



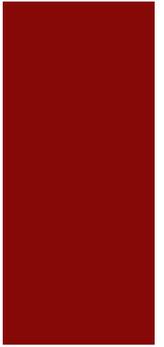
CCS 235

Blue Beetle & Comic  
Latinidad

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# Pre-lecture Question

- Let's review: What is race & racial/ethnic/ cultural (REC) identity?
- How does being Latinx & the Latinx experience fit into this?
- Is race the same everywhere, to everyone?
  - Does REC identity look different in Latin America, vs. in the United States?



# Defining Race



- Race is a socially constructed system of unequal human categorization—rooted in history, and based on phenotypical, and often ethnic, difference—that produces both social and material consequences that are very real, & very significant.

- It is an ideology\* that has been used to make sense of human difference, & justify inequality.

- \*An ideology is our belief-based framework for understanding how the world is, should, and can work

# Racialization



- We talk about this process of 'race/ethnicity/identity as a verb / a thing that happens' as RACIALIZATION, or Racial Formation:

*"The sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."*

*(Omi & Winant)*

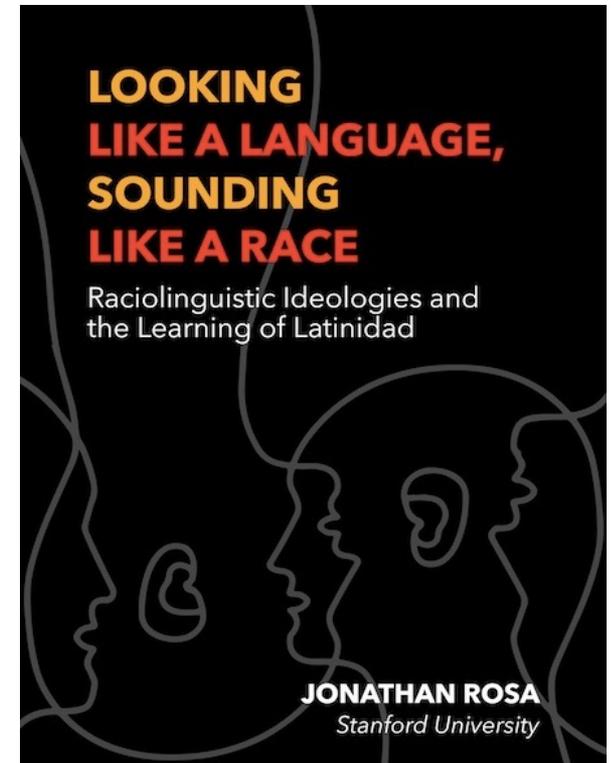
- Racialization reflects the way that racial identities & societal dynamics are understood, interpreted, represented, explained, organized, questioned, etc., both on individual & group levels; with the lived experience of race always caught between the tensions of individual experience, & the impacts of systemic power/structures

# Latinx: Race? Ethnicity? Both?

- Race = Phenotypical features
- Ethnicity = Cultural & ancestral heritage

The complexity of MESTIZO ancestry & CULTURAL POLITICS make RACIALIZATION (the process of being seen as a race) an immanent (ongoing; happening NOW) reality for Latinx folks

- In the U.S. context, Mestizo phenotype & Spanish-origin Latin American culture is regularly racialized; wrapped up with politics of belonging, citizenship, & immigration
- As Jonathan Rosa notes, ethnic difference:  
  
*“Looks like a language, and sounds like a race”*
- In certain cultural moments, like today, Latinx Ethnicity **BECOMES** race...



# Mic Check

- Since we know Latinx identity & racialization are more complicated than phenotype, what factors/dimensions would you list as contributors to Latinx racialization?



