

Keywords for Latina/o Studies

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Spanglish

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Ever since the word “Espanglish” first appeared in print, on October 28, 1948, both the style of speaking that it refers to and, more recently, the label itself, have been mired in debates enmeshed in the language politics of the day, with critical implications for the reproduction or interruption of social inequality in Latina/o communities. Salvador Tió (1948), former president of the Puerto Rican Academy of the Spanish Language, published his definition fifty years after the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898 imposed English as the language of instruction, amidst a debate about reinstating Spanish. Tió’s definition included notions that remain popular: that Spanglish is a new language consisting of parts of English and Spanish words, that it reflects confusion and ambivalence and represents a death knell for Spanish via English/U.S. imperialism: “This new language will be called ‘Espanglish.’ . . . It is an ambivalent language. It is a real fusion. Bilingualism is a confusion. It is implanted with the goal of making us dominant in a language that hopes to dominate us” (Tió 1948; translation mine). These themes persist in definitions like Wikipedia’s—“Spanglish is informal due to the lack of structure and set rules”—and the Urban Dictionary’s—“Urban American language. Not quite English, Not quite Spanish.” In a *New York Times* op-ed, a Yale University professor said Spanglish is “an invasion of Spanish by English” that is spoken mainly by “poor Hispanics, many barely literate in either language,” and that it represents “a grave danger to Hispanic culture and

to the advancement of Hispanics in mainstream America” (González Echevarría 1997). These comments reflect various aspects of “*chiquitafication*” (Zentella 1995)—that is, the trivialization of Latinas/os’ use of varieties of Spanish (as non-authentic and non-European), the disparagement of their knowledge of English (as non-standard), and the bashing of their bilingual skills, particularly Spanglish (by referring to them as a-linguals or semi-linguals). As Latinas/os became the largest minority, language discrimination intensified, along with anti-Latina/o violence (Zentella 2014).

Attacks on Spanglish reflect the ways in which negative attitudes toward diverse ways of speaking perpetuate inequities: the “standard language” of the elite is considered superior to the disparaged ways of speaking of the working masses, and many believe that those who speak “correctly” are better prepared for life, even better people. Many insulting definitions of Spanglish are couched in a kind of “I’m only saying this for your own good” rhetoric. For example, Ilan Stavans (2003) praises Spanglish as “creative” and “democratic,” but also refers to it as “a hodgepodge” of “barbarisms. . . . deformed, perverted,” and as “the tongue of the uneducated,” which does not “pay attention to the rules of syntax. But does it matter?” Stavans fails to cite any linguists who have long studied the rules of Spanglish shared by varied U.S. Latina/o groups, such as Shana Poplack (1980), John Lipski (1985), Almeida Jacqueline Toribio (2001), Carmen Silva-Corvalán and Kim Potowski (2009), and I (Zentella 1997). In a study of ninety-four Spanglish speakers (Zentella 2016), respondents had heard or used only 16 percent of the 2,073 entries in Stavan’s dictionary, which was published under the name *Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language* (2003); 23 percent were rejected completely—that is, respondents had never heard of or used those words. Nor is the number of borrowings from English into Spanish

and Spanish into English a threat to the English or Spanish lexicons.

Moreover, proclaiming Spanglish a new language distorts the linguistic facts. Most switches occur at sentence boundaries, and those that occur within sentences follow English rules in the English part and Spanish rules in the Spanish part. Even young children on a New York Puerto Rican *bloque*, or “block,” honored Spanish and English syntax in 95 percent of their 1,685 switches (Zentella 1997); anyone who spoke both languages understood them without recourse to a third grammar. Finally, “defending” Spanglish as a new language masks the nature of linguistic prejudice and its harmful repercussions. Many Spanglish speakers, including *el bloque*’s children, are on their way to losing Spanish, not creating a new language, because they are made to feel ashamed of their bilingual skills. A Latina/o studies scholar who acknowledges that “many Spanglish speakers are fluent in both English and Spanish,” concludes that “for many Latino/as whose first and only language is a form of Spanglish, their linguistic world reflects their socioeconomic status: limited, marginalized, lacking mobility, and unlikely to be valued or heard beyond their immediate communities” (Allatson 2007, 215). Refuting these assumptions requires an anthro-political linguistics (Zentella 1995).

