Who identifies as “Latinx”? An examination of the determinants of the use of Latinx among Hispanic-Latinos in the United States

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Abstract

“Latinx”—a gender neutral variation of “Latino/a”—is increasingly used to describe the Latin American diaspora. Despite expanded use of the term, the 2019 National Survey of Latinos found that just 3% of Hispanic-Latinos have ever used “Latinx” to describe themselves. Drawing on these data, we address three interrelated questions: 1) what factors explain Hispanic-Latinos having heard of the term? 2) What factors are associated with having ever used the term to identify oneself? 3) What explains individuals believing the term should be used to describe the Hispanic-Latino population? We find that sharing a sense of linked fate with other Hispanic-Latinos, greater discrimination experiences, Democratic partisan affiliation, being younger, and having at least some college experience all increase the likelihood of respondents exhibiting greater awareness of the term. However, having ever used Latinx to identify oneself is only associated with personal experiences of discrimination, identifying as Afro-Latino, and being female. Believing the term should be used as a panethnic label is associated with the same factors as those that explain awareness of the term, with the exception of greater education. These findings suggest that while university and college campuses may represent critical sites for raising awareness of the term, this knowledge is not necessarily leading to its active use.

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Introduction

The terms “Latino/Latina” and “Hispanic” have been used interchangeably to refer to people of Latin American descent residing in the United States. Research consistently finds that most self-identifying Hispanic-Latinos do not express a strong preference for either of these terms (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021a; Pew Research Center 2013), primarily because they identify first and foremost with a national origin term – for instance Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Cuban American. Nevertheless, survey research also finds that “Hispanic” is the preferred term among those with a clear preference by nearly a 2-to-1 margin (Pew Research Center 2013; Martínez and Gonzalez 2021b). The term “Hispanic,” which was first added to the US Census in 1980, has benefited from being institutionalized as an ethnic category on administrative forms for much longer when compared to the term “Latino,” which was not included on the US Census until 2000. A longer history of inclusion on the US Census and the lasting effects of colonialism, among other factors, may help account for the more prevalent use of the term “Hispanic” (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021b). Nevertheless, prior research has found that identifying racially as “Latino/Hispanic,” having a college degree, being non-Mexican, and being a first or second-generation immigrant, all increase the relative odds of preferring “Latino” over “Hispanic” (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021b).

Despite the ongoing debates about specific panethnic label preferences as they pertain to Hispanic-Latinos, a relatively new term has emerged over the past decade used to describe the Latin American diaspora in the United States: “Latinx.” As Salinas and Lozano (2019) note, though not at the same rate, the use of the term Latinx has emerged across a variety of contexts since 2015, including in academic journals, dissertations, and theses, in online new media and blogs, at professional conferences, on social media sites, and on higher education institutional websites.

Prior research has focused on the predictors of identification with panethnic group labels such as “Hispanic” and “Latino” (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021a; 2021b). However, research into the factors associated with awareness and use of the term “Latinx” as a panethnic label is virtually nonexistent.³ A burgeoning number of academic articles in the social sciences use the term Latinx (see **Figure 2**). However, rather than providing a particular focus on the use of the term Latinx, most of these works simply use the term as a label/descriptor of the Latin American diaspora in the United States (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020). Of the small number of works that *do* explore the use of the term, one article broadly tracks the emerging use of Latinx in the field of higher education (Salinas and Lozano 2019), while only one explores its use among Hispanic-Latino college students (Salinas 2020). Critically, this latter study is ethnographic rather than quantitative in design, meaning that its findings are not generalizable to the wider Hispanic-Latino population.

The dearth of empirical enquiry into the factors associated with use of the Latinx among the very group the label is supposed to describe creates an important knowledge gap in the extant scholarship. We therefore pose three interrelated research questions in our article to address this gap in the literature: 1) among self-identifying Hispanic-Latinos, what sociodemographic characteristics predict having heard of the term? 2) What factors are associated with individuals having ever used the term as a self-identifier? And 3) What factors explain believing this term should be used to describe the broader Hispanic-Latino population in the United States?

The structure of the paper proceeds as follows. We begin with a brief overview of the emergence of the Latinx, unpacking trends in public visibility of the term, as well as its use

³ In this paper, we do not take a position as to whether “Latinx” should substitute or supplement other labels such as “Hispanic” or “Latino/a.” Rather, we provide an examination of the factors associated with knowledge and use of the term among Hispanic-Latinos.

within the academy. Next, we explore the factors associated with the use of panethnic group labels such as “Hispanic” and “Latino”, hypothesizing that a number of these factors might also predict identification with the Latinx label. We then address our research questions by drawing on the Pew Research Center’s 2019 National Survey of Latinos. After outlining our data and methods, we present the results of three logistic regression models predicting whether Hispanic-Latino respondents have heard of the term Latinx, have ever used the term to describe themselves, and whether they think that the term should be used to describe the Latin American diaspora in the United States. We conclude with a reflection on the significance of our findings, looking to future directions in the study of the predictors of identification with newly emerging panethnic group labels such as Latinx.

The Emergence of Latinx

The precise moment that the term Latinx made its way into the U.S. lexicon is unknown (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020). Salinas and Lozano (2019) posit that the term first emerged on the Internet and on social media sites in 2014 (302). Alternatively, Padilla (2016), as referenced by Salinas and Lozano (2019), claims Latinx first emerged in 2004 among “left-leaning and queer communities as a way to promote inclusivity in language” ultimately becoming well-established beyond LGBTQIA+ communities by mid-2015 (para. 6). Conversely, Armus (2015) argues that Latinx was first used by a Mexican American student organization at Columbia University in December of 2014 to be more gender inclusive.