# Race Looks Different Across Latin America, & within U.S. Latinx Populations

- Latin America encompasses an ENTIRE CONTINENT
- Culture, History, Politics, Experiences, even the Spanish that is spoken in these places--NOW & HISTORICALLY--all VARY WIDELY
- There is no singular, Latina/o/x experience. Nor is there a singular experience from WITHIN a Latinx national population
- VALUES, TRADITIONS, HISTORY, POLITICAL LANDSCAPES, & BELIEFS vary widely
- Cross-cutting issues pertinent in shaping these unique qualities include:
  - Socio-economic Status
  - Political affiliation
  - History in the Cold War
  - Colorism & Anti-Black Racism
  - Indigenous Relationships ('Mestizo' is positive in the US, but often erasure elsewhere...)
  - European & Asian immigration & influence



# Bicultural Histories & Lives

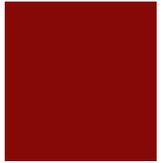
## ■ The Chicana/o/x condition

*“Ni de aqui, ni de alli”*

(Not of here, not of there)

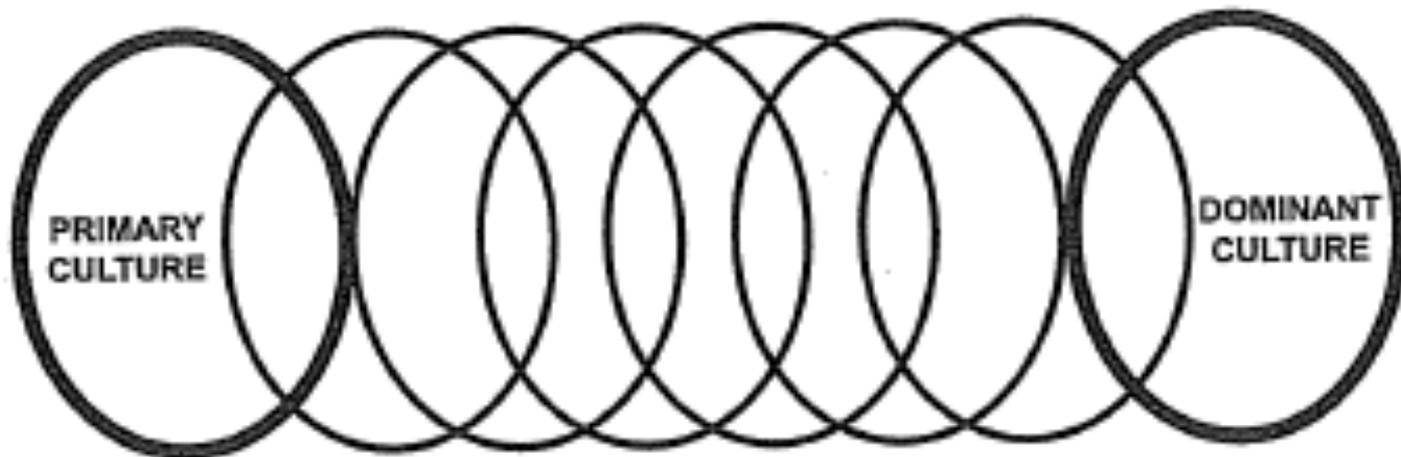


# Negotiating Identity



- Essentially, BIPOC are confronted with & absorb the cultural messages, covering demands, etc. that reinforce a **NORMATIVITY** of Whiteness/White culture, & that has a psychological impact.
- As a result, BIPOC must **NEGOTIATE** an identity that will allow them to navigate a world framed by Whiteness/White Culture/ White Supremacy, living across a *continuum of biculturalism*:

Figure 3.1 The Biculturation Process Represented along a Dialectical Continuum



# Nepantla, Latinx Identity, & the Borderlands

- The Nepantlerx “copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned.”
- The borderlands are, “not comfortable, but home.”

# Jaime Reyes, Blue Beetle: Graduation Day

- How does Blue Beetle/Jaime Reyes display/showcase a 'nepantla' attitude?
- How is the border/ U.S./Mexico borderlands an additional character in Jaime Reyes' stories & adventures?
- Can we think of stereotype threats that are likely common for Chicanx/Latinx youth?
  - How do these appear & how are they contested in Graduation Day?



