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"Latino" or "Hispanic"? The Sociodemographic Correlates of Panethnic Label Preferences among U.S. Latinos/Hispanics

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Abstract

Despite different origins, "Hispanic" and "Latino" are often used interchangeably to describe people with Latin American ancestry in the United States. Nevertheless, research consistently finds around half of U.S. Latinos/Hispanics prefer one term over the other. What factors explain these differences and account for no preference at all? Drawing on the 2013 National Survey of Latinos, we find college graduates, non-Mexicans, and first- and second-generation immigrants, and respondents in the western United States have higher relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic." Those who identify *racially* as "Hispanic/Latino" also opt for "Latino," suggesting it is associated with racialization in the U.S. context. Conversely, gender, citizenship status, language use, and political affiliation do not explain specific panethnic label preference. We employ several theoretical approaches to provide insight on these findings, including (neo) colonization and internal colonialism, assimilation and racialization, and consciousness-raising.

Keywords

race, gender, and class, Latina/o sociology, international migration

Introduction

David E. Hayes-Bautista and Jorge Chapa's (1987) seminal *American Journal of Public Health* article called for standardized terminology to describe persons of Latin American descent residing in the United States, particularly among public health officials working with this population. The authors ultimately suggested the term "Latino"[1] over "Hispanic," as the former more closely aligns with political and geographic considerations articulated in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and U.S. geopolitical intervention in Latin America (see also Alcoff 2005). In the decades that followed, "Latino" became the term largely preferred by social scientists in the United States. As of 2018, twice as many U.S. academic programs in the social sciences (e.g., Ethnic Studies, Cultural Studies, and area-specific studies) used "Latino" in their titles compared with "Hispanic" (Blackmer Reyes N.d.).

However, the prominence of the term "Latino" in academia does not correspond with the preferences of Latinos/Hispanics[2] in the United States. Though roughly half of this population reports "no preference" between "Latino" and "Hispanic," research consistently finds that "Hispanic" is the most common *panethnic* term asserted by Latinos/Hispanics by a margin of at

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least two-to-one (Diaz McConnell and Delgado-Romero 2004; Fraga et al. 2012; Lopez 2013; Taylor et al. 2012). In fact, when asked to choose a specific term, a higher proportion of this group has consistently preferred "Hispanic" over "Latino" since the U.S. Census added "Latino" in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010; Taylor et al. 2012).

How members of this subgroup identify matters. The Latino/Hispanic population is now the largest non-white ethnoracial subgroup in the United States, having numerically surpassed African Americans by the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Although population growth has slowed over the past decade, recent estimates from U.S. Census Bureau suggest Latinos/Hispanics represented 18 percent of the population as of 2018 (Flores, Lopez, and Krogstad 2020). Given their increasing share of the U.S. population, how Latinos/Hispanics self-identify in panethnic terms undoubtedly has implications for partisan politics, policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, business leaders, and other stakeholders that work closely with this population. After all, as Fraga and colleagues (2012) note, identity labels "have consequences for the belief and attitudes individuals hold and the way that individuals act" (p. 76). Perhaps more important, these consequences are political because they affect how people view themselves collectively and make decisions about collective action (Fraga et al. 2012). Label preference is not only an outward representation and assertion of individual identity, but also a connection to one's heritage and a basis for political consciousness. As Linda Martín Alcoff (2005) reminds readers, "ethnic names are always bound up with struggles of power and equality" (p. 399).

How Latinos/Hispanics self-identify also has implications for the sociological study of race and ethnicity. Ethnoracial identities are constantly in flux: They are functions of both assignment and assertion, and vary in their influence on the social lives of in-group members (Cornell and Hartman 2007). Moreover, there is a clear disconnect between the prevalent use of the term "Latino" in the social sciences and preference for "Hispanic" among the public. What factors help account for this incongruence? Despite an extensive literature on panethnicity, to our knowledge, research has not examined the mechanisms of "Latino" versus "Hispanic" identity formation, nor have scholars advanced a theoretical model articulating why some groups prefer one term over the other. Using this dearth in the literature as a starting point, this article employs a multivariable approach to identify the sociodemographic factors that best explain preference for the term "Latino"[3] over "Hispanic." We also examine the correlates of no preference for either label.

Background

"Hispanic" and "Latino" are broad panethnic terms used to describe persons of Latin American, Iberian, or Spanish-speaking descent residing within the United States. Although policymakers, the public, and members of these groups often use these terms synonymously, each possesses a unique history and describes different ancestral origins. The term "Hispanic" generally includes people with heritage from Spanish-speaking countries throughout Latin America as well as Spain. However, "Latino" excludes people of Spanish origin outside of the Western Hemisphere, but includes those with ancestry from non-Spanish-speaking Latin American countries (Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987). Below we provide a brief history of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" before proceeding to a discussion of the sociodemographic characteristics associated with these terms as articulated in the literature. We follow by providing a description of the evolution of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" among diverse and stratified Latino/Hispanic groups and suggest several possible theoretical frameworks for understanding specific panethnic label preference. We then describe our sample and analytic strategy used to address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What sociodemographic factors explain preference for the term "Latino" over "Hispanic"?

Research Question 2: What sociodemographic factors shape "No Preference"?

We conclude by highlighting our central findings and by discussing their implications for the sociology of race and ethnicity.

Early Classification Efforts

Despite constituting a nationality, the use of the term "Mexican" as a racial designation on the 1930 U.S. Census represented one of the earliest efforts by the federal government to classify and enumerate people of Latin American descent residing in the United States (Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987). At the time, community organizers and activists supported efforts to collect local-level data on the Mexican-origin population related to employment, educational attainment, poverty rates, and other measures of well-being. However, these stakeholders categorically rejected the non-white racial classification of Mexicans institutionalized through the 1930 census and practiced by Census workers (Mora 2014b:85). Furthermore, many Mexican-origin persons in the United States were not Mexican nationals, and many did not identify as "Mexican," but rather as "Latin" due to the political prominence of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), particularly in Texas (Passel 2012). These factors led to notable data limitations associated with the inclusion of "Mexican" as a racial category on the 1930 census.

By the following decennial census, the federal government eliminated "Mexican" as a racial category due to grassroots mobilization, litigation, and data problems (Mora 2014b; Passel 2012) and opted to identify Mexican ethnicity by virtue of "mother tongue" or "principle language spoken in the home" (Escobar 1999:166). Strategies to count people of Latin American descent continued to evolve. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. Census incorporated different approaches, including Spanish language usage, Spanish surname, birthplace, and the birthplace of respondents' parents (Winnie 1960). By the 1970 census, the federal government introduced the term "Spanish heritage population" defined as (1) "Spanish surname *or* Spanish language in the five southwestern states," (2) "Puerto Rican birth or parentage in the three middle Atlantic States," or (3) "Spanish language in the remaining 42 states" (Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987:64).

