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## The Mobilizer and the Mobilized: An Exploration of "Latinx"

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THE MOBILIZER AND THE MOBILIZED: AN EXPLORATION OF  
“LATINX”

by

MARISA NORZAGARAY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Anthropology  
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## ABSTRACT

The intent of this thesis is to explore the many significations of the term “Latinx.” Through the use of interviews and corpus research, I endeavor to show how “Latinx” is both a personal and political identity. As a political identity, I argue the term represents a social movement for minority allyship and empowerment, and resistance against colonialism and linguistic purism. While this is not unconnected to its personal meaning, individual embodiment of “Latinx” involves the performance and realization of an intersectional, queer latinidad. In other words, it gives those with overlapping queer and Latina/o identities a space to exist without compromising the validity of their gender identity or ethnicity. I analyze the ideological and material implications of the political and personal meanings of “Latinx” in order to show that the term does not exist solely as a theoretical construct, as it is made tangible as a social identity through the agency of those who use it to self-describe.

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

I first encountered the term “Latinx” in the Fall of 2019 on social media. Although I vaguely remember the details of the post, I recall being puzzled and skeptical of its usage of “Latinx.” I stumbled over a few possible pronunciations of the word in my head, such as “latin-ex, la-teen-ex, or la-tinks.” Given my penchant for linguistic analysis, this new term piqued my interest, and I soon asked some friends if they had ever heard of, or seen, the word “Latinx” before. Unfortunately for me, none of them had. Thus, I typed “Latinx meaning” into the Google search bar to see if any definitions had been circulating online.

From this search I found a 2016 article<sup>1</sup> from *HuffPost* entitled “Why People Are Using The Term ‘Latinx.’” As I learned from the authors’ description, “Latinx” is the gender-neutral alternative to the known identifiers “Latino” and “Latina,” and is part of a linguistic revolution that aims to rebel against the gender binary and reclaim pre-colonial Latin American identity in a racially inclusive manner. While most broad media messages are consistently aligned with the ideas reported in *HuffPost*, the term has sparked controversy between those who support it and those who do not. To its proponents, “Latinx” is a necessary variation of “Latina/o” that brings Spanish into recent discussions of gender politics. To its critics, however, the term’s “x”

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<sup>1</sup> Ramirez, Tanisha L., and Zeba Blay, “Why People Are Using The Term ‘Latinx,’” *HuffPost*. July 5, 2016. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-people-are-using-the-term-latinx\\_n\\_57753328e4b0cc0fa136a159?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LmNvbS8&gucce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAABQL72JL2BhY113TucFoGTV7h5wBCsFvHFTsLUo\\_gFQizRk5m-MPGZ9y8TAp6XFgxxvJPfmxuBSh1AtqwT63\\_pa4iH8B2gFSAG6PCs8OHJI\\_uENqdmQUO9NzvQVWPo5Ao\\_4a-Ny7Sf-x8Si1x30\\_USzLxJes2NhnsWLI0xwqPGJP7](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-people-are-using-the-term-latinx_n_57753328e4b0cc0fa136a159?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LmNvbS8&gucce_referrer_sig=AQAAABQL72JL2BhY113TucFoGTV7h5wBCsFvHFTsLUo_gFQizRk5m-MPGZ9y8TAp6XFgxxvJPfmxuBSh1AtqwT63_pa4iH8B2gFSAG6PCs8OHJI_uENqdmQUO9NzvQVWPo5Ao_4a-Ny7Sf-x8Si1x30_USzLxJes2NhnsWLI0xwqPGJP7)

inflection serves to anglicize the Spanish language by imposing the /nks/ (nx) consonant cluster – a grouping that would be phonotactically incomprehensible to Spanish monolinguals.

My research interest stems from this conflict. I originally planned to study the potential connection between this term and movements for gender-neutral speech that were already taking place for American English. Through further research, I found that in Central Florida the term had been taken up as a way to resist identity erasure and marginalization of queer Latina/o/x individuals within the larger white American queer community. This made me realize that the term “Latinx” encompasses much more than just the abstract realm of theory, as it impacts the lives of a real, physical community.

In this thesis, I explore the term “Latinx” as a linguistic sign with material and ideological significance. As an anthropological project, my methodological approach is grounded in ethnography. I also make use of corpus research to aid in my linguistic analysis of the term as it appears in public media discourse. I adopt a conceptual framework informed by semiotic and linguistic anthropological scholarship in order to interpret my findings and answer the following research questions: What does “Latinx” mean on an individual versus societal level? If “Latinx” is a social movement, what are its purposes and who does it serve? How is “Latinx” positioned for or against the existing labels “Latina” and “Latino”? Why “Latinx” and not “Latine”?

My main argument is that the term “Latinx” symbolizes a personal and political identity. As a personal identity, the term allows for the performance and realization of nonbinary/non-conforming gender identities that may exist in Spanish and be performed by Spanish-speakers. This individual self-making is then made more potent through the creation of a Latinx community, which not only promotes greater self-acceptance but also helps establish the

tangibility of this identity through space-making. While the political connotations of the term are still connected to subjective experiences, they represent how the term is mobilized by the Latinx community to incite minority allyship, and linguistic and ideological evolution. In conducting this research, I intend to advance current understandings of how queer and ethnic labels such as “Latinx” may be used in practices of self-making for both resistance and belonging.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

At the time of my research, I found no cultural or linguistic anthropological scholarship analyzing the term “Latinx.” However, two monographs on the term had been published by scholars of Latin American studies (Morales, 2018; Milian, 2019). Ed Morales, author of *Latinx: The New Force in American Politics and Culture*, proposes that the term contests the binary of both racial and gender classification, as it describes an in-between space capable of revealing the blackness and indigeneity often undermined by *mestizo* (mixed-race) ideology. In her book, *LatinX*, Claudia Milian offers a different interpretation of the term, stating that the “x” indexes an unknowable, and therefore, unclassifiable way of being (2019:39). Though these scholarly works reference the significance of “Latinx” as an inclusive, gender-neutral ethnic label, neither focus on its intimate relation to practices of queer self-making or the tangible, lived realities of the community that has taken it up as an identity. In this project, I bring this term into the purview of anthropological consideration, as I explore the symbolic, political, and agentic functions of “Latinx” as a linguistic and cultural movement. My investigation will be informed by the existing literature concerning semiotics, the political nature of labels, and self-making and resistance.

