue," Castañeda, points to how language—the English *or* Spanish binary constructed by the NLwU imaginary—is employed to keep labor opportunities away from U.S.-Latinos/as/e: They are underrepresented in English-language media,, while the labor force in U.S.-Spanish language media is largely from Latin America.[114]

In *Latinos, Inc: The Marketing and Making of a People,* Dávila discusses how efforts motivated by "Latino-oriented" initiatives have followed a "dominate model" of importing content from Latin- America. This involves Spanish language content imported by Univision and Telemundo, for example, which depend on these lower-costs alternatives.[115] And, in "One Language, One Nation, and One Vision: NBC Latino, Fusion, and Fox News Latino," Westgate points to the financial imperatives that drive essentializing notions of Latine and language, which do not reflect their actual linguistic practices.[116] Westgate and Báez find that U.S-Latine media consumption is dynamic and hybrid. And Báez states in *In Search of Belonging: Latinas, Media, and Citizenship*, these are contingent on "language competency, generation, and class."[117]

At the same time, accents are a form of cultural specificity conveyed via language. Their authenticity and intent are tied to the power dynamics at play, which can be recognized by listeners who are attune to these audio-cultural subtleties. In "Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and a Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction," Mari J. Matsuda

[113] Chávez, Christopher. *Reinventing the Latino Television Viewer: Language, Ideology, and Practice.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015, 170.
[114] Mari Castañeda, "La Lucha Sigue</Em>: Latina and Latino Labor in the US Media Industries," *Kalfou* 1, no. 2 (2014), 204. https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v1i2.41
[115] Davila. (2012). Latinos, Inc: the marketing and making of a people (1st ed., pp. 1–290). University of California Press, preface. https://doi.org/10.1525/j.ctt1ppw6p
[116] Christopher Joseph Westgate (2014). One Language, One Nation, and One Vision: NBC Latino, Fusion, and Fox News Latino. In *Contemporary Latina/o Media* (p. 82–). NYU Press.
[117] Jillian M. Báez, *In Search of Belonging: Latinas, Media, and Citizenship* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), 10, https://doi.org/10.5406/j.ctt21h4z2j.

states, "traces of… life and identity are woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words. Your self is inseparable from your accent."[118] In *Culture Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*, Michael Agar calls this Languaculture. These are "encounter[s] between different worlds of *meaning,* meaning that travels well beyond the dictionary, meaning that tells you who you are, whom you're dealing with, the kind of situation you're in, how life works and what's important in it."[119] Like with Latinidad, accents are not problematic; what is problematic is when, instead of being embraced for their authentic reflection of culture, they are deployed as markers to "other," which is tied to notions of citizenship as belonging and power.

As a study that centers the experiences of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators, my work is specifically in conversation with research at the forefront of Latina Media Studies. I take a closer look at the themes of representation and audience in my review of Latina Media studies literature.

IV. Latina Media Studies

Latina Media is a subfield of Latina/o Media Studies. Angharad N. Valdivia tell us: "Latina media studies is a feminist endeavor. Taking the intersectional step of including Latinidad, the history and process of being or becoming Latina/o, within media studies and adding the wrinkle of gender… two steps that do not naturally happen within our contemporary white masculine normative research environment."[120] Two key works, Anghard N. Valdivia's

[118] Mari J. Matsuda, "Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and a Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction," *The Yale Law Journal* 100, no. 5 (March 1991): 1329, https://doi.org/10.2307/796694.
[119] Michael Agar, *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*, 1st edition (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1994), 16.
[120]Angharad N. Valdivia; Latina Media Studies. *Feminist Media Histories* 1 April 2018; 4 (2): 101. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2018.4.2.101

"Latina Media Studies," and Maria Elena Cepeda's "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap," identify three waves of Latina Media Studies.[121]

The first wave (roughly up to 2000) includes Rosa Linda Fregoso, Clara Rodriguez, and Frances R. Aparicio.[122] These scholars "contributed a foundational corpus of research that stretches back for decades."[123] The key characteristic is that these scholars "developed Latina/o media studies research on their own, within [other departments]… yet focusing on communication and media. The second wave (roughly 2009) includes Isabel Molina Guzmán, Angharad N. Valdivia, Mari Castañeda Paredes, Mary Beltrán, Marisol (Riojas) Enriquez, Bernadette Marie Calafell, Shane T. Moreman, Katynka Z. Martínez, Dolores Inés Casillas, Lucila Vargas, David González Hernández, María Elena Cepeda, and Jillian M. Báez.[124] In this wave, scholars often lacked mentorship from advisors familiar with Ethnic or Latina/o Studies, so many "assembled their work from across disciplines."[125] They also fostered the development of Latina/o Studies departments.[126]

Our current moment is the third wave of Latina Media Studies.[127] Ours is characterized by an established Latina Media Studies subfield and scholars that explore interdisciplinarity,

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[121] Valdivia; Latina Media Studies. 101–106.; Cepeda, M. E. (2016). Beyond "filling in the gap": the state and status of Latina/o Feminist Media Studies. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(2), 344–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1052005

[122] Fregoso, *The Bronze Screen*; Rosa Linda Fregoso, "Homegirls, Cholas, and Pachucas in Cinema: Taking over the Public Sphere," *California History* 74, no. 3 (October 1, 1995): 316–27, https://doi.org/10.2307/25177514; Rosa Linda Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*, American Crossroads 12 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Clara E. Rodriguez, ed., *Latin Looks: Images of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. Media* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997); Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa*.

[123] Cepeda, M. E. (2016). Beyond "filling in the gap": the state and status of Latina/o Feminist Media Studies. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(2), 344–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1052005

[124] Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture," *The Communication Review* 7, no. 2 (April 2004): 205–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490448723; Valdivia, *The Gender of Latinidad*; Mari Castañeda Paredes, "The Transformation of Spanish-Language Radio in the U.S.," *Journal of Radio Studies* 10, no. 1 (May 2003): 5–16, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506843jrs1001_3; Angharad N. Valdivia, ed., *Latina/o Communication Studies Today* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

[125] Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap,'" 348.

[126] Valdivia, "Latina Media Studies," 102.

[127] Valdivia, 103; Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap,'" 348.

hybridity, ambiguities, and blurred boundaries.[128] Following the trajectory of Latina/o Media Studies research at large, the primary areas of Latina Media Studies research focus on the overlapping themes of: Latinidad, transnational feminism, and representation and audience. In addition to these themes, I also point to the primary methods used in Latina Media studies and include a section on Latina scholars in the interrelated arena of media governance.

Latinidad

A core issue across all of these themes is the politics of identity-construction. Who defines Latinidad and U.S. Latine identity matters. How the concept of Latinidad is operationalized, by whom, and to what ends impacts the ways that U.S.-based Latina talent experience work, how they come to understand themselves as workers. Scholars address Latinidad as it relates to Latina and women of color subjectivities. These include Isabel Molina Guzmán and Angharad N. Valdivia, who in "Brain, Brow, and Booty," offer this robust definition of Latinidad:

> We frame Latinidad as a social construct informed by the mediated circulation of ethnic-specific community discourses and practices as well as mainstream economic and political imperatives through the cultural mainstream. Thus Latinidad is a category constructed from the outside with marketing and political homogenizing implications as well as from within with assertions to difference and specificity.[129]

In "Towards a *Latinidad Feminista:* The Multiplicities of Latinidad and Feminism in Contemporary Cinema," Jill Báez uses case studies to examine the "multiplicities of Latinidad and feminism as portrayed in contemporary [U.S.] cinema."[130] In her chapter "Latinidad/es,"

[128] Valdivia, "Latina Media Studies," 103.
[129] Guzmán and Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, and Booty." 208.
[130] Jillian M. Báez (2007) Towards a LatinidadFeminista: The Multiplicities of Latinidad and Feminism in Contemporary Cinema, Popular Communication, 5:2, 109-128, DOI: 10.1080/15405700701294079

Frances Aparicio, encourages scholars to reclaim the term Latinidad and deploy it as a self-definition strategy.[131]

In their volume, *Latinas/Os in the United States: Changing the Face of América*, editors Havidán Rodríguez, Rogelio Sáenz, and Cecilia Menjívar, look into the multidimensional aspects of contemporary Latinas/os across the U.S. Contributing authors bring into focus both the heterogeneity points of commonalities of U.S. Latinos/as. Angharad N. Valdivia studies the ways that Latinidad is relationally constructed "within mainstream mass media and popular culture" in "Latinas as Radical Hybrid: Transnationality Gendered Traces in Mainstream Media"[132] and studies hybridity as it relates to Latinidad as she looks into Latina/o representation in U.S. media in *The Gender of Latinidad: Uses and Abuses of Hybridity.*[133]

Understanding Latinidad necessitates that we analyze the ways that media participates in the politics of Latina identity-construction. In "Monstrous Femininity," Calafell draws parallels between lived experiences and literature to show "how women of color are constructed as monstrous Others" in the academy.[134] In "Buscando para nuestra Latinidad: Utilizing La Llorona for Cultural Critique," Shane T. Moreman & Bernadette Marie Calafell analyze the contemporary construction of Latina/o identity, gender, and nationality in the film *Chasing Papi*. They argue that the Latin Lover serves to Other while furthering the confusion on U.S. Latina/o identity.[135] In "Gendering Latinidad through the Elián News Discourse about Cuban Women,"

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[131] Frances R Aparicio, "Latinidades," in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies*, ed. Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (NYU Press, 2017), 113, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1pwtbpj.
[132] Angharad N. Valdivia, "Latinas as Radical Hybrid: Transnationality Gendered Traces in Mainstream Media," *Global Media Journal* 3, no. 4 (2004).
[133] Valdivia, A. N. (2020). *The Gender of Latinidad: Uses and Abuses of Hybridity* (First Edition.). Wiley.
[134] Bernadette Marie Calafell, "Monstrous Femininity: Constructions of Women of Color in the Academy," *The Journal of Communication Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (2012): 111–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859912443382.
[135] Shane T. Moreman and Bernadette Marie Calafell, "Buscando Para Nuestra Latinidad: Utilizing La Llorona for Cultural Critique," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 1, no. 4 (2008): 309–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050802344647.

Isabel Molina Guzman, the author "examines the cultural values, beliefs, and meanings about Latino/as and Latinidad circulated through the sensationalistic news coverage of the Elián case."[136]

Transnational Feminism

Latinidad and the transnational scope of Latina/o Feminist Studies overlap. This reflects the transnational and diverse character of Latina/o communities while recognizing the link between gender and the global.[137] This global view inherently includes linguistic considerations. In "As the Latino/a World Turns: The Literary and Cultural Production of Transnational Latinidades," Ana Patricia Rodríguez looks into the "*transnationalization* of the Latino cultural imaginary and the production of more diverse Latinidades in the United States," during the 80s and 90s.[138] In "Jennifer as Selena: Rethinking Latinidad in Media and Popular Culture," Frances Aparicio argues that "the similarities among US Latinos that have emerged from their status as historical minorities and racialized subjects can be deployed to understand the sites in which Latinos from different national groups identify and disidentify with each other."[139]

Representation and Audience

Latina Media research, like Latino Media, tends towards a cultural analysis via issues of representation. Media representation matters because who is represented, how, and under what

[136] Isabel Molina Guzman, "Gendering Latinidad through the Elián News Discourse about Cuban Women," *Latino Studies* 3, no. 2 (2005): 180, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600141.
[137] Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap,'" 350.
[138] Ana Patricia Rodríguez. Havidán Rodríguez, Rogelio Sáenz, and Cecilia Menjívar, eds., *Latinas/Os in the United States: Changing the Face of América* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2008), 210–24, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71943-6.
[139] Frances R Aparicio, "Jennifer as Selena: Rethinking Latinidad in Media and Popular Culture," *Latino Studies* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 90, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600016

conditions are all tied to who has decision-making power. Latina Media scholars look into Latina representation across media texts (film, television, internet). Scholars study films as texts to explore Latinidad and feminism in contemporary U.S cinema. These include Jill Báez, Marisol Enriquez, Mary Beltrán, Angharad Valdivia, Rosa Linda Fregoso, and Ana López.[140] They look into identity politics and they ways that their subjects address racism, sexism, sexuality and the commodification of Latine culture and the Latina body. In other words, they study, what Báez calls, "a new, hybrid *Latinidad feminista*."[141]

Scholars who research Latina/o representation in television include Mary Beltrán, Jillian Baéz, Diana Leon-Boys and Angharad N. Valdivia.[142] Cultural citizenship, identity politics, and authorship are key themes in this arena. Beltrán's book, "Latino TV," is the first historical account of Latinos/as in English-language U.S. television. The author states that the central concern of her study is cultural citizenship: " The cultural forum of television, so central to national identity, has through exclusion from employment, erasure, and misrepresentation

[140] Baez, J. M. (2007). "Towards a Latinidad Feminista: The Multiplicities of Latinidad and Feminism in Contemporary Cinema." *Popular Communication*, *5*(2), 109–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/15405700701294079; Enríquez, M. (2021). Trying to Sell Ketchup in a Salsa Bottle: Chasing Papi and the Hispanic Audience. *Feminist Media Histories*, *7*(4), 55–79. https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2021.7.4.55; Beltrán, M. (2005). Commemoration as crossover: "Remembering" Selena. In S. Jones & J. Jensen (Eds.), Afterlife as afterimage: Understanding posthumous fame (pp. 141–167). New York: Peter Lang Publishing; Valdivia, A. N. (2000). A Latina in the Land of Hollywood and Other Essays on Media Culture. Tucson: University of Arizona Press; Fregoso, R. L. (1993). The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press; López, A. (1998). From Hollywood and back: Dolores Del Río, a trans(national) star. Studies in Latin American Popular Culture, 17, 5–33.

[141] Baez, J. M. (2007). "Towards a Latinidad Feminista," 124.

[142] Beltrán, M. (2022). *Latino TV: A History*. New York University Press. 2-3; Mary Beltrán. (2016). Latina/os On TV!: A Proud (and Ongoing) Struggle Over Representation and Authorship. In *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Popular Culture* (pp. 39–49). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637495-8; Rodríguez, V., & Beltrán, M. (2017). From the Bronze Screen to the Computer Screen: Latina/o Web Series and Independent Production. In *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media* (1st ed., pp. 156–170). Routledge. 157-158. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858005-12; Báez, J. (2021). I Know I Can't Wait to See My Name in Lights. *Feminist Media Histories*, *7*(4), 7–26. https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2021.7.4.7; Leon-Boys, D., & Valdivia, A. N. (2021). The location of U.S. Latinidad: Stuck in the Middle, Disney, and the in-between ethnicity. *Journal of Children and Media*, *15*(2), 218–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1753790.

reinforced notions that Latina/os' place in the US mainstream is uncertain."[143] By foregrounding Latinidad feminista, these works bring to light Latinas in U.S. TV history.

Digital media Latina scholars include Vittoria Rodríguez and Mary Beltrán, who in "From the Bronze Screen to the Computer Screen" study two Latina-created web series, "Ylse," the show that I created, wrote, and produced, and East WillyB. Rodriguez and Beltrán found that our web productions and the opportunities they afforded to showcase Latina/o skills and talents stood "in sharp contrast to the realities" for Latinas/os in television.[144] Other scholars who research Latinidad in the digital space include Arcelia Gutiérrez, Mari Catañeda, Martha Fuentes-Bautista, Felicitas Baruch, and Diana Isabel Arredondo Ríos.[145] Their works bring web series and other independent forms of media production into the fold of Latina Media. When it comes to audio-sphere, Mari Castañeda takes a closer look at the under-studied U.S. Latina/o radio industry. She examines the ways that policies, marketing imperatives, growth in historically non-Latino markets, and consolidation are shaping the U.S. Latino radio landscape.[146] Likewise under-studied is the audiobook industry. I have found no Latina Media studies that research audiobooks. As far as I am aware, my work is first of its kind.[147]

The relationship between representation and audience is another key area of study. Audience is also a key area of study. Audience relates to power is it speaks to: Who is the

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[143] Beltrán, M. (2022). *Latino TV: A History*. New York University Press. 2-3.
[144] Rodríguez, V., & Beltrán, M. (2017). From the Bronze Screen to the Computer Screen: Latina/o Web Series and Independent Production. In *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media* (1st ed., pp. 156–170). Routledge. 157-158. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858005-12
[145] Rodríguez and Beltrán, "From the Bronze Screen to the Computer Screen"; Arcelia Gutiérrez, "Pero Like and Mitú," *Feminist Media Histories* 7, no. 4 (October 1, 2021): 80–106, https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2021.7.4.80; Castañeda, Fuentes-Bautista, and Baruch, "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era," March 2015; Diana Isabel Arredondo Ríos and Mari Castañeda, eds., *Soap Operas and Telenovelas in the Digital Age: Global Industries and New Audiences*, Popular Culture and Everyday Life, vol. 20 (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
[146] Mari Castañeda, "The Role of Media Policy in Shaping the US Latino Radio Industry," *Contemporary Latina/o Media*, NYU Press, 2020; Mari Castañeda Paredes (2003) The Transformation of Spanish-language Radio in the U.S., Journal of Radio Studies, 10:1, 5-16, DOI: 10.1207/s15506843jrs1001_3
[147] Ruth L. Nuñez. (2021). *Qué hay detrás de todo?* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140054-14

imagined audience? What are the impacts of representation on audience? How does representation shape perceptions, perspectives, identity-and sense of belonging? As Jillian Báez explains, Audience studies "focus on how media and popular culture audiences use and make meaning of texts."[148] In, *In Search of Belongin*g, Báez uses citizenship is her key theoretical framework and demonstrates that Latina audiences "use media as a gauge to assess their place within the national imaginary.[149] And, in "Latina/o Audiences as Citizens," Jillian Báez discusses how "Latina/o audiences assess matters of belonging through media" and surfaces differences among documented and undocumented audiences.[150] Arlene M. Dávila reframes the notion of audience into consumers and markets by examining the role of Hispanic marketing in constructing and defining Latinidad and how commercial representations may shape people's sense of identity, citizenship, and belonging.[151] In "The Gender of Latinidad: Latinas Speak About Hispanic Television," Viviana Rojas studies Latina media consumption with a specific focus on Spanish-language media.[152] Cultural citizenship, identity politics, and authorship are key topics of concern in growing field of Latina Media studies.

The primary methods used in Latina/o Media are textual analysis and case studies. Few scholars use interviews as their main method. Key exceptions are Jillian Báez and Viviana Rojas. Both scholars use interviews and engage audience members in their research. [153] Mari Castañeda

[148] Báez, *In Search of Belonging*, 30.
[149] Báez, *In Search of Belonging*, 2018, 4.
[150] Jillian Báez, "Latina/o Audiences as Citizens," 2020, 260-270.
[151] Arlene M Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 2.
[152] Rojas, Viviana, " The Gender of Latinidad: Latinas Speak About Hispanic Television," The Communication Review, 7:2, 125-153.
[153] Báez, Jillian, "Latina/o Audiences as Citizens."'; Viviana Rojas, "The Gender of *Latinidad* : Latinas Speak About Hispanic Television," *The Communication Review* 7, no. 2 (April 2004): 125–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490448688.

Paredes uses interviews in her mid-range analysis of a media industry.[154] However, I have found no works that use interviews nor Pláticas methods to do a mid-range analysis of a media industry from the points of view of talent, who have an inside-view as media workers. My work addresses this gap. Referring to Gayatri C. Spivak, to understand the power dynamics embedded in Latina re-presentation in media as texts (darstellen), we have to concurrently keep within our purview the bifurcated meanings of 'representation' as political representation (vertretung) because they are mutually constitutive.[155]

Media Governance

How Latinidad is operationalized and by whom also impacts how U.S.-based Latina are perceived, and thus included, within policy-making processes. In this section, I highlight Latina scholars in the arena of media governance; a space that critically necessitates our further participation. To detangle power dynamics and foster foundational and sustainable infrastructural changes to the problem of whiteness (both structural and representational) we must keep Latina political representation in media industries within focus. Again, who's views are included in policy-making impacts the issues recognized, the solutions sought, and the consequences that are considered. A more holistic policy landscape requires diverse perspectives.

Key scholars that bring a Latina lens to media governance are Mari Castañeda, Martha Fuentes-Bautista and Felicita Baruch. As aforementioned, in "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era: Shifting Discourses in Communications Public Policy," these scholars examine the "representation of racial and ethnic minorities in contemporary U.S. broadband policy, an

[154] Mari Castaneda Paredes. (2008). Television Set Production at the US–Mexico Border: Trade Policy and Advanced Electronics for the Global Market. In *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470690079.ch21

[155] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," ed. Bill Ashcroft et al, eds., *Routledge*, 1995, 29, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2105763/mod_resource/content/0/Spivak.pdf.

emerging area of communications policy that attempts to address media and communications competition, diversity and inclusion for the digital age.[156] In this work, the authors argue that "the emerging media governance framework is both influenced by the problematic history of media diversity as well as a discursive and material shift that emphasizes market orientations."[157] The goal of this work is "to illuminate how politics and discursive struggles over power in the construction of the social meaning of public policy challenges or maintain the social order."[158] Plus, in her work, "Mapping "Diversity of Participation" in Networked Media Environments," Fuentes-Bautista forwards a solution by arguing for "a participatory community development approach to the redefinition of these public interest policies in networked scenarios."[159]

V. Conclusion

My qualitative study uniquely brings critical IS and Latina/o Media studies into conversation. It participates in addressing the problem of U.S. Latine inequitable and condition representation by shifting our view to the media's labor structures. I argue that, like in all industries, to understand how power dynamics are operationalized in media industries, it is crucial that we understand how workers experience the work. As such, I answer Castañeda's call:

> Scholarly research on the labor of Latino professionals in the media and telecommunications industries, including investigations into the special and structural context of workers who construct sets, sew costumes, prepare meals, clean studio offices, or assemble communication technologies, are important but too few… the analysis of media labor and cultural work becomes more imperative than ever as transnational communication and advanced technologies become powerful social forces.[160]

[156] Castañeda, Fuentes-Bautista, and Baruch, "Racial and Ethnic Inclusion in the Digital Era," March 2015.
[157] Castañeda, et al., 139.
[158] Castañeda, et al., 145
[159] Fuentes-Bautista, "Mapping'Diversity of Participation'in Networked Media Environments."
[160] Castañeda, M. (2014). La Lucha Sigue. *Kalfou (Santa Barbara, Calif.)*, *1*(2), 205–206. https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v1i2.41

My work addresses this gap and adds Latina talent into the fold. It centers these womens' voices by engaging in plática-interviews, a method not broadly used to center workers in Latina Media research. And I bring Latina feminist frameworks and concerns to IS where they are egregiously underrepresented.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks convey how we make sense of the world and orient our views. As an activist scholar, entertainment media professional, and mestiza, I engage with trenzas as my conceptual framework because it creates the space for theorizing my intersectional experiences in the academy. It creates the opportunity to interrogate power from multiple angles, which opens up more robust, dynamic, and holistic lines of inquiry. My intersectional power analysis also requires an engagement with critical theories.[161] To this end, I engage with Critical Political Economy (CPE), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Chicana/Latina Feminism (C/LF), and Marxism. In this chapter, I review each of these frameworks and clarify how their braiding allows for a more critical, intersectional, and holistic power analysis of the audiobook labor structure, especially as it relates to U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators.

I. Trenzas

The trenza is a concept that braids together my personal and my academic voice.[162] It acknowledges my various identities, which create my standpoint/worldview, and inform my research approach: from the questions I ask, to the communities that I am in conversation with, my analytical lenses, and the aims of my research. Sandra Quiñones points to Dolores Delgado Bernal, who encourages us to use the trenza as a metaphor: "Rather than detach and compartmentalize our identities, we might think of how the *trenza* bring together strands… to create something new…. The *trenza* is something that is whole and complete, and yet, it is

[161] Caswell, Punzalan, and Sangwand, "Critical Archival Studies," 3.
[162] Margaret E. Montoya, "Mascaras, Trenzas, y Greñas: Un/Masking the Self While Un/Braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse," *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review* 15, no. 1 (1994): 2, https://doi.org/10.5070/C7151021046.

something that can only exist if the separate parts are woven together."[163] Via the trenza, I weave Latina narratives, which are important site of resistance, into my scholarship.[164] This conceptual framework allows me to foreground one or multiple identities—as needed—in my power analysis.

II. Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPE)

I engage with Critical Political Economy of the Media (CPE) because commercial audiobooks are a culture-making industry at the convergence of media and tech. Jonathan Hardy explains, "Critical political economy of media examines how the political and economic organization ('political economy') of media industries affects the production and circulation of meaning, and connects to the distribution of symbolic and material resources that enable people to understand, communicate and act in the world."[165] This analysis requires a close look along three key registers: 1) how this industry works, 2) the influences and consequences of different ways of organizing this media, and 3) A careful interrogation of the relationships between media content and communication systems with the broader structures of society.[166]

To address the first register, I study how this industry works from the point of view of audiobook narrators. I also offer an overview of the financial strength of this industry, interrogate who benefits financially from the narrators' labor, consider support mechanisms (like agents and the union), and detangle the organization of its labor structure. For the second register, I unpack the consequences of how the commercial branch of this media arena is organized by looking at

[163] Quiñones, "(Re)Braiding to Tell," 342; González and Padilla, *Doing the Public Good*, 135.; Quiñones, "(Re)Braiding to Tell," 338.
[164] Montoya, "Mascaras, Trenzas, y Greñas," 26.
[165] Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media*, 9.
[166] Hardy, 9.

the historical construction of this industry, how it is being organized in today's platform economy, and the impacts of AI to the future of audiobook narration. I also consider worker-facing platform design alternatives. For the third register, my study detangles the relationship between the audiobook labor structure, U.S.-based Latina narrators, and the impacts of audiobooks-as cultural artifact on the workers themselves.[167]

To do this intersectional analysis, I bring Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Chicana/Latina feminism into the conversation. These critical theories are important influences of CPE work because they highlight the ways that power operates as experienced, understood, and identified from the diverse standpoints of U.S.-based Chicana/Latinas.[168] Since my work is grounded in Information Studies, it is important to note that CRT and CLF remain underrepresented in LIS literature, and my research participates in filling this gap.[169]

III. Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a critical theory, a framework, an analytical tool, and a movement that focuses our attention on the relationships between race, racism, and power.[170] As Professor Tyrone Howard stated at a 2020 CRT UCLA panel, CRT provides Black and Brown folks with the language, a framework, and a theory with which to describe our circumstances and experiences when we recognize that there is something not quite just, not quite equitable nor inclusive for POC despite trying to play by the 'rules of the game' and trying to buy into the narrative around

[167] Hardy, 9.
[168] Hardy, 9.
[169] Leung and López-McKnight, *Knowledge Justice*; Chou and Pho, *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*.
[170] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Critical America (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Sofia Y Leung and Jorge R López, "Introduction: This Is Only the Beginning," in *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* (MIT Press, 2021), 1–42.

meritocracy.[171] It surfaces the ways in which race and racism are a factor in these inequities. Delgado and Stefanic also tell us that, as a movement, CRT, "considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious."[172]

The origins of CRT can be traced back to the field of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in the 1970's U.S.[173] CLS was then "an emerging movement of legal scholarship that rejected the notion that legal matters were neutral and could be interpreted objectively…. CRT was created to focus specifically on racial inequality in all aspects of U.S. jurisprudence and to actively work toward dismantling racism in the law."[174] CRT was founded with the pioneering work of Derrick Bell[175] and Alan Freeman[176] and continued to be developed by key legal scholars including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Margaret Montoya, and Mari Matsuda.[177] In the mid-90s,

[171] Critical Race Theory in ED&IS. Panelists: Daniel Solorzano, Jessica Harris, Rob Teranishi, & Tyrone Howard. UCLA. November 15, 2021. Online.
[172] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 2–3.
[173] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Critical Race Theory: An Annotated Bibliography," *Virginia Law Review* 79, no. 2 (March 1993): 461, https://doi.org/10.2307/1073418; Lisa Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909; Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001.
[174] Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, 1.
[175] Bell, Derrick A., Jr., Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation, 85 Yale L.J. 470 (1976). (1,2, 3, 10).
[176] Freeman, Alan D., Legitimizing Racial Discrimination Through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court Doctrine, 62 Minn. L. Rev. 1049 (1978). (1, 3, 5).
[177] Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*.; Critical Race Theory in ED&IS. Panelists: Daniel Solorzano, Jessica Harris, Rob Teranishi, & Tyrone Howard. UCLA. November 15, 2021. Online.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT to the field of education.[178] Key CRT scholars in Education include Daniel Solorzano[179] and Jessica Harris.[180]

In the field of Information Studies, while there have been critical moves towards centering social justice and diversifying the field,[181] direct engagements with Critical Race Theory remains underrepresented. An important proponent of CRT in IS is Anthony Dunbar who introduces critical race theory to archival studies.[182] And, in their volume *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory,* editors Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight offer the first book to "focus solely on applying CRT to LIS." As they explain in their introduction:

> While we recognize that there are many critical theories and social justice frameworks, CRT as a conceptual construct, and methodology, is about critically

[178] Ladson-Billings, Gloria & Tate, William. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. Teachers College Record. 97. 47-68.
[179] Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 1/2 (2000): 60–73, https://doi.org/10.2307/2696265; Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso; Daniel G. Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (January 1998): 121–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236926; Daniel G. Solorzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," *Urban Education* 36, no. 3 (May 2001): 308–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002; Daniel G. Solorzano and Tara J. Yosso, "Critical Race and LatCrit Theory and Method: Counter-Storytelling," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 14, no. 4 (July 2001): 471–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365.
[180] Jessica C. Harris, "Toward a Critical Multiracial Theory in Education," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29, no. 6 (July 2, 2016): 795–813, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1162870.
[181] Sarah T. Roberts and Safiya Umoja Noble, "Empowered to Name, Inspired to Act: Social Responsibility and Diversity as Calls to Action in the LIS Context," *Library Trends* 64, no. 3 (2016): 512–32, https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0008; Myrna Morales, Em Claire Knowles, and Chris Bourg, "Diversity, Social Justice, and the Future of Libraries," *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 3 (2014): 439–51, https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2014.0017; Samantha Kelly Hastings, "If Diversity Is a Natural State, Why Don't Our Libraries Mirror the Populations They Serve?," *The Library Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (April 2015): 133–38, https://doi.org/10.1086/680152; David James Hudson, "On 'Diversity' as Anti-Racism in Library and Information Studies: A Critique," n.d., 36; Siva Vaidhyanathan, "AFTERWORD: CRITICAL INFORMATION STUDIES: A Bibliographic Manifesto," *Cultural Studies* 20, no. 2–3 (March 2006): 292–315, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380500521091; Nicole A Cooke and Miriam E Sweeney, "Social Justice as Topic and Tool: An Attempt to Transform an LIS Curriculum and Culture," n.d., 18; Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History," August 4, 2016; Caswell, Cifor, and Ramirez, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing'"; Anne Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Education and Educators in the Twenty-First Century," *Archival Science* 11, no. 3–4 (November 2011): 193–209, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-011-9147-0.
[182] Dunbar, "Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse."

> examining the structures and systems that maintain White Supremacy's chokehold on our society… it provides opportunities to identify points of integration across dynamic and multifactorial forces that together work to re-create and sustain historical systems of racial power and oppression and provide new, actionable paths toward a liberatory future.
> One of the problems CRT is seeking to remedy is the fact that BIPOC knowledge has never been considered valid knowledge, that is effectively and purposefully missing from the knowledge that has shaped this country's governing structures and institutions, and that without it, we will not be able to break the oppressive cycle of White Supremacy.[183]

Leung and López-McKnight ask us to consider the significant role our field plays in determining what is and is not regarded as knowledge, as well as the position of archives and libraries as sites of knowledge organization and distribution. As such, our field has historically been complicit in this white supremacy project. Its slow progress towards inclusion, speaks to the enduring effect of this complicity. Deliberately engaging with CRT in LIS is critical to decentering whiteness.

I did not begin my analysis by explicitly engaging with CRT, but I found myself instinctively doing CRT work. The ways I experience and understand the world, and the activist goals of my research align with CRT and its tenets.

CRT Tenets

How the strands of my research came together into a united whole came into focus once I was intentional about my engagement with CRT. I had intuitively organized my research to align with CRT tenets, which helped to facilitate my power analysis.[184] Following are the key tenets with which I engage:

[183] Leung and López, "Introduction: This Is Only the Beginning," 7.
[184] Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is" Strong Objectivity?"," *The Centennial Review* 36, no. 3 (1992): 437–70.

Racism as ordinary

This tenet highlights that racism is "the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experiences of most people of color" in the U.S.[185] It understands that racism is structural and "deeply ingrained in [US] society through its systems and institutions. Racism is doing exactly what it is intended to do, which is to maintain a social structure rooted in White Supremacy."[186] Audre Lorde defines racism as, "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied."[187] Racism is operationalized both overtly and covertly. Daniel Solórzano tells us, "it is in private conversations and interactions that racism and sexism can exist in subtle and covert ways in the form of microaggressions."[188] He points to Peggy Davis who defines microaggressions as "stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black [x] inferiority."[189] These acts are egregiously quotidian.

My study finds that in the audiobook, and other related media industries, these covert forms of racism can be found in categorizing schemas, pay rates, budget allocation along linguistic lines, the added transcultural/translation work without additional compensation (contractually invisible), in the normative articulation of whiteness as equated with Americanness in casual conversations—and its contingent assumption of agreement—, the ways in which US Latina invisibility—whether folded into whiteness or via the erasure of our

[185] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 3.
[186] Leung and López, "Introduction: This Is Only the Beginning," 13.
[187] Audre Lorde, "KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE NWSA CONVENTION," 1981, 5.
[188] Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," 124.
[189] Peggy C. Davis, "Law As Microaggression," *The Yale Law Journal* 98, no. 8 (June 1989): 1576, https://doi.org/10.2307/796605.

experiences and knowledge—is normalized. These are examples of the ways in which structural whiteness is embedded into media infrastructures.

Experiences and knowledge of People of Color

The experiences and knowledge of people of color, those of us who represent the majority world, have historically been minoritized, erased, ignored. White people, and at times even we ourselves, do not often understand the value of our experiences. "CRT contends that these experiences and knowledge are necessary and crucial to moving us to eradicating multiple oppressions."[190] My focus on US-based Latinas speaks directly to this CRT tenet. It is crucial that we understand the value of the experiences and knowledge of Latinas, if we are to eradicate the multiple forms of oppressions—including microaggressions—that we face in US media.

Focus on historical context

"To understand what is happening in the current moment, we must look to history and examine the particular historical, social, and economic contexts that led to this point."[191] This tenet explains why I felt it necessary to include a historical analysis: It is essential that I contextualize how whiteness has constructed the audiobook media industry, how US Latinas have been symbolically annihilated from the archival record, and the impacts of this history on the industry's US-based Latina workers today. Historically contextualizing the audiobook industry serves to highlight the ways which LIS has been complicit in perpetuating whiteness as

[190] Leung and López, "Introduction: This Is Only the Beginning," 14.
[191] Leung and López, 15.

the mythical norm in this media arena. It also offers the opportunity to reinsert Latinas into the historical record.

Interest Convergence

Also known as "material determinism." This tenet brings to focus that "because racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it."[192] For Critical Race "realists or economic determinists… racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and status." [193] For these materialists: 'Understanding the ebb and flow of racial progress and retrenchment requires a careful look at conditions prevailing at different times in history. Circumstances change so that one group finds it possible to seize advantage, or to exploit another. They do so and then form appropriate collective attitudes to rationalize what was done…. Little happens out of altruism alone."[194] We have a saying in my community that echoes this tenet: "Sólo cuando les conviene." "Only when it serves them." Meaning that we are only visible and included by those in power—and they only do what is morally right—when it serves their interests.

IV. Chicana/Latina Feminism (C/LF)

Chicana/Latina Feminism provides a framework for an intersectional and transcultural analysis of convergence media infrastructures. C/LF shifts the focus to people by listening to and honoring their voices and challenging dominant market discourses. It is an intersectional approach that affords the opportunity to interrogate what might seem 'natural' or 'normal' from

[192] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 6.
[193] Delgado and Stefancic, 17–18.
[194] Ibid.

dominant white and male lenses while preventing Latina voices from being folded into white female or Latino male scholarship. It provides us with a toolkit for interrogating systems and infrastructures along multiple axis (racial, gendered, linguistic, class).

C/LF questions notions of objectivity while opening up robust lines of inquiry that may not be considered from the dominant white and/or male perspectives. This framework focuses our attention on the borderlands. Dolores Delgado Bernal points to Anzaldúa when she explains:

> Within a Chicana feminist epistemology, borderlands refer to the geographical, emotional, and/or psychological space occupied by mestizas. Anzaldúa believes that those individuals who are marginalized by society and are forced to live on the borderlands of dominant culture develop a sixth sense for survival… a strength that comes from their borderland experiences.[195]

Chicana/Latina lenses are complex and multidimensional. We have been forced to understand the world from the point of the oppressor and the oppressed, from the masculine and from the feminine. Our view is oriented not only on the bridges that connect worlds, but on the liminal spaces in-between these worlds. Gloria Anzaldúa calls these spaces "nepantla." She states, "Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahualt word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space."[196] It is in these spaces from our multidimensional views that new knowledge is uncovered. Latinas embrace contradictions and listen for and are attune to the "unheard, the unthought, the unspoken."[197]

Our Latina knowledge praxis, as Maria Cotera explains, "often diverge from those of the institution in how [we] judge truth, reliability, and the aims of scholarship… it is as much about imagining a different politics of knowledge making as it is about recovery of the "evidence" of

[195] Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 5.
[196] Gloria Anzaldua and Analouise Keating, "This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation," 1.
[197] Fierro and Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology," 101; Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, Theories of Representation and Difference (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). Kindle location 174.

that difference."[198] C/LF helps us to disentangle this 'evidence' by pushing back against "single-axis framework[s]."[199] It understands that multiple structures of oppression (gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, disability, language) can operate at the same time. It thus affords us the opportunity to have "better access to the complexity of the world and of [ourselves]."[200] The insights gained from this perspective have been put to use by Chicana Feminist scholar to "work against binary thinking" and to "make meaning of… contradictions."[201]

As a feminist framework, C/LF understands "neutrality" and "objectivity" to be conceptual constructs that serve to uphold power structures. These terms, as Donna Haraway tells us are used to throw sand in our eyes:[202] This supposed "view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god trick" that keeps those who claim it out of reach from being answerable for what they learned how to see.[203] In contrast, "feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence…. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and… situated and embodied knowledges [that push] against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims."[204] Feminist objectivity is about responsibly acknowledging that all knowledge is situated. Society at large stands to benefit when we acknowledge that all knowledge is located, and when we embrace the power of standpoints.

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[198] Cotera, "Nuestra Autohistoria," 495.
[199] Kimberle Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, 1989, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2105593/mod_resource/content/0/Crenshaw.pdf.
[200] Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, Key Concepts Series (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 1.
[201] Dolores Calderón et al., "A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited: Cultivating Ideas a Generation Later," *Harvard Educational Review* 82, no. 4 (December 2012): 518, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.82.4.l518621577461p68.
[202] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 576.
[203] Haraway, 582–83.
[204] Haraway, 583.

Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives "contribute to a decolonization of the research process and inform our practice as… activist scholars."[205] Like other, Latina scholars, I "engage with Critical Race Theory (CRT) in order to connect Latinas to larger theories, and movements of resistance."[206]

V. Marxism

Marxism provides the opportunity to examine to what degree today's audiobook boom, with increased production and lower, accessible prices, is possible because of an imbalanced pay structure where the total amount of labor and labor time that narrators contribute to the final audiobook remains out of view and unwaged. This theory helps us interrogate who benefits and who loses when our attention is kept away from labor concerns. Braiding this theory with Chicana/Latina Feminism and Critical Race Theory, affords us the opportunity to also interrogate the intersectional dimensions of these exploitative labor practices.

Marx's Labor Theory of Value provides the labor theory for my analysis. This theory tells us that "the value of a commodity is the average labour time that is needed for producing it. Labour time is the measure of value. Value has both a substance and a magnitude and is in these characteristics connected to human labour and labour time."[207] In the context of audiobook production, the value of the audiobook is connected inextricably to the labor and labor time contributed by audiobook narrators. I also engage with Marx's concept of exploited surplus value, the concept via which he "intends to show that capitalism is a class society."[208] As

[205] Dolores Calderón et al., "A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited: Cultivating Ideas a Generation Later," *Harvard Educational Review* 82, no. 4 (December 2012): 514, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.82.4.l518621577461p68.
[206] From 4/2 RAC—credit and ask for help… because I Intuit that I am missing CRT, but how to incorporate?
[207] Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*.45.
[208] Fuchs, 54.

Christian Fuchs explains, "Surplus labour time is all labour time that exceeds necessary labour time, remains unpaid, is appropriated for free by capitalists and is transformed into money profit. Surplus value is in substance the materialization of unpaid labour-time."[209] This concept helps to explain all of the creative and fuzzy ways in which employers engage in abusive labor practices and rampant wage theft in the commercial audiobook industry. As Fuchs summarizes, "For Marx, capitalism is based on capitalists' permanent theft of unpaid labour from workers."[210]

VI. Conclusion

Critical theoretical frameworks are ones via "which hidden power relations and patterns domination withing a society are revealed and debunked."[211] While there is growing literature on critical frameworks in LIS,[212] Critical Race Theory and Chicana/Latina feminist frameworks remain underrepresented in our field. This matters because, for LIS to continue to more forward in authentically inclusive ways, we need to bring to light –and pushback against—the specific and nuanced ways in which asymmetrical power relations impact different communities differently. My work contributes to my field of Information Studies by participating in filling this gap. My trenzando, or braiding, of Critical Political Economy (CPE), Critical Race Theory

[209] Fuchs, 55.
[210] Fuchs, 34.
[211] Marcia J. Bates, in *An Introduction to Metatheories, Theories, and Models*, 2009, 11.
[212] Gloria J. Leckie, Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman, eds., *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from across the Disciplines.* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010); Anne Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Education and Educators in the Twenty-First Century," *Archival Science* 11, no. 3–4 (November 2011): 193–209, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-011-9147-0; M. L. Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives in the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian: A Journal of Public History*, August 4, 2016, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9gc14537; Safiya Umoja Noble and Brendesha M. Tynes, eds., *The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class and Culture Online*, Digital Formations, vol. 105 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc, 2016); Hope A. Olson, "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2001): 639–68; Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *The Library Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2013): 94–111.

