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Introduction

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Introduction

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Borders matter not because they exist, but rather when and because they are transgressed. The “in-between” spaces where cultural values are negotiated and transferred often carry the history of marginalized peoples: To the outside gaze, it is the record disappeared into the interstices of community experience and history, but for those within, it can be the experience of an “open wound” (Anzaldúa), or the invisibility of communities.

This paragraph from Elizabeth Martínez’s article, “Latino Catholicism and indigenous heritage as a subfield of Latino Studies,” points to themes that interweave throughout the five articles in this issue. The array of borders discussed in this issue includes not only Latino Catholicism but also global citizenship and identity; constitutional formation and minority rights; language use in stereotyping the Other; and the formation of cultural borders in the context of denied voice in socioeconomic space.

Elizabeth Martínez explains how the study of Latino/a Catholicism provides fertile and meaningful areas of study of the Other and helps to enrich and expand the field of Latin American studies. Building deeper understanding of cultures and their contexts, recent research investigates Indigenous populations and their creative and philosophical thought and practices. These studies go to the center of Latin American experience, “where and how people live, how they worship and continue customs, including dance and the arts, their migrations, the activism of neighborhoods and parishes, and which images influence guidance and philosophic orientations.”

Walker and Schemenauer’s article on the transformation of a declining Columbus, Ohio neighborhood also captures the essence of the daily life, worship, and customs of those who remade it. In a process that they have named *immigrantification*, recent arrivals revitalized the area shortly before the city began its own initiatives. Their case study of these coincident alterations of the landscape shows how borders may be unintentionally created during “urban socio-spatial economic transformation.” All constituents, including long-term residents,

immigrants, internal migrants, and city officials contribute to “encounters, conflicts, and resolutions that occur at the fringes of ethnic and racial borders, and how they actively produce global urban spaces.”

The reaction of long-term residents and other stakeholders may become understandable after reading the article by Stephen Reysen, Iva Katzarska-Miller, Phia S. Salter, and Caroline Hirko. “Blurring group boundaries” reports on two studies on the strength of global citizenship identity. Their findings indicated that one’s prosocial values and sense of global citizenship diminish when one perceives threat to one’s country and environment.

To avoid threats within one’s country and environment, one may create limitations and boundaries through the law. Brandy Robinson investigated the constitutions of various countries and the correlation with minority rights, focusing on nation states founded upon religious laws, with courts governing those religious laws. Her investigation concludes that a nation state that creates balance among the interests of its territory, people, government, and visitors is one that thrives. This situation would give rights, voice, and dignity to the Other.

Abed Tayyara investigated how the dignity of the Other has been degraded or enhanced, depending on the use of language in the cinematic context. He analyzed the use of Arabic as a sociolinguistic marker in five American films released around September 11, 2001. He sought to determine to what degree stereotypical factors may have changed during that time period. His application of critical discourse theory and sociolinguistic theory enabled him to identify in which areas the use of Arabic in these films signaled endeavors to promote clearer comprehension of sociocultural and political intricacies of the Arabic-speaking world.

Language, laws, and space/territory are the focus for discussions in the articles for this issue. The authors show how we can create, break or break down barriers, as well as live in the interstices.

Antonio Medina-Rivera and Lee Wilberschied
Editors