### **Semiotics**

Scholars of linguistic anthropology have argued for a number of years that language is an inherently ambiguous signifying system (Inoue 2008; Santiago-Irizarry 2005; Davis 2014) The constitution of this system includes linguistic signs, which are the focus of semiotic study

(Kockelman 2007). Linguistic signs are by nature arbitrary, and their meaning and usage are dependent upon the historical and social contexts in which they are evoked (Inoue 2008; Proschan 2008). They are capable of both reinforcing concepts or changing them through what Anna Corwin (2017) refers to as semiotic agency, or an individual's ability to control the expression of a sign (Kockelman 2007:376).

Charles Goodwin (2013) has argued that semiotic agency is a cooperative process. As signs only communicate meaning to the extent that the intended meaning is recognized by others, the use of a sign is only effective if it is taken up in some way by other people (Corwin 2017; Kulick 2000). The cooperative production of semiotic meaning within a culture is shaped by its semiotic ideology, that being the assumptions about what a sign can be and how it can function (Keane 2003:419). Semiotic ideology is intrinsically tied to social power, as linguistic practice construes social realities. Anthropologist Miyako Inoue's (2008) research on indexical inversion and the naturalization of gender inequality in Japan helps us think about the usage of signs and how it produces a historical narrative that may invert the relationship between the sign and its meaning. In her research, this occurred in discussions of "women's language," as linguistic forms that originated for dubious reasons were idealized by the public as having inherently female qualities. I consider Inoue's conception of indexical inversion with "Latinx," as I argue the male/female dichotomous structure of Spanish has naturalized the impossibility of non-binary identities within the language.

Linguistic signs may perpetuate and naturalize fixed meanings; they are also polysemic and multivalent (Proschan 2008; Santiago-Irizarry 2005; Ahlers 2017). In anthropologist Frank Proschan's (2008) work examining the usage of ethnic labels by the Kmhmu in Northern Laos,

he discovered that the label “Kmhmu,” shifts its meaning depending on the context of conversational interaction. In one context, a speaker may portray a “Kmhmu” identity as one only available to those who are born and raised within the culture – which is the traditional usage – while the same speaker may use the term to refer to someone who has no familial ties to the group. Proshan argues that this contradiction demonstrates the instability of the linguistic sign, as it may reflect both pre-existing social relations while also constitute newly emergent ones. This demonstrates that although signs may produce and fix meaning, they are still flexible and adaptable to change. We see this contradiction within “Latinx,” as it may express the conflicting ideas of ethnic belonging and ideological resistance.

In addition, scholars assert that language is part of the material world (Inoue 2008:41; Davis 2018). Through writing or other physical representations, linguistic signs may become vehicles through which material actors can interact with world and the concept the sign represents (Davis 2018; Davis 2014; Inoue 2008). To see how “Latinx” functions for queer personal and communal identity construction, I intend to analyze how the term is brought into the material world and what purpose this serves.

### **The Political Nature of Labels**

Language is a complex tool for identity construction, as it is through language that identities are communicated and labelled. In social practice, these labels may be used to transgress, impose, reject, or accept identities (Cashman 2018; Leap 2013). As linguistic signs, identity labels are socially and culturally mediated resources that may encompass multiple

aspects of identity according to circumstance (Little-Siebold 2001; Smith 2013; Macdonald 2012; Cashman 2018).

Scholars have argued that in the United States, overarching labels such as “Latino” or “Asian-American” are necessary for the political mobilization of subordinate communities (Santiago-Irizarry 2013; Macdonald 2012:9). Political power in a democratic society is based upon numbers, so the nesting of multiple nationalities within one supra-national ethnic marker allows these groups a voice in U.S. national politics (Santiago-Irizarry 2013; Macdonald 2012). In association to semiotics, the political structure of the United States allows for ethnic labels to function as signs representing both group membership and socio-cultural difference (Santiago-Irizarry 2013:93). Doan and Stephan (2006) propose that positive identifications with labels allow members of subordinate ethnic groups a way to reject stereotypes and discrimination. On the other hand, Santiago-Irizarry (2013) argues that claiming ethnic labels for personal and collective identity may unintentionally reinforce and naturalize a group’s unequal status within a hegemonic construct (93). The two distinct, but not entirely unrelated, social outcomes proposed by these scholars illustrate the complex nature and potential functions of ethnic labels as signs.

However, ethnic labels may elude the domain of semiotic agency. Macdonald (2012) contends that these labels are used so often to categorize both ourselves and others that their usage becomes unremarkable and taken for granted. Ethnic labels may be understood as components of cultural hegemony, forming part of a symbolic system so dominant and pervasive in society that it becomes naturalized as the way things are and should be (Santiago-Irizarry 2005; Reyes-Foster 2018; Rosa 2016). Given this literature, I conceptualize “Latinx” as a linguistic sign and ethnic label that is radical, yet still constrained by colonial and hegemonic

forces. As the term has been taken up by some as both a personal and group identity, I will also attempt to tease out the potential social and political meanings identification with this term implies.

### **Identity Construction and Resistance**

For decades, scholars have maintained that physical bodies are ascribed and perform gender roles through social contexts and constructions (Butler 1993; Corwin 2017). Research on gender identity and performance examines the ways in which social agents continuously produce and reproduce their positioning within the masculine/feminine binary through social interaction and discursive practices (Kulick 2000; Corwin 2017; Leap 2013; Rodríguez 2003). Reyes-Foster (2018:48) argues that “like gender identity, ethnic identity is something one *does*, not something one *has*,” as its relation to the body is simultaneously enacted and imposed through social actions. Due to the nature of their origin, then, as these identities must first be assigned before they are performed, both ethnic and gender identity labels are intrinsically political (Zentella 1995).

Within the realm of performance, the social actor is nonetheless entitled to personal agency. Defiance of cultural norms informing and shaping identity can be used for anti-colonial and hegemonic resistance (Allen 2011; Cummings 2010; Thompson 2019). In exploring “Latinx” as resistance, I make use of work done by anthropologists Katrina Daly Thompson (2019) and Jafari Allen (2011). In Thompson’s (2019) article concerning the defiant practices of queer/nonconformist Muslim groups, she argues that queer Muslims can create spaces of belonging for themselves within religious spaces by using Arabic words for Islamic concepts,

thus giving the concepts a “queer voice.” This practice in turn questions and rebels against interpretations of the religion that exclude and silence these individuals. I will relate this idea of space-making to my discussion of “Latinx” in order to see how queer Latina/o/x individuals resist identity erasure within a culture and language that does not acknowledge or support their existence.