(CRT), Chicana/Latina Feminism (C/LF), and Marxism, provides an incisive approach for critically interrogating the ways in which these power asymmetries impact US-Latinas, whose experiences have largely been erased, minimized, or hidden from view. It also offers the opportunity to understand the world from our Latina perspectives, and makes us and our contributions visible while, at the same time, pushing back against the ubiquitous centering of whiteness as the mythical norm in this, and other, entertainment media arenas.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

My research methodology is qualitative. There are many canonical qualitative research texts in Information Studies,[213] and a strong move towards decolonizing methodologies with a particular focus on Feminist[214] and Indigenous methodologies.[215] And, in her breakthrough work, *Algorithms of Oppression,* Safiya Noble uses Black Feminism as her methodological approach in her study of Google search, demonstrating how analytical frameworks that center intersections between race and gender offer fruitful ways of understanding digital economies and processes.[216] Taking Noble's cue, my work asks what new insights we might gain by analyzing the audiobook ICT industry via a Latina/Chicana feminist (L/CF) methodological framework. Despite myriad critical methodological frameworks in our field, however, there is a gap when it comes to L/CF methodologies. The only research I have found that focuses on Latinx experiences is the work of

[213] Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994); Alison Jane Pickard, *Research Methods in Information, 2nd Ed.* (Chicago: Neil-Schuman/ALA, 2013), https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/1957453/mod_resource/content/0/Pickard19.pdf; Kirsty Williamson, editor.) Williamson Kirst, and editor.) Johanson Graem, *Research Methods : Information, Systems and Contexts*, First edition (Prahran, VIC Tilde Publishing and distribution, 2013), http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/194862218; Anselm Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques (Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, 1990); Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, and Andrew J. Lau, *Research in the Archival Multiverse* (Monash University Publishing, 2017), http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=628143.
[214] Maria T. Accardi, Emily Drabinski, and Alana Kumbier, *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods* (Library Juice Press, LLC, 2010); M. L. Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives," *Archivaria* 81, no. Spring (2016): 23–43; Sharon Ladenson, "Paradigm Shift: Utilizing Critical Feminist Pedagogy in Library Instruction," in *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods* (Duluth: Library Juice Press, 2009), 105–12, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2105588/mod_resource/content/0/Ladenson.pdf.
[215] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012); Sara McDonough, "Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith," *Collaborative Anthropologies* 6, no. 1 (2013): 458–64, https://doi.org/10.1353/cla.2013.0001; Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008); Margaret Kovach, "Doing Indigenous Methodologies: A Letter to a Research Class.," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 216–34, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/1989458/mod_resource/content/0/Kovach.pdf; Devon A. Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
[216] Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

LIS scholar Melissa Villa-Nicholas whose research looks into Latinas/os in information technologies.[217] At task was to find a relevant qualitative methodological toolkit for my research.

Because audiobooks are an industry at the convergence of media and tech, I turned to methodologies in media studies. Their critical analysis acquires a transdisciplinary character in the space between these fields. This means that the disciplinary boundaries between information studies and media studies become blurred and converge.[218] As Christian Fuchs tells us:

> Critical information and media theory/studies is an endeavor that focuses ontologically on the analysis of information, media and communication in the context of domination, asymmetrical power relations, exploitation, oppression and control by employing epistemologically all theoretical and/or empirical means necessary for doing so in order to contribute at the praxeological level to the establishment of a participatory, co-operative society. Given such a definition, critical information studies and media studies are inherently normative and political.[219]

From media studies, I brought canonical texts,[220] and works that provide generative approaches to analyzing audiobooks as a media industry,[221] including key literature in Critical Political Economy (CPE)[222] into conversation with critical methodological literature from IS. Yet found

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[217] Melissa Villa-Nicholas, "Latina/o Librarian Technological Engagements: REFORMA in the Digital Age," *Latino Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 2015): 542–60, https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2015.43; Melissa Villa-Nicholas, "Ruptures in Telecommunications: Latina and Latino Information Workers in Southern California," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 42, no. 1 (2017): 73–97.

[218] Christian Fuchs, *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2011), 78, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203830864.

[219] Fuchs, 133.

[220] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1st MIT Press ed (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994); Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, "The Real Future of the Media," *M/C Journal* 15, no. 3 (June 27, 2012), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/537; Miranda Banks, *Production Studies, The Sequel!: Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315736471; Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009); Stuart Hall and Open University, eds., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Culture, Media, and Identities (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997).

[221] Caldwell, *Production Culture*; Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[222] Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, eds., *Marx and the Political Economy of the Media*, Studies in Critical Social Sciences, volume 79 (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2016); Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media*; Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980 - 1996* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2011); Michael Kackman and Mary Celeste Kearney, eds., *The Craft of Criticism: Critical Media Studies in Practice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018); Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa,

no critical methodological approaches that centered the experiences of Latinas in media industries. To do this specific intersectional power analysis, I turned to Latina/Chicana feminist methodologies from the fields of Chicana/Chicano studies, and from our sister field of Education.[223] It is important to note that I was introduced to much of this literature via Professor Daniel Solórzano's Research Apprenticeship Course, a safe space where students of color share our research and academic experiences.

My work thus borrows from all of these fields and introduces a braided Critical Political Economy (CPE) and Latina/Chicana Feminist (L/CF) methodological framework to LIS. This braided approach creates the opportunity to do an intersectional power analysis of the audiobook commercial media industry while centering the experiences of US-based Latinas and opens lines of inquiry that may not be explored from dominant white and male perspectives. Additionally, an integral component of my research process has been its emergent design. While the focus of study has been clear and my frameworks have been constant, my approach has not been restrictive. I have not limited my use of individual techniques as they have become apparent. The methods that I employ are: Textual analysis, Pláticas (a C/LF interview style), Culturally Intuitive Observation (a method I introduce to the C/LF toolkit), and Critical Technocultural

eds., *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, Global Handbooks in Media and Communication Research (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014); Dwayne Roy Winseck, ed., *Political Economies of the Media: The Transformation of the Global Media Industries* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

[223] Cinthya Saavedra and Michelle Pérez, "An Introduction: (Re)Envisioning Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodologies," *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies* 6, no. 2 (September 2014): 78–80, https://doi.org/10.18085/llas.6.2.0645634738372v66; Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands*, 1987, https://courses.washington.edu/com597j/pdfs/anzaldua,borderlands.pdf; Calderón et al., "A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited," December 2012; Héctor Calderón et al., eds., "Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics," in *Criticism in the Borderlands*, by Luis Leal (Duke University Press, 1991), 203–20, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822382355-019; Dolores Delgado Bernal, Rebeca Burciaga, and Judith Flores Carmona, "Chicana/Latina *Testimonios* : Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45, no. 3 (July 2012): 363–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149; Fierro and Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology"; González and Padilla, *Doing the Public Good*; Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*; Quiñones, "(Re)Braiding to Tell"; Sonia Saldívar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Discourse Analysis (Ch. 8). Next, I explain my methodological framework, methods, and justify my population of interest.

I. Methodological framework: CPE and C/LF

A Critical Political Economy (CPE) of media "examines how the political and economic organization ('political economy') of media industries affects the production and circulation of meaning, and connects to the distribution of symbolic and material resources that enable people to understand, communicate and act in the world."[224] Because media is increasingly produced and circulated via the Internet, a CPE lens needs to be applied to digital media to detangle how power is operationalized in the digital space, and how it is connected to legacy media. Jonathan Hardy explains that doing a power analysis of digital media industries by engaging with a CPE lens requires an analysis along three different registers: 1) The study of how the communications industries work. This includes an analysis of ownership, finance, and support mechanisms, on the one hand, and an understanding of the organization of cultural production (labor structures), on the other. 2) Unpacking the influences and consequences of different ways of organizing the media: commercial, state, public, and their complex combinations. This involves historical and contemporary studies of the changing nature of structural influences. 3) A careful interrogation of the relationships between media content and communication systems with the broader structures of society.[225]

To address the first and second registers, I include a historical chapter (Ch.5) in this study. Historically contextualizing the audiobook industry helps us to understand how it has politically and economically been organized across time, by whom, and how structural whiteness

[224] Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media*, 9.
[225] Hardy, 9.

has—whether consciously or unconsciously—served to create exclusionary structures. My historical analysis tracks audiobooks from the creation of the phonograph to digital platforms where the work of audiobook narration is increasingly taking place. I also address all three registers in chapters 6,7, and 8 where I show how the labor structure of audiobook narrators impacts resource allocation, labor opportunities, labor conditions, identity formation, sense of belonging, and policy development.

Critical theories are an important component of CPE because they work alongside it to highlight the ways in which power operates as experienced, understood, and identified from diverse standpoints.[226] To this end, I braid L/CF, which is an extension of "our [Latina/Chicana] ways of knowing and being" as an essential component of my critical methodological toolkit.[227]

L/CF is a decolonizing methodology that, as Cindy Fierro and Dolores Delgado Bernal explain, requires that the researcher: 1) grapple with their activist-scholar role, 2) embrace alternative ways of knowing, 3) confront those aspects of ourselves that render us the colonized or the perpetrator… even if we are from those communities, 4) pushback against assumptions of neutrality, and 5) pushback against ideas that our bodymindspirit must be separate entities.[228] When engaging with L/CF, the researcher must be constantly self-reflexive.

To the above points, I embrace my activist-scholar role by centralizing the lives of Latinas as a political move to include us in future of work conversations. My aim is for this study to be of benefit to my community of research by making visible our contributions in this context and for it to impact policy by highlighting the ways in which our experiences converge and

[226] Hardy, 9.
[227] Saavedra and Salazár Pérez 2014, 78.
[228] Fierro and Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology"; Calderón et al., "A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited," December 2012; I. Lara, "Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism," *Chicano/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas En Letras y Cambio Social 4(2): 10-45*, 2005, 37.

diverge from those of other workers in this space. By centering Latinas, my research brings to light how the political and economy organization of this industry impacts different communities differently, and why these must be considered in policymaking, especially future of work policy.

Embracing alternative ways of knowing is foundational to L/CF. This framework shifts the focus to people by listening to and honoring their voices and thus challenging dominant market discourses, and it prevents Latinas from being hidden and folded into traditional patriarchal (Latino) and liberal feminist (white female) scholarship.[229] It illuminates intersectional spaces that may not otherwise be considered via dominant white and male lenses. And it is an intersectional approach that pushes back against "single-axis framework[s]"[230] because it understands that multiple structures of oppression can operate at the same time. The insights gained from this perspective have been used by Latina/Chicana Feminist scholars to "work against binary thinking" and to "make meaning of… contradictions."[231] This approach allows the researcher to bring their whole-self to the work in order to have "better access to the complexity of the world and of [ourselves]."[232]

One of the ways in which the researcher operationalizes L/CF's decolonizing potential is by involving their research collaborators throughout the research process, including in data analysis where they participate in "analyzing how their lives are being interpreted, documented, and reported."[233] However, in my research process I have found that involving my participants throughout the process resulted in additional labor and labor time that many of the women were

[229] Bernal, D. D. (1998). Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555–581. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48
[230] Crenshaw, K. (2018). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. In *Living with Contradictions*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429499142-5
[231] Calderón et al., "A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited," December 2012, 518.
[232] Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 1.
[233] Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 1.

unable and/or unwilling to contribute. I reflected on whether asking participants to do the additional labor of analysis or not involving them at this stage of the process rendered me in the colonizer mode. I decided to do the analytical work, share it with my participants, and to leave the lines of communication open for their feedback, if/when they were inclined to participate at this stage of the research process. This flexibility was important to not burden them, and it also allowed me to keep moving forward with the work. We must move forward ethically and respectfully, while not imposing self-barriers to getting our activist work to the world. Whether they chose to participate in the data analysis stage or not, these women are all agents of knowledge whose participation in this study has helped link experience, research, community, and social change.[234]

Finally, as L/CF researchers, pushing back against assumptions of neutrality and against ideas that mindbodyspirit are separate entities is central to our work.[235] This is why choice of methods is critical. My methodological toolkit centers the voices of U.S.-based Latina narrators and provides a culturally relevant and respectful space for them to bring their whole-selves and ways of understanding and navigating the world to this study. It serves to detangle how the political and economic organization of this work impacts these women. It provides a ground-up understanding of how the organization of this industry impacts these workers.

II. Methods

The methods that I employ embrace complexity and require constant reflexivity and flexibility in the data gathering and analysis processes. These are: textual analysis, Pláticas,

[234] Bernal, 5.
[235]Lara, Irene. 2005. "BRUJA POSITIONALITIES: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism." *Chicana/Latina Studies* 4 (2): 10–45.

Culturally Intuitive Observation (CIO), Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). In line with my epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approach, I engage with these methods to center the experiences and voices of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators.

Textual analysis

I employ textual analysis as a method to both historically and discursively contextualize the audiobook ecosystem. By 'text', I mean, "texts as they appear in a myriad of interconnected forms—not simply printed texts, but oral communication, individual and social performances, material culture, film, television, tweets, websites, and so on."[236] I look at publicly available works, academic literature, online newspapers, websites, ebooks, contracts, datasets, digital labor platforms, and audiobooks. My interpretive toolkit for reading texts includes close reading, thick description (cultural context), distant reading, and semiotics. [237] I alternate between distant and close readings because, to truly understand a text, one cannot decontextualize nuance, nor ignore nuance by privileging distant reading: they are mutually constitutive.

Pláticas

Pláticas are a culturally relevant, in-depth, open-ended interview method that allows workers the space to explain in their own words what this growing industry looks—and feels—like from their perspectives. "Pláticas are a part of a [Chicana/Latina feminist] methodology that is essential to the way we embody and perform research. This method aligns with the strong feminist tradition of theorizing from the brown body; meaning that the modes of interaction and

[236] Philip Joseph Deloria and Alexander I. Olson, *American Studies: A User's Guide* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017). Kl, 2800.
[237] Deloria and Olson. Kl, 2735.

analysis are collaborative and attentive to the many ways of knowing and learning in our communities."[238] This method pushes back against "politics of exclusion"[239] by foregrounding the experiences of Latinas and supports a Latina feminist commitment to reciprocity. It is not clinical and extractive, but instead ensures that the conversations be a space for open dialog and mutual sharing between researcher and research collaborators.[240] (See Appendix A for Pláticas questionnaire).

Culturally Intuitive Observation (CIO)

Culturally Intuitive Observation (CIO) is a new form of participant observation that I am introducing the Chicana/Latina methodological toolkit. CIO explicitly engages with Dolores Delgado Bernal's cultural intuition by accounting for our subjectivities; our holistic and nuanced understanding of data given our borderlands standpoint. While the practice of engaging with cultural intuition during data collection and analysis is not new, naming it and deliberately employing it as C/LF praxis is. The need for claiming this method emerged during my initial participant observations. Upon reflection I found that my insider/outsider positionality not only as audiobook narrator, but as a Latina with decades of experience in the industry came into play.

For example, I attended several narrator meetings and events sponsored by our union, SAG-AFTRA, and observed that upwards of 90% of attendees were white, with an even female-

[238] Fierro and Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology," 116.
[239] Alvina E. Quintana, "Book Review *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* . By Emma Pérez. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999. *Speaking Chicana: Voice, Power, and Identity* . Edited by D. Letticia Galindo and María Dolores Gonzales. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* . By Sonia Saldívar-Hull. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (January 2003): 724–000, https://doi.org/10.1086/342586.
[240] Fierro and Delgado Bernal, "Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology."

male ratio. I was commonly one of only two Latinas; these are my colleagues, and, if there were other Latinas that I did not know, they were not many. The exception in Latinx inclusion was an audiobook workshop/taller de audiolibros sponsored by our union in 2019. During the workshop, the presenter, one of the top Spanish language audiobook producers in Los Angeles, gave an overview of the audiobook industry using successful white narrators as aspirational examples. Then, he offered participants the opportunity to read a prepared text. Unlike audiobook meetings, where the focus is on organizing efforts, contracts, pay, working conditions, etc., this Latinx-focused workshop was about introducing talent to this labor arena while offering the presenter/producer an opportunity to expand his roster.

During the Q & A section, I noted that, as is typical, newer union members asked questions about how to gain entrée into this industry while established members asked questions about labor conditions and wages. The latter were, if not avoided, not the questions the presenter wanted to focus on. When asked, "What percentage of audiobook budgets are allocated to the narrator?" The reply was, "we pay as per union rates." Intuitively, another established Latina narrator and I shared a look after this reply. In my post-presentation conversations with union staff that night, I asked about wages for English language and Spanish language narration and was told that whatever was paid for English language was the cap because Spanish language would not pay more than that. The tone indicated an assumption that I was in agreement about this linguistic hierarchy as "common sense." And, when I suggested a workshop to discuss wages, labor conditions, etc. with Spanish language narrators, the response from him was a non-committal "Oh, yeah." And a "you're stepping out of line," look from the female (perhaps Latina) union staff member next to him, which another Latina narrator and I both noticed, and later discussed.

Based on my cultural intuition, which is guided by personal, professional, and academic knowledge, I understood that these experiences were forms of microaggressions.[241] They align with the three patterns of racial and gender microaggressions that Daniel Solórzano points to as impacting career paths of Chicana/o scholars, which I am adapting to this context: 1) feeling out of place based on racial and gender exclusions, as exemplified by the lack of Latinx inclusion at "general" meetings and events. 2) Feeling the lower expectations from those in leadership positions, as with the reticence to address questions of labor conditions with Spanish-speaking Latinx members; the unspoken assumption here is that labor issues are attended to in the English-language meetings, where English is equated to whiteness as the mythical norm. 3) Latinx accounts of subtle and not so subtle racial and gender incidents, as with the assumption of agreement about linguistic and wage hierarchies and the "you're stepping out of line" look from union staff. My nuanced interpretation of this data is grounded in my awareness of what it means to be a Latina in the media industry with its complex history and nuanced power relationships.

A so-called "objective" participant observation that demands the research leave the self out of the equation, might miss these key nuances in the data. In other words, "objective" participant Observation might leave microaggressions out of view. Deliberately naming CIO is a political move to push back against this issue, and Participant Observation's racists origins.

Traditional participant observation is a key method in ethnography, which was developed mainly in anthropology. At its inception, ethnographers were primarily white men studying –and essentializing—geographically 'exotic others'.[242] Today, ethnography is "viewed as interpretive

[241] Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars."
[242] Murchison, 4–8; Alison Jane Pickard, "Ethnography," in *Research Methods in Information, 2nd Ed.* (Facet publishing, 2013), 135–47.

research that accepts that the researcher enters the field with predefined values and beliefs."[243] This method requires participating and observing at the same time. Maintaining this balance allows the researcher to "juxtapose two different types of information [insider/emic and outsider/etic] and to generate insights as well as questions."[244] The goal is to develop an insider's depth of understanding of what is happening while, at the same time, taking a step back and keeping an outsider's analytic stance. Almost all research involves some sort of directed observation, which is used to "provide evidence of the 'here and now', to discover how people behave and interact in particular situations."[245]

Researching a group that I am actively a part of makes me a participant-observer. Arguments against this type of insider work are rooted in the false notion that objectivity is ever possible. Neutrality and objectivity are conceptual constructs that serve to uphold power structures. These terms are used to throw sand in our eyes.[246] This supposed "view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god trick" that keeps those who claim it out of reach from being answerable for what they learned how to see.[247] In contrast, "feminist don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence…. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and… situated and embodied knowledges [that push] against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims."[248] Feminist objectivity is about responsibly acknowledging that all knowledge is situated; "partial and locatable."[249]

Latina/Chicana feminist epistemologies acknowledge that our knowledge –equitably with all other's—is situated. Our ways of knowing emanate from our borderlands experiences, which

[243] Pickard, "Ethnography," 136.
[244] Murchison, *Ethnography Essentials,* 88.
[245] Murchison, *Ethnography Essentials,* 8.
[246] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 576.
[247] Haraway, 582–83.
[248] Haraway, 583.
[249] Haraway, 584.

refers "to the geographical, emotional, and/or psychological space occupied by mestizas."[250] From this standpoint, at task is to push back against the "colonial mindset [that] believes in a normative language, race, culture, gender, class, and sexuality" and not allow "the white colonial heteronormative gaze to construct and interpret our past," our present, nor dictate our future.[251] In contrast, Mestiza views are complex because, to survive, we have learned to see through both the oppressors' and the oppressed eyes. Marginalized individuals develop this sixth sense for survival; a strength that comes from their borderland experiences.[252] We must remain therefore remain vigilant against hostile claims of comprehensive, all-encompassing yet unlocatable sight, and call out power moves aimed at fracturing and separating us from this intuitive knowledge, which emanates from staying in tune with our mindbodyspirit.[253]

CIO honors the power of Latina intuitive knowledge and highlights how it comes into play in the data collection and analysis. As stated, Culturally Intuitive Observation is rooted in Dolores Delgado Bernal's 1998 seminal article, *Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Education*, in which she introduced the term, "Cultural intuition." Her term expands on Strauss and Corbin's "theoretical sensitivity," which indicates an understanding of the subtle meaning of data by extending "one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engaging in the analysis of data."[254][255] I weave Delgado Bernal's four dimensions of cultural intuition: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and the analytic process itself into CIO. This move indicates

[250] Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 5.
[251] Emma Perez, "Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 24, no. 2 (2004): 123, https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2004.0021.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Lara, "Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism," 36.
[254] Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
[255] Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 7.

an awareness of the researcher's insider/outsider subjectivities, pushes back against claims of researcher objectivity, and attributes her understanding of the subtle meaning of data (or lack of data) to her borderlands—observer dependent—life experiences.

Personal Experience

Researcher subjectivity, background, and life experiences inform the analytical process and equip us with particular insights. However, as Delgado Bernal points out, "personal experiences do not operate in a vacuum."[256] For Latina/Chicana researchers these experiences are partially shaped by ancestral wisdom, collective experience, and community memory. All of these are interwoven/trenzadas and inform our cultural intuition.

Existing Literature

The literature we engage with, and how we engage with it, help us to contextualize and assess a situation or event. It provides us with theoretical insights and with the language via which to communicate our insights across a broader range of communities. This dimension brings into focus the importance of curation because the texts that we bring into conversation inform what questions we formulate throughout our research process. It enhances our cultural intuition by making us empathetic readers and sensitive to what to look for in the data.[257]

[256] Bernal, 8.
[257] Bernal, 8.

Professional Experience

Delgado Bernal points to Strauss & Corbin (1990) who state, "Years of practice in a particular field often provides an insider view of how things work in that field."[258] As earlier noted, my insider/outsider lens as a SAG-AFTRA union actress and audiobook narrator affords me a unique opportunity to continually occupy spaces and participate in conversations with narrators, union staff, producers, and policymakers who are shaping the audiobook ecosystem and its infrastructure. My positionality necessitates constant reflexivity, so that my insider lens does not blind me to information that I might consider normal or "common sense."

Analytical Research Process

Delgado Bernal again points to Strauss & Corbin (1990), who state, "Insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as you interact with your data."[259] She extends this idea by suggesting that including Latina/Chicana participants in the analysis of data "contributes to the researcher's cultural intuition."[260] The author clarifies that she is not arguing for an essentialist notion of the research or of Latina/Chicana participants, but that "many Chicana scholars achieve a sense of cultural intuition" that is informed by our situated knowledge. CIO weaves, honors, and acknowledges that these dimensions are all at play throughout this method's data collection and analysis processes.

To operationalize this method, I attended several IRL and online audiobook workshops, conferences, and events, and have kept a journal throughout the process of data collection in which I describe "events, space, actors, activities, objects, acts, goals, indicators of difference,

[258] Bernal, 8.
[259] Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 43.
[260] Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 9.

and feelings; both my own and those of others,"[261] take into consideration any "confounding variables,"[262] and I take note of my intuitive knowledge and the insights and questions this knowledge generates.

Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA)

In searching for a method for analyzing audiobook labor platforms, only André Brock's Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) provides a holistic approach for studying digital media as phenomena, artifact, and culture while concurrently analyzing the interactions between technical design, ideology and technology practice, and power relations.[263] CTDA provides "an intervention into normative and analytic technology analyses, as CTDA formulates technology as cultural representations and social structures in order to simultaneously interrogate culture and technology as intertwined concepts."[264] I engage with CTDA as a method that allows the researcher to pushback against technologically deterministic discourses and to unpack the ways in which technology is not culturally neutral nor its design value-free[265] while bringing the workers and the ways in which they interact with given technology into the analysis.

CTDA is "a multimodal analytic technique for the investigation of Internet and digital phenomena, artifacts, and culture."[266] This multimodality means that CTDA captures the "double articulation" of technology as both artifact and medium, which constitute the user and discourse through its interface design.[267] Brock explains that CTDA avoids normativity by focusing on the

[261] Caswell lecture and slides. IS 280 Social Science Research Methodology for IS. Week 4: October 24, 2017.
[262] Caswell lecture, IS 280 Social Science Research Methodology for IS. Week 3: Oct. 17, 2017.
[263] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1013.
[264] Brock, 1012.
[265] Arnold Pacey, *The Culture of Technology* (Oxford, England: B. Blackwell, 1983); Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"; Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*; Noble and Tynes, *The Intersectional Internet*.
[266] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1016.
[267] Brock, 1016.

ways that particular "technology users perceive, articulate, and ultimately define the technological space in which they operate and exists:" with the understanding that these discourses are "contingent upon the contexts in which they are enacted."[268] As an analytic technic or method CTDA thus provides the spaces—and necessitates—that we analyze technology along Arnold Pacey's three aspects of technology (technical, cultural, and organizational)[269] ---while, at the same time, considering the discursive ways in which specific users understand their interactions with given technology.

To employ this method, requires that we first delimit the artifact. CTDA classifies the ICT artifact as a text that needs to be read/unpacked. This move acknowledges the cultural influences of both designers and users, thus providing the possibilities for interpretation. This specificity in delimiting the artifact relieves the researcher "from formal exegesis of the entire technical complexity of an ICT" while asking that she "unpack specific… cultural, ideological, and historical contexts shaping [its] design."[270] The three main expectation for CTDA are: 1) an understanding of the multimodality of data, 2) multimodality of interpretive lens, and 3) that a critical cultural framework be applied to all data modes (collection, interpretation, analysis).[271] I applied L/CF as my critical cultural framework.

I employ CTDA in chapter 7.3 to analyze the ways in which Amazon's audiobook labor platform, Audiobook Creation Exchange (ACX), is designed to enhance Amazon's monopoly of the audiobook industry, and how this is discursively framed from the perspective of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators.

[268] Brock, 1016.
[269] Pacey, *The Culture of Technology*, 6.
[270] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1024.
[271] Brock, 1023.

III. Addressing Ethical Concerns, Privacy, and Limitations

Addressing Ethical Concerns

I adhered to The Belmont Report's three basic ethical principles—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, which is foundational to maintaining an ethical research approach. The respect of persons principle has two requirements: "the requirement to acknowledge autonomy and the requirement to protect those with diminished autonomy."[272] Beneficence is an obligation to do no harm and to maximize potential benefits and minimize potential harms. Justice refers to a "just distribution of burdens and benefits."[273] Engaging with C/LF is also a demonstration of an ethics of care and respect for my research participants. It is ethical inclusion in praxis.

I also engaged with the Native American Center for Excellence Substance Abuse Prevention (NACE) "Steps for Conducting Research and Evaluation in Native Communities" because these guidelines offer a clear, ethical approach that is relevant to my Chicana/Latina population. Key relevant guidelines include:[274]

- Get to know the community and establishing relationships early on.
- Understand any historical trauma experienced by this population and explore individual histories of my research partners.
- Demonstrate respect.
- Conduct my study on my community partners' schedules. Be respectful of their time.
- Appreciate my population's assets and challenges.
- Engage the population of interest in a partnership.
- Be transparent.
- Respect privacy.
- Employ blended research methods that include my population's "ways of knowing."
- Keep the community fully informed.
- Acknowledge and give credit to the community.
- Assist and support the communities in sustaining the benefits of the research study.

[272] Belmont, 1–10.
[273] Ibid.
[274] This is an edited the list.

The NACE steps are reminders to keep research expectations and ethics in check, to ensure a continuous practice of flexibility and respect, and a constant reflexivity as an activist-scholar. My commitment is for this research study to be mutually beneficial and not extractive.

On Privacy

A strict protocol for safeguarding their information was followed, for which only I had access. Any information obtained in connection with this study and that could identify participants is confidential and will only be disclosed with their permission or as required by law. Confidentiality is maintained by means of the use of pseudonyms. To maintain the use of pseudonyms, I, as the principal investigator (PI) memorized the connections. No one else has access to this information. Also, to ensure that my participants are fully informed from the outset, all information, including consent forms have been written and made available in both English and/or Spanish. The form addressed any questions and/or concerns my community partners might have.

Limitations

The study is limited because of the small number of interviews. However, due to the nuance and robustness of the research, the findings are high in internal validity and allow for insights from both the emic and etic perspectives. Though not generalizable, the findings are transferable. It is also important to note the temporal challenges of doing research within and about the digital space because of its fast pace of change, and how ephemeral the information and access to information may be.

IV. Conclusion

Any analysis of convergence media labor structures necessitates transnational, transcultural, and intersectional lenses. My braided CPE and L/CF methodological toolkit brings to light the ways in which U.S.-based Latinas bring these necessary lenses to the conversation, making their views critical to any future of work discourses. My approach reinstates Latinas into audiobook history, makes their contributions visible, and facilitates a power analysis throughout the research process.

My methodological approach models inclusivity because it is designed to listen to the voices of this historically overlooked population. My toolkit opens up new lines of inquiry that may not be considered my dominant white/male lenses thus providing new insights. These insights reveal the ways in which diverse workers might experience the same labor differently. This is key because whose voices are heard (and who is listening) impacts how problems are understood and framed, what solutions-- including policy-decisions—and consequences are considered. Without these women's perspectives our understandings of digital labor structures and future of work discourses are skewed and incomplete. Importantly, my approach contributes to my field of Information Studies by participating in filling in the gap in C/LF methodologies and methods in IS.

CHAPTER 5: A LATINA FEMINIST AUDIOBOOK HISTORY

Audiobook history is transhistorical. It is complex. It brings into conversation the history of libraries, media, and technologies. It is intertwined with U.S. racial and racist history. And it is a history of labor. History orients our view. It encompasses both "what happened," and "that which is said to have happened."[275] Official versions of history are constructed by those with the power to decide who and what matters, what is included in the historical record, how the record is interpreted, mediated, made accessible, and by whom.[276] Hegemonic memory is thus political, constructed, and contextual. It serves to protect power and the status quo by disciplining our view to misinterpret partiality and bias as fair, objective, and holistic. The history of audiobooks follows this trend. It tends to be told from a neoliberal perspective: Following the trajectory of technological developments, the markets these have opened, and the growth of the industry, both in terms of capital and market segmentation. These histories keep our focus away from the humans who are doing the work. They also tend to center white experiences; positioning whiteness as the universal, neutral, and uninterrogated "mythical norm."[277]

My approach to audiobook history pushes back against neoliberal framings and the deception of white perception as normative. I engage with a Critical Race Theory (CRT) and

[275] Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Hazel V. Carby, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015), 2.
[276] Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory."; Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past : Power and the Production of History / Michel-Rolph Trouillot.* Boston, Mass: Beacon Press.; Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Arhcives in South Africa.," *Archival Science* 44 (2002); Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community"; Geoffrey Yeo, "Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations," *The American Archivist* 70, no. 2 (2007): 315–43; Gilliland, "Neutrality, Social Justice and the Obligations of Archival Education and Educators in the Twenty-First Century"; David Thomas et al., *The Silence of the Archive*, 2017.
[277] Audrey Lorde. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 116; David J. Hudson, "The Whiteness Of Practicality," in *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Studies* (Sacramento: Library Juice Press, LLC, 2017), 213.

Latina/Chicana Feminist (L/CF) framework. This approach reorients our focus to center the humans who are doing the work, it broadens our understanding of audiobook history by bringing intersectional concerns into view, and it opens new lines of questioning. I build on existing studies by pointing to technological developments and the market, but as a means to bring labor issues into the conversation.

Whiteness is normalized when Latines and other POC are symbolically annihilating from history. This silencing, as Troillot tells us, takes place at different moments:

> Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of the fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).

To pushback against the silencing of Latinas in this arena, requires that we understand where to look for the source of our silencing. Plus, as Trouillot also points out, not all silences are the same, so how we pushback will vary: "Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly."[278] As a revisionist Latina feminist history, this chapter reveals the ways in which Latina erasures have been created at different moments, the different forms in which we have been silenced, and the ways our silencing has been operationalized and reified.

Audiobooks provide a generative site for interrogating the relationship between historical memory and power. Engaging with a CRT and L/CF framework affords me the opportunity to contextualize the power dynamics that have shaped the audiobook industry, how we have come to understand it, and how Latinas come to understand ourselves as workers within this arena.

[278] Trouillot and Carby, *Silencing the Past*, 26–27.

Our erasure from history is a form of misinformation; a microaggression that inaccurately shapes others' perceptions, and our own sense of belonging. My approach brings to light the violence inherent in forcing POC to see the world from a white lens; an aggressive move that symbolically annihilates our own understandings, views, experiences, and right to exist on our own terms. It brings to focus that, for people of color, the violence of misinformation is not a new phenomenon, but the very fabric that has held this nation-state together.

This is not an exhaustive history. It is a history that engages with Latinidad. The goal of this chapter is to reexamine the historical record and replace comforting majoritarian interpretations of audiobook history with ones that square more accurately with Latine American experiences, and to reinstate Latinas into the historical record.[279] Because of the dearth of records and studies on Latinas in audiobooks, I have interwoven audiobook history with the history of Latinas and Latine Americans in U.S. entertainment media more broadly. As such, my approach highlights the ways that Latinas have been erased not only from audiobook histories, but from U.S. media histories in general.[280] Thus, beyond audiobooks, this chapter provides a window to understanding the ways that Latina and Latine silences have been constructed and reified in English-language U.S. media.

This chapter is organized as follows: In the first section, I: 1877-1930s: Phonograph, Cylinders, Discs, and Libraries, I look into the origins of audiobooks. Then, beginning with 1940s with the emergence of commercial audiobooks, I track audiobook history by vicennial sections, covering twenty years per section:

II. 1940s-50s: The Commercial Audiobook Industry, LPs, and Interest Convergence
III. 1960s-70s: Mobile Technologies, Social Movements, and "Minority" Folding

[279] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 20.; María Cotera, "Nuestra Autohistoria: Toward a Chicana Digital Praxis," *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2018): 483–504, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0032.
[280] Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (November 2014): 26–37, https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2014.36.4.26.

IV. 1980s-90s: Neoliberal Indoctrination and Meaning Formation
V. 2000s-2010s: Strikes, Unionization, and Platform Labor
VI. 2020 and Beyond: Data Justice, AI, DE&I, and Policy

I follow its commercial track because commercial audiobooks are the focus of my study.

I. 1877-1930s: Phonograph, Cylinders, Discs, and Libraries

While digital audiobooks, as format, industry, and site of labor, may be a relatively new phenomenon, audiobooks can be traced back to Edison's invention of the phonograph and his recitation of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on a sheet of tinfoil in 1877.[281] Since 1877, finding the human with the optimal voice and interpretation skills to bring a particular book to the audio-sphere has been key to the success of an audiobook. As Matthew Rubery tells us in *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, "Whether marquee names or anonymous talent, narrators wield tremendous influence over a book's reception as well as its sales figures. To put it another way: a talking book's success depends largely on who's doing the talking."[282]

In "The Phonograph and its Future," Edison foresees the rise of the audio book. He speculates that his invention brings within the range of possibility that:

> Books may be read by the charitably-inclined professional reader, or by such readers especially employed for that purpose, and the record of such book used in the asylums of the blind, hospitals, the sick-chamber, or even with great profit and amusement by the lady or gentleman whose eyes and hands may be otherwise employed; or, again, because of the greater enjoyment to be had from a book when read by an elocutionist than when read by the average reader. The ordinary record-sheet, repeating this book from fifty to a hundred times at will, would command a price that would pay the original reader well for the slightly-increased difficulty in reading it aloud in the phonograph.[283]

[281] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 1.; An invention Edison seems to have invented, unlike others for which he took unwarranted sole credit.
[282] Matthew Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2016), 11.
[283] Edison, Thomas A. 1878. "The Phonograph and Its Future." *The North American Review* 126 (262): 533.

He repeatedly points to the importance of a professional reader (or narrator) and predicts that books will be listened to "because of the greater enjoyment to be had from a book when read by an elocutionist than when read by the average reader." In tune with his capitalist ethos, however, Edison also devalues narrators' contributions by stating that the narrators' labor is only "slightly-increased [in] difficulty [when] reading it aloud in the phonograph." A narrative that continues to this day, and which serves to devalue the labor and contributions of audiobook narrators.

Soon after the tinfoil recordings, came the Age of Cylinders. This era spans from 1887-1929 when the last cylinders were produced on celluloid.[284] The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) Cylinder Audio Archive contains a rich collection of cylinder recordings that "spanned a half-century of technological development in sound recording. As documents of American cultural history and musical style, cylinders serve as an audible witness to the sounds and songs through which typical audiences first encountered the recorded human voice."[285] This definition surfaces a series of questions including: Who is included in this tapestry of 'American' cultural history? How is 'American' culture defined? Who are considered "typical audiences?" Whose voices were recorded and included as "audible witnesses?"

The centering of whiteness as Americanness can be seen in the content of the cylinders and, also, in how the cylinders are categorized.[286] You can browse by genre, instrument, topical subject, or ethnic and foreign. That "ethnic and foreign" are under the same category gives us a glimpse into the perspective of those in charge of categorizing: Ethnic is equated with foreign. White does not seem to be considered an ethnicity that represents one type of "American," but the normative type of American from which all others deviate.

[284] UCSB Cylinder Audio Archive. Website: http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.

After the age of cylinders, came the phonographic records. The age of the cylinders gave way to the age of the disc. "Just before the turn of the century, the flat platter replaced the cylinder" with shellac as the major ingredient. 78 rpm Shellac records became the standard for many years. Though they "reproduced music with reasonable fidelity," their drawbacks were that they were expensive, heavy, fragile, and only had playing times of up to five minutes.[287] They were not ideal for talking books. In the 1920's, Hollywood invested in the research and development of sound technologies for talking motion pictures. It was in these engineering labs where the "constant turntable speed of 33½ rpm using flexible, relatively unbreakable records manufactured out of acetate mixes" for the reproduction of sound was developed.[288] Robert Irwin, Director of Research and Education, at the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) paid attention to these developments. He hired Jackson Oscar Kleber, an electrical engineer who, in the early1930's, went on to develop the technology to record talking books on twelve-inch long-playing phonographic records (LPs) capable of recording 25 minutes/4500 words on each side. In addition to their longer playing times, LPs were cheaper to produce than shellac and could be mailed to listeners.

With this technology, the AFB and the Library of Congress Book for the Blind Project established the Talking Book program.[289]As Edison correctly foresaw, one of the tracks for audiobook would be aimed at bringing literature to those with disabilities that prohibit them from reading. Audiobook origin stories intersect with histories of media used by people with disabilities, and with the history of libraries. In the 1930's, the American Foundation for the

[287] American Foundation for the Blind. "Chapter 10: The Talking Book." Website. https://www.afb.org/online-library/unseen-minority-0/chapter-10
[288] Ibid.
[289] APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.

Blind (AFB) and the Library of Congress Book for the Blind Project established the Talking Book program.[290] Soon after this, John Irwin and his team at the AFB developed the technology to record talking books on twelve-inch phonographic records.[291] In 1934, the Library of Congress sent the first talking books to readers.[292] These included the Bible, patriotic documents, several of Shakespeare's plays, and Gladys Hasty Carroll's *As the Earth Turns*, a story about a white family in rural Maine, was the first novel recorded in the U.S.[293]

The choice of works produced as the first talking books by the Library of Congress gives us a glimpse into the worldviews of the decision-makers of the time, and of whom they considered to be their 'American' audience. But, why these works? The function of recreational reading, Michael Harris tells us, was to contribute to the maintenance of order.[294] These choices served this function. They also reflect the ethos, intent, and purpose behind the creation of the U.S. public library system itself: Its role in the maintenance of order and in the construction of a particular type of "good citizen." Harris explains:

> As the Trustees of the Boston Public Library wrote in their twenty-third Annual Report (1875), 'it is in no part of the duty of the municipality to raise taxes for the amusement of the people, unless the amusement is tolerably clearly seen to be conductive to higher ends of good citizenship, like the encouragement of patriotism, the promotion of public health, of the undermining of immorality.[295]

These works were acceptable leisure reading, and thus acceptable as talking books, because they promoted the aims of the library.

According to the AFB, a key factor for the rapid popularity of talking books for the blind were the narrators:

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[290] Ibid.
[291] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 64.
[292] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 65.
[293] Rubery, 66.
[294] Michael H Harris, *The Purpose of the American Public Library in Historical Perspective: A Revisionist Interpretation*, 1972, 6.
[295] Harris, 7.