The Emergence of "Hispanic"

Throughout the 1970s, activists, ethnic entrepreneurs, and the Census Bureau collaborated in the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish-Speaking People and in the Spanish Origin Advisory Committee to generate census questions that would better enumerate the Latin American descent population residing in the United States (Mora 2014b). These efforts led to the Federal Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Directive No. 15 in 1977, which continues to affect how Latinos/Hispanics are classified by the federal government. First, it defined Spanish and Latin American origin as an ethnicity rather than a race, and second, it stipulated that race and ethnicity should be documented separately.

Because of Directive No. 15, the OMB introduced a new term that had not previously been used in an official capacity: "Hispanic." Hispanic was defined as "A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South America or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987:64). The term "Hispanic" has remained in use since its introduction on the 1980 census. Another important change was the move toward self-reported identification as "Hispanic" rather than relying on indirect measures or Census workers' subjective interpretations of respondents' ethnoracial backgrounds (Passel 2012).

The addition of term "Hispanic" to the U.S. Census did not emerge in a vacuum, nor was it solely a consequence of the imposition of a governmental classification system (Gómez 1992; Mora 2014a). Laura Gómez (1992) contended that the rise of the term must be understood against

the backdrop of generational and political change within the Mexican American community in the United States, which represented the largest Latino/Hispanic subgroup in the country at the time. The Mexican-American Generation (1940–1965), which was oriented toward accommodationist politics (i.e., making concessions to dominant society and a willingness to embrace assimilation), led to the more radical Chicano Movement Generation (late 1960s–1970s), which actively resisted assimilative pressures, followed by a more moderate Hispanic Generation coinciding with a rise of conservatism in the United States in the 1980s. Gómez's research highlighted how internal forces, such as those by ethnic political elites, played an active role in promoting the term "Hispanic" over others used by the Mexican-origin population, including "Chicano." Some Mexican American political elites, who saw themselves as ethnic middlemen bridging the gap between their communities and dominant society, found the term "Hispanic" to be politically advantageous on a national level. They anticipated the term would help unify Mexican and non-Mexican Latinos/Hispanics and be considered a less radical option than "Chicano." Others outright rejected the imposition narrative and stressed that "Hispanic" was already being used as an identifier by constituents within their communities by the late 1970s.

Christina Mora also offered greater insight on the dynamic and reciprocal processes between external and internal forces that facilitated the proliferation of the term Hispanic. Mora (2014a) found that categories such as "Hispanic" "become institutionalized through a two-stage process as state actors and ethnic entrepreneurs (1) negotiate a classification's definition and (2) work together to popularize the category" (p. 183). She proceeded to note that dynamic cross-field effects are at the core of these stages in the "Hispanic" case, which have facilitated the proliferation and use of the term beyond official government forms. These reciprocal cross-field effects include "the development of boundary-spanning networks between state and non-state actors, the transposition of resources across fields, and the use of analogy and ambiguity as cognitive tools to describe and legitimate the new category" (Mora 2014a:183). Specifically, Mora argued that stakeholders attempted "to make Hispanic panethnicity seem less artificial by constructing analogies between panethnicity and race," namely by comparing the sociodemographic characteristics of Hispanics with those of other U.S. ethnoracial groups and by positioning Hispanics "as a distinct minority separate from whites" (Mora 2014a:198). Stakeholders also leveraged ambiguity to construct a more inclusive notion of Hispanic panethnicity. That is, the organizations Mora studied never explicitly articulated which specific Latin American subgroups were considered Hispanic nor the factors that made a person Hispanic beyond those used by the U.S. Census Bureau. In the broadest sense, anyone with Latin American ancestry "could be classified as Hispanic" (Mora 2014a:198–99).

Research by Gómez and Mora clearly demonstrates that the proliferation of the term Hispanic has been more complex than conceptualized in prior literature, which discussed the term as being largely imposed on people of Latin American descent by external forces, including government officials and the media (Gómez 1992). Nevertheless, as we discuss below, the origins of "Hispanic" are more rooted in assignment by outsiders when compared with those of the term "Latino," which have emerged through panethnic unity in local political activism (Melville 1988).

The Rise of "Latinos"

The increased use of the term "Hispanic" was a consequence of changes to federal governmental classification systems in consultation with national-level activists and political stakeholders. Conversely, the proliferation of the term "Latino" largely emerged at the local or regional level. For example, in the early 1990s, the *Los Angeles Times* was one of the only national newspapers that used "Latino" instead of "Hispanic" (Gómez 1992). However, not all regional subgroups actively supported the use of the term "Latino" as a panethnic identifier. Padilla (1985) offers the

example of a community leader in the Chicago neighborhood of Pilsen who preferred the term "Hispanic" over "Latino" because the latter includes people who do not speak Spanish.

Latino group consciousness began to expand in the 1990s with the rise of panethnic churches, civic organizations, and diversification of ethnic neighborhoods in large cities with multiple national-origin groups from Latin America. Spanish-language media also played a notable role in promoting and fostering Latino panethnicity (Dávila 2012; Rodriguez 1999). While some groups joined panethnic alliances through an evolution of community cohesion, others did so strategically to partner politically on issues such as labor, citizenship, Puerto Rican independence, the push for refugee aid, or a resistance to the Monroe Doctrine (de la Garza et al. 1992; Hayes-Bautista and Chapa 1987).

The increased use of the term "Latino" also corresponded with heightened criticisms of the "Hispanic" label. Many activists believed that "Hispanic" relied too heavily on the colonial relation to Spain, erasing the modern Latin American struggle and rise of unique mestizo cultures and identities (Alcoff 2005; Esquivel 2012; Gracia 2000). Others argued the term failed to acknowledge the important histories and cultural contributions of indigenous, African, and Asian peoples throughout Latin America. As such, the term "Latino" has been considered "the progressive choice over Hispanic" for several decades (Morales 2018:3).

Due to the new progressive political push, and "to reflect the growing popularity of the term" (Passel 2012:265), "Latino" was included in the 2000 Census in the following question: "Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?" By 2010, the question evolved into "Is this person of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?" and remained verbatim and separate from the race question on the 2020 Census (Cohn 2010; U.S. Census Bureau 2018).

In sum, there is little consensus regarding one specific label that effectively encompasses all people of Latin American descent residing in the United States. Having experimented with categories such as Spanish-Speaking, Spanish-Surnamed, Hispanic, Latino, and never finding an adequate term, civic and governmental organizations have defaulted to the broad catch-all "Hispanic/Latino" (Esquivel 2012; Mora 2014b).