Furthermore, I incorporate Allen’s (2011) theory of transcendent erotics to give attention to these matters. His framework of transcendent erotics preserves two senses of the word transcendent: the spiritual or psychic, which includes the freedom to fantasize new realities, and the actual exercise of this agency to intervene in the physical, ideological, and social world (95). The process of transcendence here takes place within a three-part movement: (1) individual awareness and the creation of a new space and community, (2) the transgression of hegemonic rules and norms, (3) the actual transformation of standard practice (96). This ultimately functions to bring about what he calls “anti-structure,” which offers alternatives to the prevailing order, but not its destruction or reversal (95). Although the original application of this theory was in cultural, rather than linguistic analysis, I will use it to ground my discussion of the linguistic sign “Latinx” to gain a better understanding of how it has been used to create spaces for personal and communal belonging as well as radical linguistic and ideological change.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

My methodological approach to this project includes semi-structured interviews and an analysis of public discourses and media content. These semi-structured interviews constituted my ethnographic approach, as they allowed me to collect qualitative data. I recruited 7 participants of twenty to forty-four years of age, who identified as Latinx and lived in Central Florida or surrounding areas. The table below shows interviewee demographic information. If it is known where the participant was born and raised, that is put in parentheses under “Country of Personal/Familial Origin.”

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Country of Personal/Familial Origin</b>	<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
Benjamín	28	Mexico (Raised in U.S.)	Queer, Non-binary, Transgender	Latinx
Celia	44	Mexico (Born in New Jersey; Raised in both Mexico and U.S.)	Queer, Non-binary	Latinx, Chicanx
Daniel	41	Puerto Rico (Born and raised in New York)	Cis-gender Man	Latinx, Latino
Jaslene	34	Puerto Rico, Hawaii (Born in Illinois; Raised in Florida)	Pansexual, Queer Woman	Latinx
Lucas	31	Puerto Rico (Born Puerto Rico; Raised in Florida)	Genderqueer	Latinx
Mariana	20	Venezuela (Born in Venezuela; Raised in Florida)	Cis-gender Woman	Latinx, Latina
Mateo	23	Cuba (Born in Cuba; Raised in Florida)	Cis-gender Man	Latinx, Latino

Interview questions included: Do you identify as Latinx? What does the word “Latinx” mean to you, and what do you think it means to identify as Latinx? How is this term situated for or against Latino/Latina? How did Latinx come into your life? Did you previously identify with the LGBTQ+ community – if yes, were you active in this community? Has your involvement with Latinx changed the way you view or express your gender/sexual identity – In what ways? Would you consider Latinx to be a movement – If so, what are its goals and who does it serve? How would you describe the Latinx community? What do you think the end goal of Latinx is? How do you hope language will change in the future?

The interview sessions were audio-recorded and took place virtually via Zoom or Microsoft Teams for a duration of thirty minutes to 2 hours, depending on the willingness of the participant. These recordings are stored in a secured drive to protect participant confidentiality as well as provide me with a way to verify information I included in my analysis. All interviews were conducted in English, but some participants described situations or feelings in Spanish. I provide translations of any Spanish descriptions I decided to include.

To see how “Latinx” is being used in public media discourse, I conducted searches of the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and the NOW<sup>2</sup> (News on the Web) corpora (Davies 2008; Davies 2016). The COCA contains more than one billion words of text from 1990-2019 and eight genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, and TV and Movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages. I selected this corpus because it is the

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<sup>2</sup> The COCA and the NOW corpus do not search for terms in the same way, given the differences in source genres. The NOW also contains entries from countries other than the United States. This was largely inconsequential to my investigation because close to ninety percent of all instances of “Latinx” in the NOW corpus were from the United States.

most widely used, accessible corpus of American English. The NOW corpus contains over 12.4 billion words of data from 2010-Present and obtains this data from web-based newspapers and magazines. I used the COCA (which has 76 total instances of “Latinx”) as a preliminary search to determine major themes I would further investigate in the NOW (which has 10,544 total instances of the word “Latinx”). After I identified major themes, I conducted collocate and KWIC (key word in context) searches in the NOW to determine how often two words are associated, and in what contexts. To get a better understanding of each context, I then examined each instance separately to verify these patterns and make note of their frequency.

## **Ethics**

Above all else, my primary ethical obligation in this project was to do no harm to the participants I recruited or the larger Latina/o/x LGBTQ+ community. As resistance work linked to a tragedy, the Latinx movement in Orlando holds emotional significance to those who identify with it closely. Because of this, I took care to be sensitive to the possible ways interview questions and my analysis of conversations and online materials may inadvertently devalue the personal significance Latinx holds. While I identify as a cis-gender Latina myself, I crafted my portrayal of Latinx and Latina/o/x genderqueer individuals according to the stories and opinions of my participants rather than my own. In doing this, I aimed to uphold the anthropological belief in polyvocality by representing the Latinx movement and these individuals as they see it and themselves.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “Latinx” and Queer Self-Imagining

Like, if you go to a store and you try on a jacket and you can wear it but it doesn't fit quite right. It's a little too tight, or it doesn't zip easily. Like, it works, and you can wear it, and it'll protect you from snow; but when you put on a jacket that fits your body perfectly, it's more comfortable to walk around in and you're happier. So that's what having “Latinx,” *for me*, feels like.

Celia

In “Gender in Translation: Beyond Monolingualism,” Judith Butler (2019) writes that people may find, make, or refuse gender categories in order to make life more livable within the language they speak. Through language, we can communicate lived experiences, structure thoughts, and reinforce and reshape self-concepts. Language is paramount to practices of self-making, as it is through discourse within community that identities are established and negotiated. “Latinx” as a word to describe a previously invisible identity, then, serves to make life more livable for both within language and the material world. In this chapter, I argue that when used for self-description, “Latinx” functions as a symbol that recognizes and *materializes* queer/non-conforming identities in cultural ideology and the physical world.

#### **No soy ni mujer, ni hombre**

During our zoom interview, I asked Celia, a forty-four-year-old non-binary and queer individual, what the word “Latinx” means to them. They<sup>3</sup> began rather impersonally by defining it as a pan-ethnic term that includes folks from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, I noticed their demeanor change as they explained their personal connection to the term. Celia said, “I like

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<sup>3</sup> Celia's pronouns are they/them

Latinx because I don't identify as traditionally male or female, right? So, the 'x' acknowledges that - and it's hard because you know, in Spanish everything is gendered, right? So, it's a way for me to see my own existence within one of my languages." Celia is fluent in English and Spanish, as they lived in both Mexico and the United States for much of their youth. Yet, they feel most comfortable expressing their gender identity in English. When I asked them why they preferred English, they said that when they were first exploring their gender, "there were more linguistic options [in English] and more ways to culturally fit [themselves] in and define what non-binary is and what queer is." They went on to say that after discovering the word "non-binary" in English, explaining their gender identity in Spanish became easier.