At the macro level, anthro-political linguistics sees through the language smokescreen that obscures ideological, structural, and political impediments to equality and, at the local level, actively challenges the practices and policies that construct a group’s ways of speaking or raising children as inferior, and thereby benefiting the continued domination of a powerful class. Employing the methods of linguistic anthropology, it advocates studying language use in context to reveal the rule-governed nature of nonstandard dialects and challenge damaging ideas about “pure” languages. Above all, we reject ideologies that produce rigid linguistic, cultural,

and national boundaries, recognizing instead that “different types of identity are neither exclusive nor singular” (Kroskrity 2001, 107). Years of ethnographic studies and careful analyses of its structure reveal that Spanglish is best defined as a rule-governed, in-group, and informal style of speaking among bilingual Latinas/os, an act of “doing being bilingual” that reflects our dual worlds and challenges static notions of “Latina/o identity.” It consists primarily of some phonologically adapted (e.g., roof > *rufo*) and un-adapted (e.g., dime) English loan words inserted in Spanish, some Spanish loans in English, loan translations, a few borrowed structures, and switches between Spanish and English, usually at sentence boundaries, but also within sentences.

The disparaging of Spanglish and its speakers reveals how race has been remapped from the body onto language, as a way of avoiding racist comments about hair texture, skin color, or the shape of lips, eyes, or noses, while allowing comments about language to do the work of racist stereotyping (Urciuoli 2011). This remapping is facilitated by notions of purity, hierarchy, and boundaries in the construction of both race and language: both are deemed to consist of superior and inferior varieties and as having inherent qualities that require strict separation, or boundary patrolling, to prevent pollution. Consequently, Spanglish is often denounced as a contamination of both English and Spanish. The similarities between the construction of race and language end with a jarring difference: whereas race is viewed as unchangeable and therefore beyond an individual’s control, language ideologues insist that non-standard speakers change their ways of speaking. The racialization of Spanglish speakers has profound implications for “non-white” Latinas/os because both their bodies and their ways of speaking are perceived as contaminated.

In southern California, Mexican American students who crisscross the San Diego-Tijuana border to live and

work or study learn that standard bearers in both countries demand keeping Spanish and English separate. Half of the college students I interviewed (n=40) (Zentella 2013 [forthcoming 2017]) honored Uriel Weinreich's view that "the ideal bilingual" switches according to changes in the speech situation, but "certainly not within a single sentence" (1953, 73). They defined Spanglish as destructive, and emblematic of undesirable *pochos* who speak *poch* or *mocho* (Mexican-Americans who speak in a chopped up way), even when their Spanglish critique caused laughter: "*Pochos* are people who speak Spanish and English together *y no deben hablar así* [and they shouldn't talk that way]." Like La Migra, the feared federal agents who pursue the undocumented, these adamant critics have become La Migra Bilingüe, the Bilingual Border Patrol, policing the boundaries between Spanish and English. These future educators, social service workers, health personnel, and managers—or gatekeepers—are likely to perpetuate views of linguistic deficiency, even as others see it as natural border talk: "I don't know if it's weird but it's just the way, *yo pienso que es una dinámica ya de vivir aquí en la frontera de que se te sale el inglés o se te sale el español* [I think it's already a dynamic of living here on the border, that English comes out and Spanish comes out]."

La Migra Bilingüe can count on the support of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE), the arbiter of Spanish norms for over three hundred years, whose dictionary initially defined "españolish" as: "From Eng. Spanglish, fusion of 'Spanish' and 'English.' n. Way of speaking of some Hispanic groups in the United States, in which lexical and grammatical elements of Spanish and English are mixed, deforming them" (Real Academia Española n.d., translation mine). Hundreds of signatures on petitions demanded a revised definition (del Valle and Zentella 2014), which resulted in the removal of *deformándolos* (deforming them) in late 2014, although the online definition took longer to be changed.