Despite these subtle discrepancies regarding the origins of the term, what is clear is that Latinx emerged as more inclusive term “born out of a collective aim to move beyond the masculine-centric ‘Latino’ and the gender inclusive but binary embedded ‘Latin@’” (Sharrón-Del Río and Aja 2015, para. 1; Salinas and Lozano 2019). In short, Latinx is often

used as an attempt to disrupt “traditional binary notions of gender” (Salinas 2020: 153). The meaning of the term seems to have expanded and evolved over time to be even more inclusive. As Salinas and Lozano (2019) note, Latinx is a term that “recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype” (310). Nevertheless, in a review of the literature, Salinas (2020) found that “there are inconsistencies in how the term Latinx is meant to be inclusive” (155).

While the term “Latinx” traces its origins to “queer community conversations online” (deOnis 2017: 78), it has gained popularity in other realms, including academic publications as well as “online popular press articles” (79). In fact, in addition to an increase use of Latinx in social media, Salinas and Lozano (2019) found an “emerging use within higher education institutions” that is being used to not only “resist the gender binary” (304), but this also positioned to “disrupt traditional notions of inclusivity and shape institutional understandings of intersectionality” (302).

Nevertheless, deOnís (2017) notes that opinions regarding whether Latinx should replace or supplement the term “Latina/o” have been particularly divided, even among academics. Some have argued “for its transgressive sexual, gender, and language politics” (79), contending that “‘Latinx’ is an addition to our linguistic repertoire and that what is important is that we are aware, and that we make others aware, of what the term implies and why it exists and co-exists with other terminology” (85). Conversely, others “express hesitancy or reject usages of ‘x’ altogether, maintaining that the signifier symbolizes linguistic imperialism, poses pronunciation problems, and alienates non-English-speaking im/migrants” (79). These important considerations aside, few studies have examined the sociodemographic correlates of knowledge and use of the term ‘Latinx’ among a nationally representative sample of Hispanic-Latinos in the United States.

Building off of the work of Salinas and Lozano (2019), we assess the emergence of and increasing interest in the term “Latinx” in two distinct ways: **1)** by examining Google Search Trends as a proxy for the degree of public interest in the term (Mellon 2014), and **2)** by measuring the prevalence of use of the term in academic scholarship using the Dimensions API. We begin first by examining public interest in the term “Latinx.” The degree of public interest in the term “Latinx” can be seen more clearly below in **Figure 1**. **Figure 1** graphs the level of public interest⁴ for three panethnic terms - “Latino,” “Hispanic,” and “Latinx” – between 2016 and 2020.⁵ As indicated by **Figure 1**, the term Latino has consistently yielded greater interest, followed by Hispanic, and then Latinx. These trends are consistent with data from the Pew Research Center, which indicate that just 25% of Hispanic Latino individuals are even aware of the term (Pew Research Center 2020).

According to **Figure 1**, the first notable increase in searches for the term “Latinx” came in the wake of the mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, FL during the LGBTQIA+ club’s Latin themed night on June 12, 2016, which led to the deaths of 49 club-goers, not including the shooter. The next notable increase in interest can be seen in mid-October 2019 during the Democratic presidential primaries, when Elizabeth Warren began using the term while conducting outreach to Hispanic-Latino voters (Warren 2020). Warren’s

⁴ Google Trends normalizes search data to make comparisons between search parameters more understandable. In our case, search results are normalized to the time (January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2020) and location (United States). Each data point is first divided by the total searches of the geography and time range it represents to compare relative popularity. Afterward, the data are then scaled on a range of 0 to 100 based on a topic’s proportion to all searches on all topics.

⁵ We limit our Google Trends search between 2016 and 2020 for two reasons. First, although Salinas and Lozano (2019) note that “Latinx” first emerged online in 2014, an inspection of the Google Trends data for the period January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014, reveals there was <.1% interest in “Latinx” as a search term between these dates. Second, for the period January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015, we find a minute degree of interest in Latinx as a Google search term in the second and third weeks of November 2015. However, this level of interest as a normalized percentage (relative to interest in the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino”) is still <.1%.

use of Latinx at this time is important because it represents, to our knowledge, one of the earliest instances of a party elite using the term to court Hispanic-Latino voters at the national level. Interestingly, Warren’s deployment of Latinx in her campaign also generated a number of articles on online news websites about the nature and meaning of the term itself (Douthat 2019; Vargas 2019), further driving online interest in the term among the U.S. public.

**Figure 1: Interest in “Latinx,” “Hispanic,” and “Latino” as Google Search Terms
Between 2016-2020**

Notes: The line represents the level of interest in “Latinx,” “Hispanic,” and “Latino” as Google search term between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2020. Limited to searches made in the US.

Source: Google Trends (2021).

Given these trends in public interest in the term “Latinx,” to what extent is its use in academe also becoming more prevalent over time? The increasing use of the term “Latinx” in the academic scholarship can be seen more clearly below in **Figure 2**. In short, **Figure 2**

graphs the number of academic works mentioning “Latinx” as a normalized percentage of the total number of academic works published between 2016 and 2020 in each respective field.⁶ For brevity, only the ten fields with the highest normalized percentage of academic works mentioning “Latinx” are graphed for these years

As evidenced by **Figure 2**, we find very minimal use of the term “Latinx” across fields in 2016. For instance, in the field of cultural studies, just .01% of all academic works from 2016 mentioned “Latinx.” Nonetheless, this figure represents the highest percentage of academic works mentioning “Latinx” in any of the ten depicted fields for that year. From 2017 onwards, however, we observe a notable rise in the use of Latinx in academic works across a number of fields. This increase is most pronounced in the fields of sociology, cultural studies, specialist studies in education, and psychology. For instance, between 2016 and 2020, the proportion of articles using the term “Latinx” increased one-hundred-and-thirty-six-fold in the field of sociology, sixty-eight-fold in psychology, thirty-one-fold in specialist studies in education, and seventeen-fold in the field of cultural studies.

