

Latinx?

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This issue features two stimulating El Foro contributions that lay out some of the positions in favor of or against the use of the term “Latinx.” I thought this might be an apt moment to share with you our internal editorial board’s thinking on this subject and explain our current position. Since its beginning, *Latino Studies* has taken a democratic view of the many variations used to refer to the journal’s subject matter. We have accepted all iterations of terminology in circulation, including Latino, Latina/o, Latina and Latino, and Latin@, as well as Hispanic. The journal does not dictate that authors adhere to one particular house style with reference to this issue, although we do have a journal style sheet for other linguistic conventions. In the 6 years that I have been editing the journal, the editorial board has never tried to legislate a writer’s linguistic choices; our decision in the *Latino Studies* journal is to accept whatever scholars prefer as long as they explain (footnote) usages that may not be familiar to our readers and use them consistently throughout their articles.

We have always adhered to this practice, but this doesn’t mean that we haven’t debated the topic. When we first started receiving submissions that included “Latinx,” in 2015, some external reviewers and members of our editorial board felt it was gimmicky, trendy, and probably a passing fad. One person commented that it sounded like a laundry detergent. Another suggested (jokingly?) that they would quit the board if we ever adopted it. On the other hand, others agreed that “Latinx” signaled an important recognition of nonbinary gender identifications, and while they had not embraced its use in their own scholarship, they recognized that it was becoming more common in the writing of their students and colleagues on social media and, increasingly, in academic spaces.

Since there is not yet a consensus on adopting the “x,” at this point, we continue our editorial practice of not legislating what anyone does in this regard but

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requiring scholars to explain their use of new variations (and to use them consistently). If terms are not familiar to or accepted by the general readership of our interdisciplinary journal, scholars need to carefully explain and situate these designations in their scholarship. As often happens with linguistic innovations, early adopters might use new forms inconsistently. When this has been pointed out, some writers have either agreed to go with “Latina/o” or worked to ensure that they were using “Latinx” consistently across the article where appropriate, depending on their understanding of the term. The first time we published an article featuring “Latinx” was in the first issue of 2017; in an article on Latinx urban fiction the author explained its usage as a gender-inclusive gesture. This was similarly the case in the second issue of 2017, a special issue titled “Critical Latinx Indigeneities.” Surprisingly, despite the introduction of this particular framework—“Critical Latinx Indigeneities”—only four out of eleven authors included in the special issue used “Latinx” in their individual articles. In the third issue of 2017, we included a conversation titled “Toward a Transfrontera-LatinX aesthetic: An interview with filmmaker Alex Rivera.” However, throughout their conversation during the interview, neither Fred Aldama nor Alex Rivera use “Latinx” when referring to Latinos.

Currently most people who use “Latinx” indicate that they do so in the spirit of gender inclusivity, to represent the variety of possible genders as well as those who may identify as non-gender binary or transgender. For example, as Rigoberto Márquez explains, “‘Latinx’ can be defined as a political identity that centers the lived experiences of queer, non-binary, gender non-conforming/creative and/or trans individuals” (<https://medium.com/center-for-comparative-studies-in-race-and/whats-in-the-x-of-latinx-9266ed40766a>).

Increasingly, however, others suggest that the “x” performs multiple functions. For example, some of the authors in the recent (2017) issue of the journal *Cultural Dynamics*, edited by Claudia Milián, infuse the “x” with a vast range of meanings that are likely unfamiliar to many readers. For example, for De Guzman (2017), it signifies “gender non-conformity, coalitions across borders, boundaries, and status, and unity not only across differences but also across legislated and/or policed divisions.” She goes on to state, “The x is everything and anything, all the excluded.” For Guidotti-Hernández (2017), “Millennials use Latinx to transcend gender, racial, class, and regional constraints they see emanating from boomer generation ethnonationalist formations.” Another contributor to this issue, Galvan (2017), provocatively offers, “Latinx can be anything, and thus, it means nothing.” Clearly, in light of its expanding workload, authors need to explain the meanings they are attributing to “x” in their scholarship, since these meanings will not always be clear to readers.

It will be interesting to see whether more and more authors take up the “x.” Of manuscripts submitted to *Latino Studies* in the last year (2017), approximately 20% include “Latinx,” a small increase from the previous two years. As we have seen historically, with “Hispanic” and “Latino,” as well as with variations on “Latino” (Latina and Latino, Latina/o, Latin@) and with many other terms (i.e., “illegal” and “undocumented/unauthorized”), politically charged terms quite often coexist unless a consensus is reached, and this is rarely accomplished across institutions, generations, political perspectives, and so on. At *Latino Studies*, we will continue to monitor these changes, as we continue to embrace a democratic policy with regard



to these variations. As long as these alternatives are in flux across academic venues in our field, we will capture that variety in the journal. It remains to be seen whether variants suggested by those who embrace the politics of gender inclusivity, but who are not convinced that “x” does the trick, gain leverage. Perhaps scholars will be persuaded by Zentella’s (2017) argument for the use of “LatinUs” instead of “Latinx” to challenge binary gender assignment. She prefers LatinUs, since, for her, “the X is difficult to pronounce and violates Spanish orthography.” Others may be swayed by Hernandez’s (2017) suggestion that returning to “Latin” solves the issue of gender inclusivity. He argues, “So for now, if you must, I’m Latin. She is Latin. He is too. And so are they.” Other prefer some of the less-trending variants. For example, Sarah Mahler, in this journal’s first issue of 2018, opts for “Latin@s” in her contribution; she writes, “I thought long and hard about which term(s) to employ—particularly with regard to the various forms of ‘Latinos’ others have used in this journal and in other publications (Latinas/os, Latinxs and Latin@s). I decided on Latin@s because it both preserves the original, gendered term and complicates it. However, given that, in Miami, ‘Hispanic’ and its Spanish variants are widely used, the volume’s introduction uses both, intentionally and interchangeably.”

In sum, the journal *Latino Studies* will not police labels, even though some of our readers and reviewers might prefer that we do. One external reviewer recently wrote “[sic]” after each use of generic “Latinos” in a submitted paper. While the author will receive this feedback, we won’t insist they change their generic use of “Latinos.” That’s up to the author.

Finally, I should say that while linguistic innovations don’t necessarily equate to social change, as the two essays on the term “Latinx” in this volume demonstrate, they do serve an important purpose, as they provoke thought, controversy, and have the potential to inspire useful conversations about language, gender, inclusivity, and the power of labels.

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