The views of the RAE and others who have not done any research on the topic are not surprising, but it is dismaying to find scholars who have documented and defended the forms and functions of Spanglish waging war against the term itself. Also couching their criticism in "helping hand" rhetoric, they maintain that the word "Spanglish" is "as out of place in promoting Latino language and culture as are the words crazy, lunatic, crackpot, or nut case in mental health, or bum, slob, misfit, and loser in social work" (Lipski 2008, 72). Similarly, Ricardo Otheguy (2009) insists that by combining parts of "Spanish" and "English," the term "Spanglish" erroneously communicates a merging or mess because it merges or meshes parts of the names of two languages, just as any word that ends with "-cide" implies murder or killing. Inappropriate analogies aside, no mental health or social work advocates have adopted any insulting label with pride, whereas many speakers embrace "Spanglish." Likewise, the adoption of "queer" and "black" is proof that vilified communities can invert negative appellations. Spanglish can be, and is for many, a proud label for bilingual skills and identities. When 115 Latinas/os across the country were asked if they favored the label or not, most (71 percent) approved of it, including the majority of non-Spanglish speakers and equal percentages of males and females; the remaining 25 percent were against, and 4 percent were indifferent (Zentella 2016). More research along these lines is needed.

Some linguists insist that the word "Spanglish" suggests a mish-mashed variety and/or semi-lingual speakers who know only half a language, when in fact, they point out similar patterns of lexical borrowing, semantic bleaching, and syntactic transfers exist in many national varieties of Spanish (Otheguy 2009; Otheguy and Stern 2010; Potowski 2011). They prefer "popular Spanish of the U.S." to place this way of speaking in the Spanish fold, to salvage its prestige. But "popular Spanish of the U.S."

ignores the inequality, domination, and oppression of Spanish speakers by English speakers in the United States, which distinguishes them from speakers in Latin America or Spain. The “Spanglish” label forces us to confront the way language is used to impose national and cultural boundaries and to disguise racial and ethnic prejudices; it invites us to discuss the specific sociohistorical, cultural, economic, and racial contexts that give rise to Spanglish. The detractors of the “Spanglish” label stand outside the speakers, looking in at them, not at language in its context, and not respecting the profound—albeit sometimes problematic—relationship that speakers have with this way of speaking. To deny that conflicted relationship does a disservice to Spanglish speakers and their struggle to be recognized as authentic members of both the dominant and subjugated groups, and to connect proudly with both.

When Tato Laviera (2008, 26) writes “spanglish is *cara-holy inteligencia*,” he invites fellow Spanglish speakers to enjoy the pun that juxtaposes the curse *carajo* with “holy” reverence/reference. In addition to puns, jokes, and double entendres, Spanglish speakers perform acts of bilingual identity while deploying more than two dozen discourse strategies, such as topic and role shifting, quoting, translation, mitigation and aggravation of requests, and so on (Zentella 1997). Ultimately, Spanglish is a graphic way of saying, “We speak both because we are both.” Despite widespread condemnation and formidable opponents, our Spanglish rejects linguistic border patrolling that reinforces monoglot imperialism; the label itself proclaims its border crossing nature. Precisely because “Spanglish” is a label misused by the enemies of U.S. Latinas/os, we must wrest it from them, insisting that it is not our way of speaking or the label that is holding us back, but the power imbalances that language enforcers end up concealing. We embrace Spanglish with open and frank appraisals of its roots and structure.

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Spirituality

Theresa Delgadillo

In religious studies, including Latina/o religious studies, “spirituality” traditionally refers to the faith and understanding fostered by the practices, ceremonies, rituals, and training of individuals and groups participating in religious denominations or groups (de Luna 2002; MacDonald 2005; Nabhan-Warren 2013; Tirres 2014). Latinas/os of all denominations embrace spirituality in this traditional sense, including Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and others (Aponte 2012). Even though some Latina/o religions have not always enjoyed acceptance as a religion—such as Santería, Lucumí, Yoruba, Orisha, Regla de Ocha, or Candomblé—their adherents similarly describe the process of growing in belief, knowledge, and understanding through religious activities as the spiritual (M. Vega 2000). Alternately, in contemporary usage, “spirituality” may also refer to a relationship to a realm larger than the self—such as the cosmos, the whole of creation, or a nonmaterial sphere (MacDonald 2005).