In sum, our examination of Google Search Trends data strongly suggests that interest in the term Latinx is on the rise among the public. In a similar vein, use of the term in academic contexts in the social sciences and humanities has also expanded substantially since 2016. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that increased public interest in a Latinx and its increased use in academic contexts is not necessarily suggestive of awareness of and use among members of the very groups it supposedly represents (Mellon 2014)

⁶ Our search for academic works mentioning Latinx was completed using the Dimensions API (Dimensions 2021). Academic works refer to articles, book chapters, preprints, monographs, conference proceedings, and edited books. Works mentioning “Latinx” at least once in either the title or abstract were counted.

Figure 2: Prevalence of “Latinx” in Academic Works by Subject Area, Between 2016-2020

Notes: Points represent the number of academic works that mention “Latinx” as a normalized percentage of the total number of academic works published in each respective field, by year. Search limited to academic works that mention Latinx in the title or abstract only.

Source: Dimensions API (2021).

Factors Shaping the Use of Panethnic Group Labels

“Latinx” joins “Latino,” “Latina/o,” and “Hispanic” as another panethnic label used to describe individuals and groups with Latin American ancestry residing in the United States⁷ - albeit one that is explicit intended to be more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ individuals or groups that are non-binary, non-gender conforming, or trans (deOníz 2017; Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020). However, whether Latinx is truly emerging as a panethnicity in the same way that the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” have emerged in the United States is a distinct empirical question. Recent public opinion surveys suggest this may not be the case—at least not yet. For instance, Pew Research Center’s 2019 National Survey of Latinos found that just 25% of Hispanic-Latinos had ever heard of the term Latinx, while only 3% noted that they have ever used it to refer to themselves.

Prior research finds that group consciousness (Miller et al. 1981; Masuoka 2006) represents an important aspect of the formation of panethnicity, and notions of linked fate constitutes a key dimension of group consciousness (Dawson 2020; Sanchez 2006; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; Sanchez and Vargas 2016). As such, we would expect respondents who report higher levels of linked fate with other Hispanic-Latinos to be more likely to have heard of the term Latinx, more likely to have ever used the term as a self-identifier, and more likely to believe that it should be used to describe the broader Latino-Hispanic population. In addition to linked fate, scholarship finds that panethnicity and panethnic label preference may also emerge among marginalized ethno-racial groups as a reactive identity in response to discrimination (Masuoka 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993), and

⁷ While panethnicity functions as an identity stemming from shared backgrounds, structural commonalities, and the need to unite politically, much debate concerns whether Hispanic and Latino panethnicity are culturally meaningful social constructs, or whether their emergence stems from methodological factors from inclusion of “Hispanic” and “Latino” on the Census form in 1980 and 2000, respectively (McConnell and Delgado-Romano 2012; Tienda and Ortiz 1986).

racialization in US society (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021a). Given these findings, we expect that respondents who report higher levels of discriminatory experience will also be more likely to be aware of and use the term Latinx.

Much like “Latino” and “Latina/o,” the term Latinx recognizes the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of Latin America (e.g., Indigenous, African, and Asian influences and groups throughout the Western Hemisphere) (see Martínez and Gonzalez 2021b). However, as aforementioned, the term Latinx is also inclusive of non-binary, non-gender conforming, and genderqueer individuals. For these reasons, we conceptualize “Latinx” as being a progressive extension of the terms “Latino” and “Latina/o,” particularly when compared to other panethnic labels such as “Hispanic.” As such, similar factors previously shown to shape preference for the term “Latino” over “Hispanic” may likewise be associated with awareness and use of the term Latinx.

Among these factors is education. For instance, Martínez and Gonzalez (2021b) found that college graduates have higher relative odds of preferring “Latino” over “Hispanic.” Therefore, we anticipate that higher levels of educational attainment will be associated with awareness and use of the term Latinx. Indeed, prior research has noted that college campuses represent critical sites for raising awareness of panethnic identity labels as well as their meanings and histories (Reyes 2018; Padilla 1997). In fact, while Salinas (2020) found that just over 60% college students interviewed first heard of the term Latinx on social media, nearly 40% first learned of the term in class or from peers on campus.

Prior research has also noted that racialization may also shape panethnic label preference. Martínez and Gonzalez (2021b) found that respondents who identified racially as “Hispanic/Latino” also opt for “Latino” over “Hispanic,” which suggests preference for the term “Latino” is associated with racialization in the US context. As such, we expect that non-White respondents will be more likely to be aware of and use the term Latinx.

Data and Methods

We address our research questions by drawing on data from Wave 58 of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP). The American Trends Panel is a nationally representative online panel of non-institutionalized persons aged 18 or over living in any of the 48 contiguous US states, as well as Alaska or Hawaii. Wave 58, also known as the 2019 National Survey of Latinos, was conducted between December 3, 2019, and December 22, 2019, on behalf of Pew by Ipsos. Altogether, N = 3,030 Hispanic-Latino panelists completed the survey. Population weights were also constructed by Pew, which are used in **Table 1** so that our descriptive estimates are generalizable to the adult Latino/a/x population.