I was unsure of how the English word "non-binary" would on its own facilitate an explanation of this gender category in Spanish, so I asked them how they would normally describe their gender identity to a Spanish-speaker. "I usually say like, 'no soy ni mujer ni hombre, soy una mezcla de los dos o en parte soy un poco afuera de las divisiones de lo binario (I am neither female nor male, I am a mix of both, or I am partly outside the divisions of the binary).'" Curiously, Celia's explanation did not introduce any new vocabulary into Spanish despite their prior implication that the language lacked the linguistic resources. In fact, this was a near direct translation of how they described their gender identity to me in English earlier in the interview. Why, then, would Celia have felt limited in their ability to self-describe if the issue were not that the Spanish lexicon was unfit to communicate *una experiencia no binaria* (a non-binary experience)?

Anthropologist Don Kulick (2000: 244) notes an important trend about LGBTQ language: for non-conforming individuals, naming "confers existence." I showcase Kulick's

original phrasing here to draw attention to the fact that the creation of identity categories does not bring non-conforming identities into *being* but rather brings them into *view*. In other words, they are simply linguistic representations of pre-existing, lived experiences. However, they are important because they open up the cultural and ideological space for these identities to be discussed and performed in the social world. Because of this, Celia's prior difficulty self-describing as non-binary in Spanish may be better understood as resulting from a lack of cultural, rather than linguistic resources, as they may not have seen their gender identity as a valid or recognizable way of being.

I offer this brief discussion of the word "non-binary" as a way to conceptualize one of the many layers of the term "Latinx." The "x" suffix, when used in place of the traditional masculine "o" or feminine "a," denotes a third option or gender category. Thinking with Kulick (2000) here, the "x" confers Celia's existence in much the same way that "non-binary" did when they first discovered the term. Although it may be tempting to consider "Latinx" to be the Spanish equivalent of the English gender category "non-binary," the words *binario* and *binaria* already exist in Spanish and may be negated in the form of *no binario* or *no binaria* to convey a direct translation of "non-binary." However, a direct translation is hardly capable of conveying the cultural context of the word. Even if this were feasible, the cultural fabric of the Anglo-American social world is different from that of Latin American Spanish-speakers.

What does "Latinx" offer that *no binaria/o* cannot? In essence, an identity that may be embodied. As I show in my previous discussion, "non-binary" facilitated Celia by allowing them to describe the *quality* of being non-binary, rather than introducing a name for the identity itself. "Latinx," on the other hand, names and establishes this experience as an identity that may exist

in Spanish and be performed by Spanish-speakers, instead of being a translation of an English concept. Thus, *no binara/o* is incomplete for two main reasons: (1) its connection to the English word implies that this gender identity is an Anglo-American invention, and (2) it retains the gendered morphemes of Spanish. The significance of the “x” comes in part from its ability to ameliorate the second issue, but its paramount importance is seen through its attachment to the word “Latin.” Essentially, by replacing the “a/o” of the widely used ethnic identity “Latina/o” with the queer marker “x,” Latinx individuals are able to carve out a space for themselves in the cultural and ideological narrative of the Spanish-speaking world.

### **Queering Latinidad**

The ethnic labels “Latino” and “Latina” emerged in the early 1970s as a way to gain political and legal legitimacy for smaller national-origin groups, such as Mexican American and Puerto Rican, in the United States. Accompanying the widespread use of these terms was the concept of *latinidad*, which has been described as the “communal sense of membership in a group tied to Latin America through ancestry, language, culture, and history” (Gutiérrez, 2016:38). This sort of pan-ethnic consciousness not only brings about political and legal recognition, but also personal dignity, and identification as Latina/o is a source of pride for many. The nationalist narrative has long ignored those who are queer or non-conforming. As such, for my nonbinary interlocutors, their connection to their ethnic identity had been complicated by their gender identity. In speaking with these individuals, I learned that “Latinx” offers them a way to bridge the gap between their *latinidad* and their queerness.

During my interview with Benjamín, a nonbinary individual in their twenties, I asked whether adopting the term “Latinx” as an identity impacted their gender expression. Benjamín said,

“So, I had identified myself as queer for a very long time before I really named myself a Latinx person. But in understanding my Latinx identity and in being able to redefine how my ethnic identity was structured before, and how I was able to reclaim that in a way that was authentic to me, I was really able to give myself a way to explore my gender a bit more... I was able to give myself permission to play with gender expectations and play with gendered dress and language around gender.”

Benjamín’s difficulty exploring their gender identity prior to identifying as “Latinx” may have been due to the “ingrained machista attitude” they were taught in a traditional Latina/o household. In Benjamín’s experience, *machismo* entailed conforming to rigid gender roles and expectations, with no overlap between what is considered *masculino* (masculine) and *femenino* (feminine). Also, they told me that “for people that do overlap, there is precarity and sometimes even danger.” For the non-conforming individuals with whom I spoke, this danger took the form of severed family ties and a lack of critical resources, as they were kicked out by parents and family members who refused to accept them. The trauma associated with these experiences alienated them from their ethnic heritage, making the idea of *latinidad* something that would need to be reclaimed, as Benjamín noted in their own experience.

Lucas, a thirty-one-year-old gender-queer individual, shared a similar story. From the age of five to the age of fourteen, Lucas spent their time either with their Puerto Rican family at home, or with other minority children and “good-old-fashioned rednecks” at Christian schools. Their parents’ desire to assimilate and “be normal,” coupled with the homophobia taught in the Christian schools and in traditional Latina/o/x culture, caused them to “get this self-loathing of [their] queerness.” As a

result, they felt “like [they] had to choose between [their] Latinx identity, or [their] ethnic heritage, and [their] queerness.” This issue continued into their early twenties as well:

“I was in a gay-straight alliance up in Pensacola – I went to the first part of undergrad up there – we had a very dominantly American, white, LGBT community up there, so the conversations around my queerness very rarely entered into my *latinidad*, and when I started getting into my *latinidad* or any, like, culturalisms, then I was being too Puerto Rican, or ‘oh, there Lucas goes again with their Puerto Rican nonsense.’”