In Latina/o studies, “spirituality” best describes the cultivation and expression of one’s relationship to the sacred as a way of life. Among Latinas/os, conceptions of the sacred often flow from sources outside of traditional religions, such as Indigenous or diasporan worldviews, mythic knowledge systems, varied cultural traditions, popular or home-centered religiosities, or social, cultural, and arts formations (Carrasco 1982; Delgadillo 2000, 2011; León 2003; Cadena and Medina 2004; Acosta-Belén and Santiago 2006; L. E. Pérez 2007;

Espinosa 2013). Among the multiracial, multiethnic Latina/o population of the United States, perspectives on the sacred are diverse, and Latina/o spirituality is often hybrid in that it incorporates or embraces diverse traditions (Delgadillo 1998). For example, some describe Espiritismo or Mesa Blanca as the “official folk religion of Puerto Rico,” recognizing how those who embrace it might also be adherents of other, more “official” religious communities but also underscoring how much of a cultural influence it exerts and reflects throughout the island. As a religious practice, it embodies the cultural identity of Puerto Ricans as descendants of Indigenous peoples, Africans, and Spaniards (Flores-Peña 2004).

Latina/o studies research encompasses these multiple arenas for the spiritual among Latinas/os, and often centers on the interrelationship between the spiritual and the cultural realms. The study of both everyday forms of popular religiosity and cultural expressions of spirituality has been at the forefront of Latina/o studies research, which explores how Latinas/os have created unique practices and rituals born of both their religious and their national/ethnic/racial formations, sometimes but not always extra-institutional ones (J. Rodriguez 1994; Davalos 2002; Matovina and Riebe-Estrella 2002; Gonzalez 2006). Scholars have also explored the development of Latina/o theology rooted in Latina/o experiences that are gendered and racially, culturally, and religiously diverse in ways that have sought to amplify the space for Latinas/os in distinct religious traditions (Isasi-Díaz 1996; Aquino 2002; Gonzalez 2006), while others have explored the history and experience of Latinas/os within religious denominations such as Catholicism, Anabaptism, and Pentecostalism, including how denominations responded to the social and political issues around them and how these issues influenced the shape of religious and spiritual life (M. Sandoval 1990;

Espinosa 2002; L. Medina 2005; Hinojosa 2014). Social justice, civil rights, and feminist movements became spiritual concerns in some denominations, and this has shaped church involvement in social issues. Yet other denominations, such as Pentecostalism, with large numbers of Latina/o members and 1,200 Latina clergy, focus on transforming lives through participation in a “Spirit-filled relationship with Jesus” but have generally eschewed involvement in feminist and political concerns (Espinosa 2002), instead embracing an appreciation for spiritual gifts and submission to a divinity in a way that is also reflected in the embrace of traditional family structures and norms, though some newer Pentecostal communities are less traditionalist (Sánchez Walsh 2003). Pentecostals cultivate recovery and rehabilitation through religion, and have and continue to do significant work among addict communities and in service to Latina/o communities (Sánchez Walsh 2003). Archaeologists, historians, and religious studies scholars have examined centuries of diverse religious practices as well as the power of Latina/o religious creativity in melding together colonial and Indigenous systems of belief both in the past and in the present (Carrasco 1990; León 2003, 2004). And spirituality has emerged as a central concern of Latina/o art in the twentieth and twenty-first century (Lindsay 1996; C. Ramírez 2004; L. E. Pérez 2007; T. Romo 2011).

Worldviews that do not fit neatly into the Western category of religion and were thus historically suppressed and vilified in the violence of colonialism and empire endure in varied forms among Latinas/os (Anzaldúa 1987; Carrasco 1990; Hernández-Ávila 2008). African diaspora spiritualities have a long history in the Americas despite the fact that in earlier periods they often existed at the margins of acceptable religious behavior or community and were practiced in secret lest adherents suffer punishment or persecution (M. Vega

2000). Mesoamerican and Indigenous worldviews have long been of interest to Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, either because some are members of Indigenous communities in the present or because many in these groups have participated in the decolonial project of re-learning about the Indigenous peoples they count as forebears (often, in contrast to an exclusively Spanish/Hispanic identification). When these views are not compartmentalized as a separate, organized religion, they are often named as “spiritual” in the contemporary and Latina/o studies usages of this term. As a people’s knowledge about themselves in the world, these worldviews are communicated through socialization, enacted in cultural and artistic practices, and embodied in social relations (Castillo 1995; Harris et al. 2004). For example, some women practitioners of Santería have, through the construction of altars, aspired to remember the history of Afro-Caribbean women. In notable cases, they also ensured that others documented their religious artistic practices, both as a means of cultural preservation and an assertion of acceptance amidst efforts to discredit these non-mainstream religious communities (De La Torre 2009; Juncker 2014).