Dependent Measures

Our focal dependent measures are a series of three dichotomous items that ask respondents **i)** have you heard the term Latinx, or not? **ii)** have you ever used the term Latinx to describe yourself, or not? **iii)** do you think this term should be used to describe the Hispanic or Latino population, or not?⁸ To be clear, this third question does not specify whether the term should be used as a *replacement* for other terms such as "Latino," "Latina/o," or "Hispanic" (deOnís 2017). As such, the wording of the question leaves some room for respondents to reflect upon Latinx as a supplement to these signifiers as well as other national origin-specific terms. We code all three measures such that 1 = "yes," 0 = "no." Overall, 25.3% of all respondents have heard of the term Latinx. Among those who have heard of the term, 14.4% stated they have ever used the term to describe themselves. Similarly, 31.7% of those who have heard the term believed it should be used to describe the broader Hispanic/Latino population.

⁸ In the survey instrument, Items two and three were only asked of those who reported hearing of the term Latinx.

Independent Measures

Table 1 provides the weighted mean estimates of the independent measures we use to address our three research questions. These measures include identity and discrimination items, immigration and nationality items, and socio-political, demographic, and structural items. Linked fate is measured using a four-point ordinal item that asks a respondent how much, if at all, they think what happens to Hispanic-Latinos in the country overall affects what happens in their own life, with possible responses ranging between 1 = “not at all,” to 4 = “a great deal.” As noted, the mean linked fate score was 2.66 in the analytic sample for Model 1, 2.91 in Model 2, and 2.92 in Model 3.

The survey instrument also asks whether a respondent has experienced any kind of discrimination in the past twelve months. These experiences were: **i)** “been called offensive names because of being Hispanic,” **ii)** “been criticized for speaking Spanish in public,” **iii)** “someone made a remark that you should go back to your home country,” and **iv)** “personally experienced any other kind of discrimination or treated unfairly because of your Hispanic background.” All items are dichotomous items coded such that 1 = “yes, has happened to me,” 0 = “no, has not happened to me.” We utilize these four items to construct a count measure for discrimination experiences. The constructed measure ranges between 0 and 4, with a score of 0 indicating that a respondent had not experienced any type of discrimination in the last twelve months, and a score of 4 indicating that a respondent had experienced every type. Overall, the mean discrimination experiences scores across the three analytic samples for Models 1-3 were 0.93, 1.22, and 1.21, respectively.

Our immigration and nationality measures include national heritage (a categorical measure for Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Salvadoran, and “other” heritage, with Mexican serving as the base category), language (a categorical measure for bilingual and

Spanish dominant, with English dominant serving as the base category), generation⁹ (a categorical measure for first- and second-generation, with third-plus-generation serving as the base category), and citizenship (citizens coded as 1 and noncitizens coded as 0). Though there is notable variation in the proportions of these variables across the three analytic models, the typical respondent can be described as an individual of Mexican descent, who is bilingual, first- or second-generation, and a US citizen.

Our models also control for political party affiliation (a categorical measure for Democrat and independent/other partisan affiliate, with Republican serving as the base category), racial identification (dichotomized measures for “mixed-race” (1 = “yes”; 0 = “no”), “Afro-Latino” (1 = “yes”; 0 = “no”) and “Indigenous” (1 = “yes”; 0 = “no”), with “no” serving as the base category for these three items), age (a categorical measure for 30-49, 50-64, and 65+, with 18-29 serving as the base category), gender (females coded as 1 and males as 0),¹⁰ education (a categorical measure for some college but no degree, and college degree, with high school or less serving as the base category), and region (a categorical measure for Midwest, South, and West, with Northeast serving as the base category). Once again, though there is some variation across the three analytic samples, the typical respondent is a Democrat or Independent, who does not identify as “mixed race,” “Afro-Latino,” or “Indigenous,” between the ages of 18-49, with less than a college degree, residing in the South or West region of the United States.

⁹ We code generation consistent with the extant definitions outlined by Pew (2013). First generation refers to individuals born outside of the US or Puerto Rico to parents neither of whom is a citizen. Second generation refers to individuals born in the US or Puerto Rico with at least one foreign born parent. Lastly, third generation refers to individuals born in the US or Puerto Rico to parents who are, likewise, both born in the US or Puerto Rico.

¹⁰ It is important to be aware that Latinx is also used by Hispanic-Latino individuals who identify as nonbinary or genderqueer. However, the instrument only asks respondents whether they identify as male or female. Since there is not a specific category for either non-binary or genderqueer, we are therefore unable to explore the use of Latinx among respondents who might identify as such.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dependent measures						
Has R heard of Latinx	.239	.013	.	.	.	.
Has R used Latinx to describe self (among those who have heard the term)	.	.	.144	.022	.	.
Does R think Latinx should be used to describe Hispanic/Latino population (among those who have heard the term)	.	.	.	.	.317	.029
Independent measures						
Linked fate	2.664	.029	2.919	.055	2.920	.056
Discrimination experiences	.930	.044	1.219	.092	1.208	.093
National heritage						
Mexican (ref)	.578	.015	.583	.030	.586	.030
Puerto Rican	.094	.008	.084	.015	.085	.016
Cuban	.059	.004	.044	.007	.040	.006
Dominican	.044	.006	.074	.019	.076	.019
Salvadoran	.026	.004	.036	.010	.033	.010
Other heritage	.195	.011	.175	.021	.177	.021
Language						
English dominant	.239	.013	.311	.028	.311	.028
Bilingual	.479	.016	.600	.030	.602	.031
Spanish dominant	.280	.014	.088	.018	.086	.018
Generation						
First-gen	.474	.016	.316	.029	.314	.029
Second-gen	.286	.014	.427	.031	.434	.031
Third-gen+ (ref)	.212	.013	.245	.028	.240	.028
Citizen	.725	.014	.797	.028	.797	.028
Party ID						
Republican (ref)	.178	.012	.103	.019	.104	.019
Democrat	.347	.014	.442	.030	.449	.031
Independent/other	.473	.016	.453	.032	.446	.032
Racial ID						
Mixed race	.259	.014	.363	.029	.359	.029
Afro-Latino	.081	.008	.082	.016	.079	.016