The term "Hispanic" has gained acceptance over the past several decades. Public opinion polls consistently find Latinos/Hispanics identify as "Hispanic" at twice the rate of "Latino" (Fraga et al. 2012; Pew Research Center 2013; Taylor et al. 2012). The broader acceptance of "Hispanic" among Latinos/Hispanics has implications for the sociological understanding of race and ethnicity, as this case represents yet another example of how identities shift over time (Cornell and Hartman 2007). Given this consideration, the present article aims to shed light on the sociodemographic correlates associated with the preference for the term "Latino" over "Hispanic." We also examine the factors associated with no preference between these terms. Further research beyond the scope of this article may consider continuing to build on the work of Mora (2014a) to address the historical and sociological factors that have led "Hispanic" to become the preferred asserted panethnic identity of Latin American heritage in the United States. Nevertheless, the wider acceptance and use of "Hispanic" is likely a function of several factors, including (1) early collaborative efforts by state actors and ethnic entrepreneurs to negotiate the classification's definition and popularize the category (Mora 2014a, 2014b), (2) its longer history of inclusion on official federal and state forms when compared with other terms, (3) an effort to decouple the term from earlier progressive efforts while simultaneously calling attention to the problems similarly affecting Latinos/Hispanics across the country, and, as we discuss below, (4) the long-lasting legacy of Spanish colonization and the marginalization of indigenous and African influences throughout Latin America.

Established Predictors of Panethnic Label Preference

Although limited, prior research has suggested that national origin, political partisanship, and region within the United States are associated with *specific* panethnic label preference among

Latinos/Hispanics. Drawing on the 1989–1990 Latino National Politcal Survey, Jones-Correa and Leal (1996) examined panethnic labels as "primary" as well as "primary or secondary identifiers" among Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, and Cuban-origin respondents. The authors found low rates of "primary" panethnic identification across all three, as respondents identified first and foremost with their specific national-origin group. However, the authors noted variation between groups when respondents were allowed to chose a "secondary identifier" (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996:223). For example, when considering the two terms seperately, the authors found that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans selected "Hispanic" as a "primary or secondary identifier" at higher rates than Cubans, while a larger proportion of Puerto Ricans chose "Latino" than Mexicans and Cubans. These findings suggest Puerto Ricans are more accepting of broad panethnic lables as a secondary identifier compared with the two other groups. Furthermore, Mexicans opted for "Latino" at much lower rates than both Puerto Ricans and Cubans, but preferred "Hispanic" at higher rates than Cubans.

Researchers have also argued that the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are largely politicized in the United States, with progressives preferring the term "Latino" and conservatives opting for "Hispanic" (Alcoff 2005; Shorris 2005). Alcoff (2005) delineated "Hispanic" and "Latino" along partisan lines based on George W. Bush's use of the term "Hispanic" and Al Gore's preference for "Latino." Earl Shorris (2005) advanced this idea, arguing that "Latino" represents the political left and "Hispanic" the political right, while Ed Morales (2018) noted that "Latino" represents the more progressive of these panethnic labels. Nevertheless, there is no systematic empirical evidence in the literature specifically supporting the assertion that panethnic label preference is associated with political ideology or party preference (de la Garza 2004).

Some work has pointed to geographic differences in the preference for "Hispanic" versus "Latino." For instance, in 1997 the OMB argued against the recommendation to retain the single term "Hispanic" on the 2000 Census because "Hispanic is commonly used in the eastern portion of the United States, whereas Latino is commonly used in the western portion" (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1997:58786). Data gathered through the 2000 Census do not fully support this claim. Diaz McConnell and Delgado-Romero's (2004) analysis of 2000 Census data found that Latinos/Hispanics in Texas, New Mexico, and California overwhelmingly preferred "Hispanic," while those in New York opted to identify as "Latino" (p. 306). Nevertheless, the authors did not determine whether these geographic differences were a function of specific national origin subgroup preferences within an area rather than local historical or geographical context. Additional research is required to parse out preferences by geography when accounting for factors such as national origin, socioeconomic status, generation since immigration, and political affiliation. To the best of our knowledge, no study to date has used a multivariable approach to examine preferences for "Latino" relative to "Hispanic" nor advanced a theoretical explanation for the discrepancy in preferences.

"Hispanic" and "Latino" Subjectivities: Meanings Attached to Panethnic Labels

While there is a vast qualitative literature focused on the meanings and subjectivities of national-origin identities (Itzigsohn, Giorguli, and Vazquez 2005; Marrow 2003; Valle 2020, for example) as well as panethnic identities broadly speaking (Diaz McConnell and Delgado-Romero 2004; Martínez and Gonzalez 2020; Portes and MacLeod 1996), prior studies have largely failed to differentiate between the *specific* meanings attached to the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" (for exceptions, see Malott 2009 and Reyes 2018). Doing so is sociologically important because the meanings of ethnic labels "invoke specific genealogical or legitimating narratives" (Alcoff 2005:400).

Despite this dearth in the literature, many scholar-activists have been particularly outspoken against the term Hispanic, which offers greater insight as to why the term is used less frequently

in some academic circles. For instance, author Sandra Cisneros noted "people who use that word Hispanic don't know why they're using it. . . . To me it's like a slave name. I'm a Latina" (Fears 2003:3). Novelist Luis J. Rodriguez has also embraced "Latino" because the term Hispanic "is about people from Spain. . . . I'm Mexican, and we were conquered by people from Spain, so it's kind of an insult" (Fears 2003). For David Abalos (2007), "Hispanic" represents anti-mestizaje sentiment, white-washing, and a preference for all things Spanish. He argued that "Latino" best represents the diversity of Latin American ancestry "because it better captures the intermarriage of the European and the indigenous cultures and races" (Abalos 2007:72). Similarly, Linda Alcoff contended that "Hispanic" neglects the legacy of U.S. colonialism throughout Latin America "in favor of a weaker cultural and more distant historical reference" to Spanish colonization, while the term "Latino" distinctly recognizes "present colonial and neo-colonial conditions that structure relations between the . . . Americas" (p. 405). Conversely, Margarita Melville speculated that "Latino" should be the preferred term among Mexicans and Puerto Ricans for whom the fight for independence from Spain was the most difficult. Following this logic, and consistent with a (neo) colonial framework, it is plausible that people with origins from countries with a relatively recent history of U.S. military, political, and economic intervention—such as Puerto Ricans or Central Americans—prefer the term "Latino" over "Hispanic." Common themes undergirding these subjective meanings of "Latino" identity include a conscious connection to Latin America, its history of colonization, its geographies, and the diversity of the people who inhabit the region (see Reyes 2018 for a discusion of the meanings college students attach to these lables).