> The winning formula was in the decision that actors could do a better job in bringing a book to life than… other public speakers…. In the Thirties, heyday of soap opera, there were actors galore who were comfortable with a microphone, experienced in conveying characterization by voice alone and—the economy being what it was—glad to have a supplementary source of earnings even at the modest fees offered for Talking Book work.[296]

Narrators were paid $5 per finished "page" (one side of a 15- or 20-minute record). And the work was strenuous. Because early masters were made on wax that could not be corrected, a mistake meant doing the whole side over again.[297] The AFB does not mention how much total labor time (prep, recording, pickups) it took to record a novel.

The celebrity formula was used from the inception of the talking book program:

> That they could hear the voices of famous personages may not have made a great difference to the blind people who hungrily awaited each new Talking Book, but it carried prestige in other quarters. One of the reasons the Library of Congress gave for its reluctance to award the recording contracts to commercial firms was that only a non-profit organization could attract the unpaid services of eminent personalities.[298]

Showcasing celebrities served promotional and funding purposes. On their website the AFB provides an extensive list of the celebrities with which they worked. These include W. Somerset Maugham, Bertrand Russell, Jose Ferrer, Jessica Tandy, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Joan Crawford, and Ruth Gordon. For non-celebrity professional actors, there was an audition process. One of the AFB reports from this process states, "we have auditioned literally hundreds of professional actors [and] have found less than ten readers who combine the qualities of educational background, voice, accuracy and stamina essential for this work." In other words, this work necessitated a specific combination of skillsets and, also, for non-celebrity professionals, gaining access to this source of additional income was challenging.

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[296] American Foundation for the Blind. “Chapter 11: The Beloved Voices.” Website. https://www.afb.org/online-library/unseen-minority-0/chapter-11
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

From an intersectional lens, it also stands to be interrogated: Among the hundreds who were auditioned, how many of them were female? How many were not white? Who was given the opportunity to be considered for this work? This brings us to the question of audience: Which imagined communities did the program aim to serve? And who was doing the imagining? Talking book machines were distributed to select libraries across the country (where?) Listeners (mostly white, given which libraries had access to talking machines and talking books. Look into this) shared their support and their prejudices (in the form of criticism): "some found women's voices hard to take. Others objected to British accents."[299] Their feedback impacted decision-making:

> With new Talking Book titles being issued in the Seventies at the rate of 700 and 800 a year, such prejudices could be indulged. It was different in the early days, when only 40 or 50 new titles came out each year.[300]

This means that only a narrow subset of the potential audiences in the U.S. participated in shaping the contours of the program. This is an example of how white normativity is constructed and operationalized by those in power. How structural whiteness goes unchecked.

The Library of Congress had its own ideas about the ideal narrators. They published narration guidelines in 1937 that stated: "The reader is to have a voice both highly articulate and pleasing. He must read sympathetically but with restraint. The reading must not be mechanical nor stilted and must be free from hesitation, coughs, or other disturbances."[301]Their revised 1940 version read: "The reading shall be (a) appropriate to the book, (b) sympathetic but not exaggerated, (c) restrained but not stilted or mechanical, (d) attentive to the sense of the book and skillful in securing proper emphasis."[302] "Straight reading remained the official policy for

[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 94.
[302] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 93.

years to come."[303] What was considered 'straight' reading and by whom remains to be interrogated… in this dissertation. This 'neutral' approach was aimed at keeping the focus on the book and not the narrator. However, based on who was disproportionately hired to narrate, 'neutrality' seems to have been defined as 'the voices of non-theatrical white men'. Whiteness as the mythical norm and the over-representation of white males established in the age of cylinders, continued.

Rubery points out that when it came to casting decisions, the reader's biography came into play. This meant matching the speaker's audible markers of identity to the world of the book. He points to Irwin who stated: "It is not a question of simply having just anybody read a book. We must consider whose voice, whose temperament, whose background, whose taste, whose outlook on life, whose educational and intellectual equipment will best fit a particular piece of literature."[304] In other words, who narrated was contingent on the literature. But who was choosing the literature? Did the biography of the person(s) in charge of making these decisions demonstrate a history of serving diverse potential audiences? The AFM states that there was always a "push and pull" between them and the LoC regarding the qualities of what made for a "good narrator." Nonetheless, diversity was not a central concern.

Gender equity was also not a priority. In a September 2, 1937, issue of Talking Book Topics, William Barbour addresses the issue on behalf of AFB. This was in response to an article in a newspaper where, as he says, "an intelligent blind [female] listener was quoted as asking why the Foundation has not made more use of women's voices." To which Barbour responded:

> The main reason is that there are few Ethel Everetts. The Foundation has never made any conscious attempt to discriminate against women readers in any way but it has found, through the reactions of those of our listeners who have communicated with us and through our own experience with women's voices over the radio and in auditions,

[303] Rubery, 94.
[304] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 98.

> that in general the female voice is not completely satisfactory on records. Our engineers can explain this in terms of "frequencies," "pitch," and "voice level," but we will eschew such esoteric terms. The simple fact seems to be that the female voice, when amplified, is not so pleasant to listen to as the male.[305]

According to Barbour, the AFB did not intentionally discriminate: It was just hard to find female narrators that were as good as men, for technical issues and issues of audience preference. Hiring female celebrity narrators did not, however, seem problematic. This sexism was not the only problem. There were racial and linguistic prejudices that were likewise rationalized and excused. This is how the humans who are making the decisions shift their accountability to technology, audience preference, or to a lack of talent. An example of how exclusionary structures are constructed when diverse viewpoints are not included in decision-making processes.

The works chosen did not reflect the demographics of this country in the 1930s. From, the Library of Congress' choice of works, one might assume that the entire country was made up of white, middle-class, Christians. According to the census and their categories, the U.S. population in the early 1900s was "88.7% White, 9.7% Negro, 1.2% Mexican, 0.3% Indian, 0.1% Chinese, 0.1% Japanese:"

[305] William Barbour, "The Personality Behind the Voice," Talking Book Topics, September 1937, 13–15, Volume 3, no.2.

TABLE 1.—POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES BY COLOR OR RACE AND NATIVITY: 1930

[Per cent not shown where less than 0.1 or where base is less than 100]

COLOR OR RACE	Total population	NATIVE		FOREIGN BORN		PER CENT DISTRIBUTION		
		Number	Per cent of total	Number	Per cent of total	Total	Native	Foreign born
Total	**122, 775, 046**	**108, 570, 897**	**88. 4**	**14, 204, 149**	**11. 6**	**100. 0**	**100. 0**	**100.**
White	108, 864, 207	95, 497, 800	87. 7	13, 366, 407	12. 3	88. 7	88. 0	94. 1
Negro	11, 891, 143	11, 792, 523	99. 2	98, 620	0. 8	9. 7	10. 9	0. 7
Mexican	1, 422, 533	805, 535	56. 6	616, 998	43. 4	1. 2	0. 7	4. 3
Indian	332, 397	328, 845	98. 9	3, 552	1. 1	0. 3	0. 3	------
Chinese	74, 954	30, 868	41. 2	44, 086	58. 8	0. 1	------	0. 3
Japanese	138, 834	68, 357	49. 2	70, 477	50. 8	0. 1	0. 1	0. 5
Filipino	45, 208	45, 026	99. 6	182	0. 4	------	------	------
Hindu	3, 130	412	13. 2	2, 718	86. 8	------	------	------
Korean	1, 860	816	43. 9	1, 044	56. 1	------	------	------
Hawaiian	668	654	99. 1	6	0. 9	------	------	------
Malay	96	48	------	48	------	------	------	------
Siamese	18	7	------	11	------	------	------	------
Samoan	6	6	------	----------	------	------	------	------

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Importantly, the 1930s census was the first time that "Mexican" was a census category. Prior to the 1930s, Mexicans were made invisible by the government by being folded into the "white" category. The impacts of this move were two-fold: It erased Mexicans AND increased the percentage of whites: "If Mexicans had been classed as white in 1930, the proportion [of whites] would have been slightly higher than in 1920."[307] No other Latine communities are made visible in this dataset. It can be argued that the post-racial society some claim is a progressive step forward, is instead a regressive step that cycles us back to the pre-1930s era when folding into whiteness erased Latine Americans and empowered whites.

The works chosen reveals whom the LoC's target listeners were: visually impaired, middle-class, white Christians. These choices misinformed the public about who existed in the U.S. and shaped the public's understanding about who mattered and belonged. While perhaps unwittingly, these choices participated in shaping a racist narrative that positioned whites as normative U.S. citizens thus equating whiteness with "Americanness." These choices also

[306] U.S. Census. "Color or Race, Nativity and Parentage," *1930 Census: Volume 2. Population, General Report, Statistics by Subjects*, 1933, 25. USCensus.gov. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-2/16440598v2ch03.pdf

[307] Ibid.

impacted who got to work as narrators at the time: primarily white males. Ineffective categorizing schema reflect and serve power. They are forms of misinformation that, when left uninterrogated, can be used to justify, reify, and perpetuate oppressive systems and infrastructures.

Next, I follow the second audiobook track that Edison foresaw: the profitable world of commercial audiobooks. I trace this track moving forward because the commercial audiobook arena is the focus of my study.

II. 1940s-50s: The Commercial Audiobook Industry, LPs, and Interest Convergence

Blind people were listening to talking books for fourteen years before these were made available to the public, and commercialized. "During the war years, the 'state of the art' in recording was at a standstill so far as civilian goods were concerned. It was known, however, that great technical strides were being achieved for military purposes."[308] In 1946 the LoC called for bids on postwar models of Talking Book reproducers. "The contract went to a commercial concern. It was the first time anything to do with the Talking Book program had passed out of the hands of non-profit organizations."[309]

The Library of Congress (LoC) credits Caedmon records, founded by Barbara Holdridge and Marianne Mantell, as the "label that would pave the way for the audio book industry."[310] And the technology that made this industry possible was the long-playing (LP) vinyl record, which had allowed full-length novels to be recorded for the blind since 1934 and was now

[308] American Foundation for the Blind. "Chapter 11: The Beloved Voices." Website. https://www.afb.org/online-library/unseen-minority-0/chapter-11
[309] Ibid.
[310] https://blogs.loc.gov/now-see-hear/2020/03/the-women-who-founded-an-industry/

available for commercial labels.[311] LPs could record "around twenty-two minutes per side… they were lighter, stronger, and sounded better" than previous records.[312] In 1952 New York, Caedmon offered Dylan Thomas "a $500 advance against the first 1,000 records, with a 10 percent royalty thereafter, for the rights to one hour of [him] reading his poems… The album… went on to sell over 400,000 copies by 1960."[313] By 1959, Caedmon had annual revenues of $500,000.[314] This proved the commercial viability of spoken work recordings. Also important to note, is that their offer included a royalty/residual structure that is not standard practice for narrators in the audiobook industry today, though platform providers have the data on digital downloads, making a residual structure for authors and narrators easily trackable.[315]

While celebrating the groundbreaking work of these women, the LoC also centers whiteness:

> In addition to recording a large selection of contemporary writers they had also presented the public with great talents reading Shakespeare and the classics. Among the latter were John Gielgud, Vanessa Redgrave, and Richard Burton. Women writers were also well-represented on the label, Edith Sitwell, Lorraine Hansberry, Marianne Moore, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter are among the writer's in the company's catalog. Thanks to these two resourceful women… we can enjoy a wealth of spoken-word records which honors the artistry of some of the finest writers in history.[316]

By not acknowledging the over-representation of whites on this list of authors and narrators, white normativity is reified. By not defining "the public," there is an assumption of agreement between the writer and today's LoC website audience. Plus, the author states that "women writers were also well-represented," but, aside from Hansberry, who is African American, it

[311] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 187.
[312] Rubery, 188.
[313] Rubery, 186. The founders of Caedmon were Barbara Holdridge and Marianne Mantell.
[314] Ben Cheever. "Audio's Original Voices," Publishers Weekly.com. Volume 252, issue 42, 2005. Online. https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20051024/33210-audio-s-original-voices.html.
[315] It is unclear whether this offer may have been for Dylan's work as an author and/or as a narrator.
[316] Bryan Cornell. "The Women Who Founded an Industry." The Library of Congress Blogs. Now See Hear! National Audio-Visual Conservation Center. March 30, 2020. Online. https://blogs.loc.gov/now-see-hear/2020/03/the-women-who-founded-an-industry/

seems that the other women on the list are white. The LoC participates in folding WOC into white feminist audiobook history by failing to address racial and ethnic diversity.

Caedmon produced recordings of poets and literary writers. On working with poets reading their own works, Mantell says, "It used to take weeks, sometimes months, to get poets to relax sufficiently so that they felt that they were reading to us rather than reading to a microphone."[317] While authors reading their own works has celebrity appeal, have don't always possess the skills that make for good readers. In his 1950's review, "Twentieth Century Poetry in English: Contemporary Recordings of the Poets Reading their Own Poems," David W. Thompson critiqued many of the poets for lacking vocal energy, articulation, a tone appropriate to the work, a sense of rhythm and phrasing, audience awareness, a communicative voice, an ability to communicate the experience of the piece, an ability to not distract from the story via speech habits, patterns, over-articulation, etc., and a clear intent or point of view.[318] These are all skills that professional narrators bring to the table.

Although the LoC credits the commercial audiobook industry to Caedmon, there has always been a Hollywood connection to audiobooks. "Celebrity narrators have been around as long as talking books…. Thomas Edison himself proposed recording public figures."[319] Walt Disney Studios was an early producer of narrative audio. They produced story records to tie-in with its major films. "The celebrity formula was well established by the time Ginger Rogers recorded *Alice in Wonderland* for Walt Disney in 1944."[320] The Walt Disney Storyteller LP series began in 1957, mutated into LLR Read-Alongs in 1965, and transferred to cassette tapes in

[317] Cheever, "Audio's Original Voices."
[318] David W. Thompson, "Twentieth Century Poetry in English: Contemporary Recordings of Poets Reading Their Own Poems," *The Johns Hopkins University Press* 2, no. 1 (1950): 89–93.
[319] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 252.
[320] Ibid.

1977. Disney produced close to 200 story records and tapes, many of which went "gold" or "platinum" signifying sales of over one-million copies.[321]

Plus, the GRAMMY Awards have had a Spoken Word category since the first GRAMMYs in 1959.[322] Today, there is also a "Best Audio Book, Narration & Storytelling Recording" category, formerly "known as the Best Spoken Word Album.[323] The Grammy Award winners and nominees in this category have predominantly been white.[324] While not visible in the spoken word/audiobook category at the Grammys, Latine Americans had been a part of Hollywood since before 1940s and 50s.

However, their inclusion in U.S. entertainment media was often a political move; a result of interest convergence, a key tenant of CRT that clarifies that changes occur when "the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically)" converge.[325] To use Mexico as an example, in the 1920s, Mexico and the U.S. did not have amicable cultural relations.[326] Mexico banned the showing of Hollywood films because of their "preponderance of negative Mexican stereotypes (bandidos, greasers, gigolos, etc.)."[327] Then, in the 1930s, while Mexicans workers in the U.S. were used as scapegoats—blamed for the Great Depression that was caused by the stock market crash—and they were deported en masse,[328] Latinx performers were—at the same time—"brought to U.S. screens… in hopes of engaging" North and South

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[321] Kozloff, "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," 85.
[322] GRAMMY Awards. "Music Facts: Spoken Word." Online. https://www.grammy.com/music-genre/spoken-word
[323] Morgan Enos. "Behind The GRAMMY: Why The New Best Spoken Word Poetry Album GRAMMY Category Is A Global Victory For Lovers Of Language." GRAMMYS. August 29, 2022. Online. https://www.grammy.com/news/behind-the-grammy-best-spoken-word-poetry-album-roundtable-new-category
[324] Wikipedia. GRAMMY Award for Best Audio Book Narration. Online. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammy_Award_for_Best_Audio_Book,_Narration_%26_Storytelling_Recording
[325] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 6.
[326] Luis I. Reyes, *Made in Mexico: Hollywood South of the Border* (Milwaukee, WI: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, an imprint of Hal Leonard LLC, 2018), 22.
[327] Reyes, 22.
[328] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Rev. ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); David E. Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 17.

American audiences.[329] The U.S. wanted to have it both ways: They espoused the Good Neighbor Policy (1933-38) and included Latinx talent in the media for capitalist gains, while actively deporting upwards of 1.8 million Mexicans, many who were U.S. born, and blaming them for the country's economic failures.[330]

Historically, we, Latine Americans, have concurrently been included and excluded in U.S. media and in the U.S. generally, as it has served the U.S. political and economic interests. This has impacted the trust between Latine communities and U.S. power structures (whether these be governmental, corporate, or institutional). And, this strategy, which continues to this day, divides our communities as some benefit while others are—at the same time—marginalized and harmed. This also brings intersectional dimensions of class, race, gender, and language within diverse Latine communities into play.

The greater political landscape of the 1940s influenced Hollywood's orientation. This was the era of the second Red Scare, McCarthyism, and the Hollywood blacklist. The U.S. was intensely concerned over Axis influence in Latin America.[331] This concern impacted U.S. inclusion of Latinx Americans in media, in this era when Hollywood began to carve out a global network of transnational and transcultural film productions.[332] As Luis I. Reyes tells us, "The possibility of a transnational motion picture culture between Mexico and the U.S. had been nurtured during WWII [1939-1945], when Hollywood, Washington, and Mexico City collaborated to expand Mexican moviemaking to serve the anti-axis cause in the Americas."[333] In this context, the U.S. approach to Mexican workers also shifted. Humans who were torn from

[329] Reyes and Rivero, *Made in Mexico*, 23.
[330] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, 1st ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).
[331] Reyes and Rivero, *Made in Mexico*, 22.
[332] Daniel Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood: Internationalizing Postwar Production and Location Shooting*, 1 edition (University of California Press, 2019).
[333] Reyes and Rivero, *Made in Mexico*, 22.

their lives and deported only a few years prior, were now "invited" to work in the U.S. with the introduction of the Bracero Program in 1942:

> The result of an agreement between the United States and Mexico to provide emergency labor for designated employers, usually in agriculture, suffering from World War II's drain on the labor force. Braceros were immigrants; they were temporary guest workers, with none of the rights of immigrants. They were under contract for a limited period… braceros were often not captured in public enumerations such as the census.[334]

Mexicans have been scapegoated and included on a conditional basis as their interests and the interests of the U.S. have converged. We have a saying in my community that colloquially sums up this interest convergence: "Cuando les conviene."

Though absent from spoken word/audiobook histories, and thus seemingly excluded from that media arena, there was a community of Latinx Hollywood talent during the 40s and 50s. Celebrities included Dolores del Rio, Lupe Velez, Gilbert Roland, Cesar Romero, Rita Hayworth, Tito Guizar, Carmen Miranda, Maria Montez, Arturo de Córdoba, Dezi Arnaz, Xavier Cugar, Esther Fernández, and Ricardo Montalbán.[335] Their inclusion generally hinged upon power dynamics, and the stereotypical preconceptions of those in decision-making capacities along the production pipeline. For example:

> [Ricardo Montalbán] was screen tested by MGM… for the leading role opposite… Spencer Tracy that eventually went to the Jewish-American John Garfield in…Steinbeck's tale of Monterey Bay's Mexican-American community, *Tortilla Flat* (1942). The casting director told Montalban, to his disbelief, that he was "not Mexican enough for the role." In Hollywood, when there were rare Latino leading roles, they almost always went to white actors wearing brown makeup and sporting phony accents (e.g., Wallace Beery, *Viva Villa!),* Hedy Lamarr *(Tortilla Flat),* Warner Baxter *(The Cisco Kid),* Jennifer Jones *(Duel in the Sun),* even though established Hispanic stars—Dolores del Rio, Lupe Velez, Gilbert Roland, Cesar Romero, and Rita Hayworth—were available.[336]

[334] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California,* 52.
[335] Luis I. Reyes, *Made in Mexico: Hollywood South of the Border* (Milwaukee, WI: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, an imprint of Hal Leonard LLC, 2018), 23–24.
[336] Reyes, 24.

These moves continue to this day as evidenced by the recent casting of James Franco as Fidel Castro, and the split reaction by Latinx Americans.[337]

The consequences of these moves then and now are multifold. First, referring to Haraway, it serves to throw sand in our eyes: Hiring white actors to play Latine conceptually positions whiteness as neutral, objective, and aspirational; and keeps out of conversation the intimate understanding of culture that a Latinx talent can bring to the roles, and the audiences who can recognize these nuances.[338] While an actor's job is to portray different characters, the playing field has never been equitable. Latine actors have not had equitable labor opportunities, nor have Latine peoples and cultures been equitably portrayed as neutral and aspirational. Sand is thrown in our eyes when we are told to believe that talent of color resonate with their specific communities (or "niche markets," to use capitalist jargon), while white talent are "universally appealing." Embedded in this logical fallacy is, not only an indication of racism within "middle-america" audiences, a historically key target audience, but also a coddling and reinforcement of these prejudices.

Second, these moves construct a false narrative of meritocracy: The perception shaped is that white actors are hired for these roles because they are more talented; more capable, more hard-working. And, because they are bigger "names" (market draw), which brings us to the next issue: labor opportunities. Within this landscape: Who gets to work? Hiring white actors to play Latinx impacts labor opportunities, which include wages and career-building visibility. It serves

[337] "How James Franco as Castro Highlights Exclusion of Latinos in Hollywood," *Washington Post*, accessed August 13, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2022/08/10/latino-representation-hollywood-james-franco/; Opinion by Ed Morales, "Opinion: James Franco Controversy Spotlights Hollywood's Perpetual Blind Spot," CNN, accessed August 13, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/10/opinions/james-franco-fidel-castro-movie-problem-morales/index.html; Rosemary Rossi, "Bill Maher Rips Criticism of James Franco Casting as Fidel Castro: Acting *Is* Appropriation (Video)," August 13, 2022, https://www.thewrap.com/bill-maher-rips-criticism-james-franco-as-castro/.
[338] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 576.

to keep out of reach from U.S.-Latinx talent the opportunity to increase their "name recognition." Ultimately, these moves construct an inequitable labor arena tainted with misconceptions that serve to discipline our views: Being white means that you belonged in the U.S. with all of the privileges of belonging, including access to labor opportunities and to power structures.[339]

While the media oriented the public's view in the 1940s and 50s by marginalizing and stereotyping Latinx communities, Latinx Americans were being forced into assimilation. In *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State*, Dr. Hayes-Bautista explains:

> Spanish… was actively rooted out in the public schools… punished if they were "caught" speaking Spanish at school…. The longer [Latinx Americans] stayed in school, the more this constant reminder that Spanish was somehow "bad" worked into the images these respondents had of their families, their cultures, and themselves. Of course, the images were negative: if Spanish was bad, those who spoke it must be bad, and the culture they came from, by association, must also be bad. "…. So, as a kid, your values, all of a sudden is, 'What I have known—my parents, my grandmother, all these people that I've loved—were speaking wrong.'"
> …
> As result, these older Latinos described growing up with a void in their identity…. At its most virulent, this constant downgrading of things Latino led some to actively deny their Latino families and friends.[340]

The lived realities and injustices faced by Latine peoples, including the aggression of forced assimilation, which are an attack on our cultures and family structures, were rarely portrayed in the media. The project of devaluing the Spanish language, the people who spoke it, and the culture from which we originate was thus embedded into the national psyche. We must not forget that people from indigenous speaking communities and Portuguese speaking Brazilians are also Latin Americans yet tend to be left out view. At the same time that we were forced to assimilate,

[339] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, New Edition (London ; New York: Verso, 2007).
[340] David E. Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 14–15.

meaning that our identities were in constant motion, the media industry continued to willfully stereotype us via rigid categories aimed at facilitating control.

While absent from U.S. spoken word/audiobook histories in this era, in Latin America, the production of radionovelas (dramatic serials), which, it can be argued, are audiobook (and dramatic serial podcast) ancestors, was thriving. Thus, proving that there is a long history of Latin American spoken word audiences, and a long history of U.S. media power structures not understanding and/or dismissing these connections.[341]

III. 1960s-70s: Mobile Technologies, Social Movements, and "Minority" Folding

The next big technological developments in audiobook history came with the invention of the cassette tape in 1962 and the portable cassette recorder in 1964.[342] These accelerated the audiobook's move "from the realm of public service for those with visual impairments to become a valuable leisure commodity.[343] Cassettes were compact, could hold over 100 minutes of recording, and they could be stopped and restarted at the same point. It was a mobile technology that fit the social milieu.[344] This is because these decades also represent the advent of

[341] Wikipedia. "Radionovela," https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Radionovela&oldid=1052730570; Lola García. 2015. "En defensa de la radionovelas." *Chasqui*, no. 52: 40–43. https://doi.org/10.16921/chasqui.v0i52.618.; Noticias Oaxaca Voz e Imagen. "Radionovelas Icóncas En México," Oct. 12, 2020. Online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYYsLUfUKCk.
[342] Alison Thoet. "A Short History of the Audiobook, 20 Years after the First Portable Digital Audio Device," PBS NewsHour, November 22, 2017, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/a-short-history-of-the-audiobook-20-years-after-the-first-portable-digital-audio-device; Christian Roemer, "The History of the Audio Cassette, A Timeline," Analog, A Legacybox Blog. Online, https://legacybox.com/blogs/analog/the-history-of-the-audio-cassette-a-timeline.
[343] Philips, "Talking Books," 295.
[344] "Audiobooks on Cassette (1969 - Late 2000s)," Museum of Obsolete Media. Online. https://obsoletemedia.org/audiobooks-on-cassette/; NLS "History of NLS," National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) | Library of Congress. Webpage, https://www.loc.gov/nls/about/organization/history/; A. J. Millard, *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound*, 2nd ed (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the automobile and commuter culture. “The number of commuters using private vehicles nearly doubled from forty-three million in 1960 to eighty-three million in 1980. According to the American Automobile Association, Americans spent an average of three and a half hours per week commuting to work; the average was four hours a week in Southern California.”[345] Audio book companies, like Books on Tape (BoT) in Costa Mesa, CA in 1975, were created to target these commuters, who were described as “yuppie types.”[346]

However, while technological developments and commuter culture of the 60s and 70s brought audiobooks to affluent whites, ethnic “minorities” across the country were experiencing a different reality. A different kind of mobility was taking place: These were the decades of social movements for equality.

> Various groups sought a more significant place in American policymaking than they had previously occupied: the African American civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, women’s movement, the first wave of the gay and lesbian movement, the American Indian movement, the disabled…. Chicano Power, too, registered on the public consciousness albeit feebly.[347]

For Latine Americans:

> The decade 1965-1975 was the heyday of the early Chicano movement: César Chávez and the United Farmworkers; Corky Gonzalez’s Crusade for Justice; the new Raza Unida Party that promised to bring the boys home from Vietnam; the high school “blowouts” in East Los Angeles; the student strikes at various colleges and universities… to agitate for Chicano studies…; the Brown Beret….[348]

The questions that emerge are: To what extent, if any, did the changing social and political landscape impact the audiobook (talking book) industry? Did the industry broaden its view to become more diverse and inclusive, especially, as it relates to this study of Latinas? Again,

[345] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 225.
[346] Rubery, 221-242.
[347] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 38.
[348] Hayes-Bautista, 45.

because I have found no research that studies Latine Americans in the audiobook industry, to answer these questions, I briefly look at how the changing social and political landscape impacted the media industry, generally.

In the period of "LONG HOT SUMMERS" from 1966-1969, cities across the country seemed ready to "explode" and Black Power advocates "strode through the charred inner cities, denouncing America's treatment of African Americans and demanding something be done."[349] To understand the root-cause of these race-related protests (and/or, it can be argued, as a diffusion mechanism), President Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The commission's report corroborated the community's claim that African Americans (and other minorities) were being marginalized.[350] It is in this era that "minority politics" was born, and federal programs and funding "were routed to those involved in bettering the "minority condition."[351] Among their "findings," the commission reported that the media played a role in minority marginalization.[352] Support was thus funneled to "educational television's charge to serve minority audiences (with African American audiences given particular focus)."[353] Black Americans were firmly linked in the American imagination with the "minority condition."[354]

Meanwhile, Chicano activists lobbied to broaden the scope of "minority" in the government's imaginary to "enroll Latinos in the African American-oriented minority policy agenda," and bring these resources to Latinx communities.[355] Because of the Latinx community's push, President Johnson finally sent representatives to El Paso, Texas in 1967 to the first "cabinet hearings on Mexican American affairs…. Washington officials were made aware that

[349] Hayes-Bautista, 58.
[350] Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 47.
[351] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 61.
[352] Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 47.
[353] Beltrán, 47.
[354] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 61.
[355] Hayes-Bautista, 62.

Latinos could be legitimately considered another minority."[356] At this time, the word "minority" referred to "numerically small racial or ethnic groups, whose rights needed to be defended."[357] Being categorized as a "minority" meant that the group was now visible to the power structure. However, referring to Angie-Marie Hancock, being seen did not mean that Latinx Americans were understood.[358]

At issue was: How to categorize Latinx Americans? Latinx peoples inherently defy the white power structure's constructed and rigid racial categories. We can be white, Black, Indigenous, Asian, and any combination of these (Mestizo, Mulatto, etc.). As my Latina/Chicana feminist framework clarify, we live in in-between-ness, which may seem foreign to monoculturals.[359] It was not until 1973, six years after the Johnson administration's cabinet hearings on Mexican American affairs, that President Nixon "mandated that all official records begin to include an identifier for 'Hispanic."[360] This included census records. Under this category, Latinx people became officially visible as a group defined as: "a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race."[361] The "Spanish culture" designation brings languaculture into this conceptual understanding of "Hispanics" as a group. The Spanish language was thus used as a marker of Latine identity in the Anglo imaginary. Again, people from indigenous speaking communities and Portuguese speaking Brazilians are also Latin Americans yet tend to be erased from view.

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[356] Ibid.
[357] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 58.
[358] Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.
[359] Gloria Anzaldua and Analouise Keating, "This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation," 1.
[360] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 63.
[361] D E Hayes-Bautista and J Chapa, "Latino Terminology: Conceptual Bases for Standardized Terminology.," *American Journal of Public Health* 77, no. 1 (January 1987): 64, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.77.1.61.

In the greater Hollywood industry, taking "advantage of 1960s political shifts that created openings for television programming that served minority communities, … [Chicana/o and Puerto Rican] producers launched low-budget but ambitious Chicana/o and Latina/o-oriented programs at public television and network affiliate stations."[362] However, progress towards Latinx inclusion in English language media was—and continues to be—relatively slow. One reason is the aforementioned use of Spanish language as a marker of our "Hispanic" group identity, which serves to define us as "foreign others" in the rigid Anglo imaginary.

Another key finding suggests that there is a historical connection between data collection and interpretation processes and the vicious cycles of exclusion of Latina/e media representation. There is, in other words and issue of data justice. At example, though some "Hispanic" data was suddenly available because of President Nixon's mandate, policy analysts did not accurately interpret the data. This points to the importance of 'who' is interpreting the data. These analysts "assumed that since the Latino population so closely matched African Americans in the risk factors of low income, poor education, and high poverty, it was logical that Latinos also would match African Americans in terms of "minority characteristics."[363] This assumption may have been efficient, but it was a logical fallacy that served to erase the nuances of Latinx-specific experiences. Latinx experiences were thus conceptually folded into Black experiences under the "minority" category. This conceptual folding of the unique and complex experiences of diverse communities under the "minority" category, points to a connection between the power dynamics embedded in official data collection practices and record creation and interpretation, and how these processes have informed the media industry's approach to diversity and inclusion.

[362] Beltrán, *Latino TV,* 44.
[363] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California,* 64.

As it relates to audiobooks, GRAMMY Awards nominees and winners in the Spoken Word category provides a window into how diversity and inclusion (D&I) followed the D&I progression in the greater political landscape, yet at an egregiously slower pace. D&I progressed as follows: First, white women joined white men. Then, African American were included, as a direct result of the civil rights movement and Black visibility in the "general" public's consciousness: In 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was nominated for *The March on Washington, August 1963*. The win, however, went to the cast of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Latine Americans, and Latinas specifically, remained nowhere in sight. The GRAMMY Awards only represents a glimpse into the audiobook industry, but it does give us a view into who was recognized and rewarded for their work in in this era. It can be argued that because Latina/e Americans and other POC were folded into the "minority" category, once there was Black inclusion, the diversity box was conceptually checked off for decision-makers, and the over-representation of white Americans continued.

The collapsing of minority experiences in the interpretation of official reports impacted entertainment media's approach to inclusive representation. Latine Americans had become visible as a minority to those in power under the category of "Hispanics," but, because their visibility failed to be "more than mere sight," they were folded into the "minority" category, and, again, conceptually erased.[364] This approach has served to perpetuate the under- and mis-representation Latine Americans in U.S. media to this day. This form of seeing that fails to understand, underscores the crucial need for cultural insiders throughout data collection, data organization, and data analysis processes within media industries: This is in issue of data justice.

[364] Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.

Importantly, while some Latine-oriented TV programs and films being funded and produced, the industry was male-Latino dominated.[365] Latinas tended to be braided into Latino-male experiences. Thus, Latinas' unique perspectives are largely invisible in media records and studies. It is critical that we disrupt this practice of erasing Latina experiences as we create new facts, records, and narratives about these facts and records.

While Latinas/es Americans were pushing for inclusion in media industries at large, the audiobook industry continued to grow. In 1970, libraries began to carry audiobooks.[366] As mentioned, Duvall Hecht founded Books on Tape in 1975, becoming the first "purveyor of full-length recorded books on cassette" in Los Angeles.[367] (Its main rival was Recorded Books, founded in 1979 on the East Coast.)[368]

For their first book, BoT hired an actor, who agreed to narrate for five-dollars an hour.[369] At around the same time (1972), the narrator fee at the AFB—a non-profit organization—was $30 per recorded hour. On their website, the AFB states that though this was "far more respectable than the original pittance, it was still considerably less than what these same performers commanded for other professional assignments."[370] It is important to note that BoT paid their narrator for every hour that he read, but today's commercial audiobook pay structure seems to follow the AFB's non-profit model that only paid narrators "per recorded [finished] hour." It is also worth noting that the first BoT recording was done in Hecht's living room on an

[365] Beltrán, *Latino TV*; Jesús Salvador Treviño, *Eyewitness: A Filmmaker's Memoir of the Chicano Movement* (Houston, Tex: Arte P′ublico Press, 2001); Chon A. Noriega, *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
[366]APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.
[367] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 219-242.
[368] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 231.
[369] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 222.
[370] American Foundation for the Blind. "Chapter 11: The Beloved Voices." Website. https://www.afb.org/online-library/unseen-minority-0/chapter-11

open-reel tape recorder.[371] In this way, we have come full-circle: Today, narrators are increasingly expected to have their own home-studios from which to record and produce audiobooks; pushing cost of production onto workers.[372]

In the 1960s-70s, commercial audiobooks flourished. A primary target audience for these were white "yuppie" commuters. There were some moves toward diverse inclusion in the industry. However, these moves were slow and limited. They were also ushered in by the social and political movements for equality of the era. Latinx Americans became visible as a "minority group," but quickly erased as they were folded into one "minority" category. While Latinx Americans made some progress in content production in the entertainment industry, Latina experiences in these efforts have generally failed to be detangled from Latino-male experiences. This points to a critical need for data justice. Without intersectional data justice we will continue the cycles of exclusions that fail to consider Latina voices and to include them in the historical record, to understand these women's unique contributions, and to understand their access (or lack thereof) to labor opportunities.

IV. 1980s-1990s: Neoliberal Indoctrination and Meaning Formation

The 1980s analog audiobook boom was ushered in by mobile technologies. By 1988, about 66% of cars included cassette players.[373] As in the previous era, the continued rise of audiobooks was related to longer commutes from the suburbs. In other words, to "housing and employment patterns."[374] The invention of the Walkman in 1979 was also key. In *Doing Cultural*

[371] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 222.
[372] BoT became "one of the world's largest publishers" with revenues of $4.5 million in 1987, with over 60,000 subscribers, and was bought by Random House (Penguin Random House) in 2001.
[373] Kozloff, "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," 86.
[374] Kozloff, 86.

Studies, the Story of the Sony Walkman, Paul Du Gay et al. tell us that this new technology was pivotal in transforming culture and communication. It was light and mobile; designed to be worn as almost an extension of the body and for mobility. The Walkman also gave listeners flexibility, control, and infinite repeatability: they could fast-forward, rewind, and repeat at will. This technology shaped culture by disciplining audiences into a new way of listening that was mobile and individualistic. It shifted and blurred the boundaries between public and private audio-spheres. The Walkman maximized "radical individuality… typical of the more individualistic climate of 1980s," and the rise of neoliberalism.[375]

A word on Neoliberalism: David Harvey traces the dawn of US neoliberalism to Paul Volcker's monetary policies as head of the US Federal Reserve, and to Ronald Reagan, who was elected US president in 1980. Before this, Reagan had served as president of the Screen Actors Guild from 1947-1952 and from1959-1960.[376] During his leadership at the union, he negotiated against the studios to establish the residual structure and the pension and health plans that are in place to this day. However, as U.S. President, he shifted course and brought to power his "particular blend of policies to [instead] curb the power of labour, deregulate industry… [extract resources], and liberate the powers of finance both internally and on the world stage."[377] In other words, he brought and operationalized a neoliberal agenda.

Harvey defines neoliberalism as: [378]

> a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade…. [It] holds that the social good will be maximized by

[375] Paul Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 18.
[376]SAG-AFTRA. "SAG Presidents." Website. https://www.sagaftra.org/about/our-history/sag-presidents
[377] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 1, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2105600/mod_resource/content/0/Harvey.pdf.
[378] Harvey, 2.

> maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market. This requires technologies of information creation[379]

This doctrine brings all aspects of human experiences into the financial sphere, a narrow lens which serves capital by keeping our focus away from considering the impacts on the humans who are doing the work, and from their working conditions. Additionally, as Safiya Noble notes, this neoliberal regime is racialized and gendered, particularly in ICT industries.[380] This relates to audiobooks as it is an industry at the intersection of media and digital technologies. And, also, because this industry has developed within this neoliberal framework.

The new technologies of the 1980s, along with commuter culture and an individualistic ethos, expanded audiobooks' market reach. "By the mid-1980s, mail-order and retail sales of taped books amounted to approximately $179 million, with a yearly growth rate of 10-15 percent."[381] By 1984, Caedmon had grown into a multi-million-dollar company.[382] And BoT became "one of the world's largest publishers" with revenues of $4.5 million in 1987, with over 60,000 subscribers.[383] But, how broad were their audiences?

In 1986, BoT's "market research identified an affluent clientele living in areas where incomes, property values, and education levels exceeded the national average. Competitors described their markets in similar terms."[384] Their typical listeners were in their forties, drove a lot, and likely received a B.A. or graduate degree "ten to twenty years ago," "yuppie types."[385] None of the descriptions say "white," but these markers were proxies for race. This failure to

[379] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2–3.
[380] Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.
[381] Bonnie Ruberg, "Queer Indie Video Games as an Alternative Digital Humanities: Counterstrategies for Cultural Critique through Interactive Media," *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (September 29, 2018): 217, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0029.
[382] Rubery, 215.
[383] Rubery, 217.
[384] Rubery, 222.
[385] Rubery, 221.

point to whiteness positions whites and their experiences as normative, or what Audre Lorde calls the U.S.'s imagined *mythical norm*:

> Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a *mythical* norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows "that is not me." In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society.[386]

Those of us who know "that is not me" are keenly aware of the persistent ways that we are othered from this so-called norm and erased from historical accounts.

This norming continues the project of equating whiteness with "Americanness." At task is to disrupt this project because, as David Hudson states, the power of whiteness "resides, in crucial part, in its occupation of [this] space of unmarked normativity."[387] Its "violence [is] invisibilized as a condition of governance (even as it may well by hypervisible to those whose dignity it assaults)."[388] Whiteness permeates, others, and controls while remaining invisible by being hidden within normative rhetoric, and thus out of reach from accountability.

In audiobooks, as within the US entertainment media industries generally, white normativity impacts which audiences are imagined, what projects get produced, and who gets to work. It also impacts the egregiously slow moves towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is because, if whites represent the normative "American," then racial and ethnic inclusion is not understood to be critical to representing the "American" scene. Thus, whites continue to be overrepresent throughout the industry, power-structures persist foundationally unchanged, and

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[386] Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Campus Wars*, by John Arthur, ed. John Arthur and Amy Shapiro, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2021), 2, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429038556-22.
[387] Hudson, David James. "The Whiteness of Practicality." In Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Studies, edited by Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, 203-234. Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2017.
[388] Hudson, "Hudson_Whiteness_Of_Practicality_IR_r1.Pdf," 214–15, accessed April 19, 2021, https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10214/11619/Hudson_Whiteness_Of_Practicality_IR_r1.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y.

POC are pushed into a perpetual cycle of exclusion that requires them to continually state their case for inclusion. I argue that for systemic changes to occur throughout the industry, along with media studies that make whiteness and racial and gender disparities visible, we also need a conceptual shift that decenters whiteness as the normative American.

Thus, from the 80s and into the 90s, the commercial audiobook industry continued to expand without any seeming focus on DE&I. In 1986, the Audio Publisher's Association (APA) began to campaign on the industry's behalf.[389] And, in the late 1980s, the shift from cassette to compact discs began.[390] By the 1990s, audiobooks had evolved into an established industry, and audio technologies continued to be developed.[391] In 1994, Audiobooks.com, the first website dedicated to selling recorded books, was launched.[392] Audible, today's largest distributor of downloadable audiobooks, was founded in New Jersey in 1995.[393] In 1997, Audible debuted The Audible Player,[394] a "portable, handheld [device] on which to listen to audiobooks downloaded from the Internet…. Although short-lived, it served as a bridge to more sophisticated devices.[395] In 1998, "Audible's catalog held 1,300 audiobooks, and the company charged as much as $15.00 per download.[396]

While downloadable technologies entered the market, cassettes tapes & the Walkman and CDs & the Discman were still widely used.