Indigenous/American Indian	.136	.011	.177	.023	.173	.023
Age						
18-29 (ref)	.287	.015	.533	.031	.535	.031
30-49	.388	.015	.293	.027	.292	.027
50-64	.203	.011	.139	.020	.137	.020
65+	.110	.009	.034	.007	.034	.007
Female	.488	.016	.519	.031	.514	.032
Education						
High school or less (ref)	.537	.015	.333	.031	.327	.031
Some college no degree	.293	.014	.393	.031	.401	.032
College graduate	.168	.009	.272	.023	.270	.023
Region						
Northeast (ref)	.137	.011	.174	.026	.173	.026
Midwest	.079	.009	.087	.018	.085	.018
South	.421	.015	.363	.028	.364	.028
West	.360	.016	.374	.031	.376	.031
N		2,693		692		677

Notes: Data are weighted.

Analytical Strategy

Because our focal dependent measures all are dichotomous, we employ binary logistic regression, which is the analytic technique best suited to examine dichotomous dependent variable (Long 1997). We tested for multicollinearity between variables by estimating a linear ordinary least squares (OLS) model including our dependent and independent variables and then conducting a series of variance inflation factor (VIF) tests in Stata 16 (see section **A1** of the SI file). The tests suggested that collinearity between variables was not a concern, as the VIF scores do not exceeded what O'Brien call the "rule of five" (Menard 1995; O'Brien 2007: 688).¹¹

Results

Table 2 presents the logit coefficients, odds ratios (ORs), robust standard errors, and significance levels from three models examining the relationships between our dependent and independent measures. In what follows, we highlight the key findings from each of our three analyses: 1) *Heard of Latinx?* (Model 1), 2) *Has Used Latinx to Describe Self* (Model 2), and 3) *Should Latinx be used to Describe Latino-Hispanic Population?* (Model 3).

Model 1: Heard of Latinx?

We begin first with Model 1, the results of which are presented in the first column of **Table 2**. As evidenced here, linked fate ($p < .001$) and discrimination experiences ($p < .01$) are both associated with higher odds of a respondent having heard of the term Latinx. Because our measures of linked fate (ordinal) and discrimination experiences (nominal) are non-dichotomous, interpretation of their respective effect sizes using odds ratios is less straightforward. To get a more substantive interpretation of the effects of linked fate and

¹¹ Tests for multicollinearity are presented in section **A1** of the SI file.

discrimination experiences on our outcome measures, we therefore use postestimation to plot the predicted probability that a respondent has heard of the term Latinx as their levels of linked fate increase, or as they report a higher number of instances of discrimination. The results of the postestimation are graphed in **Figure 3**.

The top left panel of **Figure 3** graphs the predicted probability of a respondent having heard of the term Latinx as a function of linked fate. A respondent with the lowest level of linked fate has just a .14 predicted probability of having heard of the Latinx label. By contrast, a respondent with the highest level of linked fate has a .27 predicted probability of having heard of the term Latinx. Therefore, moving from the lowest to highest level of linked fate is associated with a .13 increase in the predicted probability of a respondent having heard of the term Latinx. Moving to the top right panel in **Figure 3**, we see that a respondent who reported no instances of discrimination in the past twelve months has just a .18 predicted probability of having heard of the term Latinx, while a respondent with four separate experiences of discrimination in the past year has a .26 predicted probability of having heard of the term Latinx. Thus, increases in the number of personal discrimination experiences are associated with an 8-point increase in the predicted probability of a respondent having heard of the term Latinx.

For Model 1, **Table 2** also reveals a number of significant covariates beyond the linked fate and discrimination experience measures. For instance, we find that respondents who are Spanish dominant have 62.5 percent lower odds of having heard of Latinx compared to English dominant respondents ($p < .001$), while the odds of having head of the term are 1.4 times higher for second-generation respondents compared to third-plus-generation respondents ($p < .05$). In addition, the odds of having heard of Latinx are 1.7 times higher among respondents with a partisan affiliation with the Democratic Party compared to those affiliated with the Republican Party.

Table 2: Logit Estimates

	Model 1: Heard of “Latinx”?	Model 2: Has used Latinx to describe self	Model 3: ‘Latinx’ should be used to describe Latino/Hispanic population
Linked fate	.279*** (.059)	.289 (.157)	.294* (.114)
Discrimination experiences	.114** (.038)	.255** (.086)	.177** (.066)
National heritage			
Puerto Rican	-.105 (.241)	-.194 (.532)	-.617 (.432)
Cuban	.174 (.167)	.410 (.398)	-.270 (.305)
Dominican	.033 (.284)	-.794 (.767)	-.640 (.518)
Salvadoran	.168 (.344)	-.606 (.816)	.403 (.525)
Other heritage	-.017 (.150)	-.323 (.372)	-.288 (.262)
Language			
Bilingual	.033 (.130)	-.170 (.285)	-.330 (.214)
Spanish dominant	-.978*** (.241)	.940 (.490)	-.014 (.396)
Generation			
First-gen	-.182 (.176)	-.776 (.412)	-.596 (.311)
Second-gen	.345* (.159)	-.482 (.338)	-.415 (.267)
Citizen	.086 (.171)	-.081 (.434)	-.193 (.323)
Party ID			
Democrat	.523*** (.148)	.578 (.459)	1.000*** (.355)
Independent/other	.181	.343	.609