Compared with those vehemently opposing the term Hispanic in favor of a "Latino" identity, we found little published research about the meanings of a contemporary "Hispanic" identity specifically. An exception is the well-established literature on the use of the term *Hispano* in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Historically, "Hispano" has been used by those claiming to be descendants of early Spanish colonizers and settlers. Perhaps more important, this identity, along with the self-identifier Spanish American, has largely been asserted in these states as a way to differentiate one's self from Puebloans and Mexicans (Acuña 2000; Gonzales 1997). Comparisons can be made between the historically used term *Hispano* and more recent conceptualizations of "Hispanic" since its addition to the 1980 Census: both place an emphasis on Spain, with preference for the term inferring a strong attachment to Spanish ancestry, the Spanish language, and a Spanish surname above all else. In a similar vein, a more recent study by Salgado (2020) found that Mexican Americans in New Mexico often identify as "Hispanic" to emphasize their "Spanish heritage within the history of New Mexico" and to distance themselves "from stigmatized Mexican immigrants" (p. 179).

Some Latinos/Hispanics may prefer the term "Hispanic" because it is seen as less radical and more practical than other labels. Gómez (1992) suggested the transition from the use "Chicano" to "Hispanic" among people of Mexican descent was partially motivated by local officials searching for a more pragmatic term that appealed to a broader audience. Rodolfo Acuña (2000) likewise argued that the term "Hispanic" appealed to middle-class Mexican Americans who were alienated "by the fervor and apparent radicalism of the 1960s Chicano Movement" (p. 408), though working-class people opted instead to identify on national origin terms (e.g., "Mexican" or "Mexican American"). This may help explain why Mexicans may be more accepting of "Hispanic" when compared with members of other Latino/Hispanic subgroups.

While neither Acuña nor Gómez offered a specific explanation as to why Mexican Americans may prefer the term "Hispanic" relative to "Latino" or vice versa, Acuña's internal colonialism approach emphasizes that Mexican Americans' history of colonization and internalized oppression within the United States has led many to value Spanish and European aspects of their history and identity while rejecting indigenous and African elements. Zimmerman (1988) similarly equates "Hispanic" to everything Spanish, "*es decir, lo blanco, lo Europeo*" [that is to say, the white, the European] and implicitly trying to hide darker and mixed heritage (p. 177). Therefore,

in addition to placing an emphasis on the Spanish language, "Hispanic" represents an ethnic label that actively excludes indigenous, African, and Asian histories in the Americas and represents strong attachment to Spanish heritage.

Toward a Theory of Panethnic Label Preference

The existing literature has extensively discussed the emergence of panethnicity among people of Latin American descent in the United States (see Martínez and Gonzalez 2020 for a comprehensive overview). However, theorizing *specific* panethnic label preference poses a notable challenge, particularly as it relates to somewhat recent panethnic identifiers such as "Hispanic" and "Latino." Our aim here is to offer initial points of departure that will allow sociologists to move toward a comprehensive theory of panethnic label preference. We contend that greater insights can be gained by approaching this puzzle through several different though interrelated theoretical lenses, including (neo)colonial and internal colonialism frameworks (Acuña 2000; Alcoff 2005), the assimilation and racialization perspectives (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993), and a consciousness-raising approach (Alcoff 2005; Morales 2018; Reyes 2018; Shorris 2005).

As prior research has suggested, the (neo)colonial approach considers the recency and intensity of U.S. geopolitical involvement in Latin America. This framework argues that people from countries affected by more recent U.S. geopolitical intervention post-Spanish independence (e.g., Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America) may opt for "Latino" over "Hispanic." Clearly, there has been tremendous variation in the United States' economic, geopolitical, and military intervention throughout Latin America over the past 175 years. For instance, though Mexico lost nearly half of its territory as the result of the U.S. invasion of Mexico and the subsequent Mexican-American War (1846–1848), it has forged a close though asymmetrical economic relationship with the United States for the past century (e.g., the Bracero Program, post-1986 unauthorized immigration, the North American Free Trade Agreement, etc.). While potentially devastating, economic manipulation is vastly distinct from political and military intervention. To this end, Mexico has not faced a U.S. military intrusion since General John J. Pershing's 1916 "Punitive Expedition" to northern Mexico in search of General Francisco "Pancho" Villa. On the other hand, U.S. political and military intervention in the 1970s and 1980s in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua has been well documented (Gonzalez 2000; Jonas and Rodriguez 2014; Massey 2020). Similarly, Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated U.S. territory, has endured a contentiously imposed relationship with the United States since 1898, including a decades-old independence movement and intense recent debates over merits of U.S. statehood versus remaining a commonwealth. A (neo)colonial approach would suggest that the recency and intensity of U.S. geopolitical intervention within Central America and the Caribbean serves as a factor fostering a "Latino" identity, as it represents an important commonality uniting people with ancestry from these regions residing within the United States (Alcoff 2005).

Although related, internal colonialism directs the analysis inward on how Latinos/Hispanics, especially those of Mexican origin, have been constructed as colonial subjects within the United States, particularly in former Mexican territories ceded after the Mexican-American War (Acuña 2000). This perspective contends that as colonial subjects and second-class citizens in their homelands, Mexicans and subsequent Mexican immigrants have been socialized to reject their indigenous, African, and *mestizo* origins in favor of identities perceived as holding greater social status, in this case, those denoting a connection to Europe (Acuña 2000). In addition, despite the prevailing official ideology of non-racism in Mexican society promulgated by José Vasconcelos's (1925) problematic concept of *mestizaje*, the dominant racial-ethnic group in contemporary Mexico continues to be largely comprising light-skinned individuals of Spanish ancestry, with lighter skin and Spanish phenotypes being associated with privilege and status (Fortes de Leff 2002; Sue 2013). Identifying as such might represent a path to power in the minds of many. Considering these

internal colonization processes, it is plausible people of Mexican origin are less likely to embrace "Latino" than "Hispanic" compared with people from other Latin American countries.

Nevertheless, other internal political factors must be given consideration. As previously discussed, Gómez's (1992) research found that the term "Hispanic" gained early popularity among Mexican Americans as an alternative to the more radical label "Chicano," with some using the term as far back as the 1970s. Given considerations articulated in the (neo)colonial and internal colonialism approaches, coupled with insights gained from Gómez's work, we pose the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Respondents of Mexican origin will have lower relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared to Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Salvadorans.