In 2016, after the Pulse shooting in Orlando, Lucas began experimenting with the term “Latinx” in community organizations around the city. They told me that they were originally drawn to the term because “the ‘x’ gave people like [them], who were gender-nonconforming, an option for representation that didn’t force them to misgender themselves.” However, they now consider the term to be “a merging of [their] identities, where [their race and their queerness] can just coexist.” They believe that these identities can coexist “because they aren’t mutually exclusive.” This is an idea that Benjamín alluded to by saying that “[they] can exist dually as a queer person and as a Latinx person because of language, culture, and ethnic background,” even if they do not adhere to narrowly defined social constructs. In other words, language, culture, and ethnicity are available to everyone regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – one does not contradict the other. The role of “Latinx” in the reconciliation between queerness and *latinidad* for Lucas and Benjamín is significant because it disrupts the previous status quo. By bridging their identities through a linguistic sign such as “Latinx,” they are able to bring about and share a queer, Latina/o/x experience that defies *machismo* and evolves conceptions of *latinidad*.

These views about the term “Latinx” are believed to not just be important to nonconforming individuals. Daniel, a gay man in his early forties, told me he identifies as Latinx because *machismo*

and “old-school thinking” affect everybody, even cis-gendered, heterosexual individuals. To him, “Latinx” is an empowering term because it signifies a push-back against traditional gender roles and stereotypes. “By saying “Latinx,” you’re putting a message out there saying: ‘nah, nah, nah, we’re gonna break those stereotypes of what a man should be and what a woman should be, and we’re gonna create new perceptions of what a *person* should be.” He emphasized the importance of language by saying that “if we speak in binary terms, we think in binary terms as well.”

Anthropologist Miyako Inoue writes that “language has no memory, and the speaker is never a knower of the past” (2008:42). Language and linguistic signs, being arbitrary and unmotivated in themselves, are not inherently tied to any one referent; instead, their meaning is structured and mediated by the historical and social circumstances of speakers. Inoue argues that knowledge of these circumstances offers the “explanatory power of causality,” in that one would be able to clearly see the distinction between the linguistic sign and the social construct it refers to. However, because speakers are often unaware of these circumstances, this distinction collapses, and the linguistic sign becomes inextricably tied to that which it symbolizes. This explanation can be understood when we think about what Daniel said about thinking and speaking in binary terms. Historical binary conceptions of gender have become naturalized through the usage of their binary linguistic complements in Spanish. Though the original social and historical circumstances occasioning the binary have faded, the linguistic signs themselves have preserved it, leading to what Inoue calls an “inverted causal relationship” (Inoue 2008:45). This means that now, as opposed to the past, the existence of gendered language itself is what legitimizes the existence of particular social conceptions of gender. Considering this, we can see that “Latinx” has sparked controversy by contradicting the legacy of the linguistic binary of the Spanish language.

“Latinx” does not only serve to disrupt, as evidenced by its similarity to the existing forms “Latina” and “Latino.” These labels are a source of personal pride for many who identify with them – a feeling that is heightened by the community sentiments experienced through *latinidad*. Because “Latinx” is etymologically related to these terms due to its retention of the stem “Latin,” it is also connected to *latinidad*. The important relationship across these labels exemplifies what anthropologist Don Kulick (2000:273) refers to as “the iterability of codes.” According to Kulick, the iterability of codes allows us to recognize an expression as an expression if it is replicable and available as a resource for anyone to use. A simple example of this is a hand wave, a gesture that is easily replicable and understood to be a greeting. Despite the disruptive quality of the “x,” the term “Latinx” relies heavily on structures of iterability for its significance. Its similar appearance to Latina/o establishes it as an iterable and recognizable identification with Latin American heritage that may be taken up by others. Therefore, I argue that “Latinx” is not the destruction of old identities, but rather the addition of a new one that is meant to be comparable to the existing two. In this way, “Latinx” may be seen as a way to gain political and legal legitimacy for a queer *latinidad*.

### **“Latinx” and the Making of Community**

As “Latinx” is related to *latinidad*, or the feeling of community and pride associated with a shared Latin American heritage, it also carries a communal significance. When anthropologist Jafari Allen writes of “transcendent erotics” in *¡Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-Making in Cuba*, he describes it as being a spiritual, personal experience and exercise of agency that makes interventions in a potentially malleable world (2011:95). Although this practice is a personal enterprise, he argues that it nonetheless insists on the creation of a new, shareable space,

a space in which there is the creation of both radical subjectivity and congregation. “Latinx,” as I have learned, symbolizes such a space. For my interlocutors, the term permits individual queer self-imagining that is made more potent and tangible through the physical community it brings together.

I reached out to Lucas for the first time in September of last year. We made plans to speak that month; however, I had to reschedule our meeting twice before we spoke over zoom. When the call began, I asked them how they had been, and they told me that things had been hectic for them because they were preparing for an upcoming surgery. Unaware of the severity of the issue, I asked if they would be willing to share what the surgery was for. They told me that after sixteen years of suffering from endometriosis, they were finally getting the treatment they needed by getting a hysterectomy. I was truly shocked and saddened to hear this. Immediately after the operation, they would need to undergo hormone replacement therapy to combat the effects of surgical menopause. Unfortunately, this complicated their desire to micro-dose testosterone, as their doctor told them that the removal of their entire reproductive system meant they would only be able to stay on one side of the hormone spectrum during recovery. Although this disappointed them, they said: “I don’t think I would’ve handled this as well before meeting [a Latinx community] and finding that acceptance [of my gender identity].”

For Lucas, the term “Latinx” has power in representation of the community. In early 2017, Lucas and their wife found a support group for Latinx individuals grappling with the aftermath of the Pulse tragedy. They told me that the first time they met with them, “[they] were still playing with he/him, and they/them, and trying to figure out where [they] fit.” Outside of this space, they were not openly identifying as gender-queer or using the name Lucas. But with

the support of the community, “[they] really started living as Lucas, and using Lucas outside [of the support group].” They told me that the “x” of “Latinx” gave them a form of liberation; however, “it [was] not so much the term, as the community that was provided when [they] used that term to identify.” This was a community of people “doing the same unpacking and reconstructing” of gender and identity as they were, and they said they would not be at this point of self-acceptance if they had never met them. “And that’s really it. The term Latinx brought me to a community that I might not have found otherwise – [one] that has shown me what the ability to simply exist feels like, so I can navigate myself and start unpacking my own needs, wants, and desires.” If we view these issues within Allen’s (2011) framework of transcendent erotics, we can see how the meaning of “Latinx” encompasses both radical self-making and an empowering sense of community that makes a queer, non-conforming Latina/o/x identity a permissible and tangible way of being.