	(.151)	(.483)	(.372)
Racial ID			
Mixed-race	.484*** (.119)	.230 (.262)	.139 (.202)
Afro-Latino	-.270 (.240)	.813* (.404)	.683 (.351)
Indigenous/American Indian	.469** (.162)	.276 (.308)	.159 (.250)
Age			
30-49	-1.092*** (.130)	-.372 (.279)	-.432* (.212)
50-64	-1.054*** (.151)	-.524 (.365)	-.126 (.267)
65+	-1.510*** (.201)	-.954 (.624)	-1.229** (.474)
Female	.175 (.100)	.662* (.259)	.582** (.186)
Education			
Some college no degree	.542*** (.137)	-.029 (.338)	-.058 (.261)
College graduate	1.196*** (.133)	.170 (.332)	.347 (.247)
Region			
Midwest	.032 (.302)	-.884 (.733)	-1.010 (.561)
South	-.257 (.178)	-.422 (.384)	-.032 (.304)
West	.008 (.209)	-.530 (.452)	-.207 (.347)
Constant	-2.058*** (.365)	-2.971** (.946)	-1.943** (.717)
Pseudo R^2	.186	.115	.112
N	2,693	692	677

Notes: Table entries are logit coefficients. Robust standard errors given in parentheses. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities of Dependent Measures as a Function of Linked Fate and Discrimination Experiences

Notes: Points represent the predicted probability of a respondent hearing of Latinx, using Latinx to describe self, and using Latinx to describe the Hispanic/Latino population, as a function of linked fate and discrimination experiences. The dashed lines are 95 percent confidence intervals. Predicted probabilities calculated by holding all other variables in models constant or at their respective mean values.

We also observe significant effects associated with racial identity, with the odds of having heard of Latinx being 1.6 times higher among mixed-race respondents compared to non-mixed-race respondents. A similar pattern holds among indigenous-identifying respondents. The odds of having heard of Latinx are 1.6 times higher among indigenous respondents compared to non-indigenous respondents. Respondents aged 30 and older all have a lower likelihood of having heard of the term Latinx relative to those aged between 18-29 ($p < .001$). Finally, **Table 2** reveals that higher rates of educational attainment are associated with an increased likelihood of a respondent having heard of the term Latinx. The odds of having heard of Latinx are 1.7 times higher among respondents with some college education but no formal degree than those with a high school education or less to ($p < .001$), while the odds of having heard of the term are 3.3 times higher among those with a college degree ($p < .001$).

Model 2: Has Used Latinx to Describe Self

We now turn to present the results of Model 2, the results of which are presented in the second column of **Table 2**. The analytic sample used in Model 2 is limited to the subsample of respondents who have heard of the term Latinx. Beginning with linked fate and discrimination experiences, we see that the latter measure is a significant predictor ($p < .01$) of a respondent having ever used the term Latinx to describe themselves. However, the former measure is not a significant predictor of the dependent measure. A more substantive interpretation of this significant effect through discrimination experiences can be seen in the center-right panel of **Figure 3**. As the graph indicates, a respondent who reported zero experiences of discrimination over the past year has just a .8 predicted probability of having ever used the term Latinx to describe themselves. Contrastingly, a respondent who reported

four instances of discrimination over the past twelve months has a .19 predicted probability of having ever used the Latinx label to describe themselves. Consequently, increases in the number of reported instances of personal discrimination are associated with an 11-point increase in the predicted probability of a respondent having ever used Latinx to describe themselves.

Beyond the significant effect on the outcome measure through respondents' personal discrimination experiences, **Table 2** reveals that only two other measures are significant (i.e., $p < .05$) predictors of a respondent having ever used the term Latinx to describe themselves – namely, Afro-Latino racial identity and gender. Among respondents who have heard of Latinx, the odds of having ever used the term to describe oneself are 2.3 times higher for self-identifying Afro-Latino respondents relative to non-Afro-Latino identifying respondents. Furthermore, the odds of having ever used the term Latinx to describe oneself are 1.9 times higher among female respondents compared to male respondents.

Model 3: Should Latinx be used to Describe Latino-Hispanic Population?

Finally, we present the results from Model 3, the results of which are depicted in the third column in **Table 2**. As with Model 2, the analytic sample used in Model 3 is limited to respondents who have heard of the term Latinx. As evidenced here, linked fate ($p < .05$) and respondents' personal experiences with discrimination ($p < .05$) are both associated with an increased likelihood of a respondent thinking that the term Latinx should be used to describe the broader Hispanic-Latino population. Once again, a substantive term interpretation of these effects can be seen more clearly in the bottom panel of **Figure 3**. Turning first to linked fate, the bottom-left panel in **Figure 3** indicates that a respondent with the lowest level of linked fate has just a .19 predicted probability of thinking that the Latinx label should be used to describe the broader Hispanic-Latino population. Conversely, a respondent who exhibits

the highest levels of linked fate has a .36 predicted probability of thinking that Latinx should be used as panethnic label to describe Hispanics and Latinos. Thus, moving from the lowest to highest level of linked fate on the scale is associated with a 17-point increase in the predicted probability of respondent thinking that Latinx should be used to describe the Hispanic-Latino population (among those who have heard of the term).

Next, the results of the postestimation for personal experiences with discrimination are presented in the bottom right panel in **Figure 3**. As indicated here, a respondent who has heard of the term but reported zero instances of personal discrimination over the past year has just a .25 predicted probability of thinking that Latinx should be used as a Hispanic-Latino panethnic label. By contrast, a respondent who has heard of the term and reported having four separate personal discrimination experiences over the past twelve months has a .49 predicted probability of thinking that the term Latinx should be used to describe the Hispanic-Latino population. Consequently, increases in the number of personal discrimination experiences reported by a respondent are associated with a 24-point increase of them believing that Latinx should be used as a Hispanic-Latino panethnic label among those with knowledge of the term.