Spiritism, Santería or Lucumí, and Curanderismo, have gained greater currency and study as religions proper, philosophical systems, or medicinal systems, yet elements of these and other worldviews that circulate commonly among Latinas/os are often embraced under the rubric of “spirituality” (Rodríguez, Sánchez Korrol, and Alers 1984). For these “alternative” spiritualities and similar formations, the symbiotic relationship between healing/medicinal systems and engagement with worlds larger than the self appears to be much stronger than in traditional religious denominations. This defining feature of these practices, which address the needs of individuals and groups who both historically and contemporarily confront racism, sexism, homophobia,

and the enduring legacies of coloniality, also, importantly, enacts communal formation and reaffirmation.

Shamanic traditions such as Curanderismo operate on a spiritual level as well as material and mental level (Trotter and Chavira 1997), and their efficacy in treating ailments has been increasingly recognized as modern medicine deepens its knowledge of varied Indigenous healing systems and its interest in holistic healing systems (Cervantes and McNeill 2008). Curanderismo is now recognized as a “legitimate belief system with its own history and systematics” in which a healer accesses divine energy through ritual and prayer, working to envision a cure with a patient, while also employing curative substances to benefit the patient (de la Portilla 2009). Curanderos and shamans are viewed as spiritual or sacred specialists who are initiated into a practice of spiritual, psychic, and material healing through their own “ecstatic acquisition of knowledge” (Carrasco 1982). This form of spirituality emerges from and reflects shared cultural traditions and beliefs but is not necessarily tied to any particular religious denomination or formation; as such, it is an example of the spiritual in the cultural rather than in the religious domain, often with partial roots in Indigenous worldviews (de la Portilla 2009, 62–63). Spiritism and Santería/Lucumí can also be viewed as spiritual systems of healing, and the work of Spiritist priests in healing adherents/clients has been compared to the healing effected through psychoanalysis (F. Sánchez 1996).

The relationship between the spiritual and the expressive arts is not a new one, but analyses of it in Latina/o literature, art, and performance are. Religious participants and scholars alike have long been attentive to the aesthetic dimensions of faith practices. In Santería, for example, a selective and communal curatorial practice exists with respect to vessels and artifacts employed in altar-making. This, in turn, has influenced

artists who engage with this Afro-Caribbean religious imagery in creating contemporary art (Juncker 2014). Recent research examines how Latina/o literature and art—works too numerous to list here—represents, engages, and reimagines religion and spirituality, often portraying hybrid spiritualities in hybrid visual languages and literary forms (Delgadillo 1998, 2011; L. E. Pérez 2007). New visions of spirituality linked to social justice have been powerfully present in Chicana/o and Latina/o literature, art, and culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (Carrasco 1982; L. E. Pérez 2007). Views of the sacred derived from Amerindian or diaspora worldviews appear throughout Latina/o visual culture (Mesa-Bains 2001; Cullen, Garcia, and Nieves 2005–2006), while Latina/o spiritual formation in traditional denominations takes aesthetic form in home altars, the creation of ceremonial objects, tokens of popular religiosity, and elaborate ritual preparations (Kalb 1994; Lindsay 1996; Turner 1999; Fields and Zamudio-Taylor 2001; M. Vega 2004).