Specific panethnic label preference must also be understood in connection to broader assimilation and racialization processes. For instance, preference for the term "Hispanic" may increase as generation-from-immigration increases. As one assimilates or integrates into the American mainstream they may opt for a "Hispanic" panethnic label due to its normalization within dominant society and privileged position on governmental forms, in political targeting, and in advertising campaigns. This may be particularly the case among Latinos/Hispanics who identify *racially* as "white" and are perceived as "white" by members of the majority. For white-passing Latinos/Hispanics whose families have been in the United States for several generations, a "Hispanic" identity may mean little more than a symbolic connection to Latin America or Spain. Nevertheless, not all Latinos/Hispanics are wholly accepted by dominant society or fully integrate into the American mainstream due to their structural positions, racialization, and the discrimination they experience in the United States (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993). The racialization of non-white Latinos/Hispanics—particularly those who feel they do not fit into the existing U.S. Census racial categories—is exemplified by the 37 percent of Latinos/Hispanics that chose "some other race" on the 2010 census, which is a rate higher than any other group (Parker et al. 2015). In this case, it is possible that Latinos/Hispanics who do not identify racially as "white" may embrace a "Latino" ethnoracial identity (Flores-González 2017) given their racialization in the U.S. context as well as the term's emphasis on diversity in Latin America and its origins in local panethnic unity. As such, we hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** First- and second-generation immigrants will have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with third-generation-plus immigrants.
>
> **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Respondents who identify racially as non-white will have higher odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with those who identify as "white."

Much of the existing literature frames panethnic identities as primarily political, with panethnicity serving as a foundation for collective action and political mobilization (Martínez and Gonzalez 2020). With regard to specific panethnic labels, prior research has suggested that "Hispanic" is associated with conservatism and "Latino" more closely connected to a progressive agenda. Although the literature does not articulate specific root causes affecting these political and partisan differences, we directly test these propositions by examining preference for each term according to respondents' political affiliation. We posit the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Democrat or Democrat-leaning respondents will have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with Republicans.

In addition to partisanship, educational attainment may serve as an important factor in raising consciousness about specific panethnic labels, their histories, and what they constitute. Indeed,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables (Weighted Data) (N = 5,028).

"The terms Hispanic and Latino are both used to describe people who are of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent. Do you happen to prefer one of these terms more than the other? If so, which term do you prefer, Hispanic or Latino?"

Variable	%
Latino	15
Hispanic	34
No preference	51

Source. 2013 National Survey of Latinos.

prior research has found that education leads to a heightened awareness of racial inequality and perceived discrimination (Portes and MacLeod 1996). It is possible that college-educated Latinos/Hispanics may be more attuned to the history of colonization and oppression in the Western Hemisphere over the past five centuries and will relate to an identity that better encompasses the diverse heritage of Latinos/Hispanics (Reyes 2018). The prevalent use of and preference for the term "Latino" in U.S. academia, particularly in the social sciences, certainly signals as much. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** College educated respondents will have higher relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with those without a college degree.

Data, Analytic Sample, and Measurement of Variables

In this article, we ask: (1) what sociodemographic factors best explain preference for the term "Latino" over "Hispanic?" and (2) what factors are associated with no preference for either term? We address our research questions by drawing on the Pew Research Center's 2013 National Survey of Latinos (NSL; N = 5,103). The NSL consists of a nationally representative sample of self-identified Latino/Hispanic adults residing in the United States. The survey was conducted by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) on behalf of the Pew Research Center from May 24 to July 28, 2013. Researchers drew the sample from all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Surveys were conducted via cell phones and landlines by bilingual staff. SSRS oversampled Latino/Hispanic-dominated areas and non-Mexican dominated areas. Researchers constructed and applied probability weights to account for oversampling and probability of selection (Pew Research Center 2013:1). The overall response rate for the full sample was 19.4 percent (Pew Research Center 2013:6).

Dependent Variables

Table 1 illustrates the weighted proportions for the dependent variable examined in our analyses. Surveyors read the following prompt: "The terms Hispanic and Latino are both used to describe people who are of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent. Do you prefer one of these terms more than the other? If so, which term do you prefer, Hispanic or Latino?" Roughly 15 percent preferred the term "Latino," while approximately 34 percent preferred "Hispanic." Over half, about 51 percent, had no preference at all.

Independent Variables

Table 2 provides the descriptions and weighted descriptive statistics for the independent variables we used to explain panethnic label preference based on a review of the literature. These

Table 2. Descriptions and Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables (Weighted & Imputed Data) (N = 5,028).

Variable	Description	Proportion	*SE*
Region			
West	R resides in West	0.41	(0.011)
Northeast	R resides in Northeast	0.15	(0.007)
North Central	R resides in North Central	0.08	(0.006)
South	R resides in South	0.36	(0.010)
Generation			
1st gen	R is a first-generation immigrant	0.56	(0.011)
2nd gen	R is a second-generation immigrant	0.19	(0.009)
3rd gen +	R is a third-generation immigrant or later	0.24	(0.009)
Identity			
People of your heritage	R most often describes themselves as their ancestral origin	0.55	(0.011)
Hispanic/Latino	R most often describes themselves as Hispanic or Latino	0.21	(0.009)
American	R most often describes themselves as an American	0.23	(0.009)
Depends	R stated "It depends"	0.02	(0.003)
Race			
White	R reports predominantly white race	0.48	(0.011)
Black	R reports predominantly black race	0.05	(0.005)
Asian	R reports predominantly Asian race	0.01	(0.002)
Hispanic/Latino	R reports predominantly Hisp/Lat race (non-read option)	0.17	(0.008)
Mixed race	R reports predominantly Mixed race (non-read option)	0.06	(0.005)
Other race	R reports predominantly other race	0.24	(0.010)
Citizen	R is a U.S. citizen by birth or naturalization	0.66	(0.010)
Female	R identifies as female	0.49	(0.011)
Age			
18–29	R is between 18 and 29 years of age	0.30	(0.011)
30–49	R is between 30 and 49 years of age	0.43	(0.011)
50–64	R is between 50 and 64 years of age	0.18	(0.008)
65+	R is 65 years of age or older	0.09	(0.005)
Language			
English dominant	R speaks English predominantly	0.25	(0.010)
Bilingual	R speaks both English and Spanish	0.36	(0.010)
Spanish dominant	R speaks Spanish predominantly	0.39	(0.010)
National origin			
Mexican	Majority of R's ancestors are from Mexico	0.61	(0.010)
Puerto Rican	Majority of R's ancestors are from Puerto Rico	0.10	(0.006)
Cuban	Majority of R's ancestors are from Cuba	0.04	(0.004)
Dominican	Majority of R's ancestors are from the Dominican Republic	0.04	(0.003)
Salvadoran	Majority of R's ancestors are from El Salvador	0.05	(0.005)
Other country	Majority of R's ancestors are from another Latin American country	0.17	(0.008)
College graduate	R's holds a college degree or higher	0.15	(0.007)
Political party			
Republican	R is or leans Republican	0.22	(0.009)
Democrat	R is or leans Democrat	0.59	(0.011)
Independent/Other	R is independent or affiliated with a 3rd party	0.19	(0.009)

Source. 2013 National Survey of Latinos.
Note. "R" denotes "respondent." Number of imputations (m) = 13.

variables include *Region*, *Generation*, *Race*, *Citizen*, *Female*, *Age*, *Language*, *National Origin*, *College Graduate*, and *Political Affiliation.* We also control for respondents' primary identity based on the following question asked in the survey: "People sometimes use different terms to describe themselves. In general, which ONE of the following terms do you use to describe yourself MOST OFTEN?" Respondents chose between a "heritage" term based on the primary country of origin they provided earlier in the survey (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.), a Latino-Hispanic panethnic identifier (i.e., "Hispanic/Latino), or "American."