> The industry yearned for a single, standard format (a problem shared by the music and video industries) while at the same remaining divided over the viability of Internet downloads. On one side, Audible sought to make bricks-and-mortar stores obsolete…. On the other side, Simon & Schuster and Bantam Doubleday

[389] Rubery, 245.
[390] Rubery, 243.
[391] Rubery, 246.
[392] Rubery, 247.
[393] Rubery, 248.
[394] Audible.com "Our History." Webpage, https://www.audible.com/about/our-company?year=1997; APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.
[395] Rubery, 248.
[396] Rubery, 248.

> Dell Audio withheld their titles over concerns about compensation, copyright, and piracy—the same concerns bedeviling print publishing."[397]

The industry was weary about how consumers would respond to digital downloads. This weariness was felt by narrators. As Jenny, one of my participant narrators shared when we discussed wages:

> **Jenny:** Okay, so going back, books on tape was like the wild, wild: I have $6,000 you take it, you don't…. Then, all of a sudden CDs come out … when your Walkman CD went to the MP3: total silence in the audiobook world. Because it was, "What technology are we going to use? Who is listening where?"

For Jenny, there was a long period of silence until the union began unionizing efforts in the audiobook arena (more later). Meanwhile, in 1996, the APA launched the Audie Awards, which they define as, "the premier awards program in the United States recognizing distinction in audiobooks and spoken-word entertainment."[398] Like within the GRAMMY's Spoken Word category, Latinx Americans, including Latinas, were under-represented at the Audies throughout the rest of the decade.

Meanwhile, in the greater entertainment industry, television "networks made attempts at Latina/o-centric programming."[399] Throughout the 80s and 90s (in other words, during a twenty-year span), only about twelve "series with a Latino or Latina lead character progressed from the nebulous stages of development."[400] All these shows, Mary Beltrán tells us, were "situation comedies… this translated to lower-budgets and low-commitment…. [They] reflected the perspectives of their non-Latina/o creators [and writers and producers], including their notions of universal storytelling and comedy, which centered whiteness and resulted in oddly constructed or

[397] Rubery, 250.
[398] Audio Publishers Association. "The Audie Awards Competition & Annual Gala." Webpage, https://www.audiopub.org/audie-awards
[399] Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 105.
[400] Beltrán, 105.

bland Latina/o protagonists. Relatedly, the national audience was presumed to be largely white and unfamiliar with Latina/o cultures."[401]

This white-lens approach to Latinx-themed content was also seen in the audiobook arena. For example, to explain the collaborative work of audiobook production, Sarah Kozloff, shares the example of the 1994 recording of *Streets of Laredo* (unabridged, on 14 cassettes):

> The story … vintage Larry McMurtry, a rambling, humorous, fatalistic continuation of Lonesome Dove. The narrator, Daniel Von Bergan … has a calm voice full of weather and sand, tinged with wry humor. Someone-either narrator, director or producer-has decided that the chapters centering on two Mexican characters, Maria and Joey Garza, should be inflected differently, and so for these Von Bergan adopts a somewhat sing-song Mexican accent which is both slightly racist and highly effective in separating the characters and eliciting our sympathies for Maria … the final product is shaped by the input of all the collaborators."[402]

More often than not, "slightly racist" seems an acceptable form of Latinx representation by decision-makers. This reveals their own biases and racist attitudes, as well as that of the presumed non-Latine white audience unfamiliar with Latinx cultures that they tend to center.

Though seemingly invisible from the audiobook arena at the time, the 1990s is known as the golden age of Spanish language voice work among today's Latinx VO community, Work opportunities in radio commercials and TV voice-overs grew in this era. And this is when top voice-over agencies launched their Spanish language divisions:

> **Sandra:** …hasta que recibí una llamada de SBV [large commercial agency in LA] porque ellos estaban abriendo su departamento en Español y solamente tenian a [colleagues name] … poco a poco empezó a crecer el departamento… [NOTE: this was in 1998].
> **Me:** This feels like it was the beginning of this world.
> **Sandra:** Si, totalmente.

[401] Beltrán, 105–31.
[402] Kozloff, "Audio Books in a Visual Culture," 87.

Several of my research participants and I started our LA-based voice over careers during this era and can attest to the proliferation of Spanish language voice work.

Some of my participants come to narration from another arena that flourished during this time: the Los Angeles-based Spanish language dubbing industry. While there was a large demand for their labor, however, the work was non-union, and the wages were extremely low. There were failed attempts to unionize this space, and there are mixed views on how well the union supported these efforts. I point to this to provide context for understanding that Latina narrators enter the audiobook labor arena within an environment where support mechanisms may not be equitable.

V. 2000s-2010s: Strikes, Unionization, and Platform Labor

At the turn of the century, the Latine population grew dramatically and, in the early 2000s, we became the largest ethnic group in the U.S., second only to non-Latinx whites.[403] In spite of this, and the growing opportunities for Spanish language and bilingual (English-Spanish) voice talent, Latinx Americans continued to be underrepresented in the entertainment industry. In 1999, for example, we shot the pilot for Resurrection Blvd., the first one-hour drama in U.S. history starring a Latinx family (in which I played a lead character). The show was a Showtime/Viacom production. While we were making history on a cable channel, however, the 1999-2000 Network TV lineup did not have one single actor of color featured in any of their shows.[404] As Mary Beltrán tells us, advocacy groups, most visibly through the National Hispanic

[403] According to the U.S. Census, by 2004, Latinos were 14.2% and Black or African American were 12.8% of the total U.S. population.; Roberto Suro, et al., *The American Community—Hispanics: 2004*, U.S. Census, February 2007, ACS-03; Roberto Suro, et al., *The American Community—Blacks: 2004*, U.S. Census, February 2007, ACS-04; Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 130.
[404] Sharon Waxman. " NAACP, Networks Both Take Offense," The Washington Post.com. November 30, 1999, page C01. Webpage, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/feed/a61341-1999nov30.htm.

Media Coalition and the Multi-Ethnic Media Coalition, pushed back against these racial exclusions in the early 2000 by targeting their advocacy at ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX.[405] Nonetheless, to this day, Latina/x Americans continue to be the most underrepresented demographic relative to our numbers in the U.S.[406]

In chapter 6, I point to a connection between this egregious Latina/x underrepresentation in legacy media and exploitative labor practices in digital labor platforms where an increasing amount of audiobook narration is taking place. Additionally, in the process of historically contextualizing Latina narrator experiences, another key connection has come to light: The connection between support mechanism equity and the uneven working conditions these women seem to experience within digital platforms. At example is the SAG and AFTRA commercial strike of 2000 and how its impacts on the Spanish-language dubbing industry has served to discipline Latina voice talent today.[407]

Commercial Strike of 2000

The nationwide strike began on May 1, 2000, and officially ended on October 30, 2000. The core issues were about wages and payment structure: "The union is seeking payments for the actors whenever an ad airs on cable, just as they paid residuals whenever a network commercial runs. The actors also want to address the fledging issue of how they will be paid when ads run on

[405] Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 134.
[406] Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. 2020. "The Gang's Not All Here: The State of Latinos in Contemporary Us Media." In *Contemporary Latina/o Media*, 103–24. New York, USA: New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479848119.003.0008.; Beltrán, *Latino TV*, 134; Harry P. Pachon, et al. "Missing in Action: Latinos In and Out of Hollywood," The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. Commissioned by Screen Actors Guild. 1999; Harry P. Pachon, et al. "Still Missing: Latinos In and Out of Hollywood," The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. Commissioned by Screen Actors Guild. 200.
[407] SAG and AFTRA merged on March 30, 2012

the Internet."[408] Though the union gained some important ground, advertisers refused to budge on the union's demands to establish a new pay structure for the internet.[409] The backlash was that advertiser took a lot of their work non-union. This created financial hardships for union talent and engendered bitter divisions among union members. At the same time, the union was making efforts to unionize Spanish-language channels, but to no avail. Another backlash from the strike and these efforts was that a lot of Spanish language commercial work was now—not only produced non-union—, but it was increasingly outsourced to México and other Latin American countries.

It was within this context that a group of dubbers came together to strategize how to prevent Spanish-language dubbing work from being outsourced, and to demand fairer wages. They also reached out to SAG-AFTRA for support in unionizing this space. There are mixed views on the union's efforts. This is a topic for future research, especially as compared to the efforts underway in the dubbing arena today, and to the focused approach to unionizing the audiobook industry. At the end of the day, one of these dubbers' key employers outsourced their work to México, attributing the move to these workers' plan to demand increased wages.

Unlike in past decades, this employer was able to outsource the work because of digital technologies: Geography was no longer a barrier. The turnaround time was now null, and the work was cheaper to produce. This allowed him to keep his contract with the studios and increased his own profits while disciplining local Spanish and bilingual talent into submission: the threat of outsourcing was real. Unlike their non-Latine white and black counterparts whose work –because it was conceptually categorized as English-language—though it may have been

[408] Bates, James. "Actors Strike Over Fee System for Commercials." Los Angeles Times, May 2, 2000. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-may-02-mn-25766-story.html.
[409] Staff writer "U.S. actors union ends longest-ever strike." CNN.com, October 23, 2000. https://www.cnn.com/2000/SHOWBIZ/TV/10/23/actors.strike.02.reut/index.html

transferred to the non-union space because of the strike, for Latine Spanish-language and/or bilingual talent the work was no longer within reach.

Those of us who experienced the 2000 commercial strike, understand the dangers of demanding fairer wages and living conditions. Plus, my participant narrators, who come from this world and era of Spanish-language dubbing, seem to be conditioned to working under precarious conditions. It is under this context –and within a neoliberal ethos—that Latina talent seem reticent to make labor demands in the audiobook industry today. As one of my participants warned:

> **Sandra:** You have to be kind of careful y tener pie de plomo cuando estás pisando en estos territorios porque es delicado. Porque ya lo vivimos.

Our memories of these events have in many ways disciplined us into silence in the face of precarious working conditions. Our silence is a form of psychological bowing.[410] This is not to say that we are a homogenous community or that we do not exert our agency in other ways. The strike and its aftermath are a catalyst for our differing views on the current state of Latinas in audiobook narration and how we come to understand ourselves within this industry. (More in Chapter 7.I.)

While workers were disciplined into silence, the audiobook industry continued to grow. The industry was generally wary of how consumers would respond to digital downloads. Cassettes, CDs, and digital downloads co-existed in the market. CDs did not replace cassettes as the preferred medium for listening to audiobooks until 2003-2004.[411] And, though Preloaded Digital Players were created in 2005,[412] "CD sales still made up 80 percent of Harper Collins'

[410] Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. 20th anniversary ed., with A new afterword. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[411] APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.
[412] Ibid.

audio revenue" in 2006.[413] Around the same time, in 2003, Audible, founded in New Jersey, struck a deal with Apple to make audiobooks available on iTunes, which increased public awareness and access to digital audiobooks.[414] Soon, a new player entered the scene in full force: Amazon.

Amazon & Audiobooks

Jeff Bezos founded Amazon as a virtual bookseller in 1994. Throughout its journey into the audiobook arena, Amazon has deployed tactics to gain control of its structure, the product, and the industry. First, Amazon ushered in the e-book market when it launched the Kindle in 2007.[415] A year later, it purchased Audible; acquiring its 80,000 plus properties, including audiobooks.[416] 2008 was also the year that "digital downloads surpassed CDs as the most popular audiobook format."[417] Purchasing Audible nearly doubled Amazon's Kindle content offerings, and expanded its total digital offerings.[418] Perhaps even more importantly, this also meant that audiences no longer had to leave the Amazon-sphere to purchase, download, and

[413] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 250.
[414] APA, "A History of Audiobooks" Audio Publishers Association. Website. https://www.audiopub.org/history-of-audiobooks.

[415] Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. and Mattioli, Dana. "Amazon, a Longtime E-Book Discounter, Is Accused of Driving Up the Price of E-Books," *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2021, sec. Tech, https://www.wsj.com/articles/amazon-a-longtime-e-book-discounter-is-accused-of-driving-up-the-price-of-e-books-11610748615; "How the Kindle Was Designed through 10 Years and 16 Generations," *TechCrunch* (blog), accessed May 24, 2021, https://social.techcrunch.com/2017/11/20/how-the-kindle-was-designed-through-10-years-and-15-generations/.
[416] Franklin, Paul. "Amazon to Buy Audible for $300 Million," *Reuters*, January 31, 2008; Larry Dignan, "Amazon.Com Buys Audible; March into Digital Content Distribution Continues," ZDNet, January 30, 2008. https://www.zdnet.com/article/amazon-com-buys-audible-march-into-digital-content-distribution-continues/; Wall Street Journal Staff Reporter, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller Audible," *Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 2008, sec. News, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120178852994132009.Brad Stone, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller for $300 Million," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2008, sec. Technology, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/technology/01amazon.html.
[417] Franklin, "Amazon to Buy Audible for $300 Million"; Brad Stone, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller for $300 Million," *New York Times* February 1, 2008.
[418] Wall Street Journal Staff Reporter, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller Audible."

listen to audiobooks. They could now purchase audiobooks on Amazon's platform and listen to them on their Kindle. This kept consumers and their data within Amazon's gaze and control while affectively broadening its network effects: the more people on Amazon, the more valuable its network to all participants including buyers, sellers, and, especially, to Amazon itself.

With audiobook consumption within its sphere, the next strategic step was to control audiobook production. Its entry into book publishing in 2009 with the launch of its APub unit moved Amazon in that direction and made evident the power that its network effects yielded.[419] Via its promotional tools—including Amazon First Reads and Kindle Unlimited—it could now promote the books it published to the millions of customers within its network.[420] Amazon claimed that it was not giving its books unfair advantages because any publisher could use its promotional tools.

However, it used other coercive measures to pressure publishers to acquiesce to its financial and contractual terms. Once small publishers became dependent on Amazon's distribution for sales, Amazon would then "demand longer pay periods and lower discounts. Publishers who didn't 'pay to play' would get unfavorable treatment on Amazon, making their books more expensive and harder to find."[421] This is the approach that Amazon took via its Gazelle Project, renamed by its lawyers to the Small Publishers Negotiation Program, and its

[419] Today, it owns sixteen imprints that publish different genres: Lake Union, Thomas & Mercer, Montlake, Little A, Amazon Crossing, Amazon Crossing Kids, 47North, Skyscape, Two Lions, Amazon Original Stories, Topple Books, Amazon Publishing, Jet City Comics, Grand Harbor Press, Waterfall Press, and Amazon Encore. Source: https://amazonpublishing.amazon.com/our-imprints.html; Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. "'They Own the System': Amazon Rewrites Book Industry by Marching Into Publishing," *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 2019, sec. Business, https://www.wsj.com/articles/they-own-the-system-amazon-rewrites-book-industry-by-turning-into-a-publisher-11547655267.; https://amazonpublishing.amazon.com/

[420] Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. "'They Own the System': Amazon Rewrites Book Industry by Marching Into Publishing."

[421] Edwards, Jim. "'Sadistic' Amazon Treated Book Sellers 'The Way A Cheetah Would Pursue A Sickly Gazelle,'" Business Insider, October 22, 2013. https://www.businessinsider.com/sadistic-amazon-treated-book-sellers-the-way-a-cheetah-would-pursue-a-sickly-gazelle-2013-10.

European Pay to Play project, renamed by its lawyers to the Vendor Realignment,[422] during its 2014 legal battle with Hachette Book Group over e-book pricing control.[423] What Amazon was ultimately fighting for in this battle with Hachette was control of the structure of US publishing. With this control, once publishers became dependent on Amazon, the company weaponized its technologies to manipulate visibility (what books were seen and by whom) and pricing on its platform. This speaks to the company's ethos and serves as evidence that, when unregulated, Amazon will deploy the affordances of its platform (data collection, mediation, obfuscation) to gain unfair advantages.

The question here is: If this is how Amazon has used its technology to exert its power over competitors in well-publicized battles, how does it deploy it towards workers who labor in virtual obscurity and hyper-surveillance within its unregulated labor platforms, like the narrators who work within its Audiobook Creation Exchange (ACX) platform? And what does this mean for Latina narrators who may enter this space from already precarious positions including a history of being disciplined into silence?

The Audiobook Creation Exchange (ACX), launched in 2011, is Amazon Audible's digital audiobook labor platform.[424] This platform theoretically opens up the playing field to aspiring narrators, and it gives Amazon and audiobook rights holders access to their labor (More

[422]Ibid.
[423] Bertrand, Natasha. "How Amazon's Ugly Fight With A Publisher Actually Started," Business Insider, accessed May 26, 2021, https://www.businessinsider.com/how-did-the-amazon-feud-with-hachette-start-2014-10; Jeremy Greenfield, "Inside Amazon's Battle With Hachette," Forbes, accessed May 26, 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeremygreenfield/2014/05/14/inside-amazons-battle-with-hachette/; Streitfeld, David. "Amazon and Hachette Resolve Dispute," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2014, sec. Technology, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/14/technology/amazon-hachette-ebook-dispute.html.
[424] PT Editors, "Keeping Up With the New Demand for Audiobooks - Publishing Trends," *Publishing Trends*, August 1, 2011. http://www.publishingtrends.com/2011/08/keeping-up-with-the-new-demand-for-audiobooks-2/; ACX, https://www.acx.com

in Ch.7).[425] Amazon's vertical integration ushered in a new revolution: "By 2012, downloads accounted for over half of audiobook sales, and the number of titles produced per year increased from 4,602 in 2009 to nearly 36,000 in 2013."[426] Launching ACX completed Amazon's virtual monopoly in this arena. As Michael Cader states, "Amazon's position in the digital audio market is even more dominant and unshakable than its position was in the e-book market. They're virtually unchallenged."[427] But, again, what does this mean for workers? As Trebor Scholz states, "based on evidence from Mechanical Turk and the labor practice in Amazon's warehouses, there is no reason to believe that the company would understand its relationship to digital laborers any differently than that of a predator pursuing its vulnerable prey."[428]

Importantly, SAG also began audiobook unionizing efforts in Los Angeles in 2011.

Today's Audiobook Boom

New technologies coupled with changing consumer behaviors have heralded in the current explosion of audiobook sales. "The multiple ways audiobook listeners can digitally access their content are helping them carve out more time to listen."[429] A 2019 survey released by the Audio Publishers Association (APA) found that, because of entertainment technology in vehicles, people have increased their listening in cars. And that "Smart speaker proliferation… bodes well for future listening… 42% of audiobook listeners 18 years and older own a smart

[425] ACX, "How it works: A step by step guide for every type of creator." Webpage. https://www.acx.com/help/narrators/200484550
[426] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 2016, 251.
[427] Alter, Alexandra. "Want to Read Michael Lewis's Next Work? You'll Be Able to Listen to It First," *The New York Times*, June 2, 2018, sec. Books, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/02/books/audible-michael-lewis-audiobooks.html.
[428] Scholz, Trebor. "Think Outside the Boss," Public Seminar, April 5, 2015, Online. https://publicseminar.org/2015/04/think-outside-the-boss/.
[429] Cobb, Michele. "New Survey Shows 50% of Americans Have Listened to an Audiobook" (Audio Publishers Association, April 24, 2019).

speaker."[430] People listen on their commute, while exercising, traveling, at home, and in a variety of other contexts. The survey also states that, in 2019, "50% of Americans have listened to an audiobook."[431] These facts translate to strong sales figures. In July 2019 the APA reported, for example, that, in 2018, U.S. audiobook sales totaled $940 million, which continues a "seven-year trend of double-digit revenue growth in audiobooks year over year."[432]

These numbers, however, do not match other news reports, which put 2018 U.S. sales at upwards of 3 billion. They tell us that U.S. audiobook sales were estimated at $2.1 billion in 2016,[433] sales increased to $2.5 billion in 2017,[434] and that the trend continued in 2018 with another 22.7% increase to +$3 billion.[435] The metrics used to track audiobooks seem inconsistent and the fiscal value of this industry is fuzzy. If engaging with the "seven-year, double-digit revenue growth" claim, then the beginning of today's boom can be traced to 2011 when digital downloads became the preferred format, and Amazon's Audible launched ACX.

Continuing the legacy of uneven Latine media representation, Amazon's Audible launches Audible Latino in 2019, while Latine Americans continue to be egregiously underrepresented throughout legacy media.[436]

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[430] Ibid.
[431] It is not clear whether they mean people in the U.S., U.S. citizens, or people across the American continents.
[432] Cobb, Michele. "U.S. Publishers Report Nearly $1 Billion in Sales as Strong Industry Growth Continues" (Audio Publishers Association, July 17, 2019).
[433] Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. "Amazon Already Disrupted the Sale of Print Titles. Up Next: Audiobooks," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2018, sec. Business. https://www.wsj.com/articles/readers-listen-up-amazon-wants-to-extend-its-dominance-in-audiobooks-1517832000.
[434] Maher, John. "Audiobook Revenue Jumped 22.7% in 2018." Publishers Weekly, June 21, 2018. Online. https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/audio-books/article/77303-audiobook-revenue-jumped-22-7-in-2018.html
[435] Ibid.
[436] Dr Darnell M Hunt and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part Two: Television," UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report (UCLA, 2022). https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2020-Television-10-22-2020.pdf; Dr Darnell M Hunt and Dr Ana-Christina Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film," UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report (UCLA, 2022). https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2020-Film-2-6-2020.pdf; Dr Stacy L Smith, "Report Finds Popular Films Show Paltry Progress

VI. 2020 and Beyond: Data Justice, AI, DE&I, and Policy

The global commercial audiobook market continues to be the "fastest growing sector within the publishing industry."[437] According to Publishers Weekly, 2020 sales "exceeded $1.3 billion, up 12% over 2019." While other publishing sectors declined between 2015 and 2020, "audiobook revenue surged by 157 percent," according to the Association of American Publishers.[438] A recent Gizmodo article states that audiobook, "sales increased by 25%... bringing in more than $1.5 billion to the audiobook market. The industry is expected to reach $33.5 billion in overall revenue" in 2023.[439] As revenues increase, publishers and other rights holders seek to widen their profit margins by employing AI technologies –synthetic voices and cloning—to do the job of audiobook narration, a continuity of a capitalist ethos to increase profits at the expense of workers. As AI technologies sound more human, the job of human narrators are increasingly at risk. Discussions about the impacts of AI on entertainment industry workers at large are driving the current Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike and they are at the core of upcoming Directors Guild of America (DGA) and SAG-AFTRA negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP).[440]

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toward Inclusion," USC Annenberg, School for Communication and Journalism, September 10, 2020. Webpage. http://annenberg.usc.edu/news/research-and-impact/report-finds-popular-films-show-paltry-progress-toward-inclusion; Darnell Hunt, "Writers Guild of America, West: The 2016 Hollywood Writers Report: Renaissance in Reverse?" March 2016. http://www.wga.org/uploadedFiles/who_we_are/HWR16.pdf.

[437] DeepZen PR, "Press Release: DeepZen Launches First Audiobooks Using AI Emotive Voice Tech." March 2, 2020. https://prnewslink.net/releases/e-1/23308.html.

[438] Simonite, Tom. "Synthetic Voices Want to Take Over Audiobooks." WIRED, January 27, 2022, https://www.wired.com/story/audiobooks-synthetic-voices/.

[439] Main, Nikki. "Apple Quietly Rolls Out AI-Narrated Audiobooks," Gizmodo, January 5, 2023, https://gizmodo.com/apple-audio-books-ai-authors-ebooks-1849952963.

[440] WGAw "Summary of the 2023 WGA MBA." Webpage. https://www.wga.org/contracts/contracts/mba/summary-of-the-2023-wga-mba; Goldberg, Lesley and Kilkenny, Katie "As SAG-AFTRA Responds to Studio Offer, AI Protections for High-Earning Members Remain Sticking Point." The Hollywood Reporter, November 6, 2023. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/sag-aftra-ai-protections-for-high-earning-members-sticking-point-1235638247/ ; Pulliam-Moore, Charles. "The Directors Guild of America has ratified a new labor contract." The Verge, June 26, 2023. Online. https://www.theverge.com/2023/6/26/23773926/dga-amptp-new-deal-strike

For Latines, the fight is multifold. As we join in solidarity to protect human jobs against unregulated AI technologies, we also continue to fight against our underrepresentation. While we are the largest ethnic group in the US, second only to Non-Latine white Usonians with 19% of the population *(*62.1 million), our representation in US English language media is less than 5%.[441] Plus, for Latinas, there is the added layer of invisibility as we are continually folded into Latino/x or female categories.[442] This underrepresentation, as this chapter has brought into focus, has historically been facilitated by inadequate racial and ethnic categories and data collection and analysis processes.

In this section, I first look into how these moves continue to this day, and argue that, when it comes to Latinidad, there is an urgent need for data justice. Then, I will contextualize the current commercial audiobook industry, and look into emergent AI technologies and the key players in this space. I will conclude with an overview of the digital policy landscape and how Latinidad and DE&I at large come into play.

Data Justice and Latinidad

In 2021 and 2022, Congressman Joaquín Castro (TX-20) requested reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) "on the underrepresentation of Latinos in the media

[441] Dr. Ana-Christina Ramón, Michael Tran, and Dr Darnell M Hunt, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2023: Part 1: Film," UCLA Entertainment & Media Research Initiative, 2023. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2023-Film-3-30-2023.pdf; Dr Ana-Christina Ramón, Michael Tran, and Dr Darnell M Hunt, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2023: Part 2: Television," UCLA Entertainment & Media Research Initiative, 2023 https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2023-Television-11-9-2023.pdf; LDC, "2022 LDCMediaReport: Put Your Money Where Your Market is." LDC, 2022.

[442] California Latino Legislative Caucus. "Unseen Latinas Initiative: Invisible No More." Webpage: https://latinocaucus.legislature.ca.gov/unseen-latinas-initiative; WGAw. "'Unseen Latinas' Sets Sights on Hollywood," May 7, 2021. Webpage. https://www.wga.org/news-events/news/connect/5-7-21/unseen-latinas-sets-sights-on-hollywood.

industry, including the film, television, news and publishing sectors." [443] The reports found that "Latinos are mostly invisible."[444] The 2022 report also found that "more data are needed for federal enforcement efforts."[445] It can be argued that this lack of data needed for "enforcement efforts" towards media equity is a form of disinformation because it signals a hegemonic choice that deliberately excludes Latines from data collection priorities, which serves to spread fear and suspicion about the Latine community and confusion within it. In other words, the erasure and disempowerment of Latine Americans via this lack of data is a policy choice. It is not accidental, it is an intentional, deliberate choice to disinformation.

In this work, the ways that the U.S. Census has, and continues to be, deployed as a means to "validate racial inequality" surfaced.[446] The US Census' race category continues to inadequately represent the US Latine population, which is a form of mis/disinformation. These inaccurate categories mis/disinform as they construct skewed, incomplete, and inaccurate or false narratives. They inaccurately frame our understandings of issues and topics. They control the orientation of our views. And they subjugate possible discourses within specific—and often, politically motivated—parameters. Together, these systems of mis/disinformation serve to disempower Latine Americans across all levels of society.

The US Census current race categories "adhere to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity which guide the Census Bureau in classifying

[443] GAO, "GAO: Government Accountability Office: Workforce Diversity: Analysis of Federal Data Shows Hispanics Are Underrepresented in the Media Industry," September 21, 2021. https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/716641.pdf; GAO, "GAO: Part Two: WORKFORCE DIVERSITY: Hispanic Workers Are Underrepresented in the Media, and More Data Are Needed for Federal Enforcement Efforts," September 2022, https://www.gao.gov/assets/730/723119.pdf.
[444] Ibid.
[445] GAO, "GAO: Part Two: WORKFORCE DIVERSITY: Hispanic Workers Are Underrepresented in the Media, and More Data Are Needed for Federal Enforcement Efforts."
[446] Karen Humes and Howard Hogan, "Measurement of Race and Ethnicity in a Changing, Multicultural America," *Race and Social Problems* 1, no. 3 (September 2009): 113, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-009-9011-5

written responses to the race question."[447] These race categories are: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. On its site, the bureau explains its definition of "race" as follows:

> **What is Race?**
>
> The data on race were derived from answers to the question on race that was asked of individuals in the United States. The Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification.
>
> The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as "American Indian" and "White." People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.
>
> OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

[448]

They note that the "categories of the race item include racial, national origin **or sociocultural groups**."[449] Yet also state that "People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race." This approach serves to conceptionally divide us at the first instance into different racial groups. Thus, shaping perceptions and our understanding of self as one of the US government's five race categories first, then, secondly, as Latinos/as/x.

That this conceptual fracturing is operationalized by the US government as our percentage of the total US population continues to grow, is not accidental. By the Census' own account, in 2000 and 2010 a large percentage of Latinos/as filled in the some other race (SOR) option, which underscores that, when it comes to Latinidad, these categories continue to

[447] United States Census Bureau. "About the Topic of Race." Webpage. https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html
[448] Ibid.
[449] Bold is mine.

inaccurately reflect US Latines' understanding of self.[450] It thus stands to question, when the census states that their categories of race "generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country," to whose imaginary are they referring?[451]

The 2020 Census did include changes to its "Hispanic" data collection processes.[452] They added a "Hispanic Origin Question" at first instance, and demand a separate "race" answer:

Figure 1.
2020 Census Hispanic Origin Question

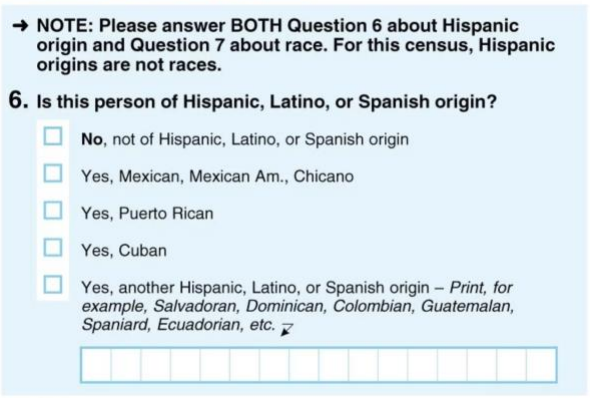
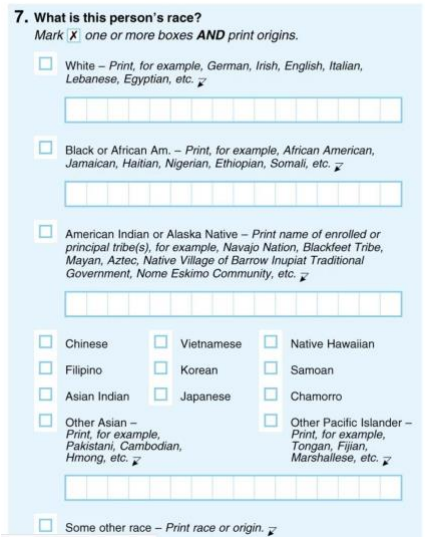


Figure 2.
2020 Census Race Question

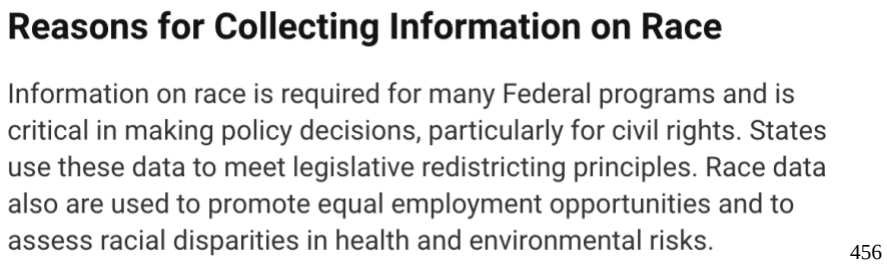


[453]

In other words, the US government's uncomfortable relationship with categorizing Latinidad began with the first census in 1790 and continues to this day.[454] The decision to exclude us in the race category even as the Bureau clarifies that this category includes "sociocultural groups," is problematic as these data are tied to budgetary decisions, resource allocation, and in assessing equity and harms.

[450] United States Census Bureau. "Research to Improve Data on Race and Ethnicity." Webpage. https://www.census.gov/about/our-research/race-ethnicity.html
[451] United States Census Bureau. "About the Topic of Race." Webpage.
[452] Marks, Rachel and Rios-Vargas, Merarys. "Improvements to the 2020 Census Race and Hispanic Origin Question Designs, Data Processing, and Coding Procedures." United States Census Bureau. August 3, 2021. Webpage. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/08/improvements-to-2020-census-race-hispanic-origin-question-designs.html
[453] Ibid.
[454] Ibid.

As the below image shows, the census' "Reasons for Collecting Information on Race" are tied to federal programs, policymaking decisions, "particularly for civil rights." And because "states use these data for redistricting principles." And because "race data are also used to promote equal employment opportunities and to access racial disparities in health and environmental risks."[455]



[456]

We must not allow a "we do not recognize you, Latinos/as/es as a race, so we cannot protect you," move against our communities. Because despite the new "Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" question in the 2020 census, it is the five race categories that are taken up in academia and the media. Our exclusion from being equitably recognized as a federally protected race or "sociocultural" group at first instance, thus becomes a convenient excuse for our exclusion in media and for the lack of social protections.

If we are not included in the race category, then there is deniability. In other words, racism against us does not exist, because we do not exist as a race. This is particularly concerning with the rise of white supremacy in the US and as the US government's draconian southern-border policies dehumanize and criminalize migrants and refugees.[457] When data collection, organization (E.g.: categories), and distribution processes are inadequate, they work

[455] United States Census Bureau. "About the Topic of Race." Webpage.
[456] Ibid.
[457] Robles, Justo."Title 42 Migration Restrictions Have Ended, but Biden's New Policy Is Tougher," *The Guardian* (blog), May 13, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/13/title-42-migration-biden-new-policy-tougher.

against social justice, racial justice, and authentic DE&I initiatives. I argue that our communities must demand that Latinidad be added to the US Census "race" category at the first instance. We must demand data justice because data (or lack thereof) shapes how we are perceived, shapes how we come to know what we know, impacts our own sense of belonging, it informs budgetary decisions, resource allocation, and our pathway towards equitable media inclusion. It is thus critical that we interrogate inadequate racial and ethnic categories and data collection and analysis processes as these are used to shape diverse forms of mis/disinformation, and the policies built in their image.

For Latinas/os/es in culture industries, a multimodal approach to data justice is needed. Data justice is needed to manage big data, to push back against the use of data without consent, to push back against information asymmetry, which includes the increased use of NDA's as a strategy to silence, surveille, and control workers. Data justice is also needed to make Latinidad equitably visible. Next, I give an overview of the audiobook industry, then I point to the ways that Latinidad & DE&I come into play.

Today's Commercial Audiobook Landscape

One of the first industries that Silicon Valley disrupted was the media industry where the power has shifted and is increasingly concentrated in the hands of few tech giants who mediate representation and the supply and demand of creative labor via their platforms. Before the 2020 pandemic, U.S. talent had already been experiencing tech's bifurcated impacts: YouTube facilitated user-generated content distribution at scale; musicians lost billions in revenue in the

shift to streaming.[458] Netflix and Amazon opened new job opportunities for actors, and remote recording of auditions for voice-talent became common practice, to name a few. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the media industry's reliance on digital tools and the process of transferring creative work online. Thanks to technological affordances, voice artists, including audiobook narrators, were some of the few creative workers who were able to continue to work remotely throughout the pandemic.

As we transitioned out of lockdown, many of these changes took hold. Talent are now expected to audition, and some—like narrators—to work from home. There are immediate advantages for actors, such as: less driving around town, participating from anywhere, more auditions in one day, and more potential time with family. However, this also brought an inclusion shift. Participation became tied to talent's ability to provide the means of production (technology) and the production location (a soundproof home studio). It is also contingent on talent's willingness to forego optimal working conditions as working from home can be problematic since labor conditions are hidden from view. As Valeria, one of my participants, mentioned:

> "Siempre es la contradición, no? De como la tecnología nos está fregando, pero también nos está haciendo favor. *It's always a contradiction, no? Of how technology is hurting us, but it's also doing us a favor."*[459]

For audiobook narrators, abusive practices include long hours of isolation—sometimes from an unventilated closet—which are giving rise to mental, emotional, and physical health issues. It

[458] Goldman, David. " Music's Lost Decade: Sales Cut in Half." CNNMoney.com. New York, February 3, 2010. Webpage. https://money.cnn.com/2010/02/02/news/companies/napster_music_industry/; Ben Sisario and Karl Russell, "In Shift to Streaming, Music Business Has Lost Billions," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2016, sec. Business. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/business/media/music-sales-remain-steady-but-lucrative-cd-sales-decline.html; Andy Cush, "How Musicians Are Fighting for Streaming Pay During the Pandemic," Pitchfork, June 29, 2020. https://pitchfork.com/features/article/how-musicians-are-fighting-for-streaming-pay-during-the-pandemic/; El Gamal, Ashraf. "The Evolution of the Music Industry in the Post-Internet Era." Scholarship @ Claremont. 72.

[459] Translation mine

also includes the consolidation of labor without commensurate compensation. It is critical that we shed light on abusive labor practices and strengthen worker protections because, as a narrator stated in an audiobook panel, working from home can be "the road to the sweatshop."[460]

At the same time that the pandemic accelerated the shift of audiobook narration to the home and to digital platform worksites, Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies were in-development to eliminate narrators altogether.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Audiobooks

When I began this research in 2019, AI tools in the audiobook arena were a whisper. I noted that the consolidation of labor in this arena was not only a form of wage theft, but also indicated a form of upskilling with a view towards future job reduction or elimination. (Upskilling is done via the consolidation of multiple jobs onto the narrator, who is expected to be narrator, engineer, director, producer, casting, proofreader, etc.)

Today, AI tools are front page news and are changing the structure of the audiobook industry, and the entertainment industry at large. Until now, Amazon has held a virtual monopoly in the commercial audiobook arena.[461] However, emergent AI technologies are bringing new global players into the mix. Key among these are tech giants Google and Apple, and startups like DeepZen, Speechki, Revoicer, and Respeecher. Plus, Spotify, with its purchase of the audiobook platform, Findaway, in June 2022, is set to become a competitor to Amazon's

[460] SAG-AFTRA. "Audiobooks: Expanding Opportunities for Actors." February 17, 2021. Online. https://www.sagaftra.org/videos/audiobooks-expanding-opportunities-actors

[461] Peter Osnos, "How Amazon Became the King of Audiobooks," *The Atlantic*, July 16, 2013; Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg, "Amazon Already Disrupted the Sale of Print Titles. Up Next: Audiobooks," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2018, sec. Business, https://www.wsj.com/articles/readers-listen-up-amazon-wants-to-extend-its-dominance-in-audiobooks-1517832000.

Audible.[462] These companies promise to increase profits by cutting costs, increasing production, and reducing audiobook production time by transferring the job of narration from humans to AI.

However, what is generally left out of discussion is that AIs have been trained with human talent often without informed consent.[463] (They are not AI, they are human-trained AI.) As these companies' text-to-speech (TTS) technologies sound increasingly indistinguishable from the human voice and cloning capabilities advance, concerns over copyrights and data justice, which includes data rights, data protections—data storage and data privacy—are accelerating; as are concerns over informed consent, human narrators losing jobs to AI, and/or unfair compensation.[464] Plus, adding to the complexity of these issues is a general disconnect between what these companies claim, and what they do. As stated in a 2021 Publisher's Weekly article, "The various vendors mostly go out of their way to reassure customers of their great respect for human narration, while developing their R&D efforts to making live humans an unnecessary, or at least optional, component of audiobook creation."[465]

At question is: How are human narrators being protected? What is the digital policy landscape? What does the future of creative work look like? Where is DE&I in these discussions?

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[462] Todd Spangler, "Spotify Closes Acquisition of Findaway, Mounting Challenge to Audible in Audiobooks," *Variety* (blog), June 16, 2022, https://variety.com/2022/digital/news/spotify-findaway-acquisition-audiobooks-1235296150/.

[463] Shubham Agarwal, "Audiobook Narrators Fear Apple Used Their Voices to Train AI," *Wired*, February 14, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/apple-spotify-audiobook-narrators-ai-contract/; Main, Nikki. "Apple Quietly Rolls Out AI-Narrated Audiobooks." Gizmodo, January 5, 2023, Online. https://gizmodo.com/apple-audio-books-ai-authors-ebooks-1849952963; Strauss, Victoria. "Findaway Voices, Machine Learning, and the New Rights Frontier," Writer Beware, February 10, 2023, https://writerbeware.blog/2023/02/10/findaway-voices-machine-learning-and-the-new-rights-frontier/.

[464] Leyland Cecco, "Death of the Narrator? Apple Unveils Suite of AI-Voiced Audiobooks," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2023, sec. Technology, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jan/04/apple-artificial-intelligence-ai-audiobooks.

[465] Mcllroy, Thad. " AI Comes to Audiobooks." Publishers Weekly, October 29, 2021. Webpage. https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/87762-ai-comes-to-audiobooks.html

Digital Labor Policies and DE&I

Digital labor policies, including AI, and worker protections are in development. As earlier stated, discussions about the impacts of AI on entertainment industry workers at large are central to the 2023 WGA, DGA, and SAG-AFTRA strikes against the AMPTP. At its core, the fight is about information. It is about "Who owns the data?" (E.g.: Is it the human narrator whose voice was used to train the AI, and must therefore be equitably compensated?), and "Who controls the information?" (E.g.: When is consent *informed* consent? Because a human's data ought not be taken and used for purposes not clearly defined and mutually agreed upon at the outset.) The fight is also about "Who shapes the narrative?" as workers pushback against mis- and dis-information and demand visibility and clarity. Workers are demanding that it be clearly articulated to the public when a work is human vs. generated by human-trained-AI and demanding that the work to be commensurably compensated.