Table 2 also reveals a number of significant covariates beyond the identity and discrimination-based measures. The odds of thinking that Latinx should be used as a panethnic label for Hispanic-Latinos are 2.7 times higher among respondents affiliated with the Democratic Party than those affiliated with the Republican Party. In addition, we also observe significant effects on the dependent measure through age. Specifically, respondents aged between 30-40 ($p < .05$), as well as those aged 65 and over ($p < .05$), are significantly less likely than those aged between 18-29 to think that Latinx should be used to describe the broader Hispanic-Latino population. And finally, the odds of thinking that Latinx should be

used as a panethnic label for Hispanic-Latinos are 1.8 times higher among female respondents when compared to male respondents.

Discussion

The term “Latinx” emerged rapidly in the latter half of the 2010s as a panethnic label used to identify individuals of Latin American descent residing in the United States. The exponential increase in Google Search Trends for the term (see **Figure 1**), increases in academic publications using the term (see **Figure 2**), and the terms use on university campuses across the country (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020) certainly signal as much. In many ways, the term Latinx is more analogous to, and possesses similarities with, the terms “Latino” or “Latina/o” than “Hispanic,” in that it is more inclusive of ethno-racial diversity throughout Latin America, acknowledges the (neo)colonial history of the Western Hemisphere, and places less emphasis on Spanish aspects of Latin American identities (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020; Martínez and Gonzalez 2021b). Nevertheless, Latinx constitutes a more progressive term than “Latino” or “Latina/o” in that it is more inclusive of non-binary, non-gender-conforming, or gender queer individuals and communities (deOnís 2017; Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020). Still, the 2019 National Survey of Latinos found that just one-fourth of self-identifying Latino-Hispanics had ever heard of the term Latinx and only 3% had ever used the term to identify themselves (Pew Research Center 2020). Moreover, little is known about the factors associated with awareness of the term Latinx as well as those that influence its use as a self-identifier or as a panethnic label used to describe the Latin American descent population in the United States.

The present study represents a first step attempting to fill this gap in the literature. In this article, we posed three interrelated research questions: 1) among self-identifying Hispanic-Latinos, what sociodemographic characteristics are associated with having heard of

the term Latinx? 2) Among individuals who have heard of the term, what factors are associated with having ever used the term to identify oneself? And 3) Among those with knowledge of the term, what factors are associated with believing Latinx should be used to describe the Latino-Hispanic population? We addressed these questions by drawing Pew Research Center's 2019 National Survey of Latinos.

Overall, we find that higher levels of “linked fate” (i.e., believing that what happens to Hispanics in the country overall affects what happens in one's own life) is associated with higher odds of having heard of the term Latinx (Model 1) as well as believing that the term should be used as a panethnic label describe the broader Latino-Hispanic population among respondents with knowledge of the term (Model 3). Interestingly, we failed to find evidence that linked fate is associated with having ever used to term as a self-identifier (Model 2). On the other hand, higher rates of discrimination experiences are positively associated with our outcomes of interest across all three model, net of all other covariates. These findings are partially consistent with previous research that finds group consciousness represents a critical domain in the emergence of panethnicity (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021a). In this regard, Latinx *does* appear to be emerging as a panethnic identity with a basis in group consciousness, though not yet to the same extent as other identities such as “Latino” or “Hispanic.”

Prior research has also found that identifying primarily on panethnic terms—that is, identifying primarily as “Latino/Hispanic” over “American”—is associated with racialization and marginalization in the United States, and that primary panethnic identification may be emerging as a reactive identity in US society (Martínez and Gonzalez 2021a). Similar to the work of Martínez and Gonzalez (2021a), findings from the present study suggest that “Latinx” may be emerging as a reactive identity one's marginalized status in the United States. For instance, in addition to finding a strong association between higher levels of

discrimination experiences and self-use of the term Latinx, we also found that self-identifying Afro-Latino as well as female respondents had higher odds of having ever used the term Latinx to identify themselves compared to non-Afro-Latinos and males, respectively. Interestingly, our gender-related finding is consistent with those from Salinas and Lozano (2019) who find that “females (58.5%) outnumber males (41.5%) on the usage of the term Latinx,” at least when it comes to use of the term in social media platforms. Yet, females and Afro-Latinos were no more or less likely to have ever heard of the term nor were they more or less likely to believe the term should be used as a panethnic label to describe the broader Latino-Hispanic population. Future research should continue to unpack this paradoxical finding.

Our analyses also reveal that university and college campuses may represent important sites for raising awareness of the term Latinx. As noted, we find that college graduates as well as those with some college but no degree have higher odds of having heard of the term when compared to those with a high school degree or less. This finding is consistent with discussions in the existing literature describing the emergence of the term Latinx on college campuses (Salinas and Lozano 2019; Salinas 2020). This finding also corresponds with prior research which finds that colleges and universities represent key institutions in which students begin to learn, interpret, and articulate the meanings of specific panethnic labels (Reyes 2018).

Nevertheless, we do not find that university or college experience is associated with having ever used the term Latinx to identify oneself or believing that it should be used as a panethnic label used to describe the broader Latino-Hispanic population. This finding is consistent with those from qualitative research conducted by Salinas (2020) who notes that “participants perceived higher education as a privileged space where they only used the term to be inclusive. Once they returned to their communities, they did not use the term” (162).