Multiple Imputation

We used multiple imputation to address the challenges of missing data. Multiple imputation reduces potential bias associated with listwise deletion[4] by replacing missing values with plausible ones based on the underlying structure of the data while accounting for statistical uncertainty through structured randomness (Li, Stuart, and Allison 2015). We conducted 13 imputations based on the percentage of missing observations for the variable in the analytic sample with the highest rate of missingness, as recommended by Graham, Olchowski, and Gilreath (2007). We imputed for the 75 missing responses on our dependent variable to preserve the original structure of the data, but omitted these cases prior to our inferential analysis (von Hippel 2009). Our final multiply-imputed analytic sample consisted of 5,028 cases. The appendix provides the results of our final model using listwise deletion to handle missing data. The results are consistent with those presented in our final model.

Analytic Approach

Because our dependent variable is not continuous nor logically ordered (i.e., *Hispanic, Latino, No Preference*), we used multinomial logistic regression to examine panethnic label preference (Long and Freese 2014). To test the assumption of independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA), we conducted a Small-Hsiao test of IIA assumption and confirmed that each outcome in our dependent variable is independent of the other alternatives (Long and Freese 2014; Small and Hsiao 1985). To confirm that the categories of our dependent variable are not collapsible, we executed a Wald test for combining alternatives (Long and Freese 2014). We found no evidence that the categories could be collapsed. We tested for multicollinearity on a linear probability version of our final model. We found no evidence of multicollinearity among the variables, as the highest variance inflation factor score did not exceed 3.92 (Menard 1995).[5]

Results

"Latino" versus "Hispanic"

Table 3 provides the results of our multinomial logistic regression analysis. Our results suggest important differences between respondents who prefer the label "Latino" to "Hispanic." Specifically, *National Origin*, *Generation*, *Race*, and *College Graduate* play the most notable roles in increasing the relative odds of a respondent preferring the term "Latino."

We hypothesized that respondents of Mexican origin would have lower relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Salvadorans (H1). Our findings are largely consistent with this hypothesis: we find that non-Mexicans, except for Dominicans, are more likely to prefer the term "Latino" to "Hispanic." Specifically, the relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" are 2.30 times higher (*relative odds ratio* = $\exp(\beta k)$) for Puerto Ricans ($p < 0.001$), 2.01 times higher for Cubans ($p < 0.001$), and 1.65 times higher for Salvadorans ($p < 0.01$) compared with Mexicans.

We had also suggested that first- and second-generation immigrants would have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with third-generation-plus respondents (H2). Our findings support this hypothesis. The relative odds of first-generation immigrants choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" are 2.05 times higher than those who are at least third generation ($p < 0.001$). We also find higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" among second-generation respondents compared with those who are third-generation-plus (2.00 times higher odds; $p < 0.001$).

Our third hypothesis (H3) posited that respondents who identified *racially* as non-white would have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with those who identified as "white." Our findings partially support this assertion: the relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" are 1.29 times higher for those who identified racially as "Hispanic/Latino" compared with "white" ($p < 0.005$).

Our fourth hypothesis (H4) posited that Democrat or Democrat-leaning respondents would have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with Republicans. We failed to find support for this hypothesis. We also believed that college-educated respondents would have higher relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" relative to those without a college degree (H5). We found that the relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "Hispanic" are 53 percent higher for respondents with at least a college degree when compared with those who have not completed college ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports our hypothesis.

The literature points to possible regional differences in specific panethnic label preference. We did not pose a specific hypothesis with regard to region because the guidance in the literature is mixed. Nevertheless, we did control for region in our analysis. We found that respondents in the "South" region, which includes Texas, have 42 percent lower relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with respondents in the "West" region, which includes California (or 1-exp(βk)). Finally, we find that primary identity (*Identity*), citizenship status (*Citizen*), and *Language* are unrelated to preference for one specific panethnic label over the other.

"Hispanic" versus "No Preference" and "Latino" versus "No Preference"

Table 3 also presents the multinomial logistic regression results comparing "Hispanic" versus "No Preference" and "Latino" versus "No Preference." Because the central aim of this article is to examine the sociodemographic correlates of *specific* panethnic label preference, we did not outline hypotheses associated with "No Preference" for either label. Nevertheless, we provide a general overview of key results, as doing so helps contextualize our findings regarding panethnic label preference.

First, we find specific panethnic label preference appears to largely apply to respondents who identify primarily on panethnic terms in the first place. That is, we find that respondents who identify primarily with a "heritage" term (i.e., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.) or as "American" have lower relative odds of preferring either "Hispanic" or "Latino" over "No Preference" compared with respondents who identified primarily as "Hispanic/Latino." Collectively, these findings suggest specific panethnic label preference is perhaps only relevant to people who identify primarily on panethnic terms.

Second, we find that generation-since-immigration shapes respondents' panethnic label preferences. First- and second-generation immigrants have *lower* relative odds of preferring "Hispanic" over "No Preference" compared with third-generation-plus respondents. Conversely, first- and second-generation immigrants have *higher* relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "No Preference" compared with third-generation-plus respondents.

Third, we find that racial identification matters. Our results suggest that respondents who identify as "black" or "Asian" have higher relative odds of preferring "Latino" over "No Preference" compared with white respondents. However, Asian respondents also have higher

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Coefficients for "Which Term Do You Prefer, Hispanic, Latino, or No Preference?" (Multiply Imputed) (N = 5,028).