From a Latina feminist lens, these issues are not new. These are issues at the core of Latine media advocacy; efforts aimed at pushing back against harms caused by inequitable media representation, which are forms of mis- and dis-information. Critically, the narrators' union, SAG-AFTRA, is at the forefront of technological discussions and developing worker protections. However, it fails to bring a DE&I framework to these issues to the detriment of its membership at large. This is because the future structure of creative work will likely be built upon the current infrastructures and systems of oppression, exploitation, and exclusions already in place, which have worked to control Latine Americans and other marginalized communities. As the telephone followed the telegraph followed the railroad tracks, our future will be built on existing infrastructures. In other words, because the industry has failed to address systemic oppression, the infrastructures of oppression are already in place. These structures become

visible to new groups as they expand to include them, as power is increasingly centralized. The issues generated by AI entering the workforce are not entirely new to communities who have lived in a universe of marginalization. What may seem apocalyptic and new from one lens, is recognized as an exacerbation and continuity from another.

In the SAG-AFTRA 3rd Annual Labor Innovation & Technology Summit 2021, for example, Tristan Harris, Co-founder & President of the Center for Humane Technology, talked with then union president, Gabrielle Carteris, about the impacts of technology on our understanding of the world, and its fracturing of our shared understanding of reality. Carteris stated:

> So as a society what is happening… actually, it's quite frightening… the idea [is] it's changing and shaping our realities, right? So that we are not living in a universal universe anymore. It's a segmented universe, right?... That manipulation in the tech environment actually scares me… I don't know what to do to correct it…. How do we engage with this technology and create still a universe of humanity that lives and understands the world in some agreement?[466]

I share Carteris' concerns. This problem is frightening and must be urgently addressed. Yet, the shaping and fragmenting of our reality is not new. As media industries fail to equitably include us, Latine Americans continue to live in a dangerous universe. Our reality has always been different from ways in which we see ourselves represented in the warped universe of U.S. media. We know that we exist. We know that we are not stereotypes. We know that we contribute to society. We know that are experiences are complex, varied, and diverse. This "universe of humanity that lives and understands the world in some agreement," is what we have been advocating for because, for us in the U.S., it has yet to exist.

[466] SAG-AFTRA. "3rd Annual Labor Innovation & Technology Summit 2021." SAG-AFTRA, YouTube channel, Streamed live on February 19, 2021. Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSLiQubnTi0 @3:59:30

I agree with Carteris that we must center unions in the future of work. I additionally argue, that in this process, we must also center authentic and sustainable DE&I within our unions. This means equitably including Latinidad as a recognized sociocultural group. Failure to do this will continue the process of creating fragmented universes in US media where whiteness is privileged. This failure to understand the world from perspectives outside of whiteness, indicates that diverse groups, including Latinidad are not equitably represented by our union.

At question is will this problem finally be prioritized as interests converge with AI entering the workforce? If we do not concurrently address structural whiteness as we rally to push against AIs being overrepresented in the media workforce, whiteness will continue to position itself as the mythical normative human. Therefore, as it has historically been the case, what we will see is the conditional and temporary inclusion of Latinidad to participate in these efforts, then this will be followed by racial justice being, again, pushed to the margins. Critically, for Latines, as Latinidad is becomes further conceptually normalized as "not a recognized race" throughout society (prompted by the US census categories), our group's needs, concerns, and existence will be pushed further down the well.[467]

Therefore, the US census data collection and analysis processes and categories impact Latine workers in culture industries. Because our understanding of race impacts our inclusion/exclusion. It also impacts policymaking decisions. And it impacts efforts to promote equal employment opportunities. What this means is, that if Latinidad is not understood to be a recognized race/sociocultural group, then it becomes conceptually justifiable to deny us equitable participation in representation in-front and behind cameras/mics, in executive suites, and within worker protections discussions and policymaking processes. In other words, the false logic

[467] Bell, Derrick. 2008. *Faces At The Bottom Of The Well: The Permanence Of Racism*. 1st ed. Boulder: Basic Books.

becomes, “once the five federally recognized races are included, then Latinidad is included by default,” which results in our erasure and exclusion. It provides deniability of access.

Categories matter because they frame the narrative. When Latinidad is not included in the census’ race category, this move works to fracture us, putting us on the path towards future erasure as a united sociocultural group. This is not accidental. Neither is divisive language: As community insiders, we understand that we are not a homogenous group, and we understand that we are also one united group. We are free to choose among and between the Latinas, Latinos, Latines, Latinx, Hispanic, Latin@s, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicana/o/x, Peruvian, Guatemalan, etc. categories or all of the above because we are comfortable with hybridity and diferénce. What we should not be comfortable with is relentless efforts to be defined from outside and pushed into rigid, inadequate categories aimed at controlling and dividing us.

Authentic and sustainable DE&I must not be excluded from AI conversations. In addition to the moral imperative, Latinas/es/os must be equitably included in technological and future of creative work discourses because our views benefit us all. We have experienced the ways that inadequate categories and data collection and analysis practices have been operationalized to frame the narratives, and consequently served to keep us out of reach from protections, resources, and other social benefits. The actions and decisions we make today, and the voices that are included in the conversations, will shape the future structure of creative work.

The AI policy landscape is area for future work. In the AI space, EU is at the forefront of developing laws and policies, as efforts are under-development in the US.[468] As Latinas/os/es, must take urgent steps to ensure that we are not excluded from these discourses.

[468] Allen, Asha.“AI Policy & Governance, European Policy, Privacy & Data: CDT Europe’s AI Bulletin: May 2023.” Center for Democracy & Technology, May 16, 2023. https://cdt.org/insights/cdt-europes-ai-bulletin-may-2023/

CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDING AUDIOBOOK NARRATION

As an industry at the convergence of media and tech, understanding the labor structure of commercial audiobook narration from an intersectional lens offers us a window into how the future of creative work is being constructed, while, at the same time, highlighting the consequences of this design on specific communities of workers. This chapter answers the questions: What is audiobook narration? How is the work organized? My goal is to surface the ways in which the current political and economic structure of this labor arena impacts how we come to understand this work, how it impacts U.S.-based Latina narrators differently, how these women come to understand themselves within this workforce, and how it shapes the values embedded in the audiobook as cultural artifact. This matters because understanding how and why different workers experience the same work differently, can help inform policymaking to ensure that all workers are equitably protected.

To do this, I first offer a more robust definition of audiobook narration, then I detail how the work is organized during the pre-production, production, and post-production processes. Along the way, I shed light onto the affective dimensions of this work and bring into focus the different points along the production pipeline where structural whiteness and toxic masculinity impact Latina narrators' experiences.

I. Audiobook Narration Defined

Audiobook narration is a key component in the creation of audiobooks. It is the art of bringing a written work to the audio-sphere by a narrator who, via her voice, translates the world created by an author to the mind of the listener while connecting to her audience on an

emotional level.[469] Far from the kind of haphazard gig economy labor that it is increasingly treated as, narration involves an amalgam of specialized acting and technical skillsets. It is, at the same time, creative labor, emotional labor, knowledge work, and digital labor.

Audiobook Narration is Creative Labor

Audiobook narration is an art. It, therefore, requires creative labor. Creativity is the ability to synthesize disparate elements into the creation of "an original knowledge product, or to add obvious value to an existing one."[470] Audiobook narrators co-create an original form—the audiobook—by contributing their creative acting skills. Skilled actors are trained to sift through text, subtext, context, tone, character, time-period, dialog, setting, word choices, etc. for clues about an author's intent and vision. Then, based on this investigative work and the actor's interpretation of these clues, narrators translate the author's ideas and images into aural form for the listener(s) via their voice by employing sonic choices, which include rhythm, pronunciation, cadence, tone, characterizations, articulation, and intent.

Creativity requires an active imagination. Actors are trained to develop our ability to engage in structured, directed play, and to fully commit to the worlds and characters created by writers. Our job is to make creative (and technical) work seem effortless. In other words, our job is to "hide the work." This fuzziness between play and labor (playbor) is foundational to our

[469] Ruben, Paul Alan. "Upping Your Performance Game While Recording Home Alone (now that you're really alone." Audiofile presents Audiobook Narration webinar with Paul Alan Ruben. April 18, 2020. Online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRYOvqYgrkc7/11/2024 9:18:00 PM

[470] Vincent Mosco, *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*, ed. Catherine McKercher (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2008), x.

work and training.[471] This is strategically used by unethically employers as a conceptual justification for devaluing narrators' labor.

Audiobook Narration is Emotional Labor

Affect permeates this work. Emotional labor is clearly inherent in the acting process. What may not be as apparent is that narrators are in a persistent internal emotional negotiation as a means to cope with the abusive labor practices to which they are subjected. Narrators engage in emotional labor when they exert their agency to push back against the power asymmetries at play throughout the production process:

> **Carmen**: He [a supervisor] mansplained to me… that type of environment… not being treated like an equal because he would not speak or treat a male counterpart that way…. I called him out on his passive-aggressive behavior…. He reacted with multiple email messages… saying that I didn't understand how the process worked, and how he had to educated me…and how I was being selfish…. I stopped any further direct contact with him, and all my communications involved the producer, and he was CC'd on everything, so I never had any direct communication with him after that because, no.

Every power play by employers has consequent affective impacts on the worker.

Narrators negotiate being over-worked, under-valued, under-paid, and even disrespected with the hope that this work experience will lead to increased skills and more job opportunities. This type of emotional work is hope labor, defined by Kuehn et al. as "un- or under-compensated work carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow." [472] Narrators employ hope labor

[471] Julian Kücklich, "FCJ-025 Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry," *The Fibreculture Journal*, Open Humanities Press. Issue 5 2005: precarious labor. Online. http://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precarious-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/; Christian Fuchs, "Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet," *The Information Society* 26, no. 3 (April 30, 2010): 179–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/01972241003712215.
[472] Kathleen Kuehn, "Hope Labor: The Role of Employment Prospects in Online Social Production." 9.

as a conceptual coping mechanism to deal with abusive labor practices.

> **Carmen:** I feel like I graduated… I went through school, and I learned a lot from this. But, as a job, it's really frustrating.
>
> **Sandra:** Fué un lig… un, un… iba a decir un ligero proceso de adaptación pero, no. Fué unnnn lento proceso de adaptación…. Por más que el trabajo sea tedioso, a veces, ó difícil, ó demorado, no importa siempre y cuando, bueno en el momento te importa pero el resultado final para mí es lo más importante. Que el cliente quede contento…. Entonces, um, pues, de cierto modo fué complicado porque me imagino uno como actor y con la trajectoria que llega al estudio he, de pronto, internamente… no es conciente, pero internamente está el conflicto de que este es mi primer idioma [Español]. Esto es lo que yo hablo…. Eso es lo que hago con los ojos cerrados. Osea, cuál es, no entiendo cual es el problema. Sin embargo tu lo haces… después de un tiempo, empiezas a entender que quieren crear una cosa diferente… que it may be just a certain style, done a certain way, and it works and it works for that industry…. Y, esas cosas son interesantes porque because they form you into a better, more well-rounded actor…. Entonces… um, por más que esto fuera difícil y fuera un reto me gusto porque te enseña cosas diferentes.

Because narrators get paid per finished hour, this slowing down of the work process added to her uncompensated labor time.

The narrators justified these working conditions because they felt they were gaining experience and broadening their skillsets (hope labor). Plus, as bilingual and bicultural talent, in addition to contributing their labor and labor time, they also contributed their (uncompensated) cultural knowledges.

Audiobook Narration is Knowledge Work

In their introduction to *Knowledge Work in the Information Society* editors Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher, trace the historical debates about "the relationships between technologies of communication and information, work, and social developments" from Henri de Saint-Simon (18th century), Karl Marx (19th century), Daniel Bell, Herbert Schiller, and Harry Braverman Henri (20th century), to current debates about definitional

parameters of knowledge work.[473] They point to Richard Florida, who defines knowledge labor as creative labor. Florida argues that the knowledge economy is fundamentally "powered by human creativity. Creativity… [which] is now the *decisive* source of competitive advantage."[474] In Mosco and McKercher's volume, knowledge is understood as the "insights to methods of producing wealth" that workers lend and "of which they are denied their fair share."[475] Audiobook narrators are knowledge workers because their labor is inherently creative and because they contribute their cultural insights to an industry that denies them an equitable share of the wealth they are helping to create.

U.S. Latina audiobook narrators, and other multi-cultural workers, contribute additional knowledge work in the form of transcultural and translingual knowledge. When they narrate a book in English that is grounded in Latinx culture, they bring not just two languages to the table, but an intimate understanding of two unique ways of understanding the world. In *Culture Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*, Michael Agar calls this Languaculture. These are "encounter[s] between different worlds of *meaning*, meaning that travels well beyond the dictionary, meaning that tells you who you are, whom you're dealing with, the kind of situation you're in, how life works and what's important in it."[476] Cadence, rhythm, accent—including what words are read with a Latinx accent (and which Latinx accent) and what words are read with a U.S.A. accent—are sonic choices that convey to the listener a particular world and specific perspectives.

[473] Mosco, *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*.
[474] Richard L Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 4–5. Emphasis in original.
[475] Mosco, *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*.
[476] Agar, *Language Shock*, 16.

Cultural specificity conveyed via language can be recognized by listeners who are attune to these important audio subtleties. These sonic choices that narrators make are crucial because, as Mari J. Matsuda tells us in "Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and a Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction," "traces of… life and identity are woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words. Your self is inseparable from your accent."[477] Therefore, for a robust and nuanced sonic translation, a narrator who understands the author's cultural perspective is key. Their sonic specificity serves as a layer of mediation that may mitigate any unconscious or implicit biases that some cultural outsiders might have when reading a book about Latinx cultures. In transcultural narration projects, the labor and cultural knowledge that narrators contribute are thus multiplied.

It is important to note that this knowledge work is taking place within a political and economic context where "a dynamic process of deskilling, upskilling, and reskilling is taking place in the occupational hierarchy… [wherein] companies have benefited from reducing the skill components of jobs, or from eliminating jobs and replacing them with automated systems…especially to jobs traditionally filled by women."[478] The insights from our pláticas reveal that intensive upskilling is taking place in the audiobook industry. We saw this in the previous quote from Sandra, a seasoned voice-actress, who shares that she learned a "new way of reading" on the job.

We also see upskilling in the industry's increasing consolidation of labor:

> **Jenny:** They make deals with authors that don't have that much money to get it done… so, it's… okay, so if we have it self-recorded… the actor will be the engineer… it's basically getting you to do double work. (pause) How about that?
>
> **Sandra**: [Reading a casting notice] "What we are looking for: Primary female

[477] Matsuda, "Voices of America," 1329.
[478] Mosco, *Knowledge Workers in the Information Society*, ix.

> narrator to record the vast majority of the project, you will also be the editor/producer on this project… native Spanish speaker…. Much of the project is in English…. Someone who can produce crisp, clear, high-quality audio with no background noise…. The only part you will not record will be the other male characters lines in the sample dialogs. But, as the producer responsible for editing the project, you will, of course, be responsible for editing his lines in. That said, we are looking for someone who knows a male narrator." What is that?
> **Me:** So, you're doing the casting as well.
> **Sandra:** Yes. "…that can record this part… preferably in studio with you for sound consistency." Oh, so, that means that I will record him as well with my studio time.

Narrators are increasingly expected to shoulder multiple (uncompensated) skillsets and responsibilities, and to provide the recording studio. In other words, they are expected to gain new knowledge, contribute their labor, labor time, *and* the means of production without commensurate compensation.

This consolidation of labor is tantamount to wage-theft. And, with the emergent threat of automation (AI), today's consolidation of labor also serves as a form of upskilling with a view towards future job reduction or elimination. (More on AI and IP later).

Audiobook Narration is Digital Labor

Digital technologies have opened this labor arena to a global workforce. Audiobook narration is digital labor because it is a form of labor associated with the information and communications technology industry (ICT). According to Christian Fuchs, what makes different forms of labor 'digital labor' is that they are part of a "collective workforce that is required for the existence, usage, and application of digital media."[479] He advocates for a broad understanding of digital labor defined, not by "a common type of occupation, but

[479] Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 3.

rather the industry they contribute to and in which capital exploits them."[480] Narrators engage with digital technologies during the production process, and the final product—the audiobook's current format— is digital.[481] Today's audiobook is an immaterial cultural artifact that is produced, distributed, and accessed via digital technologies.

This robust understanding of audiobook narration brings into focus the added labor and skillsets that U.S.-based Latinas contribute. Next, I look at how the work is organized.

II. How the Labor is Organized

There are three stages to the audiobook production cycle: pre-production, production, and post-production. As the image below shows, different workers and skillsets are needed within each stage:

Pre-Production	**Production**	**Post-Production**
Author		
Copyright agent		
Publisher		
Translator	Engineer	Editor
Producer	Producer	Producer
Proof-reader		Proofer
Researcher		
Director	Director	Director
Casting Director		

[480] Fuchs, 3.
[481] MP3 or .AA/.AAX

Missing: Talent agents		
Narrator	Narrator	Narrator
		Marketer & Distributor
Accountant?	Accountant?	Accountant?
Legal?	Legal?	Legal?

However, as the rest of this chapter will show, this division of labor occurs under optimal conditions. The more hidden the narrator, the more the labor is consolidated and transferred onto their shoulders without just compensation. Following, I take a closer look at each stage of the production cycle to bring into focus the power dynamics that impact how the work is organized, and how this impacts narrators and U.S.-based Latina narrators specifically.

Pre-production

A significant amount of work that takes place before the narrator records the audio. Generally, the author creates the text,[482] there is a copyright agent, a publisher, and, if the text is translated, a translator. Then, budgetary decisions are made, and a producer is hired. The producer is responsible for the production. This includes hiring the production team, which can include a director, proof-reader/proofer,[483] researcher, casting director, narrator, engineer, and

[482] Generally, although there have been straight to audio works such as Shaun White's memoir, which was released as an audiobook before the text verstions. See: Trachtenberg, Jeffrey. "Amazon Already Disrupted the Sale of Print Titles. Up Next: Audiobooks." WSJ.com. February 5, 2018. Business sec. Online. https://www.wsj.com/articles/readers-listen-up-amazon-wants-to-extend-its-dominance-in-audiobooks-1517832000

[483] The person who proofreads the script before recording begins.

editor. All of this 'behind the scenes' work and decisions tend to be obfuscated from narrators' POV, as illustrated by a question posed by Graciela during our pláticas**:**

> **Graciela**: "Qué hay detrás de todo antes de que me llama [el productor] y me dice ven a grabarlo? / *What is behind everything before [the producer] calls and says come and record?"*[484]

While pre-production decisions are generally obfuscated from performers' view regardless of media arena, talent agents generally bridge this gap by looking out for talent's best interests. This is not the case in the audiobook arena where talent agent representation is notably absent. This obfuscation creates power asymmetry, which puts narrators at a disadvantage from the get-go. (More on agents in ch7).

Narrators enter the process at the **pre-production** stage when they search for work opportunities, audition, and book the job. The quantity of work opportunities and the quality of the labor conditions are contingent on which authors/works get published, which works are greenlit to be produced as audiobooks, who the imaged audiences for these audiobooks are, and who is doing the imagining. These decisions are packed with power dynamics and racial conceptions that undergird U.S.-based Latinas narrators' access to work. I surface these dynamics by taking a closer look at three key areas that come into play during pre-production: casting categories, the union as support mechanism, and budget allocation.

Casting Categories

The first questions talent typically ask when we see a casting notice is: "Is this my casting?" "Will I be considered for this job?" Casting categories are the first gateway between talent and work; and they are identity categories. How narrators are categorized for casting

[484] Translation is mine.

purposes impacts their access to labor opportunities. On one hand, these categories need to be constructed for the convenience of the client/employer by helping to orient their search. And, on the other, they ought to provide talent the broadest opportunity to be findable given their casting range. To orient search, casting categories, like other classification schema, "must decide which differences to use as dividing lines."[485] These choices are informed by who is assumed to be doing the searching and what search criteria they are likely to use.[486]

A closer look at categories surfaces their racial logics. For example, I visited Deyan Audio's website, one of the top LA-based audiobook production houses in the world. From the actor thumbnails on their landing page, what Deyan gets right is that they do not equate "female" nor "male" with whiteness:



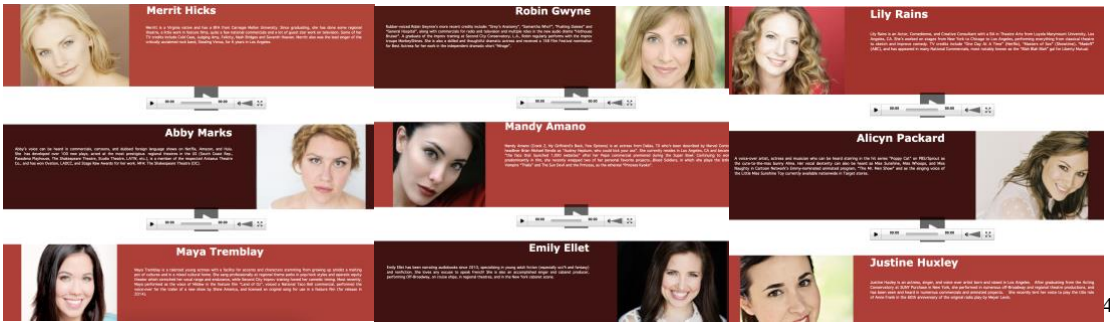
[487]

However, on the left-hand side, their casting categories are organized by gender, age range, language, and accent or nationality. Their organizing logic is alphabetical. Other than that, they offer no explanation of their category criteria. It can be argued that this "short-hand" approach presumes a "common sense" understanding shared by Deyan and their clients regarding which

[485] Hope A Olson, "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2001): 653.
[486] Olson, 641.
[487] Deyan Audio. Webpage. https://www.deyanaudio.com/castingindex.html

differences are used as dividing lines to categorize talent, and, therefore, necessitate no further explanation. But they do.

A closer look at their "American" categories, for example, surfaces an over-representation of whiteness. The unspoken agreement seems to be, "by American, we generally mean white."



[488]

Equating American-ness with whiteness, and with the sound of "whiteness," is a political move and a micro-aggression that continues the project of othering people of color: A project that can be traced back to the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 under which Congress mandated the allocation of immigration quotas.

In "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," Mae Ngai tells us that "like race, nation and nationality are socially constructed; their legal definitions and cultural meanings can only be understood in the context of history."[489] The Immigration Act of 1924, Ngai argues:

> Comprised a constellation of reconstructed racial categories, in which race and nationality…disaggregated and realigned in new and uneven ways… the law constructed a white American race, in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness that made them distinct from those deemed not white… non-European immigrants—among them Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and Filipinos—acquired ethnic and racial identities that were one and the same… [rendering] them unalterably foreign and unassimilable to the nation. The

[488] Deyan Audio. "American" category. https://www.deyanaudio.com/ame20f.html
[489] Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 69, https://doi.org/10.2307/2567407.

> Immigration Act of 1924 thus established legal foundations for social processes that would unfold over the next several decades, processes that historians have called, for European immigrants, "becoming American" (or, more precisely, white Americans), while casting Mexicans as illegal aliens and foredooming Asians to permanent foreignness.[490]

This social and cultural unfolding continues and can be seen in today's casting categories when, as in the case of Deyan Audio, whites are positioned as normative Americans from which all other 'types' of Americans (Latine, Black, Asian, Native, etc.) and their respective real or assumed accents and cadences deviate. This classification schema couples aurality with race, ethnicity, and nationality. In the case of Latine Americans, the logic of whiteness seems to be: Latinx are not white, therefore, they are foreign, and, as foreigners, they, thus, have foreign accents.

This logical fallacy is reinforced—in the public's imaginary—when Latinx talent are expected to have or to put on a Spanish-language accent as the line of difference. To clarify, accents are not at issue. It is an actor's job to personify different characters and see the world from different perspectives; What is problematic is when accents are rotely used as an aural code for "brown" people not belonging. The underlying message of this move is two-fold: Latinx people are not Americans, so they do not belong. And, if they speak English, they are not capable of speaking it as fluently as whites. This disregards the violence of assimilation to which many of us have been subjected via which we were forced to learn the American dialect fluently and makes a judgment on capabilities. Not only are we capable of learning accents, generally, Latinx Americans continually navigate multiple cultural perspectives. At task is to pushback and interrogate: What does an 'American' sound like? According to whom?

[490] Ngai, 70.

Important to note that the U.S. does not have an official language.[491] People in the U.S. speak different languages, and with diverse accents, including the American dialect of the English language. This clarity matters because, as it relates to this study, it is connected to who gets to work. Historically, the psychological wage of whiteness, or benefits and privileges conferred to white workers, has come from their confidence in knowing that their personhood and life experiences are representative of Americanness as reflected in U.S. media.[492] In other words, labor opportunities have been tied to equating whiteness with Americanness in the entertainment industry. This results in the overrepresentation of whiteness in U.S. media, as has been well document in media reports and underscored by campaigns like #OscarsSoWhite.[493]

Uninterrogated casting categories that center (the sound of) whiteness continue the racist project of defining Americans as white, which has its roots in the Immigration Act of 1924. These categories are a result of power dynamics, biases, and assumptions that denote who has the power to name and to define. [494] They work against authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) efforts, impact work opportunities, shape the audiences' understandings of what an

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[491] Harmeet Kaur, "FYI: English Isn't the Official Language of the United States," CNN, May 20, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/20/us/english-us-official-language-trnd/index.html.
[492] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[493] Negrón-Muntaner et al., "The Latino Media Gap: A Report on the State of Latinos in U.S. Media"; Dino-Ray Ramos and Dino-Ray Ramos, "Latinx Creators Sign Open Letter To #EndLatinXclusion In Hollywood: 'We Are Tired,'" *Deadline* (blog), October 15, 2020, https://deadline.com/2020/10/latinx-representation-hollywood-untitled-latinx-project-tanya-saracho-lin-manuel-miranda-gloria-calderon-kellett-roberto-aguierre-sacasa-steven-canals-diversity-inclusion-representation-1234598129/; Lee Yandoli, Krystie."The 2020 Oscar Nominations Are, Yet Again, So White And Barely Include People Of Color," BuzzFeed News, January 13, 2020, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/krystieyandoli/2020-oscar-nominations-so-white; Hunt and Ramón, "UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020. Part One: Film"; Smith, "Report Finds Popular Films Show Paltry Progress toward Inclusion"; USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative et al., "Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019," n.d., 42; Dino-Ray Ramos and Dino-Ray Ramos, "CAA And Parrot Analytics Study Finds Increase In Diversity With TV Shows In Past Three Years; Latinos Remain Underrepresented," *Deadline* (blog), October 5, 2020, https://deadline.com/2020/10/caa-parrot-analytics-study-diversity-tv-shows-representation-inclusion-1234591140/.
[494] Hope A. Olson, "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2001): 639–68.

"American" sounds like, and force narrators to reshape their identity to fit casting and client preconceptions in order to have access to labor opportunities. At task is to reorient our understanding of what an "American" sounds like, and to have that reflected in reimagined casting schema that give talent equitable access to labor opportunities while disrupting power asymmetries and reorienting racial logics and subjectivities.[495]

For authentic systemic transformations in the industry, these racial logics also need to be addressed at the key support mechanism for narrators: our union.

SAG-AFTRA: Our union as (equitable?) support mechanism

The next question that narrators typically have is: "Is this work union?" As Jonathan Hardy tells us, a CPE power analysis of media necessitates an understanding of support mechanisms.[496] Union representation is a crucial support mechanism for narrators. When workplace frictions arise, union members can turn to the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA). Our union represents approximately 160,00 actors, recording artists, singers, dancers, stunt performers, and other media professionals.[497] In Los Angeles, audiobook unionizing efforts began as late as 2011. Yet, today, according to past SAG-AFTRA president, Gabrielle Carteris, audiobooks are 100% unionized.[498]

Working under a union contract means having the protection of your union behind you. As Jenny mentioned during our plática while discussing the industry's low pay rates in relation to union vs. non-union work:

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[495] Olson, 659.
[496] Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media*.
[497] SAG-AFTRA. Webpage. https://www.sagaftra.org/about
[498] Audiobooks: Expanding opportunities for Actors. Feb. 17, 2021. SAG-AFTRA Foundation YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOnYPxFjQe0

> **Jenny:** The thing is, [a union job] pays pension and health, so I thought it was a better deal to do it through the union, you know? It's always a better deal, in the long run, for the actor.

Among other things, union work ensures pension and health (P&H) benefits and minimum pay rates. However, this does not seem to be clearly communicated to all talent. When I asked Carmen, who worked on a non-union audiobook project, if she thought the abusive labor practices that she experienced would have been mitigated had her job been union, she responded:

> **Carmen:** No. That's the thing. It's no, not at all because there's no minimum. Producers can [pay] whatever they want. Where are our protections?... We don't have leverage at all.

What is important to note is Carmen's perception of our union's protections. Regardless of the project's union status, she is *unaware* of the minimum rates our union has secured for union work.

This is an example of information asymmetry, which seems endemic of our union and its historically complex and, at times, problematic relationship with its Latinx members (see chapter 5). From an intersectional perspective, the question is: Is SAG-AFTRA an equitable support mechanism? To answer this question necessitates that we again consider categories. This is because how the union conceptually categorizes its membership impacts its orientation, its infrastructure, what issues the union is attuned to and prioritizes, how it comes to understand and interpret issues and concerns, what solutions are sought, consequences considered, who participates in solution-seeking efforts, and, ultimately, how equitably, effectively, and sustainably it represents all its members.

Within a union that centers whiteness as the mythical universal norm, what we will see is an over-representation of whiteness in positions with real decision-making power, which denotes an undergirding institutional belief that whiteness is all seeing, neutral, and

objective. As Donna Haraway tells us, this supposed "view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god trick" used to throw sand in our eyes, and keep those who claim it out of reach from being answerable for what they learned how to see.[499] The power of whiteness "resides, in crucial part, in its occupation of a space of unmarked normativity."[500] In other words, white Americans "can convince themselves that life as they experience it on their side of the color line is simply the objective truth about race,"[501] and about all else because, until recently, their race had not been visible to them. This distorted understanding of their whiteness as objective, neutral, and normative keeps them out of reach from accountability and serves to uphold existing power structures.

Institutional structural whiteness remains comfortably uninterrogated because it is so embedded in the institution's culture that it is practically invisible. And, also, because the fear of the repercussions for being deemed a "troublemaker" for speaking up serves as a deterrent. As Michael K. Brown, et.al. explain, "In a white-dominated society, color brings problems. And if people of color cry foul, if they call attention to the way they are treated or to racial inequality, if they try to change the distribution of advantage, if they try to adjust the rules of the game, white Americans (whose race and racial advantage are invisible [to themselves]) see them as asking for special privileges. They are seen as troublemakers."[502] There are consequences for speaking up, not the least of which is being branded a

[499] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 582–83.
[500] Hudson, *The Whiteness of Practicality*, 213.
[501] Brown, Michael K., Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz, and David Wellman. 2023. *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*. University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2vt05j1.
[502] Michael Brown, "Whitewashing Race - Michael K. Brown, Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz, David Wellman - eBook - University of California Press.Pdf," 1, accessed April 19, 2021, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/4143179/course/section/64443197/Whitewashing%20Race%20-%20Michael%20K.%20Brown%2C%20Martin%20Carnoy%2C%20Elliott%20Currie%2C%20Troy%20Duster%2C%20David%20B.%20Oppenheimer%2C%20Marjorie%20M.%20Shultz%2C%20David%20Wellman%20-%20eBook%20-%20University%20of%20California%20Press.pdf.

"troublemaker" with all of its attached connotations: out-of-work, angry, isolated. When these racial logics are institutionally embedded, what we see is a lack of authentic commitment to equity and inclusion.

For example, at SAG-AFTRA, equitably diverse inclusion is not prioritized; it is instead deemed a peripheral value and an individual choice. This "individual choice" is indicative of neoliberal logics within the union. These logics can be identified in the ways that Latine members tend to be excluded from decision-making processes. When we are primarily (or exclusively) categorized as Spanish speakers in the union's imaginary, this move renders us—in their view—a niche community. This niche-ness is used as a justification for excluding us from key conversations and processes. This is because whiteness sees white views as holistic, and all other views (Black, Brown, Native, Asian) as partial and skewed. Their rationalization seems to be, "What could POC possibly add to the conversations that they (whites) are not already covering?" They fail to understand that their failure to comprehend our value is the result of their own partial and skewed views.

At issue is that these undergirding racial logics have real practical, affective, political, and economic impacts on Latinas, Latine talent, and POC. Can the union be an equitable support mechanism without equitable inclusion throughout its structure? Can it understand how different workers might experience the same work differently if all voices are not equitably heard? As the findings from my Culturally Intuitive Observations reveal Latina representation in audiobook union meetings and events is not equitable (Ch.4, pg.10-11). Latina exclusions at the union are egregious. Especially, at our Los Angeles headquarters; a city where Latine

Americans make up 48% (4.9 million) of the population.[503] The reasons for their lack of engagement are multifold, but key is the issue of conceptual categorization and how it impacts authentic equitable inclusion at the union, which is the key support mechanism for narrators.

While not assuming homogeneity of thought, the historical lack of racial and ethnic diversity in union leadership indicates a need for critical self-reflection regarding inclusion and power asymmetries. This self-assessment needs to be applied throughout the union's systems, processes, structure, and infrastructure. We must address the problem of structural whiteness because racial and ethnically diverse insights can support and strengthen SAG-AFTRA's organizing efforts in this new digital era by helping to expand and reframe what labor issues are addressed and what policy solutions are sought as we shape our digital labor futures.

On Budgets: Conceptual linguistic hierarchies and wage theft

The next question for narrators is typically: "What's the pay?" Wages is another issue that shapes Latina narrators' experiences before they enter the production stage of this work. My findings reveal that wage theft is rampant in this industry, and, for Spanish language narration, one of the ways that wage theft is deployed is via differential pay rates associated with the media's linguistic hierarchies. Simply stated, Spanish language work is devalued, which is ironic as it represents a greater skillset. Budgetary decisions and wages fail to account for the added knowledge work that Spanish and bilingual speakers bring to the table. As earlier stated, the additional language these talent bring to the work is not just about language, but about languaculture. Our Spanish language work is devalued as Latinidad, our cultures, are devalued.

[503] "Hispanics/Latinos in Los Angeles County: By the Numbers," *Los Angeles Almanac.* Webpage. https://www.laalmanac.com/population/po722.php; Anna Brown and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Mapping the Latino Population, By State, County and City," *Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project* (blog), August 29, 2013, https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2013/08/29/mapping-the-latino-population-by-state-county-and-city/.

During our pláticas, the women shared the differences in pay rates they have experienced as voice professionals. Valeria shared her experiences in the related arena of dubbing:

> **Me**: Se paga diferente dependiendo del lenguaje?
> **Valeria:** Claro. Español somos los peor pagados. Porque estamos compitiendo con México y con toda LatinaAmerica. Y entonces, claro, le van a pagar a un actor Frances de Francia, o sea no Franco-Canadiense, … mucho más dinero porque son menos actores.
> **Me:** Porqué son menos actores; menos competencia?
> **Valeria:** Mhm [confirming]… Entonces, por eso a los Latinos nos pagan tan poco: Porque tenemos toda la competencia de todo LatinoAmerica. Pero, otros idiomas son más codiciados, más bien pagados, porque el pool es así de chiquitito [indicates].

Valeria's insights generate a series of questions including: Is pay rate only a function of the pool of workers? Or, as Andrea shared regarding audiobooks, is it also a function of audience and market share?

> **Andrea:** La tarifa que tiene SAG-AFTRA con Penguin en Español son [X] pero me parece que para Inglés es más. Porque, claro, se venden más, da más dinero el de Inglés. El de Español no les debe rentar tanto, yo creo. Porque no hay tanta tradición de escuchar audiolibros. Entonces no pueden pedir mucho más porque no van a saquear tanto. Pero, como bueno también el hecho de que ya no sea en CD, sea en MP3 abarata también la produción un poco que no tienes que comprar, que no tienen que comprar el CD… pero, sigue siendo, la gente sigue comprando menos audiolibros por alguna razón.
> Me: mmm… en Español?
> **Andrea:** En Español.
> Me: Entonces por eso las tarifas…?
> **Andrea:** Creo que puede ser por ahí. Yo no creo que sea algo… Claro, obviamente, sé que el mercado tiene menos dinero para… es un mercado menos pudiente, digamos, que el mercado Americano ó Britanico. Entonces y también se produciran menos… bueno se produciran menos ó se pagara menos al locutor por eso. Es lo que yo quiero creer. (laugh) No por aprovecharse. No?

In her response, we see how Andrea tries to make sense of the differential linguistic pay rates for narrators. She begins by confidently stating that English language narrators get paid more than Spanish language narrators because "of course, they sell more; there's more money in English language." Then, she considers formats and how digital technology has lowered the cost of

production but decides that Spanish language audiences are still buying fewer audiobooks, "for some reason." Finally, she admits that she wants to believe that these are the possible reasons for the differences, and not because those in power are trying to take unfair advantage of Spanish language workers. An example of a worker trying to make sense of differentials for her own mental health.

Some of the women were not sure if there is difference in pay rate according to language. This lack of clarity is a form of information, and thus, power asymmetry. however, what the women have in common is that they all did the extra emotional labor of trying to find justifiable reasons for any potential pay gap. They wanted to assume the best, *hoping* they were not simply being taken advantage of. This uncertainty, informational gaps, and additional emotional labor could be mitigated if the union took a more inclusive approach to their audiobook informational meetings. Because, while the economic organization of the audiobook ecosystem is generally fuzzy, it seems unevenly obfuscated along linguistic lines.

As Andrea points out, another key factor in budgetary decisions is audience. Who publishers, producers, and/or marketers imagine their audiences to be, is evidenced by the sounds of the audiobook. For example, bicultural/bilingual Latine listeners of a work set in a Latine culture can hear whether they have been considered as an important part of its potential audience(s). They can discern whether decision-makers (producers, directors, publishers) took care to hire a narrator who understands the culture(s) of the world of the work or if they simply hired someone to do a generic "Latin-accent." They can hear whether Languaculture was considered in the casting process, and not just language.

Budgetary decisions are audible in that they can impact the final sound of an audiobook. Was it a rush job? Was a director hired? Was the narrator working under stressful labor

conditions? Because, currently, recording schedules can be physically, mentally, and emotionally draining and this impacts the work. One narrator mentioned a job where she was put up in a hotel, worked for seven days a week, eight-hours a day, and with only a twenty-minute lunch break. I've heard narrator coaches and producers say that narrators need stamina. While this may be true, we also need to reevaluate the current labor conditions; as voice professionals know, the microphone hears everything. And, thus, the sound of the audiobook is impacted by decisions about imagined audiences, budgets, and labor conditions.

After a job's union status is clarified, the audition process has been completed, and once the job is booked, the narrator signs a contract (though not always, if the job is non-union) and finds out where the recording will take place. Recording location gives the narrator an indication of the range of labor conditions she might expect to encounter. Before heading into the recording studio, however, the next step for the narrator is to prepare the text, which is the first step in the production process.

Production

For narrators, the production stage involves preparing and then recording the text.

Preparing the Text

Approaches to preparing a work are individual to each narrator. They are also informed by the complexity and genre of the text. Whether it is a book of fiction or non-fiction, narrators typically first do a skim-through read of the book. This gives them a general understanding of the world: the arc of the story or narrative, its tone, the time-period, and characters. During this skim-through, they assess what research and how much research will be needed. Then, they go

through the book again, more carefully this time, and make notes and markings on the page or using a markup app (E.g.: iAnnotate).

> **Graciela:** Volviendo a lo de leerlos antes, aunque no lo estoy leyendo 100%, si invierto una buena cantidad de horas marcando el libro. Que no me pagan, obviamente…. Sería ideal que de alguna forma, lo que pagan, compensara un poco esas horas que estás invirtiendo…. // *Returning to how much you read them beforehand. While I don't read them 100%, I do invest a good number of hours marking up the script. That is, obviously, not paid…. It would be ideal if somehow, folded into the pay, they would compensate some of that work that you are investing.*

Markups are made to note any words that may be in doubt (either in terms of meaning or pronunciation, etc.), and were further research needs to be done. They also guide the narrator when she enters the recording booth, to remind her of emotional choices, changes in settings, tone, pace, rhythm, even perhaps where to breathe in long or complex sentences.

> **Andrea:** Yo me leo no todo el libro, pero la primera parte el primer dia… osea antes de ir al primer dia…. Intento leerme un tercio del libro, pero por encima. Y, entonces voy señalando. Veo sobre todo los dialogos y a ver quién habla para ponerme una marquita delante de quien habla.
> Subrrayo, si por ejemplo, "dijo llorando," pues entonces pongo una carita llorando. O [si dice] "con esperanza," y entonces subrrayo "esperanza" muy fuerte para verlo rapidamente antes de leer la frase. Y ah, cosas, asi.
> Hay gente que se pone colores. Yo no he llegado a tanto, porque tampoco sé manejar tan bien la aplicación. Pero, si que, yo me lo escribo. Y eso. Los signos antes de cada dialogo: fundamental.Y luego si que dejo las partes de narración. A veces las salto cuando estoy haciendo tal. No leo todas las partes de narracion. Voy directamente a los dialogos, que es lo que más me... o si hay un personaje nuevo, entonces si voy antes y digo, a ver que dice de este personaje. Cuantos años tiene? O, entonces si voy antes a mirar... ahé si miro la narración un poquito por encima, si hay un personaje nuevo. Y, eso. Asi, que leo un tercio. Intento leer lo máximo que puedo. Pero, normalmente no llego al final antes de empezar el libro. Eh y, luego la siguente parte la leo, de entre el primer y segundo dia de grabación. Llego por la noche y me leo (sound effect of her reading quickly)./*need to add my translation.*

All of these decisions the narrator makes while preparing the text contribute to the sound of the audiobook, which constructs a particular mental image and emotional state(s) for the listener.