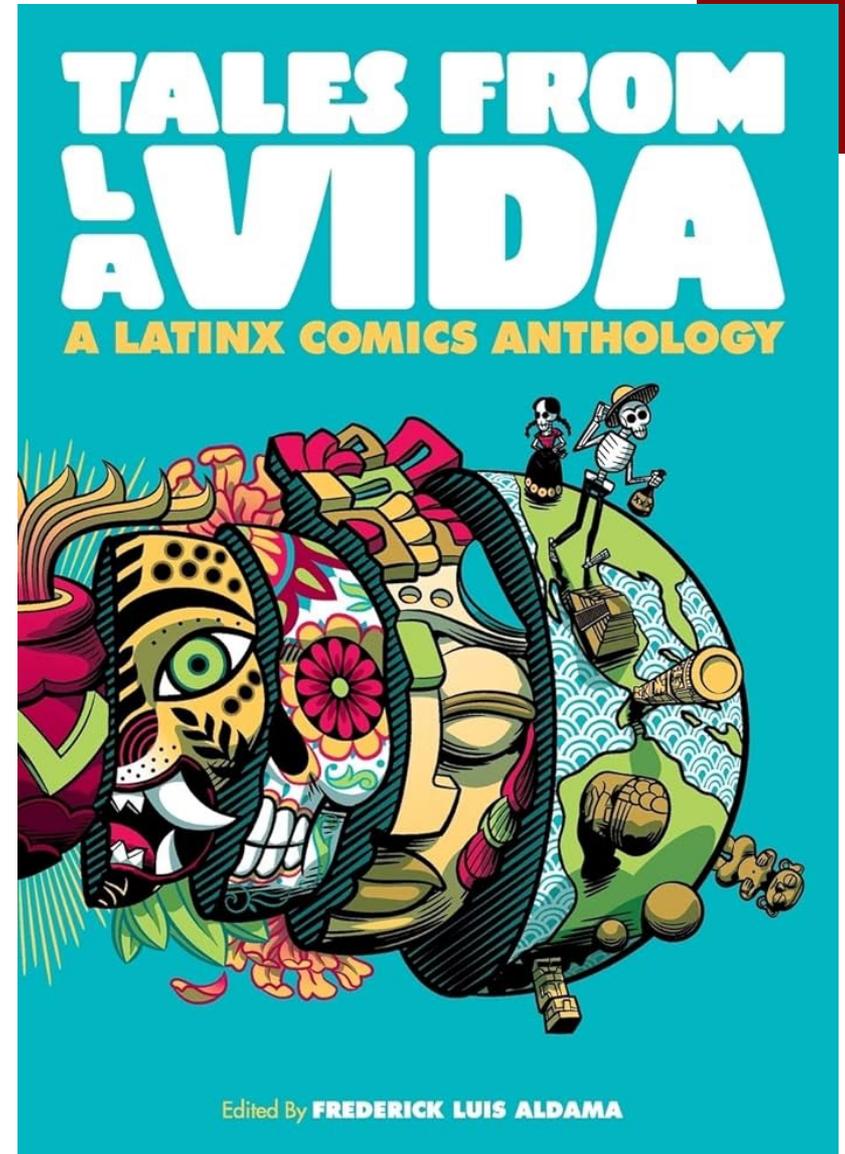
# Blue Beetle – 2023 film

- Let's make a list: What are all the ways that the film Blue Beetle signals that this film is some unapologetically Latinx sh\*t?
  - i.e. What are all the Latinx cultural elements that are captured in the film?
- How does the film & narrative capture, subvert, & play with Latinx stereotypes?
- Let's talk soundtrack...Calle 13, Los Tucanes, Vincente Fernandez...how is Latinx music part of the film's (and Blue Beetle's) identity work?



# Latinidad in Comics Elsewhere

- Which story(ies) from *Tales from La Vida* most struck you? What does this compendium tell us about REC identity?
- How are Latinx creators capturing nepantla experiences both in narrative, & in their art choices?
- How does mestiz@ consciousness shape modern Latinx identity?
  - i.e. How are stories, myths, values, iconography, & cultural practices from pre-Colombian America present in the identity construction & art of Latinx peoples & culture today?
- What are the major tensions of belonging & racial identity facing Latina/o/x peoples, as told by these comics?



# Reflection Questions

- Revisit: What is REC identity for Latinx folks? Is it the same everywhere?
- What are the pressing issues of identity & belonging for the Latinx community?
- How does the border/borderlands operate as an omnipresent character in the lives of Latinx people, & in Latinx comics?