Variable	"Latino" vs. "Hispanic"		"Hispanic" vs. "No preference"		"Latino" vs. "No preference"	
Region (Ref: West)						
Northeast	−0.230	(0.137)	0.111	(0.108)	−0.120	(0.129)
North Central	0.241	(0.192)	−0.477**	(0.148)	−0.236	(0.170)
South	−0.542***	(0.113)	0.189*	(0.082)	−0.353**	(0.108)
Generation (Ref: 3rd generation +)						
1st gen	0.719***	(0.179)	−0.310*	(0.127)	0.409*	(0.170)
2nd gen	0.694***	(0.166)	−0.289*	(0.115)	0.405**	(0.157)
Identity (Ref: Hispanic/Latino)						
People of your heritage	0.164	(0.106)	−0.616***	(0.086)	−0.452***	(0.104)
American	0.049	(0.142)	−0.725***	(0.105)	−0.676***	(0.136)
Depends	−0.253	(0.344)	−0.536*	(0.237)	−0.790*	(0.328)
Race (Ref: white)						
Black	0.124	(0.186)	0.228	(0.147)	0.353*	(0.179)
Asian	0.374	(0.446)	0.907*	(0.456)	1.281*	(0.508)
Hispanic/Latino	0.252*	(0.125)	−0.364***	(0.094)	−0.111	(0.116)
Mixed race	0.220	(0.191)	−0.208	(0.143)	0.012	(0.172)
Other race	0.241	(0.123)	−0.233*	(0.092)	0.007	(0.117)
Citizen	0.004	(0.121)	0.009	(0.096)	0.013	(0.114)
Female	−0.165	(0.088)	0.241***	(0.066)	0.075	(0.082)
Age (Ref: 18–29)						
30–49	0.265*	(0.125)	0.020	(0.091)	0.284*	(0.117)
50–64	0.165	(0.138)	0.231*	(0.100)	0.396**	(0.131)
65 or older	0.162	(0.161)	0.058	(0.118)	0.219	(0.152)
Language (Ref: Spanish dominant)						
English dominant	−0.235	(0.160)	−0.057	(0.118)	−0.292	(0.151)
Bilingual	−0.023	(0.111)	−0.078	(0.087)	−0.101	(0.105)
National origin (Ref: Mexico)						
Puerto Rican	0.834***	(0.197)	−0.416**	(0.141)	0.418*	(0.185)
Cuban	0.697***	(0.188)	−0.298*	(0.147)	0.398*	(0.174)
Dominican	−0.024	(0.219)	−0.340*	(0.158)	−0.364	(0.204)
Salvadoran	0.499**	(0.186)	−0.116	(0.155)	0.383*	(0.173)
Other country	0.468***	(0.119)	−0.056	(0.092)	0.412***	(0.113)
College graduate	0.422***	(0.115)	−0.270**	(0.089)	0.152	(0.105)
Political party (Ref: Republican)						
Democrat	0.193	(0.112)	−0.091	(0.084)	0.102	(0.106)
Independent/Other	−0.167	(0.150)	−0.225*	(0.106)	−0.392**	(0.143)

Source. 2013 National Survey of Latinos.
Note. Standard errors in parentheses. McFadden's pseudo R^2 = .034. Number of imputations (m) = 13. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 (two-tailed test).

relative odds of preferring "Hispanic" over "No Preference," while respondents who identify racially as "Hispanic/Latino" or as "Other Race" have lower relative odds. Fourth, we find that college-educated respondents have higher relative odds of expressing "No Preference" over "Hispanic" compared with respondents with less than a college degree. We find no education effect for "Latino" versus "No Preference."

Finally, national origin also appears to shape overall preference for specific panethnic labels. For instance, Puerto Rican-, Cuban-, and Dominican-origin respondents have lower relative odds of choosing "Hispanic" over "No Preference" compared with Mexican-origin respondents. On the other hand, all national origin categories, with the exception of Dominicans, have higher relative odds of choosing "Latino" over "No Preference" when compared with Mexicans.

Discussion

Despite their distinct origins, the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are often used interchangeably to describe people of Latin American origin residing in the United States. In fact, nearly half of Latinos/Hispanics express no preference between the two terms. Yet, survey research consistently finds that a nontrivial proportion of Latinos/Hispanics express a clear preference for one label over the other, noting that twice as many prefer the term "Hispanic." This suggests that "Hispanic" identity has become more "asserted" than when it was first introduced on the U.S. Census (Cornell and Hartman 2007).

We contribute to the literature by using a multivariable approach to identify the sociodemographic factors associated with specific panethnic label preferences among Latinos/Hispanics. Specifically, we focus on how U.S. region, generation-since-immigration, racial identification, citizenship status, language use, national origin, education, and political affiliation shape panethnic label preference. We also call attention to factors associated with no preference at all for these terms.

We find non-Mexicans, except for Dominicans, are more likely to identify as "Latino" than "Hispanic," which is consistent with (neo)colonialization theory. This approach contends people from countries with a more recent history of U.S. intervention and imperialism tend to embrace the term "Latino" over "Hispanic" (Alcoff 2005). This finding is also consistent with the internal colonialism perspective, which argues that powerful colonial processes have led some people of Mexican origin to fail to acknowledge their indigenous and African roots in favor of their Spanish ancestry, hence preferring the term "Hispanic" (Acuña 2000). Mexican-origin activists and students have led well-documented efforts to confront these internal colonial processes. For instance, the rejection of "Hispanic" in favor of an asserted "Chicano/a" identity was one of the many struggles undertaken by the Chicano Movement and student groups such as the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán (MEChA). These groups also advocated for the recognition of Chicano/as' indigenous ancestry and the struggles of indigenous peoples in the Americas, past and present. Parallels can be drawn here with the more recent intersectional Latinx movement, which has fought for the recognition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and nonbinary persons' subjectivities and experiences by opting for the more inclusive "Latinx" over "Latino" or "Latina/o" as well as an outright rejection of "Hispanic" as an identifier. Despite these efforts, people of Mexican descent continue to be more likely to prefer "Hispanic" compared with members of other Latin American-origin groups. Meanwhile, Dominican-origin respondents might be more likely to prefer "Hispanic" over "Latino" as a way to distinguish themselves from Haitians given the Dominican Republic's contentious relationship with Haiti. Haitians could be considered "Latino" but not "Hispanic." The long history of anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic, as documented in the extant literature (Howard 2007), might account for why Dominican-origin respondents favor "Hispanic" over "Latino," though this claim should be empirically tested in future research.

Our results also suggest that first- and second-generation immigrants have higher odds of preferring "Latino" over "Hispanic" compared with third-generation-plus respondents. First- and second-generation immigrants also gravitate toward "Latino" over "No Preference." On the other hand, third-generation-plus respondents have higher relative odds of preferring "Hispanic" over "No Preference" compared with both first- and second-generation immigrants. Consistent with

the assimilation framework, this finding implies that as one integrates into mainstream American society, they are more likely to opt for a “Hispanic” panethnic label due to its normalization within dominant culture and its privileged position on governmental forms, in political targeting, and in advertising campaigns. Moreover, this finding suggests that people with a more recent family history of immigration likely recall how U.S. geopolitics and neoliberal reform affected their family’s need to migrate, supporting the (neo)colonialism framework.