In speaking of tangibility, I am reminded of what Miyako Inoue (2008) writes regarding the materiality of language. She states: “language is part and parcel of the material world... in which real human actors live” (2008:41-42). As I spoke with my interlocutors, I was surprised to learn the deep importance of material representations of identity. For example, Jaslene, a thirty-four-year-old pansexual queer woman, shared her experience learning about the term “Latinx” for the first time. She told me it was mind-blowing and exciting for her because it meant that her trans and non-binary loved ones could finally have a space to feel welcomed. She emphasized the importance of creating physical spaces for inclusion, saying that “it’s important to advertise [“Latinx”], because that starts a conversation [about the identity],” and its significance to those who are non-conforming. By wearing “Latinx” t-shirts in Bravo and other Spanish markets,

Jaslene brings the term into the world of others in a tangible, material way. Although she knows this may offend those who do not support “Latinx,” the confidence she has gained through the community has given her the “ability to *own* it.”

The Latinx community is tangible, as it is made up of materially situated social actors. Because of it, both Lucas and Jaslene found liberation, confidence, and solidarity with those who are similarly situated. When it comes to queer self-imagining, physicality is significant, because social performances of any identity are in part tied to the physical presentation of the body. As Jaslene told me, the physical presentation of “Latinx” on shirts and other objects allows others to “see the visibility of our community.” By bringing the term into the physical world – be it through written materials or t-shirts – the Latinx community establishes a material presence. Therefore, culturally, ideologically, and materially, the term “Latinx” symbolizes proof that this community exists.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Mobilization of Identity

“We recognize that to adopt the moniker of “Latinx,” it’s not just a personal adoption, it’s a political one. And we are creating – not creating – we are *propelling* forward an effort when we politicize our identity.”

As Benjamín states in the above quote, a Latinx identity is both personal and political. Politically speaking, then, what does “Latinx” stand for? And who does it serve? According to my interlocutors, the answers to these questions appear deceptively simple: inclusion, and everyone. In regard to my discussion of queer self-imagining, it is easy to see how “Latinx” stands for the inclusion of a historically excluded population; however, I posit that the political significance of the word “Latinx” encompasses more than this. Through my research, I have found that “Latinx” also stands for minority empowerment and allyship, and resistance against colonialism and linguistic purism.

#### **“Latinx” and Minority Allyship**

To better understand the political undertones of “Latinx,” I analyzed its usage in public media discourse. This methodology required researching the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the News on the Web corpus (NOW). In my preliminary search of the COCA, I found that out of 76 total entries containing “Latinx,” only two used the term to refer to the queer/non-conforming population specifically. The other 74 used “Latinx” in place of “Latino” to describe people of Latin American descent. From analyzing each entry individually, I found that 10 entries used the term in contexts also referencing other minority populations. Because this theme was more common than others I attempted to identify, I used this information

to focus my search of the 10,544 total instances of “Latinx” in the NOW corpus. To this end, I conducted a collocate search of “Latinx” and the terms “Black\*” (For the NOW corpus, “\*” indexes any collocate. Searching with this syntax allowed me to specify on the results screen “BLACK/AFRICAN” to certify that “Black” in my search refers to the racial category), “African American,” “Indigenous,” and “Asian.” For “Latinx” and “Black\*,” there were 3,167 entries, meaning approximately 30% of all instances of “Latinx” also reference this word. For “African American” specifically, there were 253 results. By comparison, “Latinx” and “indigenous” yielded 277 results, and “Latinx,” and “Asian” yielded 367. I concluded from this data that “Latinx” in the news is referenced much more frequently in the context of other minority populations, especially the Black population.

To further my investigation of the relationship between “Latinx” and “Black” efficiently, I searched the phrases “Black and Latinx” and “Latinx and Black” in list display. For “Black and Latinx,” there were 1,676 instances, and for “Latinx and Black” there were 111. For both of these searches, there was a dramatic increase in usage in 2020 (see figure 1 below).

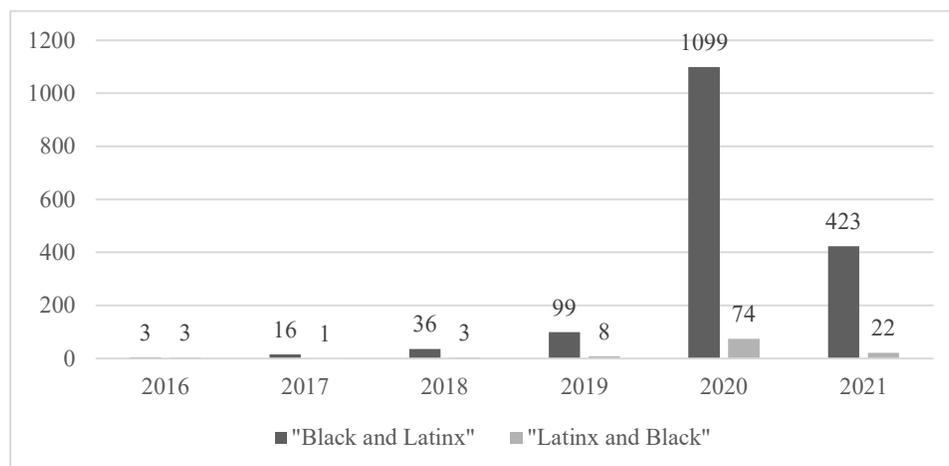


Figure 1. Instances of “Black and Latinx” and “Latinx and Black” from 2016-2021 (data retrieved from Davies, Mark. (2016-) Corpus of News on the Web (NOW). Available online at <https://www.english-corpora.org/now/>).

Following this, I conducted a KWIC (key word in context) search for “Black and Latinx” and “Latinx and Black.” My findings suggest that these two function most often as adjective phrases describing the nouns “communities” (222 instances), “people” (201 instances), “students” (99 instances), and “women” (64 instances). Other words that were less common: populations (20), residents (47), Americans (45), workers (42), households (30), families (51). It is worth noting that both “communities” and “populations” were far more common than “community” (20 instances) and “population” (20 instances). This suggests that “Latinx” and “Black” are not used together to reference the same community, but separate, comparable ones.