In this sense, institutions of higher education are succeeding in raising awareness of the term Latinx, but are not having much success in converting that awareness into action as measured through self-identification, or indeed believing that the term should be used as a panethnic label to describe the Latino-Hispanic population. This finding stands in stark contrast to those from prior research that examined the factors associated with preferring the terms “Latino” versus “Hispanic” versus no preference at all. For instance, Martínez and Gonzalez (2021b) find that college graduates had higher odds of preferring the term “Latino” over “Hispanic” when compared to respondents without a college degree. The authors also find that college graduates were more likely than those without a college degree to report “no preference” for either over preference for “Hispanic.” Future research should consider further exploring the disconnect between having heard of the term Latinx and actually putting the term to use among those with college degrees.

Interestingly, the present study also finds a sociopolitical association with the term Latinx. Similar to its increased usage in institutions of higher education, the term appears to have gained traction in the realm of partisan politics. For instance, we find that, relative to those affiliated with the Republican Party, respondents affiliated with the Democratic Party have higher odds of both having heard of the term, as well as believing that it should be used as a panethnic label to describe the broader Latino-Hispanic population. Indeed, given the usage and deployment of the term Latinx by Democratic elites such as Elizabeth Warren in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries (Warren 2019), it is not too surprising to find that respondents with a Democratic partisan affiliation exhibit higher awareness of the term than other partisans. Still, we fail to find any meaningful differences between Democrats and Republicans in terms of having ever used the term to identify themselves. This finding is particularly interesting because it suggests that, even if Hispanic-Latinos who identify as

Democrats are more likely than Republican partisans to have heard the term, they do not necessarily identify with the label themselves.

Conclusion

Identities are subjective, contextual, and fluid, meaning that the labels to which many individuals attach themselves are dynamic and constantly evolving. In the case of “Latinx”, Salinas and Lozano (2019) hypothesized that its use will become more prevalent among “high education scholars, practitioners, activists, students, faculty, and staff” (312). While our analyses find that the university/college experience may raise awareness the term, there is a gap between knowledge of the term and its active use. Notwithstanding the increasing use of Latinx in collegial contexts and within the academy itself, interviewees asked about the future viability of the term in deOnis’s 2017 study do not fret too much about academic scholars “dictating” the use of Latinx since, ultimately, “the term will be... accepted or not, regardless of what the RAE (Real Academia Española) or academics say” (83). Nonetheless, there is perhaps something important to gain through engaging with the term directly; namely, to: “bring into discussion... [the] issues faced by marginalized communities within the binary o/a of traditional culture/language/society.” (deOnis 2017: 83). Moreover, we must keep in mind that much like identities, language is fluid and can change or evolve over time. It is certainly possible that the term Latinx will gain broader acceptance and increased use among Hispanic-Latinos as it becomes normalized and increasingly used in colloquial contexts.

Finally, though the focus of this paper has been to examine the factors which are associated with greater awareness and use of Latinx, it is also worth considering the contexts in which Hispanic-Latino individuals are likely to be taken aback by the term. For instance, while those with a college degree appear to be the most likely to be aware of Latinx, those

who attained a high-school diploma or less sit at the other end of the spectrum. This observation is likely consistent with preliminary findings from interviews conducted for the deOnis (2017) study, where one interview observed that the term was not gaining much traction among Hispanic-Latino respondents who did not have a college degree (88). In a similar vein, our study finds that older as well as Spanish-dominant respondents are less likely to have heard of the term Latinx. Collectively, the sociodemographic divide between those who have heard of the term and use it and those who have not (and therefore do not use it) poses a notable obstacle for the term's broader acceptance, at least in the short-run.

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Supplemental Information for Who identifies as Latinx? An examination of the
determinants of the use of "Latinx" among Latino-Hispanic Americans

A1: Tests for Multicollinearity

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A1: Tests for Multicollinearity

Table A1: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Estimates for Models

	Model 1: Heard of ‘Latinx’?		Model 2: Has used Latinx to describe self		Model 3: ‘Latinx’ should be used to describe Latino/Hispanic population	
	VIF	1/VIF	VIF	1/VIF	VIF	1/VIF
Linked fate	1.21	.828	1.25	.799	1.25	.799
Discrimination experiences	1.19	.845	1.26	.794	1.25	.800
National heritage						
Puerto Rican	1.79	.558	1.70	.586	1.71	.583
Cuban	2.34	.427	2.08	.401	2.10	.475
Dominican	1.41	.711	1.50	.664	1.52	.658
Salvadorian	1.06	.942	1.10	.907	1.10	.908
Other heritage	1.82	.550	1.69	.591	1.70	.587
Language						
Bilingual	2.08	.481	1.45	.689	1.44	.693
Spanish dominant	2.77	.361	2.31	.432	1.68	.593
Generation						
First gen	3.36	.297	2.88	.347	2.90	.344
Second gen	2.34	.427	2.31	.432	2.36	.424
Citizen	1.46	.687	1.41	.709	1.41	.710
Party ID						
Democrat	1.97	.508	2.66	.376	2.65	.377
Independent/other	1.82	.549	2.52	.396	2.52	.397
Racial ID						
Mixed race	1.21	.829	1.22	.820	1.21	.824
Afro-Latino	1.23	.813	1.27	.787	1.28	.784
Indigenous/American Indian	1.14	.877	1.16	.863	1.15	.087
Age						
30-49	2.02	.494	1.38	.723	1.38	.724
50-64	1.12	.471	1.55	.646	1.54	.648
65+	1.88	.530	1.29	.773	1.29	.774
Female	1.02	.981	1.03	.967	1.04	.966
Education						
Some college no degree	1.41	.711	1.80	.556	1.82	.549
College graduate	1.52	.658	1.92	.520	1.94	.515
Region						
Midwest	1.44	.692	1.46	.684	1.46	.686
South	3.32	.301	3.03	.329	3.06	.326
West	3.48	.287	3.24	.308	3.26	.306
Mean VIF	1.86	.	1.76	.	1.77	.

Notes: Table entries are VIF values.