The next stage after preparing the book is to record the audio. The different locations where the recording can take place matters because location impacts labor processes and conditions.

Recording Locations

Audiobook narration has traditionally been location-based, meaning that narrators travel to a production studio to record. However, digital technologies have altered this infrastructure, opening up the playing field to global workers by compressing space and time.[504] "Proximity between employers, workers, and clients now has almost no impact on how quickly the work can be done, and the product delivered… geography has become less sticky."[505] Theoretically, anyone with a home studio (the needed equipment and optimal-speed Internet connection), technical and technological know-how, and acting skills, can now participate in this workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this process of working from home; narrators and other voice-professionals are now expected to have a home studio from which they can perform and deliver their work. While some production studios have opened (or remained open) during the pandemic, it is not yet clear what the audiobook infrastructure is going to look like after the pandemic. Whether we will go back to 'business as usual' or if narration will remain a predominately 'work from home' labor arena.

Traditionally, narrators can record at a variety of locations (with their contingent labor conditions). Locations include a publisher's top-of-the-line studio, a production house, with an independent producer, or at the narrator's home studio, which at times means a

[504] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005, 4.
[505] Graham, M. and Anwar, M. A. (2018) Labour, in Ash, Kitchin and Leszczynski (eds) 'Digital geographies', Sage: London. 3.

converted closet.

Publisher's recording studio (In-house): Some publishers have In-house recording studios. Penguin Random House, for example, has fifteen in-house studios, five in New York and ten in Los Angeles.[506] On their "News for Authors" webpage, they state that their state-of-the-art studios, "allow us to record all kinds of audiobooks, ranging from single-voice narration to large-scale full-cast recordings with many narrators…. Our goal as an audio publisher is to remain true to the author's vision, and our recording facilities help us to foster a creative environment that's comfortable for authors and actors alike."[507]

They state that their belief is that the best way to accomplish "the best listening experience in publishing" is to "foster a collaborative relationship between producer and author for every title, and to hire a director and engineer to be present in the studio for every recording." This is arguably the best-case scenario for a narrator: she has a production team and an optimal recording environment, so her focus is on narration, the work she is actually getting paid to do. As Penguin acknowledges, providing these labor conditions for narrators, authors, and the production team is an important investment because it will impact the quality of the final audiobook. For narrators, this level of support and comfort is key because the microphone hears *everything*.

Instead of producing the audiobook in-house, publishers (the rights holders) can also outsource this work to production houses and/or independent producers.

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[506] Zitt, Dan. "Behind the Scenes: A Tour of Penguin Random House's Audio Studios." *News for Authors,* Penguin Random House. November 2017, http://authornews.penguinrandomhouse.com/behind-the-scenes-a-tour-of-penguin-random-houses-audio-studios/.
[507] Ibid.

Production house: An independent audiobook production house is a business that provides the production team (casting, research, producing, studio engineer, directing, editing, mixing & mastering, quality control, and talent) and a physical location for the process of production. The recording types for narrators at production houses include working in-studio with an engineer, self-recording in-studio, or recording from the narrator's home studio. Two of the main audiobook production houses in Los Angeles are Deyan Audio and Mosaic Audio. Both companies have multiple locations with several fully equipped recording studios at each of their locations.[508]

Independent producers: In contrast to production houses that have a full staff, independent producers freelance; producing audiobooks at various studios or in their own (home-based) studio. Independent producer can hire a team or he (it is a male-dominated ecosystem) can serve as producer/engineer/director. At times, the client (the rights-holder) is patched into the session via phone or the internet from anywhere in the world. If the recording takes place in an 'out of town' location, the narrator may have to travel, and be lodged for the duration of the job.

Home studios: Narrator's home studios are increasingly becoming the production site for audiobooks. (This takes us full-circle back to when the first Books on Tape audio book was narrated/recorded by South Coast Repertory Theatre actor, Jake Gardiner, in Duvall Hecht's, BOT founder's, living room on an open-reel tape recorder in the late 70s).[509] Home studios require hardware and software: a computer, a studio-quality microphone, fast-speed internet connection, a sound-proof space with quality sound, editing software (Protools, Twisted Wave,

[508] Deyan Audio, https://deyanaudio.squarespace.com/; Mosaic Audio, https://www.mosaicaudio.com/
[509] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 222.

Audacity), and software for remote recording (Source Connect, ISDN). It also requires narrators' know-how to operate these systems.

Working from a home studio means that narrators are contributing not just their narration labor and labor time, they are also expected to shoulder the work of a production team (director, engineer and/or editor, etc.), while also providing the means of production (the sound studio). One benefit of having a home studio is that voice-work has been the only area in entertainment that has continued to provide job opportunities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, self-recording can be extremely isolating. Union members have organized a support group for narrators to help them cope with the loneliness and isolation that can lead to depression. Health issues are another affective dimension of this work: the negative impacts on the mind and body because of how this labor is currently organized.

Recording the Audiobook

The recording booth conjures up a wide variety of scenarios. It can mean that narrators are recording in state-of-the-art studio with a team that includes a director, engineer, and producer or, as is increasingly typical (especially during the current covid-19 pandemic), narrators are recording in their home studios, which can mean a sound-proofed closet. Regardless of location, once in the booth, other considerations come into play: the narrator's research, technical equipment (hardware and software), technical skill (microphone work), physical, mental, and emotional stamina, and the power dynamics and affective impacts that continuously infuse the process.

Being fully committed and present in the world of the book takes concentration and skill. Narrators take their prep work into the recording booth, which helps guide them through the

recording process. They record for long stretches of time, so comfort is important because the microphone hears everything: It picks up any physical and/or emotional strain, and whether the narrator is doing presentational work or organically connecting to the story.

After having done hours of preparation work, recording in the booth can also be time consuming:

> **Jenny:** Yeah, I mean, forget the work that you do, the prep. I'm talking… I was talking even in the studio it's taking you so much longer to record an hour… it's at least two hours per hour… depending on the difficulty of the thing, you know?

The industry pushes a 2 to 1 ratio; meaning that it takes two hours of recording time to get one hour for the finished product.[510] However, it can take 3 times as long or longer depending on the difficulty of the project, the narrator's experience, and on working conditions. Valeria and Sandra who worked in studio with an engineer each shared:

> **Valeria**: Me gusta, me gusta hacer audiolibros. Me gusta mucho, pero es muy pesado. Muy laborioso. Para lo que es, no? Porque te pagan por hora narrada. Y una hora narrada te puede tomar hasta trés horas hacerla, no? Depende del ritmo de que tu vayas, del libro, de cuanto te equivoques. Me entiendes? Entonces es un libro de cinco horas, de seis horas, te puedes aventar 3, 4 días.
>
> **Sandra:** Me acuerdo que hubo un día que grabamos, no se… trés horas, digamoslo hací, y de pronto terminamos y él [the engineer/director] me dice, "ok, perfecto. Bueno pues, hoy, bastante bien, mira, grabamos cuarenta minutos." I nearly died.

Carmen self-recorded a non-union project from home under conditions of extreme misinformation:

> **Carmen:** He told me four hours total… for these two chapters every week…. And, at the time that he told me that, I didn't know how long the chapters were or how many chapters were or how long the [project] was. So that's why I was like, Oh, okay, great… I can even do two full days on a weekend…. That's more than enough. But, um, that was grossly underestimated because it doesn't take into account the research, the recording, the posts and the pickups…. I was blindly

[510] Ruben, Paul Alan. "Upping Your Performance Game While Recording Home Alone (now that you're really alone." Audiofile presents Audiobook Narration webinar with Paul Alan Ruben. April 18, 2020. Online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRYOvqYgrkc7/11/2024 9:18:00 PM

> working, and I wasn't tracking it. I started to track it, so that I would see how much it really was taking. And each chapter was different, but… [I] ended up averaging 20 to 30 hours per chapter.

Carmen's is an example of how flexible hours and working remotely are strategically used to create an abusive labor environment. Working without a union contract may have exacerbated these abusive conditions. This is exploitation and wage theft.

Sandra and Graciela described recording projects with an independent producer in Los Angeles, while being directed via phone-patch by a publishing executive based in Spain. For both narrators, the process was slow and arduous:

> **Graciela:** Me paraba cada tercer palabra… fué una tortura verdadera el comienzo de ese libro. // *She'd stop me every third word…. The start of that book was truly torturous.*

Graciela described the process as "torturous," and shared that the executive only slowed down the work and stunted their creativity. It was not until after the executive left that she and the engineer were able to really get to work. Sandra also detailed her experience:

> **Sandra:** …una directora… viviendo en España, trabajando para la editorial. Entonces ella era bastante precisa en lo que… ya that was it… ella era bastante precisa en lo que requería… me acuerdo que queria que no se oyera como doblaje. Y, yo creo que ella a lo major sabia que yo venia de esa industria entonces… como que no se oyera [Sandra demonstrates de difference] "Entonces…'' "ahhh, ahhh, ahh… ts, no. Te está saliendo ese tonito…" [Sandra demonstrates de director stopping her and giving her a line reading] "
> **Me:** Te acuerdas de cuento duro el proceso de hacer la novela esa?
> **S:** (laughs) Mucho.

Graciela's and Sandra's experiences highlight that even when working under union contracts and good conditions, power dynamics and affective impacts continuously infuse the recording process, adding to workers' labor time.

Post-production

After the recording has been completed, the next stage is post-production. For narrators, this means "pickups," or re-recording anything that needs to be changed or adjusted.

Post-production: pickups

Jenny shared her experience with pickups after a job where she had self-recorded at a production house:

> **Jenny:** Que horror de experiencia. And, then when they called me back for pickups.[511] I was, "Ah, if someone had listened to me." Because I had to correct one word all throughout. And, claro, they don't panic because, "ok, we'll call you in for pickups" and you're still getting paid for hour [produced], so: "Do we care that you have to drive out here again and you're here for an hour or two doing pickups?" They don't panic. I mean, if they were paying, they would be a little more attentive, I think.
>
> **Andrea:** Y, encima pickups. No, claro (laughs). Es que esa es otra. Es el único trabajo que tienes que ir por pickups. Después de que te están dirigiendo, tienes que volver por pickups, y no te pagan extra.

This is another creative way in which wage theft takes place: Narrators are not generally paid to re-record, and there are no financial penalties to incentivize employers to be mindful of narrators' labor time. If the structure were worker-centric, employers would be contractual required to adhere to an ethics of care; an approach that seems largely absent in this arena.

III. Conclusion

[511] Pickups: Rerecording to make changes or corrections.

This chapter offered a detailed definition of audiobook narration as creative work, emotional labor, knowledge work, and digital labor. It also brought to light how key aspects of its political and economic organization impact Latina narrators' labor processes. My goal has been to show how different workers experience the same work differently. Latina narrators, for example, have to constantly navigate—and emotionally negotiate—a system that is designed to maximize the extraction of their labor at minimal costs to employers. understanding how this labor is structured, serves to detangle the political and economic influences that are shaping the industry, its impacts on labor, and how this shapes the values embedded in the audiobook as cultural artifact.

In many ways, audiobook narration seems an attractive labor opportunity: flexible hours, the opportunity to work remotely, creative fulfillment, working in the entertainment industry, getting paid to read. However, audiobook narration is being shaped as a precarious form of labor, informed by the exclusionary and oppressive labor practices of both the media and digital technologies industries to which it contributes. As Fuchs points out, this structure shows how opening up the playfield, "does not signify a democratization of the media towards participatory systems, but the total commodification of human creativity."[512] The current structure allows for rampant wage theft, long "flexible" work hours (meaning there are no work-time boundaries), the threat of fungibility, the emerging threat of automation, weakened worker protections, and emerging health care issues. It is a digital labor arena that necessitates stronger worker-centric regulatory frameworks.

Importantly, where the labor takes place matters because it impacts working conditions: the less visible the workers, the more abusive the labor practices workers are

[512] Christian Fuchs, "Class, Knowledge and New Media," *Media, Culture & Society* 32, no. 1 (January 2010): 148–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443709350375.

subjected to. Non-union workers are less visible than union-workers because they do not have the power of the union behind them. U.S. Latina audiobook narrators are also less visible at the union than "mainstream" narrators. They experience differential treatment in their union engagement, and in the historically lower-pay rates associated with Spanish language voice-work. Regardless of union status, this is an imbalanced ecosystem where worker protections are falling behind, so many employers are quick to take unfair advantages. Especially when it comes to multicultural and multilingual Latinas who are contributing more work for lesser wages, making their wage gap even more egregious.

The audiobook arena has the potential to provide Latina talent with opportunities to bring not only our acting craft and technical skills, but also our first-hand and robust cultural knowledge(s) to our work; a potential realized when languaculture is considered by the production team. From preparing the text to recording in the booth (or at home on our laptops), the sonic choices narrators make as artists, actors, and cultural translators are infused in the audiobook. If you listen closely, you may be able to hear every decision that has been made throughout the process-- sonic choices, imagined audiences, budgets, casting, and labor conditions--, because this information is all there, embedded in the final sound(s) of the audiobook.

CHAPTER 7: PLÁTICAS INSIGHTS: KNOWLEDGE FROM THE INSIDE

Audiobook narrators are culture-making creative knowledge workers whom capital wants laboring under increasingly factory-like conditions. Nonetheless, working as a narrator sounds like an attractive job prospect: Flexible hours, getting paid to read, the potential to work remotely, and it also offers the opportunity to enter the entertainment industry. The number of narrators is fluid since digital technologies have given employers access to a global workforce. Participation has exploded via digital platforms. According to their website, for example, there are over one million producers (AKA narrators) participating via Amazon/Audible's ACX platform alone.[513] Narrators can be celebrities (actors, sports figures, politicians), authors,[514] or, as is often the case, voice-professionals.[515] However, who narrates—in other words, who gets to work—is not simply a matter of talent and ability, it is also a question of power. To understand how power is operationalized throughout the audiobook labor infrastructure and how this impacts who gets to work and under what conditions we need to understand what this labor arena looks like from the perspective of the workers. And, to detangle its transnational, linguistic (linguacultural) and intersectional registers, I center the voices of U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators.

[513] ACX.com. This number is fuzzy, as they also make a distinction between number of total narrators, and the 6,500 who are "audible approved."
[514] Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book*, 252.
[515] By professionals, I mean that they have significant training and experience.

Because of the affordances of digital technologies, Latina narrators contribute their labor from global locations. 2018 marked the fourth year in a row with a 20% global increase in audiobook production, and production in the Spanish language market saw a 33% increase that same year.[516] This speaks to both a production gap and (foreseeable) demand given that, in 2019, Spanish was second in number of native speakers and third in total language speakers worldwide.[517] Plus, according to one of the top Spanish language audiobook producers in Los Angeles, while 60% of audiobooks in Spanish were recorded in Spain, and 40% in the Americas in 2019, this distribution will soon balance off to 50%-50%. This means that U.S. Latina audiobook narrators' potential job opportunities are projected to increase given that they contribute to both English- and Spanish-language markets (and Portuguese, if not more). In addition to power, factors that impact how these job opportunities breakdown in terms of gender and accents include author and/or rights-holder preference, and the gender of the characters in the written work. This is an area for further study.

In this chapter, I reveal key findings from my pláticas with six U.S.-based Latina audiobook narrators, which I conducted between 2018 and 2019. My goal was to understand the audiobook infrastructure from their points of view. I collected robust and nuanced data from our interviews that I later analyzed and coded for themes. The women I spoke with differed in narration experience, and union status. All are professional actress, and they all happen to be bilingual (English-Spanish) and bicultural. The pláticas took place in quiet and private locations of their choosing, so that they felt comfortable and free to share their insights without external pressures or interference. To protect their privacy, the names are pseudonyms.

[516] SAG-AFTRA "Taller de Audiolibros." 2019 workshop.
[517] David Fernández Vitores, "El Español Una Lengua Viva: Informe 2019" (Spain: Instituto Cervantes), 5, https://www.cervantes.es/imagenes/File/espanol_lengua_viva_2019.pdf.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In **7.1: "Journeys into Audiobook Narration,"** three of my participants share how they entered the audiobook industry. In analyzing their journeys, three key findings came into focus. First, their transborder journeys inform their complex views. Second, historical memory and workers' experiences with their union, SAG-AFTRA, work together to shape particular types of disciplined workers into being. Third, power is operationalized within the infrastructure via two key forms of microaggression: information asymmetries and unilateral communication. In **7.2, "How employers infuse opacity and precarity into the labor structure,"** our pláticas bring to light some of the strategies that employers deploy to infuse opacity and precarity into the audiobook labor structure, while keeping themselves out of reach from accountability. We also discuss some of the affective dimensions of these women's labor. And, in **7.3: Digital technologies, language hierarchies, wage differentials** We discuss their views on differential pay rates for Spanish language work and the impacts of digital technologies. Importantly, throughout our conversations, it became clear that U.S.-based Latinas' perspectives are key to future of work conversations because they bring transnational, intersectional, and multi-linguacultural lenses to the table. Across all of our pláticas, these women continually keep within view—and at the same time—individual, local, and global concerns.

I. Participants' Journeys into Audiobook Narration

During our pláticas, Sandra, Andrea, and Valeria shared their journeys into audiobook narration. In my analysis, it became clear that their transborder journeys have shaped their views on the structure of this industry, and their place within it. Two key findings came into focus. First, U.S.-based Latinas' perspectives are critical to any media analysis because they bring

transnational, intersectional, and multi-linguacultural lenses to the table. Second, that historical memory and the union, SAG-AFTRA, play central roles in shaping particular types of disciplined workers into being. This section is organized as follows: first, I trace my participants' journeys into audiobooks and look into key moments that have shaped their identity as workers. Then, I take a closer look at how SAG-AFTRA's reticence to center DE&I throughout its infrastructure points to an internal problem of institutional structural whiteness, which, in turn, impacts Latinas' sense of agency and identity as media workers.

Transborder Knowledge and Historical Memory

During our pláticas, Sandra, Andrea, and Valeria shared their transborder journeys into Hollywood and their entries into the world of audiobook narration. Each woman is from a different Spanish-speaking country. Several points of congruency came to light: They are all immigrants and, though bilingual and perhaps because they all moved to the U.S. as adults, they were all more comfortable conversing in Spanish.[518] All three had successful, extensive careers and training in media in their native countries before moving to Los Angeles. These included work in theatre, television, and radio, with radio being a key commonality among the three. They all of entered the Los Angeles media industry thanks to personal and professional relationships with folks in the industry. And they all moved to Los Angeles to begin their local careers:

> **Valeria:** Me vine a Los Angeles a retomar mi carrera de voice-over, de doblaje. Yo hacía doblaje en México./*I came to Los Angeles to relaunch my voice-over career, in dubbing. I did dubbing in Mexico.*
>
> **Sandra:** Era muy exitosa en lo que hacia. Me iba muy bien y me gustaba mucho. Pero, estaba en esta relación y decidió que se venia [a Los Angeles] a trabajar con su familia, que ellos sí están en esta industria./ *I was very successful in what I did. I did very well, and I liked what I did a lot. But I was in this relationship, and he*

[518] The excerpts from our conversations are in the original language. The translations in italics are mine.

> *decided that he was coming to LA to be with his family, and they are in this industry.*
>
> **Andrea:** Y les dije, "pues estoy pensando ir ó a Australia ó a los Angeles." Y me dijeron [dónde trabajaba en la tele], "porqué no te vas a Los Angeles que hay un agente que nos graba videos desde ahí para el programa y entonces ya vas… ya conoces a alguien." / *And I told them, "well, I'm thinking of going to either Australia or to Los Angeles." And they told me [where I worked in TV], "why don't you go to Los Angeles since there's an agent that records videos for our show from there… so, then you go… and you already know someone there."*

Their cross-border journeys inform their multi-dimensional lenses. As immigrants, they bring their multicultural and multilingual knowledge to their work. They have experience in two industries, diverse worlds, and the liminal spaces in-between them. As Gloria Azaldúa tells us, "Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahualt word meaning tierra entre medio."[519] It is from these spaces, which are infused with the melding of our robust transborder historical memories that my participants' views are shaped.

All three entered the world of audiobooks after having moved to Los Angeles. I asked them how they first learned about audiobook narration as a potential job arena to be explored.

> **Sandra:** Si. No hace mucho, sabes. Not too long ago. Estoy pensando… hace solamente…. Bueno, mira, hace unos, uf, muchisimos años, muchisimos años., me acuerdo que grabé el primer audiolibro. Pero, como que hice ese y no se volvio a hacer nadamás. Pero, has de cuenta una decada pudo haber pasado desde que hice eso. / *Yes, it wasn't that long ago, you know? Not too long ago. I'm thinking… only about…. Well, look, about, uf, many years, maaany years, I remember that I recorded de first audiobook. But, like I did that one and nothing else happened. But, like a decade could have gone by since I did that one.*
>
> Me: Te acuerdas en que formato era? / *Do you remember the format?*
>
> **Sandra:** O sea, en que formato llegó al público? … No. No sabría. Sé que lo grabamos en el studio. Yo estaba aterrorizada porque cuando llegué a grabarlo me dí cuenta que era una cosa super sexual. Como que me tomo por sorpresa y yo…whaaat? … Muchisimos años despues, creo que con [producer's name] … yo me acuerdo que cuando yo fuí con el, yo ya habia grabado otra cosa, pero no me acuerdo bien que era… de pronto, sabes que? Para la iglesia de los Mormones… y esos si los hicieron como en un CD. / *You mean, the format in*

[519] Gloria Anzaldua and Analouise Keating, "This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation," 1.

> *which it got to the public?.... No. I wouldn't know I know we recorded it in the studio. I was horrified because when I got there to record I found oout that it was something super sexual. Like it took me by surprise and I was… whaaat?.... Many years later, with [producer's name]… I remember that when I went to work with him, I had already recorded something else, but I don't really remember what that was… Maybe, you know what? For the Mormon church… and those they did make them as a CD.*
>
> Me: Y, luego cuando fué lo de [producer's name]? / *And, then when was your work with [producer's name]?*
>
> **Sandra:** …Lo de [producer's name] fué hace cuatro años. / *With [producer's name], it was four years ago.*

Valeria had a similar journey and timeframe:

> **Valeria:** Hace como 17 años hice mi primer libro. Y que era super innovador, porque eran los primeros libros que se hacian en Español. Me acuerdo que fué una novela erótica. Me parecio muy gracioso hacerla…. Y, ese fué mi primer contacto con el mundo del audiolibro. Y me parecio super canzado. Me parecio matádisimo. Fué todo una semana y trabajar siete, ocho horas diarias. Y, me acuerdo que también ahí me parecio que pagaran bien poquito para lo que fué. (Laughs) Chinga que fué. / *I did my first audiobook something like 17 years ago. It was super innovative, because they were the first books that were made in Spanish. I remember that it was an erotic novel. I thought it silly to do it…. And, that was my first contact with the audiobook world. And, it was super tiring. It was exhausting. It was like a week of working seven, eight hours every day. And, I remember that then it also seemed to pay very little for the work it was. (Laughs) It was heavy/oppressive work. [Note: this is slang.]*
>
> Me: Y, cómo llegaste a ese trabajo? *And, how did you come to this work?*
>
> **Valeria:** Me llegó porque estaba haciendo yo teatro y una amiga de una amiga actríz, estaba produciendo. Hice la audición…. Hay como un proceso, no? Pero, me acuerdo que en ese entonces sentí que habia sido poca plata. Luego me invitaron a hacer otro…. Y, no lo pude hacer al final porque me cayó una campaña de publicidad. / *Because I was doing theatre and a friend of an actress friend was producing. I auditioned… There's like a process, right? But, I remember that I thought it was very little pay. Then, they invited me to do another… And, at the end, I couldn't do it because I booked an ad campaign.*

For Sandra and Valeria, there was a gap of upwards of a decade between their first and most recent narration jobs. They point to erotica and religion as the first genres they encountered. Valeria points out that the wages did not seem commensurate to the amount of labor and labor

time she invested in narrating her first audiobook so, when given the choice, she took a higher paying job.

While there were many commonalities, there was one key difference between Sandra and Valeria's journeys, and Andrea's journey: Andrea moved to Los Angeles a decade later. This difference is key. Her initial encounter with audiobooks involved an established Spanish language audiobook industry, and Amazon's labor platform, ACX:

> **Andrea:** … cuando llegué a Estados Unidos, se me ocurrio, si que podria grabar historias infantiles… y estaba esta pagina web que salio hace unos años que se llama ACX. / *When I come to the U.S., it occurred to me that I could record children's stories… and there was this site that came out a few years ago that's called ACX.*

But, perhaps more importantly, Andrea did not experience the "golden age of Spanish language voicework" during the 1990s nor the SAG and AFTRA commercial strike of 2000, and its immediate aftermath. This difference is key to how these women discussed their sense of agency, which is core to their identity formation as media workers.

Identity Formation as Media Workers

1990s: The Golden Age of Spanish Language voicework

The 1990s is known by insiders as the "golden age of Spanish language voice work." Work opportunities in radio commercials and TV voice-overs also grew in this era. This is when top voice-over agencies launched their Spanish language divisions:

> **Sandra:** …hasta que recibi una llamada de SBV [large commercial agency in LA] porque ellos estaban abriendo su departamento en Español y solamente tenian a [colleague's name] … poco a poco empezó a crecer el departamento./ *…until I received a call from SBV [large commercial agency in LA] because they were starting their Spanish-language department and they only had [colleague's name] … little by little the department began to grow.*
> [NOTE: this was in 1998].

Me: This feels like it was the beginning of this world.

Sandra: Si, totalmente./*Yes, completely.*

Several of my research participants and I started our LA-based voice over careers during this era and attest to the proliferation of Spanish language voice work. Some of my participants come to narration from another arena that flourished during this time: the Los Angeles-based Spanish language dubbing industry. For folks in Spanish language dubbing there was a significant amount of work opportunities. As Valeria shared, there was so much work, that there were three shifts a day for Spanish language dubbing:

> **Valeria**: Habia mucho auge del doblaje en ese entonces…. Trés turnos al día./*There was surge of dubbing at that time… three shifts per day.*

While there was a large demand for their labor, however, the work was non-union, and the wages were extremely low.

2000: SAG and AFTRA Commercial Strike

Then came the SAG and AFTRA Strike in 2000 (See chapter 5.5). The core issues of the nationwide commercial strike of 2000 were about wages and payment structures. The unions gained some important ground, but advertisers refused to budge on their demands to establish a new pay structure for the internet.[520] Advertiser retaliated by taking their work non-union. At the same time that these negotiations were taking place, the union was making efforts to unionize Spanish-language channels, but to no avail. Advertisers retaliated taking Spanish language commercial work non-union and outsourcing it to Latin America. Here, I take a brief detour into the world of Spanish language dubbing circa 2000. This is because several of my participants

[520] U.S. actors union ends longest ever strike." CNN.com, October 23, 2000. Webpage. https://www.cnn.com/2000/SHOWBIZ/TV/10/23/actors.strike.02.reut/index.html

shared that they come from this world, and my findings indicate that the impacts of the 2000 strike have shaped them into the particular types of disciplined workers they are today as audiobook narrators.

Within the context of the strike, a group of dubbers came together to strategize how to demand fairer wages. The key employer they were targeting soon outsourced their dubbing work to México. He attributed his move as a push-back to the workers' strategizing initiative. (Though some believe he only used this as justification for outsourcing plans already in the works.) Unlike in past decades, this employer was able to outsource the work because of the affordances of digital technologies, which compressed time and space, and reduced costs. This allowed him, the recording studio owner, to keep his contract with the production studio/network and increased his own profits while disciplining local Spanish-speaking talent into submission. In other words, more than 20 years ago, Spanish-speaking Latine media workers understood how digital technologies exasperated globalization and outsourcing, and how employers used this threat of fungibility as a way to discipline workers.

This event prompted some of these workers to approach the union, SAG, for help. (SAG and AFTRA had not yet merged). It was because of their efforts that the first Spanish-language dubbing union contract was put in place. This was, however, the only contract achieved. At the time, further efforts to unionize Spanish language dubbing failed:

> **Valeria:** Si tratamos pero no… no hubo coro. La union. O sea, a la union no se como le fué. O sea, la union es la que a tratado de hacer eso. Nosotros tratamos pobremente a lo, a mandar la carta, "Querida [x-celebrity], yo soy tu voz en Español. Ya quieren llevar todo el trabajo para allá. Cómo me ayudas?" no?/ *We tried, but no… there was no united front. The union. I mean, I don't know how it went for the union. I mean, the union is the one that tries to do that. We tried in our humble way, we sent letters, "Dear [x celebrity], I am your voice in Spanish. They want to take the work away. How can you help us?" right?*

After the one contract was achieved, Valeria does not know if or how the union continued to push for unionizing the space. In other words, there was no continued clear communication between the union and this group of workers. They were left on their own to continue their efforts. Questions that emerges are: Is this the union typical approach for unionizing new spaces? Is this how the union typically works with and communicates with their membership in their efforts to unionize new labor arenas? If not, then what is the difference that makes the difference in the union's approach? The union's approach to working with members in unionizing the audiobook space, for example, has been decidedly different.

2011: Audiobook Unionizing in Los Angeles

In Los Angeles, the union began audiobook unionizing efforts in 2011. Prior to this, the union did not have a framework of organizing this format. Since then, the number of audiobooks produced under a union contract has grown significantly. According to Rebecca Damon, SAG-AFTRA New York Local, Labor Policy and International Affairs Executive Director, audiobooks, a space that "once upon a time was not union," has seen great success in its organizing efforts.[521] The union has an audiobook committee and union staff dedicated to supporting [some] narrators with whom they are in constant communication. However, as noted via my culturally intuitive observations, there is a difference between the union's relationship these narrators and with those categorized as "Spanish language" narrators.

I attended several narrator meetings and events sponsored by our union, SAG-AFTRA, and noted that upwards of 90% of attendees were white, with an even female-male ratio. I was

[521] SAG-AFTRA. "Audibooks: Expanding Opportunities for Actors." Webpage. https://www.sagaftra.org/videos/audiobooks-expanding-opportunities-actors @56:00

commonly one of only two Latinas in attendance. While these events focused on organizing efforts, the Latinx-focused workshop, "Taller the Audiolibros" that I attended in 2019, focused on labor opportunities and recruitment. The difference in focus between these events, in and of themselves, is not problematic. At issue is that there have been no such strategy meetings for Spanish language narrators, of which I am aware. This is an example of information asymmetry, and it impacts equity. Because, without information equity, the union cannot function as an equitable support mechanism. Here, it is also worth noting that immediately after the Audiolibros presentation, I conversed with union staff and suggested a workshop to discuss the issues I had observed in the "general" meeting (wages, labor conditions, etc.) with Spanish language narrators. The response from the union representative was a non-committal "Oh, yeah."

The difference in the union's approach to unionizing audiobooks—whereas some members are empowered with the support of the union via the creation of a committee with staff that is in constant, clear, bilateral communication—and its approach to unionizing the Spanish language dubbing space in 2000—whereas these members had no clarity on the union's unionizing efforts and were left on their own to write letters to celebrities pleading for support, is significant. This form of information asymmetry empowers some workers and disempowers others, and it differently impacts each group's sense of agency and identity as workers.

Those of us who experienced the 2000 commercial strike, understand the dangers of demanding fairer wages and living conditions. As audiobook narrators today, for Sandra and Valeria who were established within the industry by 2000 and thus experienced, what Sandra called, the "golden age of Spanish language voice-work" and the consequent outsourcing of Spanish language dubbing work to Latin America, demanding fair wages and working conditions is something to tread carefully. Sandra warned:

> **Sandra:** You have to be kind of careful y tener pie de plomo cuando estás pisando en estos territorios porque es delicado. Porque ya lo vivimos.

Our memories of these events plus the difference in union support equity have served to discipline workers into silence in the face of precarious working conditions. Our silence is a form of psychological bowing.[522] It is under this context—and within a neoliberal capitalist ethos—that we come to understand ourselves and our agency in our union and thus the industry at large.

II. How Employers Infuse Opacity and Precarity into the Labor Structure

During my pláticas with Carmen, Jenny, and Graciela, we discussed the material and affective dimensions of their work, and how this ecosystem is structured.[523] During my data analysis, it became clear that audiobook employers engage with a series of strategies that infuse opacity and precarity into the system. I have organized the insights from our pláticas into four overlapping themes: 1) Employer immunity via opacity, 2) Invisible, unrecognized, and uncompensated labor, 3) Exacerbated exploitation, and 4) The affective impacts of precarious labor.

Employer Immunity via Opacity

Infusing opacity into the audiobook ecosystem serves to obfuscate where the labor is taking place, who is laboring, and under what conditions. Three of the key intertwining strategies deployed by employers are: information asymmetry, imprecise contracts, and diminished talent representation. I will discuss each individually, but, collectively, these tactics help employers

[522] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 20th anniversary ed (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2003).
[523] All names are pseudonyms.

build immunity by yielding them uneven power and at times allowing abusive practices and the accumulation of capital without accountability for (and to) the humans doing the work.[524]

Information asymmetry

Instances of information asymmetry emerged from the moment Carmen and I began our conversation. Carmen is new to audiobook narration. She recently recorded her first long-form work of non-fiction from her home studio, which consists of a laptop, mic, editing software, and internet connection. We discussed how this job came about:

> **Carmen:** I had an audition process first. He [the producer] said he had a couple projects lined up…. He said that the client had selected my voice … so, I still didn't know… how long the project was or what the project was… I said, "What is the time commitment?"... "What are you looking for? And, I can tell you what my availability is." I remember him saying something like, "Oh, probably like four hours," like per weekend…. At the time that he told me that, I didn't know how long the chapters were or how many chapters there were or how long the textbook was. So, that's why I was, okay great: My weekends are free, and I can even do two full days on the weekend…. But that was woefully underestimated because it doesn't take into account the research, the recording, the post, and the pickups.[525]

Lack of clarity permeated her experience. The producer gave Carmen different and contradictory time estimates, hindering her ability to assess the actual labor and labor time to which she was committing. He was also unclear about the length of the final audiobook. This is significant because audiobook narrators typically get paid per finished hour (pfh). This means that they only get paid for each hour of the final audiobook. Absent this information, Carmen does not know how much she will get paid. She worries that she will not get paid at all because there was no contract. The lack of a contract represents another form of information asymmetry; a tactic that further obfuscated the terms of their agreement. Instead, the job was negotiated via email.

[524] Roberts, Sarah T. "Digital Labor." Doctoral seminar. UCLA, 2018.
[525] Post means post-production or the stage that happens after the recording. This includes editing, labeling, etc. Pickups are any words, phrases, or sections that will need to be rerecorded.

I would like to offer my own experience as another example of how information asymmetry has been deployed by an employer. I booked a job, but when I questioned the pay rate a series of events were activated: The producer that hired me did not respond. I, instead, received an email from the casting department with an "official" work offer, which was a lower rate than the original offer. I responded by pointing out that the union's rate sheet supported my argument. At this point, the producer came back into the loop and told me that I was to be paid a lower rate because they have a "tier structure" and some of my previous jobs did not count as audiobooks.[526] I contacted my union and was advised that I could either take the job or decline the work. I refused the job. The company came back with a higher offer because, unbeknownst to me before this shift, the author had a say on this project, and she had chosen my voice.

Carmen's and my experiences exemplify how information asymmetry or fuzzy information can be deployed as a tactic to control workers while yielding uneven power in favor of employers. My experience also provides a glimpse into the potential strength in solidarity-building between authors and narrators. Since the author had a say, my fungibility was decreased and my negotiating power increased. This insight matters because it can inform re-imaginings of more worker-centered labor structures.

Imprecise Contracts

Current audiobook contracts tend to be imprecise with the discretion unevenly yielded to the employer. They mainly serve to protect employers from liabilities. Except for pension and health contributions, these contracts offer no identifiable worker-protections. They offer no work time limits, overtime, late payment penalties, itemized fees for work beyond narration (e.g.,

[526] This means that narrators who have worked on more than x number of audiobooks are paid a higher rate.

engineering, editing, directing), pickup fees, and no explicit protections against future uses of the narrators' work (e.g., for machine learning). The also fail to provide residuals, which serves to alienate narrators from their work.[527] This is an egregious move since a platform's design puts them in a privileged position to easily and exactingly record the interactions between sellers and buyers. This means that tracking downloads should facilitate, rather than make more difficult, the establishment of a residual structure as common practice.[528] Contracts typically clarify narrators' per-finished-hour (pfh) pay rate as the "only and final amount" that they will be paid, which leaves their actual total labor contributed "off the books."[529]

These moves bring Marx's concept of exploited surplus value, the concept via which he "intends to show that capitalism is a class society," into the conversation. [530] As Fuchs explains, "Surplus labour time is all labour time that exceeds necessary labour time, remains unpaid, is appropriated for free by capitalists and is transformed into money profit. Surplus value is in substance the materialization of unpaid labour-time."[531] These skewed contracts highlight the power imbalance in this media/tech arena.

Diminished Talent Representation

Typically, a talent agent looks out for those best interests. Because agents represent several to hundreds of people ("talent," in industry parlance), they have a broader view of the playing field and can thus advise their clients on best practices and negotiate optimal contracts

[527] Residuals are royalties that are typically paid to individuals involved in the making of a film, television show, or radio/voice project. For more information on residuals in the entertainment industry. See: SAG-AFTRA. "Membership & Benefits: Residuals." Webpage. https://www.sagaftra.org/membership-benefits/residuals
[528] ACX offers an either/or choice for narrators: per finished hour (PFH)or royalties share.
[529] From contracts under which I have worked.
[530] Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 54.
[531] Fuchs, 55.

on their behalf. When this relationship is strong and healthy, artists can focus on their work with the assurance that their agent(s) (manager and/or entertainment attorney) will ensure they are treated and compensated fairly on each job. This is why it gave me pause when their notable absence came into focus during our *pláticas*. Carmen mentioned:

> **Carmen:** Years ago, I asked one of my voiceover agents about audiobooks… I think I asked her for any recommendations on training or workshops and/or about doing an audiobook… she gave me recommendations and she also said, "It's a lot of work."

Her agent does not represent her in this arena. Jenny, an experienced narrator, also mentioned her agent's warnings:

> **Jenny:** And, let me tell you, [my agent], I mean, anytime I bring up audiobooks is like, "Really? Are you, I mean, it's an abuse. It's crazy. Why are you going to do it?"

Absent their agents' protections, talent end up shouldering the responsibility of self-representation. This can effectively weaken narrators' position as we attempt to navigate a sea of information asymmetries within an opaque ecosystem and, in many cases, without negotiating experience, business acumen, or a legal background.

Union representation is also crucial. A key characteristic of precarious labor is that unionizing, if not prohibited, is highly challenging. Admittedly, this is not exactly our case: When workplace frictions arise, union narrators have the option of turning to SAG-AFTRA. Our union represents approximately 160,00 actors, recording artists, singers, dancers, stunt performers, and other media professionals.[532] However, not all audiobook work is unionized. And, for underrepresented communities, like U.S. Latinas, the lack of unionized and creatively substantial work opportunities in traditional media may affect their consenting to abusive labor conditions. Audiobook narration may not be precarious because of the lack of a union, but legacy

[532] SAG-AFTRA. "About." Webpage. https://www.sagaftra.org/about

media's exclusionary practices have an impact on the exploitation of marginalized talent in digital labor arenas.

Invisible, Unrecognized, and Uncompensated Labor

One of the reasons why talent agents may be disincentivized to represent clients in audiobooks is due to its notoriously low pay rates, which translates into negligible agent commissions.[533] Our *pláticas* revealed the myriad ways in which laborers are being overworked and underpaid. This is tantamount to wage-theft, and in line with Marx's understanding of capitalism. As Fuchs summarizes, "For Marx, capitalism is based on capitalists' permanent theft of unpaid labour from workers."[534]

Jenny is an audiobook veteran. She has worked in this arena since the mid-1990s and has transitioned with it across formats. Jenny shared that one of the ways in which the industry has changed is in the consolidation of labor without commensurate compensation. In the 1990s, for example, directors were included in the audiobook production process. Those roles have increasingly been eliminated and, today, it is either the engineer or the narrator herself who performs this role:

> Me: Did you have a director for this [most recent job], too?
>
> **Jenny**: Now, they're getting very… because the director is now the engineer. They figure that we, as actors are precious with our work, so [they know you] want to do it the best that you can. So, in a sense, they figure, "we don't need a director, director."

Another example came into focus as Jenny described an experience with self-recording at a production studio:

> Me: Why were you in [the recording studio] by yourself?

[533] Compared to other unionized areas.
[534] Fuchs, 34.

> **Jenny:** They make deals with authors that don't have that much money to get it done… so, it's… okay, so if we have it self-recorded… the actor will be the engineer… it's basically getting you to do double work. (pause) How about that? But it sounds… you know, that's what happened with freelance, right? It sounds fantastic. But, it's like: Ok, you're your own boss and you can work 24 hours a day. And, you better. Because, otherwise, there will be somebody else who will do it and will probably get the job and we will never call you again.