I analyzed the context of these further and identified common key words and made note of their frequency: “Disproportionate/disproportionately,” “vulnerable,” “inequality/inequity” “low-income,” “insecurity,” “systemic racism,” and “racism/racist.” Out of all of these, “Disproportionately” (or “disproportionate”) had the highest correlation, 111 out of 841 instances of “Black and Latinx” (13.2%) and 8/38 instances for “Latinx and Black” (21.1%). The vast majority of these entries were in reference to the impact of the corona virus, which helps explain the surge in usage of “Black and Latinx” and “Latinx and Black” in recent years. The other key terms, though less statistically significant, also linked both of my search terms to discussions of political and economic vulnerability and disadvantage.

With the hope of understanding these corpus findings better, I asked Lucas if they felt the term “Latinx” was in any way tied to issues endured by the Black community. “Black liberation is at the center of all liberation, especially in the United States. So basically, what affects black lives – if we fight for that – we will eventually, if not pretty instantaneously, have a positive

effect on Latinx folk who are fighting for similar things. Our causes are joined.” According to Lucas, “Latinx” is especially tied to issues of black liberation because “pride started as a protest, and the rights that [the Latinx community] have today exist because people didn’t stay quiet.” The words “Latino” and “Latina” have been linked to discussions of black liberation for many decades, as these two groups have both fought for recognition and legitimacy in the United States. In fact, the origins of pan-ethnic Latina/o/x nationalism can be traced back to the late 1960s, when Chicana/o/x (Mexican American) and Boricua (Puerto Rican) groups formed their respective organizations: the Brown Berets and the Young Lords. As argued by historian Ramón A. Gutiérrez (2016:41), these groups “found inspiration in the aspiration and organizational structures of the Black Panther Party,” which was a black power organization founded in 1966. The Brown Berets and the Young Lords were nationalist organizations that heralded “racialized brown and black pride” and aimed to “corrode the toxicity of racism” in the United States (41). As the terms “Latino” and “Latina” were direct results of the nationalist ideologies put forth by these organizations, the political significance of the term “Latinx” is also rooted in this historical context.

Despite the connected history of these two groups, Latina/o/x individuals are often unwilling to claim any association with the Black community. When I asked Daniel about the colorism that exists in the Latina/o/x community, he said: “It’s very easy to say that something is a Black problem, not a brown problem. But the reality is that its all our problem because ultimately, racist individuals look at us all the same – they lump us in the same category. Therefore, if we’re all oppressed together we need to stand tall together.” As we have thus far been conceptualizing “Latinx” as a way to envision a queer *latinidad*, its connection to the racial

issues I have laid out in this section may seem unclear. It is here, though, that I argue the Latinx movement's call for inclusion takes on multiple meanings. As many of my interlocutors have told me, the "x" of "Latinx" pays an honorific tribute to the indigenous heritage of Latina/o/x peoples, as the "x" is used often in languages such as Nahuatl and Huasteco. Benjamín, whose first language was Huasteco, described this as part of an intentional effort to respect the diversity of the Latina/o/x population, and "include as many people as possible." This combats the colorism present in the community today, as it inserts within the label a reminder of its mixed indigenous and African ancestry. In this way, "Latinx" brings issues of both gender and race to the forefront, by representing and respecting the diversity of identities that make up this group. As a result, part of the political signification of the Latinx movement's push for inclusivity is a call for minority allyship.

### **The Name of Change**

The other major political component of "Latinx" that I would like to address is in the "x" itself. There has been much debate surrounding the usage of this letter and its intended meaning. Some propose, as I have mentioned, that it was inspired by the sound systems of indigenous languages, while others liken it to an undefined, mathematical variable that is ascribed value on the individual level. Lucas shared during our interview their opinion on this matter. Instead of choosing between the two arguments, they simply told me "it can be both." To Lucas, the importance of "Latinx" is not dependent on its affiliation with either part of this debate, but rather its ability to be a third option outside of "Latina" and "Latino."

Many of the non-binary individuals I spoke with were not overly attached to the term “Latinx” or the “x.” For example, Celia, who explained the idea of “Latinx” to me enthusiastically, also said that “if another label becomes available, or if [they] found another label that [they] feel works better [than “Latinx”], [they] might use that in the future.” I admit that this troubled me at first, as I feared it meant the term “Latinx” was not as significant to Latinx individuals as I had originally thought. However, as I analyzed my interview transcripts, I realized that for all of my interlocutors, this connected to an underlying support for the continuous evolution of language. Regarding “Latinx” in particular, Benjamín said that “it is a symbol of an identity of a people that are ever-changing, ever-evolving.” Because of this, the language to describe these people must be ever-evolving as well. As Lucas told me later, the term “might switch, or it might evolve, but we’re never going back to having just two options, and that in itself is enough to put ‘Latinx’ in the history books.”

The connection between “Latinx” and change made more sense to me when I considered it alongside Benjamín’s explanation of personal gender evolution. For gender theory workshops, they include a graphic in the presentation with text that reads: “the possibilities are limitless” superimposed over a picture of the cosmos. They told me with pride that this section of the presentation symbolically told the audience: “where you’re at in your gender now, be comfortable with it, but don’t feel like you’re stuck there.” As all of my interlocutors either have personal experience experimenting with pronouns and gendered language or know someone who does, they are familiar with the concept of change in this way. Thus, what “Latinx” brings to this community, and why it is so important, is not a term that will last, but the idea that change can occur within and be supported by language. As Daniel told me, the main goal of “Latinx” “is to

be forward thinking. To be inclusive of the people we have now, to be inclusive of the people that have yet to come, and inclusive of the people who could not be their true authentic selves in the past.”

Still found myself asking: why the “x”? Could a word like “Latine,” with a different suffix, have been just as effective as a third option to “Latina” and “Latino”? Due to the brevity of this paper, I cannot pretend to offer a comprehensive answer to either of these questions. However, I will argue here that for the purposes of radical linguistic change, a word like “Latine” would not have been as impactful as “Latinx.” This is because the “x” disrupts the flow of the Spanish language in a way the “e” would not. Early on in my interview with Benjamín, when I asked what “Latinx” means to them, they told me that one of the reasons they use the term is because it honors the indigenous languages that were condemned during Spanish colonial occupation. They continued by saying: “linguists will like, push-back on the term “Latinx.” One, criticizing that it’s not a real word, which is not true because it is. Two, that it is difficult to use or hard to pronounce in Spanish. But that is because it is inherently designed to challenge the Spanish dominance that has effectively eradicated many indigenous languages.” Therefore, “Latinx” is more than just a third option. It opposes the traditional sound system of Spanish in an obvious – and to some, offensive – manner. Yet it is from this disruption that the word invites change.

