



Is it Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, Latina, Latinx?

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If you are like me, you want to be mindful and respectful of a person's race and culture. You want to respect how they may identify and educate yourself around terms that are outdated, discriminatory, racist, or not appropriate. I wanted to take this opportunity to learn about the various terminology used here in the United States. It may not be the terminology that you might believe is most appropriate.

People often will ask which label is the most appropriate: The answer to this question varies. A person may identify differently based upon what information is being sought. The term "Hispanic" refers to any person in the Americas (North, Central, South) and Spain who speak Spanish are descents of Spanish-speaking communities. "It was coined in the 1970s by the U.S. Census Bureau to offer a pan-ethnic name for peoples such as Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and others, whose social, economic and political needs were often ignored" (Campos, 2021). This was in response to the U.S. Census in which these people were considered White. This designation is still on the Census form today as Hispanic or Latino, and not Hispanic or Latino by race. This term was to allow for an opportunity to acknowledge a population that was largely ignored while counting them as "American."

These developments led to some communities identifying as hyphenated such as Mexican-American, and Cuban-American. Chicano is a term related to the Mexican-American civil rights movements and was originally a slur for people of Mexican descent (Campos, 2021). Chicano soon became a term synonymous with national pride, and many people identify with this term, including in the desert Southwest United States, Texas, and Mexico. This is different than being considered Mexican, which is a citizen of Mexico, and sometimes these terms overlap (*What is the Difference Between "Hispanic," "Mexican," "Latino," and "Chicano"?*).

Latino/Latina is a term that refers to anyone who is from Latin America, which includes Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Central, and South America. This term is also inclusive of any person who has parents, grandparents, etc., who are from this area of the world (*What is the Difference Between "Hispanic," "Mexican," "Latino," and "Chicano"?*). Latino/Latina as a term gained popularity in the 1990s/2000s. Although not perfect, some who utilize this term admit that it is preferred rather than using the term Hispanic.

"Latinx is essentially a non-binary form of Latino or Latina." (Campos, 2021). The use of this term comes from the desire to move away from the masculine or feminine form that is used in the Spanish language. Although there is not a specific timeframe that this term originates from, it is widely accepted that Generation Z, some younger millennials, and the influence of social media have led to this term being used more. Others use this term as a way to move past the gender roles that some in the community still may ascribe to. Latinx allows for an opportunity to join with those in the LGBTQI+ community or those who do not want to use terms that could be considered marginalizing.

I hope that you have found this educational like I did when researching for this piece. I will leave with the questions posed by Antonio Campos “in choosing what term to use, everyone has to ask themselves: Who is included and who is excluded? And what do we hope to accomplish when we bring forth a word and speak its power?” (Campos, 2021).

Resources

Campos, A. (2021, October 6). *What’s the difference between Hispanic, Latino and Latinx?* University of California. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/choosing-the-right-word-hispanic-latino-and-latinx>.

What is the Difference Between “Hispanic,” “Mexican,” “Latino,” and “Chicano”? SpanishDict. (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2021, from <https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/what-is-the-difference-between-hispanic-mexican-latino-and-chicano>.