Chicanas and Latinas have been at the forefront of embracing and expanding upon redefinitions of spirituality in the ways described above, participating in new spiritual formations, engaging in spiritual aesthetics, and creating art and literature about spirituality in ways that contest traditional and limiting norms about gender and sexuality. Chicana feminist artists and Chicana lesbians have “made peace” with La Virgen de Guadalupe, a figure traditionally associated with submission and conservative religiosity, by humanizing her in images as an everyday woman who gets things done, a feminist fighter, a nonjudgmental mother, or an Indigenous woman linked to Indigenous goddesses. These revisions often lead to new spiritualities as a redefined Guadalupe becomes a potent cultural and spiritual symbol of nonconformity with oppressive ideologies, embrace of unconditional love for all, and a specifically Chicana

cultural inheritance (Trujillo 1998; Esquibel 2006). Chicanas and Latinas have also joined together in new spiritual circles and communities that retain aspects of their religious cultural inheritance—whether Christian, Indigenous, or African—while also cultivating an ethos of recognizing interconnections, valuing the erotic as an aspect of spirituality, and respecting spiritual knowledge from multiple cultures (Medina 1998). For many feminist artists and writers, worldviews and religions of the Indigenous and African diaspora peoples of the Americas empower alternative understandings of the nexus of gender/race/sexuality and disrupt normative assumptions about race and ethnicity (Delgadillo 1998, 2011; L. E. Pérez 2007). The work of Latina/o artists on spirituality includes a spectrum that ranges from those, like Gloria Anzaldúa, who see the spiritual as a necessary component of the creative act, to those whose art is animated by engagement with religions or religious art forms, to those who enact healing through spiritwork that restores denigrated bodies, worldviews, and aesthetics (Anzaldúa 1987; L. E. Pérez 2007).

Understanding spirituality as the beliefs, practices, and performances through which individuals and peoples define and engage the sacred for themselves is also a way of tracking anti- and decolonial movements. Dominant ideologies and cultures in the Americas that sought to erase and marginalize Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and peoples led those same peoples to seek multiple and creative ways to continue to exist and to define their realities. In our more recent history, Latina/o civil rights movements demanded a right to an education about the history, cultures, languages, literatures, and arts of these groups in the United States. One of the founding documents of the Chicana/o Movement, “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” penned by the poet Alurista and read publicly for the first time at the Denver Youth Conference of 1969, mentions “religion” only

once, as a kind of exclusive grouping or demarcation that it suggests Chicano nationalism transcends, yet it adopts “spiritual” in its title and with this term signifies both a shared relationship among those it appeals to and an ethos of commitment to anti-racism, social justice, compassion, and liberation that it asserts (Anaya and Lomelí 1989, 1–5). In this way, the call resignifies “sacred,” ascribing to it a meaning that extends beyond that of monotheist traditions. The call’s invocation of a sacred origin place was a reclamation of an Indigenous and spiritual identity (Mesa-Bains 2001). These values were also invoked by the United Farm Workers movement and by Cesar Chavez in the 1960s and 1970s struggles for farmworker rights, a struggle that sometimes took the form of spiritual ritual in fast, prayer, and pilgrimage (León 2014). For the young people gathered in Denver in 1969, “church” was named as one of the places where “*El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* must be distributed, but not viewed as the only home of the spiritual” (Anaya and Lomelí 1989). On the East Coast, Puerto Rican civil rights organizations also often developed new understandings of the spiritual, as for example, when the Philadelphia Young Lords, a Puerto Rican social and political organization, embraced liberation theology as it partnered with local religious groups to provide needed social services in Puerto Rican communities (Whalen 1998), thereby recentering community service as spiritual work. In the Latina/o context, “spiritual” no longer referred exclusively to one’s formation in a traditional religion, with its emphasis on ritual and education in a specific denomination, and charitable work being seen as a reflection of one’s commitment to the divine. Instead, Latinas/os reimagined the sacred within and among themselves, or as present in wider social, cultural, and material relations, adopting a decolonial stance that empowered their minority knowledge and culture. As many have observed, social movement and

religious resurgence converged among Latinas/os in the 1960s and 1970s to impact traditional denominations (M. Sandoval 1990; Díaz-Stevens and Stevens-Arroyo 1998; L. Medina 2005).

The unique histories of Latinas/os in relation to multiple worldviews and belief systems may be the very reason that spirituality has long signified differently in these communities and in this field than in mainstream religious studies. That is, the Latina/o invocation of spirituality ascribes value to the knowledge and experience of worldviews that are devalued in the mainstream (Anzaldúa 1987; Delgadillo 2000; Anzaldúa and Keating 2002; L. E. Pérez 2007) and gestures toward a fuller understanding of the complexity of the interrelationship among experiences, histories, expressive cultures, and beliefs among varied Latina/o groups.