Job consolidation without compensation is one of the ways in which precarity is built into this labor structure. Jenny's labor as engineer and director was not added to her contract. Rather than be compensated for her ability to manage so many aspects of the production process herself, her combination of skillsets was devalued, remaining contractually invisible. Jenny's comment points to key characteristics of precarious labor: Narrators "get to freelance" they are "on call," and the threat of fungibility looms over their heads.

At the same time that jobs have been consolidated, pay rates have been decreased:

> Me: So, let's talk about the compensation.
>
> **Jenny:** Ha.
>
> Me: What is that like for you?
>
> **Jenny:** Okay, so going back, books on tape was like the wild, wild: I have $6,000 you take it, you don't…. Then, all of a sudden CDs come out … when your Walkman CD went to the MP3: total silence in the audiobook world. Because it was, "What technology are we going to use? Who is listening where?"…. Then, it was, "Hey, we have struck a deal with the union." Oh, wow, you're back, What's going on?

This deal included the aforementioned 'per finished hour' (pfh) pay rates.

> **Jenny:** Which, of course, was like, okay, so it takes many times three hours per finished hour, right? So, you're like, "this doesn't sound exactly, right." Cause, it's… I'm not a partner in this. I'm just working per hour to get this done. So, it was kind of awkward, but, as I say, you're like, "I kind of like this book. I'll read it anyway"… The thing is, [a union job] pays pension and health, so I thought it was a better deal to do it through the union, you know? It's always a better deal, in the long run, for the actor. But I was surprised. I said, "so what happened to the $6,000? The flat deal?"

> Me: That's a huge change. Because it's per finished hour and you can prep for however long it takes you to prep.
>
> **Jenny:** Yeah, I mean, forget the work that you do, the prep. I'm talking… I was talking even in the studio it's taking you so much longer to record an hour… it's at least two hours per hour… depending on the difficulty of the thing, you know?

Jenny alludes to the general lack of transparency about budgets and budget allocation that permeates this ecosystem: What happened to the budget for directors? "What happened to the $6,000?" She also points out that the pfh rates do not account for the "difficulty of the thing."

Wage theft in this industry is rampant. The industry's 2:1 accepted industry standard ratio; meaning that it takes two hours of recording time for each hour of the finished final audiobook, is at best conservative and, at worst, disingenuous and deceptive. I have found that when prep time, recording time, and the consolidation of other responsibilities (including self-direction, engineering, editing, etc.) are shouldered by the narrator, their labor time can range from 6-12+ hours per finished hour. The $6000 flat fee that Jenny mentions was paid to narrators before the advent of digital platforms, gets closer to a commensurate compensation for the actual work. This ratio seems to be a creative form of wage theft.

For Carmen, the 2:1 ratio was an extreme underestimation. In addition to providing her home studio, she was expected to be researcher, editor, engineer, proofer, and director without commensurate guidance or compensation. During the production process, she had many questions, from how to approach research in this context, to what equipment to use, to how to label files, and how much post-production she was expected to do. The company provided no answers, which added to her labor time.

> Me: How much work do you think, que le calculas más ó menos,[535] that it actually took, if you take all of it into consideration?

[535] Translation: "that you calculate, more or less."

> **Carmen:** Yes, so I was blindly working, and I wasn't tracking it. I started to track it, so I would see how long it really was taking and each chapter was different, but… you end up averaging 20 to 30 hours per chapter…. Yeah, I don't understand how the other readers were working.

This is an example of the type of exploitative labor practices that are hidden when labor conditions are obfuscated. It also points to how narrators can be isolated and made invisible to each other, which impedes their ability to build solidarity, or to even do basic information-sharing that might ease the way of getting the job done well and efficiently.

My *plática* with Graciela brought to light additional examples. Graciela recently entered the audiobook world. She works primarily in Spanish, and, unlike Carmen and Jenny, she has never self-recorded; all of her jobs have been in studios with an engineer/director. She initially shared that she found that the lower pay rate was balanced out by a good working environment and flexible schedules but returned to it later in the conversation. She shared that though she spends hours rereading and preparing the script before recording, this work is not compensated.

As noted in the previous chapter, narrators approach their prep work as it best fits their needs. Typically, however, narrators do a skim-through read of the book. Then, they go through it again and invest a significant amount of time marking up the text. These include markups to differentiate between characters, emotions, settings, tone, pronunciation, rhythm, and so on. Their effort is a combination of both technical skills and creative/acting labor.[536] As an audiobook producer stated at a Spanish-language SAG-AFTRA audiobook workshop:

> El trabajo del narrador es el trabajo más importante y más difícil… el candidato ideal para narrar, es un actor./ *The job of narrator is the most important and difficult job… the ideal candidate to narrate is an actor.*[537]

[536] Bednar, "Audiobooks and the Reassertion of Orality," 78.; SAG-AFTRA. *Taller de Audiolibros,* February 13, 2019.
[537] SAG-AFTRA. *Taller de Audiolibros.* February 13, 2019. Translation is mine.

He went on to say that all good narrators are great actors, but that not all great actors make good narrators. This underscores the combination of specialized skillsets needed to do this work well, far from the kind of haphazard gig economy labor that audiobook narration is increasingly treated as. Unfortunately, even while discursively celebrating narrators, employers find creative ways to not compensate them for the actual value they contribute to the final audiobook.

While frictions are not always present and not all employers seek unfair advantages, a systemic lack of transparency keeps narrators from effectively addressing abusive labor practices if and where they occur. As Graciela interrogates:

> **Graciela:** Qué hay detrás de todo antes de que me llama [el productor] y me dice ven a grabarlo? / *What is behind everything before [the producer] calls and says come and record?*[538]

Graciela's question illustrates how opaque this ecosystem can be from a narrator's perspective.

Exacerbated Exploitation

Making a living as an audiobook narrator sounds very attractive. Among other incentives are the ability to work remotely and on flexible schedules. As Carmen stated:

> **Carmen:** It totally makes sense to me, as a woman in this industry, why there's that interest to do audiobooks… to be independent.

Graciela mentioned that narrating audiobooks is a great, creatively fulfilling, acting exercise:

> **Graciela:** A mí me gusta mucho hacer los audiolibros. Es muy pesado, te digo, pero me gusta hacerlos. Es un ejercicio actoral muy bueno…. Es tu voz y ya. Y la actuación que tú le das… por eso lo encuentro más retante… cuando regreso de [hacer] un audiolibro llego con esa sensación de satisfacción y de que hice algo bueno. // *I really enjoy doing audiobooks. It's hard work, but I like doing them. It's a great acting exercise…. it's just your voice, and your acting. That's why I find it more challenging… when I do an audiobook I return with a sense of fulfillment and that I did something good.*

[538] Translation is mine.

While Jenny also finds audiobooks creatively fulfilling, she concurrently points to this as a reason why Latinas may endure problematic labor conditions:

> **Jenny:** One of the reasons we go back to the audiobook, under the discrepancies and unfairness in terms of labor, is because it's a space where the content that we are asked to work with has the depth and complexity that we would like to see ourselves doing on screen, and we don't. [There], we get one-liners and, here, we get to tell the whole story.

Her comment surfaces a connection between the exclusionary structures of legacy media and the exploitation of labor in digital environments and how these may be distributed across racial and gender registers.

While the promise of creative fulfillment as a reason for entering this labor area may not be exclusive to Latinas, what these women's experiences bring to light is that exploitative practices are sustained and exacerbated when narrators enter this ecosystem from an already precarious condition. For example, regarding pay schedules, Jenny shared:

> **Jenny:** The actual pay of it comes, I think, it's 30 days or 60? Yeah, 30 days after the book is… out… approved, done, no changes. Thirty days after a date you can't control.
>
> Me: So, you have no idea really [when you will get paid]?
>
> **Jenny:** You kind of don't. You have to just relax.
>
> Me: You have to relax. Viene cuando viene, no es gran cantidad de dinero.[539]
>
> **Jenny:** Yeah, it's not. But, *ya sabes como es* with actors;[540] I mean, one residual check can save your life that month.

Actors might thus enter this arena from an already financially precarious situation, deeming them easier targets for exploitation. For Latinas, our intersectional axis of marginalization in

[539] *It will come when it comes, it's not that much money.*
[540] *You know how it is with actors.*

Hollywood across race, gender, and linguistic lines may indeed exacerbate our exploitation in this space.

One way in which this is operationalized is by limiting Latina access to narration jobs via casting categories that include linguistic assumptions and conceptual hierarchies. In U.S. media, whiteness and the English language are equated with Americanness and positioned as the aspirational norms; a problematic move that reifies a narrow, racially-charged understanding of what it means to look and sound "American."[541] Within this context, Latine communities are often equated with Spanish language (exclusively) or with an accent intended to mark them as "other" than American. This limits the jobs for which Latinas have historically been considered.

The Affective Impacts of Precarious Labor

What does exploitation feel like? The words Carmen, Jenny, and Graciela used to describe the negative affective impacts of their experiences include frustration, torture, horror, disrespect, heavy, and abuse. In describing her experience with self-recording, Jenny said:

> **Jenny:** Qué horror de experiencia./ *What a horror of an experience*.

Carmen shared:

> **Carmen:** It was like eight months of my life…. I'm not expecting anything. I just want to close this chapter and move on…. It was such a frustrating experience… the time I spent on this compared to payment… I've come to terms with myself that I basically worked for free.
> …
> Me: Did this turn you off from doing narration or is this still something that you would want to do "under different circumstances," cómo tú dices?[542]
>
> **Carmen:** It turns me off a little bit, but it turns me off because of the ongoing abuse that is happening… and what I mean by "abuse," I mean taking advantage of voice actors and not paying them for the amount of work that they are doing.

[541] Also problematic is the Imperialist logic of U.S. being equated with "America."
[542] Translation: "As you say?"

> It's, it's horrible…. And, there's more and more opportunity for people to work from home and to either supplement their income or do this fulltime, and that's great. But people are taking advantage.
> ….
>
> **Carmen:** Not only not getting respect financially, I'd be interested to see the male/female ratio. I mention that because I felt disrespected. He [a proofreader] mansplained to me. That kind of environment. Not being treated like an equal. There's no way he would have talked to a male this way.

Here, Carmen offers us a glimpse into gendered dimensions within this ecosystem that necessitate further scrutiny.

Conclusion

My participants are media professionals with cross-border, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual knowledge. Throughout our pláticas, they concurrently kept within view individual, local, and global concerns. Their experiences and lenses are complex, and yet the system's infrastructure is not oriented towards listening to their voices, learning from their knowledge, nor understanding and addressing their specific concerns. I highlighted, for example, how 20+years ago Latina talent approached the union for support regarding unionizing the Spanish language dubbing space. Yet there seemed to be no infrastructure in place, no clear communication, no sustainable results, even though unionizing "new" labor arenas, such as audiobooks, is one of the union's raisons d'ê·tre. My pláticas with these women brought into focus the role of SAG-AFTRA in shaping particular types of disciplined workers into being. In other words, a workers' relationships with their union impacts their sense of identity as workers, and thus how they express their sense of agency. My findings have brought to light some of the ways that Latina workers are disempowered via microaggressions that are operationalized via the industry's and the union's information systems and structure. Two key methods of disempowerment are

information asymmetry and unilateral communications from employer/producer, union leadership, etc. to narrator/worker.

I argue that, if the union is to be an equitable support mechanism for all of its members, then its organizational structure including information systems and the ideologies that inform them, must authentically center DE&I. The union must serve as the model of authentic equitable and diverse inclusion that we want to see throughout the U.S. media landscape. We need diverse lenses on all union concerns. In other words, we must model DE&I that is not merely an optical illusion or a public relations buzz phrase. Getting DE&I right must be a union priority.

In the next section, I employ a Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) and Chicana/Latina feminist frameworks to interrogate the ways in which Amazon's audiobook labor platform, ACX, is designed to enhance this monopoly.[543] I analyze this platform because it is the site via which narrators enter and are kept within Amazon's sphere of gaze and control throughout the production and distribution processes. My interest is to reveal how, beyond its immediate self-professed goal of creating more audiobooks, ACX is designed to facilitate worker participation to increase its network and thus its value (network affects), which serves its financial interests while enhancing its power to reshape this industry.

[543] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis."

III. The Audiobook Platform Worksite: Injustice by Design

As Marshall McLuhan states, the medium is the message.[544]

Introduction: Analyzing Amazon's ACX

The future of creative work depends on the decisions and actions we take today, as well as on the voices and perspectives that are included in the decision-making processes. In this era of convergence media, fueled by neoliberal capitalist ethos and supported by the lack of regulatory frameworks and strong worker protections, platforms providers are reshaping labor structures and culture without accountability. In the commercial audiobook arena, Amazon holds a virtual monopoly.[545] It has done this via a constant broadening of its network effects, which increases its power to control the work, the workers, and the public's access to information while keeping itself out of reach from accountability. In this section, I analyze how Amazon achieves these corporate goals via its ACX audiobook labor platform. I study ACX because this is where narrators enter Amazon's digital audiobook workforce.

Referring to Langdon Winner, at task is to reveal if/how ACX is "designed and built in such a way that it produces a set of consequences logically and temporally *prior* to any of its professed uses."[546] To do this, I braid Cultures of Production methodology, Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), and Latina/Chicana feminism into an analytical

[544] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 1.
[545] Osnos, "How Amazon Became the King of Audiobooks."; Trachtenberg, "Amazon Already Disrupted the Sale of Print Titles. Up Next," February 5, 2018.
[546] Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" 125.

toolkit. As described in chapter 4, this toolkit provides the intersectional lens, and the moral and political language for a holistic evaluation that looks beyond tools and uses to interrogate the ways that power is embedded in the platform's design.[547]

Next, I explain my methodology. Then, I consider the greater socio-political and corporate ethos by historically contextualizing Amazon's entry into audiobooks because ideological context informs design. After this, I analyze ACX. Then, informed by my findings, I conclude with a Latina feminist reimagining of an alternative worker-centered designed.

Methodology and Methods

To analyze this digital media worksite, I employ a braided Cultures of production methodology,[548] Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), "a multimodal analytic technique for the investigation of Internet and digital phenomena, artifacts, and culture," [549] and Latina/Chicana feminism (L/CF) is my critical theoretical framework.[550] This braided toolkit opens the opportunity to concurrently analyze the interactions between ideology, technical design, technology practice, and to interrogate power relations.[551] It shifts the focus to the workers, and opens robust lines of inquiry that may not be considered from the dominant white, male technologically deterministic perspectives.

Historical Context: Amazon and Audiobooks

[547] Winner, 126.
[548] Caldwell, John Thornton, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press Books, 2008).
[549] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis."
[550] See chapter 4, "Methodologies and Methods."
[551] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1013.

As detailed in Chapter 5.5, Amazon ushered in the e-book market when it launched the Kindle in 2007.[552] A year later, Jeff Bezos entered the audiobook industry when his company purchased Audible, acquiring its 80,000 plus properties, including audiobooks.[553] This move meant that audiences no longer had to leave the Amazon-sphere to purchase, download, and listen to audiobooks. This kept consumers and their data within Amazon's gaze and control while affectively broadening its network effects. Amazon entered book publishing in 2009 (APub)[554] and the launch of Audible's ACX digital labor platform in 2011. In 2016, Amazon officially entered the Text-to-Speech (TTS) AI space with its release of its first Amazon Polly Developer Guide.[555] Though new competition is underway in the AI space, since entering the audiobook arena, Amazon has deployed a series of tactics to gain control, monopolize, and restructure this industry. Thus, revealing its corporate ethos.

Amazon has revealed its ethos throughout its history. Examples include its Gazelle project, its Pay to Play project, and its 2014 legal battles with the Hachette Book Group. In these instances, detailed in Chapter 5.5, Amazon used coercive measures to pressure publishers to acquiesce to its financial and contractual terms. Another example is its 2011-2020 "in-App"

[552] Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. and Mattioli, Dana. "Amazon, a Longtime E-Book Discounter, Is Accused of Driving Up the Price of E-Books." WSJ.com, Tech sec. January 15, 2021. Webpage. https://www.wsj.com/articles/amazon-a-longtime-e-book-discounter-is-accused-of-driving-up-the-price-of-e-books-11610748615; Coldewey, Devin. "How the Kindle Was Designed through 10 Years and 16 Generations." Techcrunch.com, hardware sec., November 20, 2017. Webpage. https://techcrunch.com/2017/11/20/how-the-kindle-was-designed-through-10-years-and-15-generations/

[553] Franklin, "Amazon to Buy Audible for $300 Million"; Dignan, "Amazon.Com Buys Audible; March into Digital Content Distribution Continues."; WSJ staff reporter, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller Audible." WSJ.com, February 1, 2008. Online. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120178852994132009; Stone, "Amazon to Buy Audiobook Seller for $300 Million," The New York Times. Online. February 1, 2008. https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/technology/01amazon.html

[554] Amazon Publishing. "About Us." Webpage. https://amazonpublishing.amazon.com/about-us.html

[555] AWS. "Document History for Amazon Polly." Webpage. https://docs.aws.amazon.com/polly/latest/dg/doc-history.html

purchase war with Apple (another market monopolist).[556] Plus, its abusive labor practices against its warehouse workers and drivers are infamous and relentless.[557] Its tactics serve as evidence that, when unregulated, Amazon will deploy the affordances of its platform (data collection, mediation, obfuscation) to gain unfair advantages. Important to note that, though I focus on Amazon, this does not mean that these types of strategies are unique to this company. Taking a closer look at Amazon serves to underscore that power operationalizes coercive measures in myriad ways.

This section serves as evidence to Trevor Scholz's statement that ""based on evidence from Mechanical Turk and the labor practice in Amazon's warehouses, there is no reason to believe that the company would understand its relationship to digital laborers any differently than that of a predator pursuing its vulnerable prey,"[558] by revealing the ways that Amazon's corporate ethos is embedded into the design of its digital labor platform, ACX.

ACX: Delimiting the Artifact

After understanding the corporate context, the next step in Brock's CTDA is to "delimit the artifact."[559] Thus, the question at hand is: What is ACX? Audio Creation Exchange or ACX

[556] Pepitone, Julianne. "Amazon wins skirmish in 'App Store' battle with Apple." CNN.com, Money sec., July 7, 2011. Online. https://money.cnn.com/2011/07/07/technology/apple_amazon_app_store/index.htm; Sandler, Rachel. "Apple Offered To Reduce Its Fee To Get Amazon Prime Video On Devices, Emails Show." Forbes.com, July 29, 2020. Online. https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelsandler/2020/07/29/apple-offered-to-reduce-its-fee-to-get-amazon-prime-video-on-devices-emails-show/?sh=1c036e113eae; https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52130321

[557] Palmer, Annie. "Amazon's focus on speed, surveillance drives higher warehouse worker injuries, study finds." CNBC, tech sec., October 20, 2023. Online. https://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/25/study-amazons-focus-on-speed-surveillance-drives-worker-injuries.html; Kelly, Jack. "A Hard-Hitting Investigative Report Into Amazon Shows That Workers' Needs Were Neglected In Favor Of Getting Goods Delivered Quickly." Forbes.com, October 25, 2021. Online. https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/10/25/a-hard-hitting-investigative-report-into-amazon-shows-that-workers-needs-were-neglected-in-favor-of-getting-goods-delivered-quickly/

[558] Scholz, "Think Outside the Boss."

[559] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1024.

is Amazon/Audible's digital audiobook production worksite or digital labor platform. It is the entryway via which narrators enter the Amazon workforce. In typological terms, ACX is a cloud work (web-based digital labor) platform of the freelance marketplace subtype.[560] As such, its purpose is to mediate between supply and demand of labor; between rights holders of written works, and those who bring these works to the audio-sphere.[561] On their site they self-define as:

> A marketplace where authors, literary agents, publishers, and other Rights Holders can connect with narrators, engineers, recording studios, and other Producers capable of producing a finished audiobook. The result: More audiobooks will be made.[562]

While seemingly straight-forward, their definition does double duty. By adhering to its 'marketplace' typology, Amazon is defining its ACX platform's role as that of technical intermediary, not as an employer. It is directing our conceptual orientation to 'understand' that, aside from providing the technical landscape, Amazon is hands off. Nothing could be further from what is actually at play. Plus, its definition also hides in plain view the abusive labor practices (consolidation of labor and wage theft) that facilitate its production of "more audiobooks." It is the narrators who often shoulder the work of producer, director, and engineers, while providing the means of production (home studios) without compensation.

In addition to hiding behind its typology, Amazon also obfuscates the disconnect between what it claims ACX is and what it is actually designed to do via the platform's design. To understand how it does this, I take a closer look at seven platform interface components. Informed by Aloisi et al.'s platform variables, these components are foundational to

[560] Schmidt, *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy*, 14.
[561] According to their site, it is currently available to residents of the US, the UK, Canada, and Ireland who have who have a mailing address, valid local Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), and banking details for one of these countries. https://help.acx.com/s/article/what-countries-is-acx-open-to
[562] ACX.com. Webpage. https://www.acx.com/help/about-acx/200484860

understanding what the platform is actually designed to achieve.[563] And, as I study the production process—from the workers' perspectives— I categorize these components under three stages: 1) Entering the Worksite, 2) At Work, and 3) After-work Work:

Entering the Worksite	At Work	After-work work
1-Access & Registration	4-Managerial Control	6-Self-Promotion & Marketing
2-Selection & Hiring	5-Monitoring, Rating, and Deactivation	7-Proprietary Formats*
3-Payments & Contracts		

Analyzing these components at each stage has brought to light the ways that ACX is designed to 1) constantly broaden Amazon's network effects, 2) to exert managerial control over the work and the workers, 3) to control the public's access to information, and 4) to keep itself out of reach from accountability. Next, I take a look at how Amazon achieves this via ACX's value-laden design at each stage of the process.

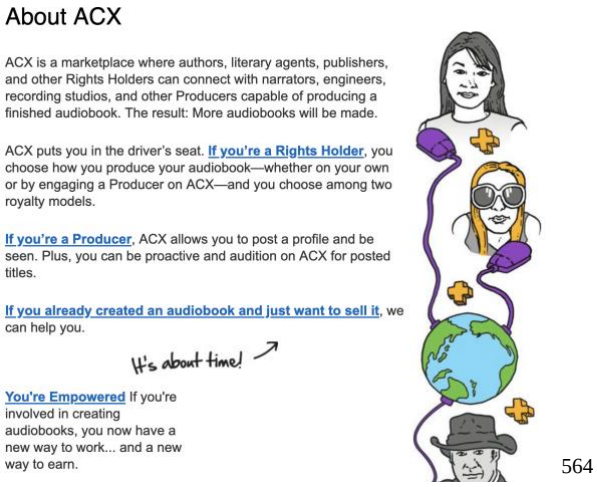
Entering the Worksite

To enhance its network affects, Amazon first needs workers to enter its worksite. It encourages worker participation by manufacturing trust via a performative transparency and an anti-establishment sense of casual authenticity in its design aesthetic. It also motivates participation by prompting workers' hope labor, facilitating participation across union statuses, and via targeted labor 'opportunities'.

Manufacturing Trust

[563] Antonio Aloisi et al., *European Legal Framework for "Digital Labour Platforms."* 2018, 15, http://publications.europa.eu/publication/manifestation_identifier/PUB_KJ0418843ENN.

Whether you are a new or experienced narrator, the platform provides a variety of tools to facilitate worker participation: Videos and Lessons, ACX University, Ways to Promote Yourself, etc. The significant amount of information they provide gives the semblance of transparency. Plus, its casual tone serves to conceptually manage the expectations of prospective narrators:



[564]

The "hand-drawn" characters and "hand-writing" gives the site a low-budget feel that manufactures an anti-establishment sense of casual authenticity. In addition to setting the tone, Amazon encourages workers' to labor by appealing to their sense of hope.

Hope Labor

Kuehn et al. introduce the concept of 'hope labor' as a motivation for voluntary participation in online social production. They define it as: "'un- or under-compensated work carried out in the present, often for the experience or exposure, in that that future employment opportunities may follow'."[565] In this space, the synthesis of workers' neoliberal indoctrination

[564] ACX.com. "About ACX." Original website version. You can access this version via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine here: https://web.archive.org/web/20240000000000*/acx
[565] Kathleen Kuehn and Thomas F. Corrigan, "Hope Labor: The Role of Employment Prospects in Online Social Production," *The Political Economy of Communication* 1, no. 1 (May 16, 2013): 9, http://www.polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/view/9.

and Amazon's widely known corporate ethos of abusive labor practices allow Amazon to prey on the hope of laborers.[566] For example, during our pláticas, Andrea shared:

> **Andrea:** El primero [libro] lo edite yo. Asi, que probablemente que perdiera más tiempo porque lo quería limpiar... y, además, ACX tiene los parametros muy claros y muy especificos de como quiere el sonído y no sé que. Entonces, si fué trabajito…. Pero bueno, estubo bien. Tampóco lo borraría de mi vida porque aprendí. Pero bueno, te aprendes cobrando también. */ I edited the first [book]. So, I probably wasted more time because I wanted to clean it, and also, ACX has very clear and specific parameters about how it wants de sound, and other stuff. So, it was some work… But, well, it was fine. I wouldn't erase it from my life because I learned. But, well, you also learn while charging for your work.*

Like many workers, Andrea justified the uncompensated labor time, and stressful working conditions because she felt that she had learned a new skill in the process. But, as she also points out, you can also learn while getting paid. Non-union narrators may also enter this worksite in the hope of joining SAG-AFTRA, as the union has negotiated a contract. Thus, ACX becomes a gateway into the professional entertainment industry.

Unionization: Blurring the Lines

[566] Nina Godlewski On 9/12/18 at 4:42 PM EDT, "Amazon Employees Have Resorted to Urinating in Trash Cans in Some Warehouses," Newsweek, September 12, 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/amazon-drivers-warehouse-conditions-workers-complains-jeff-bezos-bernie-1118849; Evans, Will. "Ruthless Quotas at Amazon Are Maiming Employees," *The Atlantic*, November 25, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/11/amazon-warehouse-reports-show-worker-injuries/602530/; Shona Ghosh, "Peeing in Trash Cans, Constant Surveillance, and Asthma Attacks on the Job: Amazon Workers Tell Us Their Warehouse Horror Stories," Business Insider, May 5, 2018. https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-warehouse-workers-share-their-horror-stories-2018-4. Colin Lecher, "How Amazon Automatically Tracks and Fires Warehouse Workers for 'Productivity,'" The Verge, April 25, 2019, https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/25/18516004/amazon-warehouse-fulfillment-centers-productivity-firing-terminations; Michael Sainato, "'We Are Not Robots': Amazon Warehouse Employees Push to Unionize," *The Guardian*, January 1, 2019, sec. Technology, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/jan/01/amazon-fulfillment-center-warehouse-employees-union-new-york-minnesota; Eric Spitznagel, "Inside the Hellish Workday of an Amazon Warehouse Employee," *New York Post* (blog), July 13, 2019, https://nypost.com/2019/07/13/inside-the-hellish-workday-of-an-amazon-warehouse-employee/; Guendelsberger, Emily. "I Worked at an Amazon Fulfillment Center; They Treat Workers Like Robots," Time.com, July 18, 2019. https://time.com/5629233/amazon-warehouse-employee-treatment-robots/; Auerback, Marshall. "Inside Amazon's Abusive Labor Practices," Truthdig.com, January 26, 2018. Online. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/inside-amazons-abusive-labor-practices/.

Expanding their labor base serves Amazon's goal of enhancing their network effects. Its contract with the SAG-AFTRA serves this purpose: union members can work at this worksite. Plus, the more professional narrators participate, then more authors may be incentivized to also participate. Partially unionizing this space also serves to blur the lines between amateur and professional. A union contract encourages participation from amateur narrators to labor in hope of entering the entertainment business, and from professionals who labor in the hope of generating an additional revenue stream. It also blurs the lines between user-generated and work that is solicitated by a client, which blurs typology and Amazon's responsibilities to the workers. Blurring the lines ultimately encourages broader participation and serves to enhance Amazon's network effects.[567] Plus, it stands to be interrogated whether participating narrators might, inadvertently (without informed consent), be training Amazon's AI.

Personalized Labor "Opportunities"

Another way that ACX encourages participation is by emailing auditions to registered narrators. During our pláticas, Sandra shared this recent offer she received from ACX:

> **Sandra:** Yeah, this is it. [Reading] "We are currently finishing up editing of what we estimate to be a 30 to 40-hour Spanish learning audiobook…. We like your samples… and would love to get an audition from you in the next 5 days…. What we are looking for: Primary female narrator to record the vast majority of the project, you will also be the editor/producer on this project… native Spanish speaker…. Much of the project is in English also, so someone who can speak English clearly with either an American accent or a natural Spanish accent is okay…. Someone who can produce crisp, clear, high-quality audio with no background noise…. The only part you will not record will be the other male character's lines in the sample dialogs. But, as the producer responsible for editing the project, you will, of course, be responsible for editing his lines in. That said, we are looking for someone who knows a male narrator that…" Oh, "also, who knows a male narrator who can recommend." What is that?
>
> Me: So, you're doing the casting as well.

[567] Aloisi et al., *European Legal Framework for "Digital Labour Platforms,"* 2.

> **Sandra:** Yes. "That said, we are looking for someone who knows a male narrator that can record this part." Oh, "his part of the dialog, preferably in studio with you for sound consistency." Oh, so, that means that I will record him as well with my studio time.

This consolidation of labor is an abusive labor practice. The rate that Sandra was being offered for her labor, labor time (prep and record the narration, produce, engineer, edit, proof, cast), bilingual/bicultural knowledge, and for providing her studio time, is a form of wage theft. As Florian Schmidt states, what looks like opportunity from one lens, looks like exploitation from another.[568]

At Work

Once narrators enter the Amazon workforce via ACX, they are at work. Amazon promotes ACX as a Do-It-Yourself marketplace, in line with neoliberal ideologies. This framing orients the user towards understanding this as a space where they "get to be their own boss" and where financial success is contingent on how much work they are "willing to put in." While the company claims to only facilitate client-worker relationship, the site obfuscates the insidious ways in which Amazon exerts managerial control over the worker and the work throughout the process.

Managerial Control

While some of the characteristics of platforms may seem new, they are continuities of decades-old operational and ideological registers that have been shifted onto this new digital location. As an industry at the convergence of media and tech, it can be said that in many ways,

[568] Schimdt, Florian. Digital Labor Conference. Paris, 2019.

the platform has taken the place of the unit production manager (UPM) who managed transnational productions during the era of runaway productions, which were instituted and developed in the postwar era of the 1940s-50s.[569]

During this era, the intermediary role of the UPM was pivotal to assuring U.S. control of productions that were taking place abroad. He (generally a white male) came from the studio system and was the trusted middleman who served as the eyes and ears (gaze) of the US-based company.[570] Under his watch, a series of practices as control mechanisms were operationalized: the production was prepared in the mold of studio filmmaking, Hollywood technicians served as department heads abroad, and there was constant communication between the UPM and the Hollywood studio/production company.[571] The documentation sent from Hollywood (call-sheets, daily production reports, script notes, camara reports) served as organizational models.[572] They structured the workflow, and dictated what and when data was collected. This information was then sent back to Hollywood, which is how the production's progress was controlled.

Likewise, labor platforms are designed to collect data, and, this time, at scale (Big data). Data mining is today's mechanism of surveillance and control. Unlike the era of runaway productions, in the platform economy, control is not held by the client, but by today's UPM managerial middlemen facilitating the relationship and workflow: the platform provider. Thus, far from a "hands-off" approach or simply providing the technical landscape, Amazon exerts insidious control of the work and the worker throughout the process. For example, as is typical of workers who labor within cloud-based marketplace labor platforms, narrators have a certain degree of autonomy for how they approach their work, but they are, at the same time, highly

[569] Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*, 3.
[570] Foucault, Michel, and Alan Sheridan. 1977. *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*. Allen Lane.
[571] Steinhart, 136.
[572] Steinhart, 135.

surveilled.[573] Narrators must adhere to the exact specifications outlined in the "Audio Submission Requirements."[574] This adds their labor time, which has brought in another layer to the production process from which the platform provider holds itself out of reach from accountability: the further outsourcing of work.

In the end, it is the client who approves the final work, but the platform manages the work process, and continues to control and discipline workers even after the production process on ACX has been completed. It does this via its ratings system on its Audible and Amazon distribution platforms and by monitoring narrators' online presence and activities. Thus, once narrators enter the workforce, there is no end to the unwaged work. Even their activity becomes mineable, profitable data. (It is worth noting that all of this seems to be logic that Amazon "perfected" in Mechanical Turk where the requestor can reject the final product.)

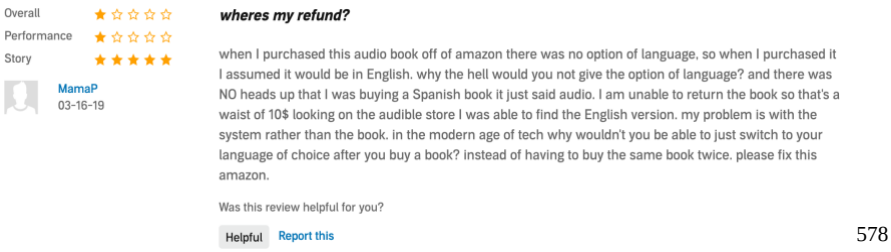
Ratings and Monitoring: Surveilling and Disciplining Workers

Workers are disciplined through the ratings systems. Though in their terms of service Audible/ACX offers no warranties and hold themselves out of reach from liability for the connections they facilitate, the platform is paradoxically seen as an "enhanced system allowing trust between strangers."[575] The traceability of the data they collect matters "when it comes to vetting workers and profiling customers" because this is how platforms build the semblance of trust.[576] The ratings system is a key component to this trust-building endeavor, and it can impact a worker's future job prospects. It signals to potential customers that the quality of worker's

[573] Schmidt, *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy*, 14.
[574] Aloisi et al., *European Legal Framework for "Digital Labour Platforms,"* 18.
[575] Aloisi et al., 20.
[576] Aloisi et al., 19.

labor has been regularly traced by the platform and vetted by other 'verified' customers.[577] Trust is thus built on the company's penetrating surveillance.

Ratings expose workers to customers' subjectivities. Additionally, because the platform controls what is visible to whom, and when, the worker is forced to blindly trust the platform as mediator. Once production is completed on ACX, the audiobook is distributed via Audible, Amazon, and/or iTunes. Audible's ratings system then comes into play. This system allows customers to rate the overall audiobook, the story, and the performance by the narrator.



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Also (like with Mechanical Turk), the platform offers no appeal option to narrators who are "rarely allowed to challenge rejections they believe are groundless, unfair, or fraudulent…. [Meanwhile] the implicit threat of receiving a bad rating compress the autonomy of the worker and governs his conduct."[579] This can impact how narrators approach their work in the production stage.

The threat of continued surveillance serves to discipline talent's labor and their online presence. A narrator's job prospects may also be impacted by their online visibility and activity including the number of followers, and their open political views. Referring to Foucault, platforms continue to exercise power over talent by "guiding the possibility of [their] conduct;"

[577] Aloisi et al., 20.
[578] Audible.com. "Esperanza renace." Webpage: https://www.audible.com/pd/Esperanza-renace-Audiobook/B07D1BDKZW?qid=1612027280&sr=1-1&ref=a_search_c3_lProduct_1_1&pf_rd_p=83218cca-c308-412f-bfcf-90198b687a2f&pf_rd_r=WQ9A51QS54651206ZMS6#customer-reviews
[579] Aloisi et al., *European Legal Framework for "Digital Labour Platforms,"* 21.

governing the way in which their conduct might be directed.[580] Network effects and worker control have a direct correlation. As Amazon's network effects increase, so does it power over workers during and beyond the production and distribution processes. Amazon keeps narrators within its gaze and control via its ratings system and by encouraging them to use its marketing tools for self-promotion.

After-Work Work

Amazon continues to exploit talent by benefitting from their free marketing labor at this stage of the process. Once narrators are within Amazon, the company employs a series of tactics to keep them within its gaze and control by encouraging self-promotion/marketing and via its proprietary formats. On the ACX site, narrators are encouraged to stay within Amazon to promote their work. They state that because of its strong network effects, in other words, because of the large number of people who are already within its sphere, Amazon is the optimal space for marketing.

Self-Promotion and Marketing

They offer three steps for self-promotion within Amazon: 1) Writing reviews for other people's work, 2) Creating an Author Page on Author Central, and 3) Clicking on "Was this review helpful?"[581] The first suggestion, "Write reviews," and the use of social media tools in general are all geared towards manufacturing authenticity, a key ingredient in today's social media peer-to-peer guerilla marketing approach. In *Your Ad Here: The Cool Sell of Guerilla*

[580] Foucault, Michel. 1982. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 789–90. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181.
[581] ACX.com. Webpage. https://www.acx.com/help/take-advantage-of-amazon/200575260

Marketing, Michael Serazio defines authenticity as "the expression of individuality amid and against the determinism of branded commodities."[582] He points to Foucault to explain how resistance is used in the service of governance through the deployment of guerilla marketing:

> One of the ways that governance channels that defiance is by posturing as defiance itself: guerilla advertising, here, self-effacing its own power through an anti-establishment ethos and dissident aesthetics, which attempt to absolve any pretense of marketer authority. And for an industry always on the prowl for authenticity, given the perceived cynicism of millennials, that defiance represents a key source of credibility.[583]

In other words, the site's casual-tone is design to manufacturing authenticity. It creates the "do-it-yourself' tone that encourages narrators to contribute unwaged marketing and PR work that enhances Amazon's network effects, and builds its 'trust-worthiness'

First, it is positioning itself as non-authoritarian or "posturing as defiance itself." The company states that it is offering suggestions to give the users the opportunity to increase their earning potential. The users are free to take action or not: the marketing is up to them.[584] In this way, Amazon absolves itself of "any pretense of marketing authority." This peer-to-peer manufactured authenticity model shifts the marketing responsibility onto the shoulders of the narrators themselves. The big winner for all of this additional unwaged marketing labor are not the authors or narrators, it is Amazon. Let us not forget that Amazon makes 60 percent from every audiobook sale. The company has already stolen wages in the production process, now it aims to increase sales without marketing costs, since narrators and authors are doing this work. Their self-promotions also serve to bring more customers to Amazon, enhancing its network effects.

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[582] Michael Serazio, *Your Ad Here: The Cool Sell of Guerilla Marketing* (NYU Press, 2013), 89, https://ccle.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/3084365/mod_resource/content/0/Serazo-%203.pdf.
[583] Serazio, 61.
[584] I have underlined words that represent the tone of the 'Promote Yourself' ACX web pages.

ACX also encourages narrators/producers, Rights Holders, and authors to increase their royalty earnings potential by using social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, podcasting, and YouTube) to promote their work. The goal is to drive up sales and, of course, brings more customers to Amazon. These images are examples of how Twitter and Facebook are used as a digital marketing tool by an audiobook narrator:



[585]

Their self-promotions also serve to bring more customers to Amazon. Amazon also maintains power asymmetries and keep users, consumers, and creators within its gaze and control via its proprietary formats.

Proprietary Formats

Amazon also maintains power asymmetries and keep users, consumers, and creators within its gaze and control via its proprietary formats. Analyzing Amazon's (ACX and Audible) format choices helps to shed light on their moral, political, and economic ethos. While the MP3 format facilitates the participation of labor, their proprietary formats restrict access to the final audiobooks, which serves to keep customers, their data, and their spending dollars within

[585] Image: A public tweet by an audiobook narrator.

Amazon's ecosystem. This is also the case with their DRM (digital rights management) technology, which it uses on its Kindle books to ensure that they remain behind a paywall.[586]

While Amazon seems highly concerned with creating restrictions in order to maintain control of users' data, its business is thriving partly due to the lack of regulatory restrictions and governmental oversight of its platforms. Amazon's monopolization of this space is achieved by it controlling the gaze at each step of the process without being gazed upon.

Reimagining a Latina-Feminist Worker-Centered Design

My braided CPM-CTDA-L/CF framework opened the opportunity to concurrently analyze the interactions between ideology, technical design, technology practice, and to interrogate power relations.[587] Shifting the understanding of the work process by centering the insider-view of Latina narrators affords the opportunity to rethink the platform design. The series of alternative worker-centered design capabilities that came into focus are:

1. Visibility: Making the labor and labor condition visible
2. Communication: Facilitating working communication within the platform
3. Tracking: Total Actual Labor and Labor Time
4. Rating: Rate the Platform Design and Platform Provider
5. Residuals: A Residual Structure w/Tracking

1-Visibility: Making Labor and Labor Conditions Visible

Narrators would have the option to make their labor and labor conditions visible to each other. Taking a cue from the Turkopticon project,[588] an initiative that focuses on Amazon's Mechanical Turk, providing a place for workers to communicate, and rate and report employers,

[586] Shashwat. "How to De-DRM Kindle Books Using Calibre [2024]." Nerds Chalk, January 3, 2024. https://nerdschalk.com/remove-drm-kindle-books-de-drm/; https://blog.the-ebook-reader.com/2023/01/07/amazon-making-it-more-difficult-to-remove-drm-from-kindle-ebooks/; https://developer.amazon.com/docs/in-app-purchasing/drm-overview.html
[587] Brock, "Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis," 1013.
[588] Turkopticon. Website. https://turkopticon.ucsd.edu

an audiobook platform could be designed to facilitate workers' interactions, and ability to watch out for each other while protecting their privacy. This brings us to a related design component:

2-Communication: Facilitating Worker Communication within the Platform

Workers are not made visible to one another on the platform, which makes it difficult to build solidarity. Narrators circumvent this by turning to other avenues of communication like Facebook groups. Communication among workers engenders a crucial sense of community and group consciousness. This sense of solidarity is a key reason why audiobook unionization has been possible; demonstrating the importance of worker communication.[589] Not facilitating worker visibility and communication on the platform weakens the narrator's position, by design.