In her 2005 article<sup>4</sup> entitled “Language Rights,” anthropologist Vilma Santiago-Irizarry writes that “homogeneity is a prime component of nationalism, operating as a necessary illusion

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<sup>4</sup> This source was published online without page numbers, and is available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195156003.001.0001/acref-9780195156003-e-476>.

for dominant groups to maintain existing power relations.” Although conceptions of nationhood are illusory, a nation’s inhabitants are socialized into believing this homogenous community exists, which then leads to practices that attempt to actualize this ideology in the world around them. This relates to anthropologist Beatriz Reyes-Foster’s discussion of the colonial matrix of power, as she describes it as “the way in which coloniality is produced and reproduced through a matrix of social phenomena” (2018:31). Human actors unknowingly perform according to this social matrix, which includes constructs such as language, culture, religion, and authority. Social order, and consequently cultural hegemony, are preserved through the continuous use of and adherence to these social phenomena. In other words, they function collectively to support the idealized nation and its norms. A term such as “Latinx,” that directly contradicts and disrupts this matrix through language, is capable of exposing and questioning this system’s framework, thus opening up opportunities for evaluation and change. As such, I propose that “Latinx” supports linguistic evolution because it exists as a radical, third option to “Latina” and “Latino,” and the controversy it brings draws attention to and challenges the ideological legacy of Spanish colonialism that upholds purist ideals of cultural and linguistic homogeneity.

### **“Latinx”: A Conversation Starter**

Although I spend time in these pages situating “Latinx” within theory, I do not wish to remove it from the real people that have given it meaning. I would like to remind the reader that the term is not an unknowable abstraction that exists in a vacuum, but rather a tangible identity lived and performed by material actors. After all, linguistic signs are the product of historical and social contexts mediated by human agency. So, when I speak of “Latinx” as it relates to

resistance, self-making, and solidarity, I must emphasize that the term only relates to these important concepts insofar as the people who use the term stand for and value them.

Viewing “Latinx” in this way allows us to see again that the importance of the term stems from its ability to acknowledge and support personal exploration and social evolution. In the words of Lucas: “the term ‘Latinx’ is symbolic of a conversation, dialogue, and movement that’s here to stay and is continuously evolving.” While Lucas, like my other interlocutors, passionately explained the ideological implications of “Latinx,” they made sure to underscore its connection to the community:

“What’s most important about the term ‘Latinx’ is not the trajectory of the *term* but the trajectory of the *community* that finds solace in it. Because words are words, but the meaning we give them has power, so if we get caught up solely in the trajectory and not in the community that is forging this trajectory, then we lose the reason for the word in the first place.”

In much the same way that “Latinx” brings queer Latina/o/x identities into view, rather than into being, the term also renders visible the conversation this community attempts to share with the public at large. Although the term itself may evolve or be replaced, Lucas told me that it is significant because “it is the one of the most successful attempts of the reclamation of our acceptance of ourselves.”

As an attempt to bring about this shared dialogue, we can conceptualize “Latinx” as a precursor to future change. To this effect, Daniel told me that “[‘Latinx’] is a start. We’re not gonna fix everything just by going around ‘latinx, latinx, latinx,’ right? So it’s not the end all be all, but it’s a start, and it starts a conversation.” For Jaslene, the term invites these discussions and interest because when people see the term for the first time, on shirts or on posters, they

become curious and tell their friends: “Mira, I saw this person and I saw this, have you ever heard of this before?” She continued by saying “it makes people google, it makes people research, and that’s when it happens, that’s how we can create interest and greater awareness.” Thus, “Latinx” helps make these ideas visible because it invites interest and opens up opportunities for education and awareness.

To close this chapter, I will share a quote from anthropologist Ana Celia Zentella’s (1995:14) explanation of an *anthropolitical* linguistic framework: “if we listen to what *speakers* tell us, not just phonemes, morphemes, syntactic constituents and discourse markers, we learn about the forces that control speakers’ lives and shape their linguistic repertoires.” I argue that “Latinx,” as a linguistic sign that can be interacted with and used, functions to bring the identities it represents into the awareness of the larger public, thus opening up opportunities for discourse, and the beginning of social change.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued the term “Latinx” symbolizes a personal and political identity. As a personal identity, the term confers the existence of nonbinary/non-conforming gender identities in a way that may be embodied and performed by Latina/o/x Spanish-speakers. In turn, this individual awareness allows for the creation of communal solidarity, which I refer to as a queer *latinidad* (Rodríguez 2003). The community created within queer *latinidad* is further validated and materialized through the agency of Latinx-identifying individuals, as they bring visibility to the term and its significations by displaying its written form on physical objects.

The political connotations of “Latinx” offer a distinct way for us to conceptualize identity categories. Though public opinion on the “x” morpheme is divided, I maintain in my argument that far from representing the unknowable, it evokes tangible sentiments of minority allyship, and linguistic and ideological evolution. In this way, “Latinx” disrupts the current order of identity classification by promoting an unstable, and malleable identity label that is meant to accommodate future cultural developments.

By current order, I am referring to that found within the U.S. political landscape, which is heavily populated with “census identities” designed to fix legal significance to groups. At the beginning of my research, “Latinx” was still fairly new and uncommon even within the United States. However, the term has since gained some popularity in certain pockets of Latin America. I believe that these locations would be fertile ground for future investigation, as it would allow “Latinx” to be considered outside an American context. Future work should also focus on how “Latinx” is employed in Spanish during interaction to see if the sign is being pronounced by

Spanish-speakers with an anglicized (or foreign) pronunciation or if it has been (or is being) adapted to reflect indigenous pronunciations of “x.” For future consideration both within the United States and abroad, I believe further ethnographic approaches with participant observation would be fruitful in understanding how the term is used in natural, casual interactions between the researcher and the participant as well as the participant and their larger community.

By grounding my analysis of “Latinx” in theory put forth by scholars of semiotics and cultural and linguistic anthropology, I have added the term to the ongoing discussions of identity construction and semiotic agency. To this end, I hope to contribute a greater understanding of how resistance work may take place through the mobilization of linguistic signs, and how these signs may also be used to forge new areas of community and belonging.

Through the process of researching and writing about “Latinx,” I have greatly augmented my knowledge of semiotic and linguistic anthropological analysis and theory. As a current anthropology student and aspiring linguist, this endeavor has allowed me to gain valuable experience in research that I know will aid me in future projects. For parting words, I would like to quote Lucas again as they say: “words are words, but the meaning we give them has power,” as a reminder to myself and the reader to consider language in the context of its speakers in future pursuits.

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