3-Tracking: Total Actual Labor and Labor Time

Facilitating narrators capacity to track and choose to make visible their actual total contributed labor and labor time, to the client, the union, and policy-makers. Workers would continue to track, and demand compensation for their continued marketing labor. And they would also track labor time for any additional multi-linguacultural work. A location (home studio) fee could be included in the contract.

4-Rating: Rate the Platform Design and Platform Provider

[589] SAG-AFTRA. "Audiobooks: Expanding Opportunities for Actors." SAG-AFTRA, YouTube channel. Feb. 17, 2021. Online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOnYPxFjQe0

An alternative ratings and monitoring design would allow audiences to also rate the platform design and platform provider. As a customer pointed out, include an option for rating "the system."

5- Residuals: A Residual Structure w/Tracking

The platform is designed to provide a clear view of all activities to the platform provider. Tracking downloads for royalties/residual compensation should be a design feature.

Conclusion

My findings reveal that ACX's value-laden design serves to facilitate participation, manufacture authenticity to seem trustworthy to prospective workers, it blurs the lines between professionals and amateurs, and it keeps labor within Amazon's gaze and control throughout the production and distribution processes. Its design ultimately serves to enhance Amazon's power to (re)structure this labor arena and industry by normalizing precarity on one end, and controlling access to information, on the other (E.g.: its hostile hoarding of e-books and audiobooks).[590] It is also designed to keep Amazon out of reach from accountability by hiding behind its theoretical typology. My work provides a model for surfacing how injustice is embedded into the design of creative labor platforms. With this understanding, we can then reimagine worker-centered alternatives and demand appropriate regulatory structures. With the emergence of AI narration, these efforts may be null. Although, Amazon/Audible's current policy is to not distribute AI narrated audiobooks; this is a topic for future research.

[590] Action Network. "Amazon: Release the Audiobooks!" Online. https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/amazon-release-the-audiobooks; Fight for the Future, "11,000 Call on Amazon to End War on Libraries," Fight for the Future. Online. https://www.fightforthefuture.org.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The media is a powerful knowledge-shaping institution. It shapes what we know, and how we come to know it. Thus, media equity matters. Without media equity in the U.S., we will continue to push forth an unbalanced and incomplete representation of who we are as a nation. U.S. English-language media problematically centers whiteness, and erroneously equates it with "Americanness." The overrepresentation of whiteness is a political move that empowers whiteness and minoritizes, erases, devalues, and disempowers the rest of us. In the U.S., Latina/e Americans have historically been the most under- and mis- represented community in English-language media, relative to our U.S. numbers. Plus, Latinas tend to be erased from media discussions altogether by being folded into minoritized, female, and/or Latino-male categories. Our under- and mis-representation in U.S. English-language media actively works to diminish the basic fact that we exist and that we are all equally significant as human beings. It actively constructs a skewed understanding of who we are, which shapes glocal perceptions, and has real life impacts on the Latine community: From how we are treated, our identity and sense of belonging, our access to social protections, resources, benefits, and equitable inclusion in decision-making. Our conditional inclusion is harmful, irresponsible, and undergirded by white supremacist ideologies.

There are two sides to this problem of our conditional and inequitable inclusion: One is external-facing. This view addresses the impacts of representation on audiences, communities, and society at large. The second is internal-facing. This is my approach. I look into the structure to understand how this inequity is structurally constructed. While it is clear that executive-suite decision-makers hold the power to decide who participates and under what conditions, what may not be as clear is why Latine Americans are the most egregiously under-represented relative to

our U.S. demographic share. I argue that to reconstruct a more equitable labor future, requires that we look into the structure, point to marginalizing processes, their applications, and locations. Failure to do this structural work—at the same time that we diversify the executive suites—may result in optical diversity aimed at maintaining the status quo; diversity as an optical illusion in the service of unaltered power.

To this end, my goal has been to gain knowledge from the inside. To manage my scope, I asked what new insights we might gain by studying the audiobook arena from the intersectional lens of Information Studies, Critical Race Theory, Latina feminism, Critical Political Economy of the Media, and labor. My aim has been to understand what the commercial audiobook labor arena looks and feels like from the perspectives of Latina talent, and, in the process, highlight how and why Latinas' intersectional, multicultural, multilingual, transnational lenses are crucial to our analysis of media industries. It soon became clear that Latinas' insider knowledge was "a chemical catalyst… [bringing] to light power relations… their positions… their point of application and the methods used."[591] This process also brought into focus that marginalizing processes vary in how and where they are applied. Therefore, the operations required to deconstruct them must vary accordingly.[592] It is important to underscore that power's oppressive moves are not visible to, nor felt equally by everyone. For example, Non-Latine whites may fail to recognize oppressive moves against minoritized communities, or the degree of impact, because power does not impact them in the same ways, if at all. Therefore, it became clear that, to do a power analysis, Critical Race Theory was an essential conceptual, theoretical, and analytical framework.

[591] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 780.
[592] Trouillot and Carby, *Silencing the Past*, 26–27.

My research process was iterative. At each stage of data collection and analysis my findings brought into focus the myriad ways that mis- and dis-information have been operationalized as conduits of power asymmetries that have resulted in the continual and conditional inequitable inclusion of Latina/e Americans into the U.S. commercial audiobook industry, and U.S. media at large.

While my findings are not generalizable, they are transferable. Taking a closer look at audiobooks from the perspective of Latina narrators brought into focus the ways that white supremacy and imperialist neoliberal capitalist ideologies and values undergird media structures, and their information systems. And, most importantly, how and where they make themselves known to marginalized workers via specific, at times overlapping, forms of mis/dis-information. In this way, mis/disinformation are microaggressions used to discipline and control individuals, groups, and communities in the service of power. These systems of mis/dis-information are created, operationalized, normalized, reified, and maintained in (in)visible (c)overt, (un)conscious ways at specific points along the production pipeline. My iterative process was fundamental to surfacing these insights and mapping out these insidious dimensions.

In other words, my work surfaces some of the ways that different workers experience the same work differently, and why. These differences matter as we develop labor policies, worker protections, and shape the future of work. Because, to reconstruct a more equitable labor future, we must point to these marginalization processes, their applications, and locations. And then, conceptually, and foundationally reconstruct our labor structures to be more authentically equitably. I have organized some of the key forms of mis/disinformation that came to light in my work under three overlapping arenas:

1) **Ideological Foundations**
2) **¿Support Mechanisms and/or Locus of Discipline?**

3) **Control Mechanisms at Work**

I. Ideological Foundations

"One man's imagined community is another man's political prison."[593]

Ideology is the foundation on which Latine inequitable and conditional inclusion is built. While mis/disinformation take various forms, and their locations and applications vary, what remains constant are the racist white supremacist and neoliberal capitalist ideologies that undergird them. These ideologies make themselves known in many ways. Key among these are via inadequate racial categories, linguistic hierarchies, and inadequate data collection and analysis processes.

Inadequate Racial Categories

U.S. hegemony fails to adequately categorize demographic groups. This is a form of mis/disinformation that is used to reinforce white supremacist racial hierarchies. The U.S. Census plays a key role in this deception. The census does not just count the U.S. population, but, historically, it has also played a key role in validating racial inequality.[594]

Whiteness as "Americanness"

Latine conditional inclusion in U.S. English-language media is founded upon the racist white-supremacist imperialist logic that equates whiteness with "Americanness." To be clear, there are two American continents: North America and South America. And there are a total of

[593] Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society* (SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi), Vol. 7 (1990), 295.
[594] Humes, Karen, and Howard Hogan. 2009. "Measurement of Race and Ethnicity in a Changing, Multicultural America." *Race and Social Problems* 1 (3): 113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-009-9011-5.

57 countries in the Americas.[595] The U.S. is only one of these 57 countries. Therefore, non-Latine white usonians are, in fact, NOT the normative American. They are far from it. As such, positioning whiteness as the normative "American," is a form of disinformation. This is not accidental, but an imperialist project of white supremacy.

When this disinformation is internalized by decision-makers in U.S. English-language media who then represent non-Latine usonian whites as the normative "American," in the media, this disinformation is amplified and reified. It serves to mis/disinform the world, empower whites, and marginalized all others. When whiteness is equated with "Americanness," it means that it is imagined to be the core community of significance by U.S. hegemony, and thus diverse representation in U.S. media becomes conceptually optional. This is one reason why efforts towards equitable diverse media representation has been historically slow. As Arjun Appadurai states, referring to Benedict Anderson (1983), "One man's imagined community is another man's political prison."[596] This brings us to U.S. Latines.

Latines

The U.S. government, via the census, has shaped misperceptions about Latine Americans via inadequate racial categories. Race is a social construct. The U.S. Census defines race as, "generally [reflecting] a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically… [race categories] include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups."[597] Engaging with the above Census definition of race, since Latines *are* the largest socio-cultural group, we are a race. Latines are one multi-cultural,

[595] World Data. Website. https://www.worlddata.info/america/index.php
[596] Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society* (SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi), Vol. 7 (1990), 295.
[597] U.S. Census. Webpage. https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html; bold is mine.

multi-lingual race that defies white supremacist racial logics. We are inherently diverse. We are Black, Brown, Asian, Indigenous, Mestizo, Mulatto. Attempts at forcing us into inadequate racial categories have served to erase and mis-represent U.S. Latines, and mis-informed the world about who we are. This is not accidental, but a strategic move aimed at fracturing, disempowering, and diverting resources and protections away from our community.

For example, prior to the 1930s, Mexicans were demographically erased by the government by being folded into the "white" category in the census. The impacts of this move were two-fold: It erased Mexicans and increased the number of whites. The 1930s census was the first time that "Mexican" was a census category. No other Latine communities were yet made visible. Echoes of these logics persist in racist misconceptions of all U.S. Latine communities being one and the same, which flattens and disregards each of our unique nationalities and cultures.

Then, in the late 1960s, the "minority" category was constructed. During the Johnson administration in response to race-related protests across the country, federal programs and funding "were routed to those involved in bettering the "minority condition."[598] In an effort to be recognized and included in this primarily African American-oriented minority policy agenda, Chicano activists lobbying and ultimately made "Washington officials… aware that Latinos could be legitimately considered another minority."[599] However, this folding into the "minority" category conflated Blacks, Latines, and other minoritized communities, effectively erasing the unique experiences of Latine Americans and that of all other groups under that umbrella.

It is important to also note the difference between the inclusion of national and international Latine talent in U.S. media. As in the 1930s, when Mexicans workers in the U.S.

[598] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 61.
[599] Ibid.

were used as scapegoats—blamed for the Great Depression that was caused by the stock market crash—and deported en mass,[600] Latine performers were—at the same time—"brought to U.S. screens… in hopes of engaging" North and South American audiences.[601] The U.S. wanted to have it both ways. It still does. These logics continue to this day. Latine talent from Latin America tend to be included while U.S. Latine talent are excluded. The market reason is that established Latin American celebrities bring their built-in audiences, (which also indicates a class difference). But they also fit into the U.S. racial categories and white imaginary that Latines are "Spanish speaking foreign others." They fit into the comforting hegemonic category that U.S. Latines inherently defy. Our Inclusion is conditional. It hinges upon power dynamics, systems of rewards and punishments, and the stereotypical preconceptions of those in decision-making capacities along the production pipeline.

Linguistic Hierarchies

The U.S. government has constantly adjusted how it categorizes Latines. In 1973, Nixon "mandated that all official records begin to include an identifier for 'Hispanic."[602] Under this new category, Latine people became officially visible as a group. The administration defined Hispanic as: "a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race."[603] This definition highlights "Spanish culture or origin" as the marker of difference, as a means to sidestep our inherent Latine racial diversity. It engages languaculture as the conceptual framework for understanding who "Hispanics" are as a group. Thus, the Spanish language became an intertwined, rigid marker of Latine identity in the

[600] Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 2006; Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 17.
[601] Reyes and Rivero, *Made in Mexico*, 23.
[602] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 63.
[603] Hayes-Bautista and Chapa, "Latino Terminology," 64.

hegemonic imaginary, which continues to this day. It became a marker of difference and "othering." Language became a proxy for racial hierarchy, which, in turn, creates linguistic hierarchies.

The logical fallacy is: "Hispanics speak Spanish. They are others. Hispanics are others because they speak Spanish," and it echoes to this day. This logical fallacy has historically been weaponized as reason for not including Latine Americans in English language media. One common response to calls of Latine inclusion is, "Latinos have Univision and Telemundo." This reveals white supremacist logics in its aggressive move to define and control Latine perception. We are both forced to assimilate AND relentlessly defined as Spanish-speaking outsiders. This categorization is mis-information.

This study has shown what has always been ubiquitous community knowledge: Latine communities' connection to languaculture is hybrid, dynamic, complex, and diverse. Any move by power to define us via a lens of static rigidity in regard to Latine engagement with language(s) and culture(s) is oppressive, and reveals a fundamental lack of understanding at best, and a direct connection to white supremacist logics at worst. Inadequate racial categories and conceptual linguistic hierarchies have also impacted data collection and analysis processes.

Inadequate Data Collection and Analysis Processes

Inadequate data collection and analysis process result/construct mis/disinformation. My findings suggest that there is a historical connection between internal data collection and interpretation processes and the vicious cycles of exclusion of Latina/e media representation, making these processes an issue of data justice. They impact who gets to work, and the "benefits" that are tied to work in the U.S. context, such as pension & health, and residuals.

For example, though some "Hispanic" data was suddenly available because of President Nixon's mandate, policy analysts did not accurately interpret the data. This points to the importance of 'who' is interpreting the data. These analysts "assumed that since the Latino population so closely matched African Americans in the risk factors of low income, poor education, and high poverty, it was logical that Latinos also would match African Americans in terms of "minority characteristics."[604] This assumption may have been efficient, but this conflation served to erase the nuances of Latinx-specific experiences. Latinx experiences were thus conceptually folded into Black experiences under the "minority" category. This folding of the unique and complex experiences of diverse communities under the "minority" category, points to a connection between the power dynamics embedded in official data collection practices and record creation and interpretation, and how these processes have informed the media industry's approach to diversity and inclusion.

Historically, the folding of Latine people into the categories of whites, Mexicans (as the only Latine community), minorities, Hispanics, and Spanish-speaking have been inadequate. Forcing us into rigid, erroneous categories is a fundamental way of seeing us that fails to understand.[605] It is indicative of white supremacy and imperialist capitalist logics that may serve power's information imperatives to efficiently categorize and standardize, yet they also flatten and mis-inform. These moves inaccurately shape global and local (glocal) perceptions, and our own sense of belonging. It is also important to note that, at the same time that Latine Americans were generally framed in the U.S. imaginary as Spanish speaking others, the centering of whiteness as the normative "American" was also and continually being constructed.

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[604] Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California*, 64.
[605] Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.

These hegemonic ideologies seep into support mechanism and worksites, and actively participate in constructing different types of mis/disinformation that take various forms.

II. ¿Support Mechanisms and/or Locus of Discipline?

In this sphere, the role of support mechanisms in shaping particular workers into being came into focus. My braided labor, CRT, L/CF, and CPE framework brought three key support mechanisms into view: the narrators' union SAG-AFTRA, academia, and news media.

SAG-AFTRA

Because I engage with a labor lens, the union came into view during my research process. Additionally, my CRT and L/CF lens brought into question whether the actors' union, SAG-AFTRA, is an equitable support mechanism for all audiobook narrators? And/or whether it functions as a locus to discipline workers? Engaging with a critical IS lens, to assess this, three key locations came into view. (Mis)categorization schema, information asymmetries, imprecise contracts.

(Mis)categorization Schema

How does the union categorize its members? How does it conceptually categorize its diverse membership? Who does it understand its membership to be? And how is this understanding made visible? (Mis)categorization schema matters because it is a type of mis/disinformation that shapes the union's own understanding of who and what matters. Who and what matters to the union is made visible by the degree of diverse and equitable inclusion within union leadership, the union's structure, its political orientation, what issues it is attuned to

and what the union prioritizes, how it understands issues and concerns, what solutions are sought, what consequences are considered, who participates, and how equitably it listens, informs, and represents its members, for example. These inclusion differences are internalized by workers, which serves to discipline them and shape particular workers into being.

Within a union that centers whiteness as the mythical universal norm, what we will see is an over-representation of whiteness in positions with real decision-making power, which denotes an undergirding institutional belief that whiteness is all seeing, neutral, and objective. It is not. This failure to decenter whiteness at the union means that DE&I initiatives are more of an optical illusion. And if efforts are not authentic within the union itself, then any talk of transforming the media landscape towards equity loses steam and is presentational. If we expect the media landscape to change, the union must serve as a model of equitable and diverse inclusion. Anything less is unacceptable.

Information Asymmetries at the union

Who knows what at SAG-AFTRA? How clear and/or obfuscated is the Union's structure? Who participates? Under what conditions? Information asymmetries are a form of mis/disinformation and that shape particular workers into being. Workers internalize this knowledge of whose voices matter at the Union. My findings reveal that information asymmetry, or information that is unequal in quantity and quality that creates a power imbalance, is a form of micro-aggression that is weaponized within the union. Deploying different quantity and quality of information to different groups of members actively works to discipline particular types of workers into being, it creates hierarchies, power imbalances, keeps the union's structure and actual locus of power out of view and, thus, out of reach from accountability. My hope is that

pointing to this problem can help support authentic DE&I efforts and bring into focus why it is critical that authentic DE&I be ubiquitously centered at our union. To clarify, by "authentic," I mean, DE&I that is not an optical illusion, a public relations effort, or a diffusion mechanism, but one that equitably includes and embraces diverse perspectives.

Imprecise Contracts

Imprecise contracts are those that fail to make all of the work and additional contributions, like providing the means of production, visible. As such, imprecise contracts are a form of mis/disinformation. When contracts fail to detangle the consolidation of labor to make total actual labor visible, it is an imprecise contract. Consolidation of labor is also tantamount to wage-theft. Plus, with the emergent threat of automation (AI), consolidation of labor serves as a form of upskilling with a view towards job reduction or elimination. White supremacist logics can be found in imprecise contracts when, for example, additional linguacultural contributions fail to be contractually recognized. As in the case when additional Spanish language work is not commensurately compensated, which indicates a devaluing of this language and the peoples that natively speak it. Here, it is important to note that indigenous Latin American languages are egregiously out of view in all media.

Academia

Academia is not an equitable support mechanism. Studying white spaces from white places as a Latina required additional emotional and practical labor to reexamine the historical record and replace comforting majoritarian interpretations of audiobook history and audiobook industry with ones that square more accurately with Latine American experiences.

This additional labor to reinstate us, Latinas, into the historical record is a political move, which makes mine a work of activist scholarship.[606]

Information Asymmetries in academia

The dearth of Latina feminist frameworks in my field of Information Studies is a form of mis/disinformation. While white scholars are introduced to a plethora of frameworks that reflect their ways of understanding the world, Latinas are not. This is information asymmetry. Without relevant critical frameworks and methods, Latinas/es are forced to see and understand the world from a white perspective and to deny our own experiences, cultural knowledges, and histories. This forces us to participate in maintaining the status quo; as our capacity for so-called success and to earn a living wage are tied to our being trained to address the concerns, seek solutions, and understand consequences as understood from white hegemonic lenses. The lack of Latina feminist frameworks creates a barrier to critically interrogating gaps and silences, and to asking new questions from fresh perspectives. It creates a barrier towards authentically and equitably including diverse perspectives in IS. As a Latina, we have to do the additional intellectual and emotional labor of navigating how to critically study white places from white spaces.

Historical Erasure: Exclusion from the Archives

Historically, archival practices have been complicit with white supremacy logics. As such, academia is a problematic support mechanism. As it relates to this study, there is a dearth of records on Latine/a Americans and in audiobooks. My work highlights the ways that audiobook history intertwines with library history, and in this process, it disentangles the power

[606] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001, 20.; Cotera, "Nuestra Autohistoria," 2018.

dynamics at play in Latina erasures within audiobook history by bringing into focus the problematic role of structural whiteness in archival and recordkeeping processes and categorizing schema. I had to fill in this archival gap before I could begin to address my initial research questions. Again, studying white spaces from white places as a Latina required additional emotional labor, practical labor, and labor time to reexamine the historical record and replace comforting majoritarian interpretations of audiobook history and audiobook industry with ones that square more accurately with Latine American experiences. The degree of additional preliminary work that Latinas, and peoples from other minoritized communities, must do is not labor required of colleagues whose heritage and histories are preserved in the archives.

News Media

Corporate-centered news stories that uncritically reflect white supremacist and neoliberal imperialist capitalist logics are a source of mis/disinformation. This specific type of news contributes to cultural and societal obfuscation. It keeps our focus on the market and reinforces technological deterministic discourses while failing to bring to light the human dimensions including the people who are doing the work, and the conditions in which they labor. This disconnect between what I was seeing/reading in the news media about the audiobook industry and my experiences as an audiobook narrator is what motivated my taking a closer look at the audiobook industry.

The role of corporate media in obfuscating and exacerbating the exploitation of workers goes as far back as the media itself. In 1882, for example, The Los Angeles Times came to prominence under the leadership of Harrison Gray Otis, “a bellicose, union-busting Civil War colonel who kept an arsenal of shotguns in the newsroom in case of labor strife…

Otis and his heirs, the Chandlers, used the power of the newspaper to shape Los Angeles to their interests, and were pivotal in nearly every aspect of the city's growth."[607]

III. Control Mechanisms at Work

In the work arena (understanding that the line between work and personal life/time is fuzzy), mis/disinformation are operationalized as mechanisms of control to discipline workers. They are used to exclude Latina/e workers from labor opportunities and to infuse obfuscation into worksites. Mis/disinformation take different forms and make themselves known to workers at different locations during work. Thus, the strategies to pushback against time will vary.

I have organized these under two categories. The first, "Mis/Disinformation: Controlling Who Gets to Work." This category brings into focus the ways that inequitable labor opportunities are (almost) imperceptibly constructed via inadequate casting categories and linguistic hierarchies. The second category is "Mis/Disinformation: Controlling our View." This category surfaces the ways that, when Latines enter the worksite, tactics are deployed to control these workers. We find these by taking a closer look at conflation, linguistic hierarchies, and imprecise contracts.

Mis/Disinformation: Controlling Who Gets to Work

Mis/disinformation are used to control who gets to work and under what conditions by constructing inequitable labor opportunities. It is within this context that U.S. Latine talent participate in the U.S. entertainment media workforce. Inadequate casting categories and

[607] Monzingo, Joe. " Visionaries and scoundrels made the Los Angeles Times, which returns to local ownership after 18 years." LA Times online. June 17, 2018. https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-latimes-owners-20180617-htmlstory.html

linguistic hierarchies are examples of forms of mis/disinformation that control who gets to enter the worksite.

Inadequate Casting Categories

Inadequate casting categories are a type of mis/disinformation. Casting categories and linguistic hierarchies impact labor opportunities and wage differentials. Casting categories that equate (the sound of) whiteness with "Americanness" from which all other deviate, continue the racist project of defining "Americans" as white, which has its roots in the Immigration Act of 1924. These categories are a result of power dynamics, biases, and assumptions that denote who has the power to name and to define. [608] They work against authentic DE&I efforts, impact work opportunities, shape the audiences' ontological expectations and their understandings of what an "American" ought to look like. They force narrators to reshape their identity to fit casting and client preconceptions in order to have access to labor opportunities. Equating whiteness and the English language with "Americanness" impacts labor opportunities, and access to all of the benefits that are tied to work in the U.S. context.

Linguistic Hierarchies

Again, linguistic hierarchies are a type of mis/disinformation. They shape audiences' understandings of what an "American" ought to sound like. In the U.S. context, these hierarchies devalue the Spanish language. For example, my findings reveal that wage theft is rampant in this industry, and, when it comes to Spanish language narration, one of the ways that wage theft is

[608] Olson, "The Power to Name," 2001.

deployed is via differential pay rates associated with the media's linguistic hierarchies. Simply stated, Spanish language work is devalued. This seems to build upon the antiquated and rigid hegemonic definition of Latine Americans as Spanish speakers, who deviate from white English-speaking normativity. Budgetary decisions and wages fail to account for the added knowledge work that Spanish and bilingual speakers bring to the table. The additional language these talents bring to the work is not just about language, it is about languaculture. Inaccurate contracts are those that fail to make this additional work visible.

Mis/Disinformation: Controlling our View

Mis/disinformation are infused into worksites to construct obfuscation to control our views. Obfuscation is an aggressive tactic that allows for different forms of microaggressions to operate within the worksite. These microaggressions can, at the same time, be invisible to some workers, aggressively visible to others, and rationalized to the point of near-invisibility by yet others. Power operationalizes mis/disinformation to construct work environments within which different workers experience the same work differently. My findings reveal some of the myriad forms of mis/disinformation as microaggressions and control mechanisms that Latina/e talent experience upon entering the worksite. They can be (c)overt and/or (un)conscious. The forms that mis/disinformation take varies, as does their location within the production processes. When These include conflation, information asymmetries, and imprecise contracts.

Conflation

Conflation or the "act or process of combining two or more separate things into one

whole, especially pieces of text or ideas,"[609] results in mis/disinformation. Conflation takes different forms. One of these forms is flattened definitions. For example, far from the kind of haphazard gig economy labor that it is increasingly treated as, narration involves an amalgam of specialized skillsets. It is, at the same time, creative labor, digital labor, emotional labor, and knowledge work. The emotional labor and multi-linguacultural knowledge work that Latina narrators bring to the table remains largely unacknowledged and undervalued. These layers need to be unpacked and made visible, so that these workers are equitably compensated for the total amount of labor they contribute. As described in chapter 7 section III, another example is how Amazon/Audible's ACX's self-definition adheres to its typology to orient our view away from what the digital labor platform is actually designed to achieve.

Information Asymmetries at work

As within the union, information asymmetries at work actively construct obfuscated worksites. This results in diverse forms of mis/disinformation being operationalized and impacting different workers in both similar and different ways. Information asymmetries are a means via which power makes itself known at work. Information asymmetry or fuzzy information is deployed as a tactic to control workers while yielding uneven power in favor of employers. In the non-union space, for example this could be the lack of a contract that outlines the terms of the agreement, a lack of clarity about time estimates and total actual work, and an obfuscated structure, especially for worker recourse.

[609] Cambridge Dictionary. Online. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/conflation

My findings reveal that, in line with other digital labor sites and work types, the more hidden the work and the worker, the greater the capacity for labor violations. Non-union workers are less visible than union-workers because they do not have the power of the union behind them. U.S. Latina audiobook narrators are also less visible at the union than "mainstream" narrators. This is also the case when audiobook narration takes place within digital platforms, which, today, are obfuscated worksites. Working from home can mean working from an unventilated closet, which as one narrator stated in an audiobook panel, "no disrespect to the ancestors who suffered much worse… but that is the road to the sweatshop."

Imprecise Contracts

Imprecise contracts hide a series of wage theft tactics from view including consolidation of labor, linguistic hierarchies, and incommensurate wages. As such these contracts serve as documentary evidence of white supremacist logics. Again, imprecise contracts are types of mis/disinformation that can serve to keep unethical employers out of reach from accountability for exploitative and inequitable labor practices. As mentioned earlier, imprecise contracts fail to make all of the work and additional contributions, like providing the means of production and additional language work visible. (See SAG-AFTRA above).

IV. Future Work

Mis/disinformation is not new. Hollywood has been mis/disinforming the world about Latinas/es from day one. What is new are the scope and scale of mis/disinformation that are facilitated by today's digital technologies. Also new, is the Latina perspective from which this work understands these issues.

To be clear, today's mis/disinformation issues and harms have been built upon a foundation of white supremacist logics and neoliberal capitalist imperialist ideologies. U.S. Latinas/es and other historically minoritized communities have been oppressed by the impacts of mis/disinformation in U.S. culture industries with little to no recourse nor authentic support from the onset. This is why we are late to having protections for victims in place, a reflection of our society's general willingness to care until issues impact and are thus suddenly visible to U.S. hegemony. My look into the U.S. audiobook industry by centering the insider knowledge of Latina talent has brought these issues into focus.

Today, as AI enters the workforce, at question is how will AI impact the future structure(s) of our media industries? This was at the core of the historical SAG-AFTRA and WGA 2023 strikes against the AMPTP. I argue that to address this question, the perspectives of those of us who have experienced marginalization are key. This is because AI entering the workforce is a continuity and expansion of the systems of oppression that are already in place; the systems that minoritized communities have been advocating to eradicate for decades. Our insights also offer a window into what may be in development. It is critical that authentic and sustainable DE&I be centered in AI, and all future of creative work conversations. Because, the future of creative work depends on the decisions and actions we take today, as well as on the voices and perspectives that are included in the decision-making processes. For ours to truly be a participatory culture, we must all participate.

Our task is to decide whether we will continue to go down the path where corporations with a history of labor abuses—like Amazon—design our future or if we are going to push back, interrogate, and dare to think beyond neoliberal capitalist logics to reimagine and (re)construct a digital labor future built on design justice where regulatory frameworks and hard-fought labor

protections ensure fair wages and working conditions for all workers; a future where participation as workers is not contingent on their willingness to be exploited. We must work together to disrupt the wage- and labor-conditions-race to the bottom that Amazon is designing via its relentless infusion of injustice into this labor structure by design. To protect all workers, diverse voices must equitably participate in policymaking. This includes the critical multi-dimensional, transnational, intersectional, and multi-linguacultural voices of U.S. Latinas.

To reconstruct a more authentically equitable labor future, we must do the structural work. At the same time that we push for inclusion, we must also question the conditions of our inclusion. Failure to do so, risks our community participating in oppressive systems, structures, and institutions that reify white supremacy. We must break the chains and refuse to be complicity. True liberation necessitates critical and honest interrogation. In future work we must take a closer look at SAG-AFTRA, at the role of Latine informants in our community's ongoing conditional inclusion and oppression, and at white supremacist, neoliberal capitalist, and misogynist ideologies in U.S. Spanish language media. Because Latinidad does not keep anyone out of reach from accountability in their complicity with oppressive systems and structures. This is critical to foundationally restructuring the U.S. media landscape to one that centers authentic equity, justice, and humanity.

My hope is that this work helps support efforts towards achieving Latine equitable inclusion and developing worker protections and labor policies aimed at protecting all workers by understanding the problem from new lenses. As Malcolm Perry, theoretical physicist states, of black holes, "This problem is probably too hard to do on your own, but different people think about different things in different ways and, well, each brings their own little bit of it to the

table."[610]Though Perry was referring to black holes, the same inclusive approach applies if we are authentically committed to solving the problem of Latine inequitable inclusion in the media industry. I hope is that this work can contribute to these efforts. My goal has been to include the voices of Latina talent-as creative workers in the conversation. One of my participants stated, "I don't know if any of this is useful to you…." My answer is yes. Your perspectives matter and, to solve this problem, you are needed at the table where power needs to learn to listen.

[610] Galison, Peter. "Black Holes: The Edge of All We Know." Collapsar. Documentary film, 2020. Quote by Malcolm Perry, theoretical physicist @41:20.

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

Audiobook narration is a key component in the creation of audiobooks. It is the art of bringing a written work to the audio-sphere by a narrator who, via her voice, translates the world created by an author to the mind of the listener while connecting to her audience on an emotional level.[611] Far from the kind of haphazard gig economy labor that it is increasingly treated as, narration involves an amalgam of specialized acting and technical skillsets. It is, at the same time, creative labor, emotional labor, knowledge work, and digital labor.

Digital labor is a form of labor associated with the information and communications technology industry (ICT). According to Christian Fuchs, what makes different forms of labor "digital labor" is that they are part of a "collective workforce that is required for the existence, usage, and application of digital media."[612] He advocates for a broad understanding of digital labor defined, not by "a common type of occupation, but rather the industry they contribute to and in which capital exploits them."[613] For actors, this is the media industry. It is important to note that digital labor has been constructed under a global neoliberal regime.

Neoliberalism, as defined by David Harvey, is:

> a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade…. [It] holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring

[611]SAG-AFTRA Audiobook workshop. February 13, 2019; Ruben, Paul Alan. "Upping Your Performance Game While Recording Home Alone (now that you're really alone." Audiofile presents Audiobook Narration webinar with Paul Alan Ruben. April 18, 2020. Online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRYOvqYgrkc7/11/2024 9:18:00 PM
[612] Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 3.
[613] Fuchs, 3.

> all human action into the domain of the market. This requires technologies of information creation[614]

Neoliberalism brings all aspects of human experiences into the financial sphere, a narrow lens which serves capital by keeping our focus away from considering the affective impacts on the humans who are doing the work, and from their working conditions. Additionally, as Safiya Noble notes, this regime is racialized and gendered, particularly in ICT industries.[615]

Hollywood has been structured under this neoliberal regime, an ideology that keeps the focus away from structural issues by putting the responsibility squarely on the individual. "This is show *business*," we are constantly reminded. Several layers are folded into this market-driven understanding of the industry. First, one connotation is: this is business, it is not personal. Second: if you work hard enough to make yourself marketable, then you will succeed. Third: because the industry is market-driven, it cannot be racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. But neoliberal capitalist perspectives are skewed and incomplete. While it is true that actors must prepare, their labor opportunities are not solely contingent on their preparation. There are also structural barriers at play. It is no secret that legacy media has a racist, sexist history with high barriers to entry, and a concentration of power in the hands of a few straight white men.[616] And with diffusion mechanisms that give the illusion of progress, while maintaining status quo power firmly in place.[617]

[614] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005, 2–3.
[615] Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.
[616] A 2020 Report from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at USC found that "The overall ecosystem of cinematic storytelling is still one in which girls, women and people of color are marginalized and minimized."
[617] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 2001.

Whiteness

Throughout the industry, ***whiteness***, which David Hudson defines as "the production of shared norms underwritten by physical and epistemological violence, a violence invisibilized as a condition of governance (even as it may well by hypervisible to those whose dignity it assaults),"[618] permeates, others, and controls. Whiteness's power, Hudson states, "resides, in crucial part, in its occupation of a space of unmarked normativity."[619] This is what Audre Lorde calls a *mythical norm*:

> Somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a *mythical* norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows "that is not me." In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society.[620]

Those of us who stand outside of this power are keenly aware of the persistent micro-aggressive ways in which we are constantly othered from this so-called norm: from casting categories that equate whiteness with Americanness, scripts that only include racial categories if the roles are non-white, and within our union, the lack of Latine representation in all spaces and the tendency to equate Latine peoples exclusively with Spanish language is problematic. These are all "subtle and not-so-subtle expressions of racial inequality that are woven into the fabric of society."[621] These expressions of racial inequality are egregious matter of social justice when woven into media industries, which shape global perceptions and perspectives, sense of belonging, and identity. To disrupt imperialist language/logics, in this work 'whites' refer to non-Latine white estadounidenses (NLwE)/non-Latine white usonians.

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[618] Hudson, David James. 2017. *The Whiteness of Practicality*. Library Juice Press. 214–15.
[619] Hudson, 213.
[620] Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex," 2.
[621] Brown, Michael K, Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, and David B Oppenheimer. 2023. *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*. 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 7. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520938755.

To interrogate neoliberal framings and point to issues of structural whiteness within media infrastructures necessitates an intersectional lens.

Intersectionality

According to Kimberle Crenshaw, who coined the term, intersectionality is an analytical framework, which is used to push back against "single-axis framework[s]" of analysis. It is about understanding that multiple structures of oppression can be operating at the same time.[622] Intersectionality is an analytical tool to examine how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing.[623] Referring to Angie-Marie Hancock, I employ "intersectional-like thinking" in my study of the audiobook ecosystem in order to illustrate how "relative visibility or invisibility influences the conceptualizations of the policy problem and which policies are considered legitimate options."[624] Where "visibility," as Hancock points out, "is more than mere sight; instead it is a matter of being seen in a way that also understands."[625] When it comes to the audiobook ecosystem, who is visible and to whom, impacts the concerns that are identified and addressed, and which solutions are considered and enacted along its infrastructure.

Intersectionality is a crucial addition to these discussions because our labor future depends—not only on the decisions and actions we take today—, *but also* on the voices and perspectives that are included in the decision-making processes. What is considered an issue, how issues are understood, what solutions are sought, and what consequences are considered are all contingent on the voices that participate in these processes.

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[622] Crenshaw, Kimberle. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, 1989.
[623] Hill Collins, Patricia and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, Key Concepts Series (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016).
[624] Hancock, *Intersectionality*, 2016, 48.
[625] Hancock, 44.

The uninterrogated centering of whiteness in our industry is problematic in myriad ways. By centering Latinidad, my work sheds light onto the ways that whiteness has been constructed, operationalized, and reified in the audiobook arena. At task is to reveal where and how to push against it because, to authentically construct a sustainably equitable and just digital labor future, we must deconstruct structural whiteness. And the first step in this process is to name it.

Latinidad

Latinidad is a category that defines the diverse forms of cohesion—along several axis—among different peoples with shared dynamic Latin-American roots, and which continually defies homogenizing narratives.[626] Maria Elena Cepeda orients the definition of Latinidad to the self-defining subject: "'Latinidad' constitutes a dynamic belief in a shared "Latina/o" identity rooted in cultural, historic, affective, and political affinities (be they real or imagined) within and across US borders."[627] Latines are a as one multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-lingual race.

Latinidad presents bifurcated affordances. It can be "valued as an integral component in the success of more formal Latina/o political mobilization efforts as well as everyday 'on the ground', pan-ethnic endeavors," a move that increases the strength potential within and across Latine communities. [628] Or it can be appropriated and misused to "flatten the unique cultural and historic features of individual Latina/o communities."[629] The latter reveals a form of visibility that fails to understand.[630] This form of careless visibility of Latine communities in U.S. media is

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[626] Esteban del Río. 2016. "Authenticity, Appropriation, Articulation." In . Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858005-2.; María Elena Cepeda and Dolores Inés Casillas, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media.*, 2017; Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap'"; Diana Leon-Boys and Angharad N. Valdivia, "The Location of US Latinidad: Stuck in the Middle, Disney, and the in between Ethnicity," *Journal of Children and Media* 0, no. 0 (April 18, 2020): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1753790.
[627] Cepeda, "Beyond 'Filling in the Gap,'" 350.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Hancock, *Intersectionality*, 2016, 44.

at the core of the communities pushback. Understanding Latinidad thus requires attention to two key questions: Who is engaging with Latinidad? And, to what end?

Linguistically, beyond the Spanish language, Latinidad includes indigenous peoples that communicate in indigenous languages throughout LatinAmerica, Brazilians who speak Portuguese, and English or other language speakers with a LatinAmerican ancestry. It is a pan-ethnic, multiracial, multiculture, multilingual peoples with shared hemispheric (including ancestral-hemispheric) roots. It is also important to point out that, while Latinidad has "increased exposure and employment opportunities for Latina/o industry professionals,"[631] this does not mean that Latine visibility has engendered any foundational structural changes (in neither academia nor in the media industries), only that Latinidad has served to make us increasingly visible to those who continue to hold onto the power to employ. Short-term individual gains do not inherently engender long-term systemic changes.

What my study brings to the conversation is a view into how Latinidad and the 'Latina' casting category impact the way U.S.-Latinas experience work as U.S.-based entertainment media professionals. I engage with Latinidad to increase my study's (and thus my community's) strength potential to reveal how Latinidad is appropriated and misused within the entertainment industry's labor structures to marginalize and exclude.

Feminist objectivity

As a feminist framework, **Latina feminist frameworks** understand "neutrality" and "objectivity" to be conceptual constructs that serve to uphold power structures. These terms, as

[631] Ibid.

Donna Haraway tells us are used to throw sand in our eyes:[632] This supposed "view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god trick" that keeps those who claim it out of reach from being answerable for what they learned how to see.[633] In contrast, "feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence…. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and… situated and embodied knowledges [that push] against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims."[634] Feminist objectivity is about responsibly acknowledging that all knowledge is situated. Society at large stands to benefit when we acknowledge that all knowledge is located, and when we embrace the power of standpoints.

Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation and disinformation are problematic types of information. While "both terms refer to information that is inaccurate, incorrect, and misleading," the distinction between them is intent.[635] Where misinformation is unintentional and may or may not inadvertently mislead, disinformation is intended to deceive.[636] Andrew Chadwick and James Stanyer center the concept of deception in their definition. They argue that "deception enables scholars to build an explanatory bridge linking intentionality, processes, and outcomes. Deception occurs when an intention to deceive can be shown empirically to lead to the adoption of false beliefs, following

[632] Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.
[633] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 582–83.
[634] Haraway, 583.
[635] Jack, Caroline. *Lexicon of lies: terms for problematic information*. (2017). Data & Society Research Institute. 2.
[636] Zeng, J. & Brennen, S. B. (2023). Misinformation. *Internet Policy Review*, *12*(4). 6. https://doi.org/10.14763/2023.4.1725; Wardle, C. & H. Derakshan (September 27, 2017) Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe, https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-researc/168076277c; Zavallis, Achilleas. "Using Social Media in Community Based Protection: A guide." UNHRChttps://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Factsheet-4.pdf

relational interactions between deceivers and deceived in specific contexts."[637] Process speaks to the relationship between misinformation and disinformation: What may begin as disinformation at the source, may be disguised as misinformation in its dissemination across layers of mediation.

[637] Chadwick, Andrew, and James Stanyer. 2022. "Deception as a Bridging Concept in the Study of Disinformation, Misinformation, and Misperceptions: Toward a Holistic Framework." *Communication Theory* 32 (1): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtab019.1–24

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