The segmented assimilation perspective, which is subsumed under the assimilation and racialization framework, argues that immigrants and their descendants may integrate into the United States by joining the American mainstream, experiencing downward social mobility, or experiencing selective acculturation within the context of ethnic enclaves (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993), with skin color and racialization playing important roles in shaping these outcomes. Complementary to the segmented assimilation perspective, we find that respondents who identify *racially* as “Hispanic/Latino” have higher relative odds of choosing “Latino” over “Hispanic” compared with those who identify as “white.” The United States is a racially stratified society (Bonilla-Silva 1997) within which Latinos/Hispanics are largely seen by the dominant group as non-white and unable or unwilling to integrate into U.S. society (Chavez 2013; Flores-González 2017). Placed against this backdrop, the term “Latino” seems to operate as a consequential (Telles and Sue 2019) ethnoracial minority identity (Flores-González 2017) set apart from the mainstream and motivated by discrimination and exclusion. Conversely, it is plausible that “Hispanic” identity represents little more than a presumed distant cultural connection to Spain for white-identifying, white-passing respondents who have assimilated into the American mainstream. Considering that integration into a host society is a dialectic process—requiring a host society’s willingness to accept a new group as much as necessitating transformations by the new group itself—it is logical that Latinos/Hispanic who identify racially as such are more likely to gravitate toward a “Latino” identity, which has much more progressive and grassroots origins that recognize the racial diversity of Latin America. We also find that people who identify racially as “black” or “Asian” (compared with “white”) have higher relative odds of preferring the term “Latino” over “No Preference,” which supports the racialization approach.

Much of the literature on panethnic identity argues that panethnicity is largely political in nature and that preferences for “Hispanic” or “Latino” fall along the political divide. Yet, we find little support for this partisanship or politicization argument. However, our findings are consistent with the consciousness-raising framework. We find that college graduates prefer the term “Latino” over “Hispanic.” We also find that college-educated respondents have higher relative odds of expressing no preference over the term “Hispanic.” These findings lend some support to the idea that a college education is associated with increased awareness of sociopolitical issues and the emergence of a salient “Latino” identity. As Latinos/Hispanics become better educated, they become conscious of racial inequality and racial stratification in the United States as well as U.S. political, economic, and military intervention throughout Latin America. In addition, as “Latino” is the preferred term among social scientists, Latino/Hispanic college graduates who have had some exposure to the Latino/a/x Studies curricula are likely to adopt the term and participate in framing the meanings of the identity (Reyes 2018; Padilla 1997).

Conclusion

While a majority of those with Latin American ancestry in the United States express no preference between the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino,” research finds that Latinos/Hispanics typically prefer “Hispanic” over “Latino.” There is also a discrepancy between the use of “Latino” in the

social sciences and the broader Latino/Hispanic population's preference for "Hispanic." What sociodemographic factors explain these patterns? And what helps explain no preference for either term? We find that college graduates, non-Mexicans, respondents who identify racially as "Hispanic/Latino," and more recent generations have higher relative odds of preferring the term "Latino" over "Hispanic." We also find that specific panethnic label preference seems to largely apply to those who identify primarily on panethnic terms.

We offered several theoretical frameworks that can be used to contextualize these findings: (neo)colonization and internal colonialism, assimilation and racialization (i.e., segmented assimilation), and consciousness-raising. Drawing on these frameworks to understand the social process of specific panethnic label preference represents an important contribution to the sociological study of race and ethnicity, as doing so helps bring larger structural forces, distinctive subgroups' histories, and individual experiences into dialogue to ultimately explain these preferences. Furthermore, there is a growing interest among scholars to interrogate white identity among non-European-origin populations (Twine and Gallagher 2008). We believe our empirical finding helps contribute to this line of inquiry by examining how panethnic label preferences are shaped by racial identities (e.g., white-identifying respondents being more likely to identify as "Hispanic").

Similar to people of Latin American descent, people of African origin in the United States have fought to redefine labels "to assert their group standing and aid in their struggle for racial equality" (Smith 1992:513). The preferred terms among people of African descent have continued to evolve. For example, The Black Power movement altered the dominant discourse about blackness, advocated for Black Pride, and helped usher the transition away from the term "Negro" in favor of "black." However, research in the 1990s found that after the decline of the Black Power movement, the term "black" began to be used without deep assigned meaning, and that people "appeared to have no particular ideological reason for choosing that term" (Speight, Vera, and Derrickson 1996:47). Our findings suggest a parallel between the use of the panethnic label "Hispanic" and research in the 1990s on the use of the term black. On the other hand, Speight and colleagues (1996) found that "African-American" was specifically chosen "as a sign of empowerment and political consciousness" (p. 48). Moreover, "African-American" was associated with self-determination and strong "symbolic, political, and cultural" meanings for the users" (p. 47). These findings are similar to the factors associated with the rise of the term "Latino" as noted in our analysis. Collectively, this body of research represents a clear example of how ethnoracial identities are constantly made and remade.

The present study possesses limitations that future research could attempt to overcome. First, we did not have access to direct measures of phenotype or skin color, nor perceived discrimination against respondents. As our theoretical frames and findings suggest, these factors likely play important roles in shaping one's preference for "Latino" versus "Hispanic" or vice versa. Second, though we draw on several theoretical frameworks to contextualize individual-level preferences for one panethnic term over the other, we did not have measures of the salience or "thickness" of how these identities affect respondents' everyday lives (Cornell and Hartman 2007). As such, additional research is needed to understand the roles of phenotype, discrimination, and racial exclusion in producing two very different outcomes and the salience of those outcomes: the preference for a largely symbolic identity (i.e., "Hispanic") versus the preference for a more consequential ethnoracial identity (i.e., "Latino"). Scholars' understanding of specific panethnic label preference would also benefit from the use of systematic research methods to examine the subjective meanings underlying the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic," as this is something that has been largely overlooked in the extant literature. Finally, identities are constantly in flux. Future research should consider how, if at all, preferences for these terms change across the life course.

Appendix

Multinomial Logistic Regression Coefficients for "Which Term Do You Prefer, Hispanic, Latino, or No Preference?" (Listwise Deletion) ($N = 4,422$).

	"Latino" vs. "Hispanic"		"Hispanic" vs. "No preference"		"Latino" vs. "No preference"	
Region (Ref: West)						
Northeast	−0.242	(0.146)	0.088	(0.115)	−0.155	(0.137)
North Central	0.195	(0.206)	−0.527***	(0.158)	−0.332	(0.182)
South	−0.563***	(0.119)	0.187*	(0.088)	−0.375**	(0.115)
Generation (Ref: 3rd generation +)						
1st gen	0.689***	(0.188)	−0.279*	(0.134)	0.409*	(0.180)
2nd gen	0.683***	(0.173)	−0.309*	(0.120)	0.373*	(0.164)
Identity (Ref: Hispanic/Latino)						
People of your heritage	0.226*	(0.111)	−0.713***	(0.091)	−0.487***	(0.110)
American	0.013	(0.149)	−0.782***	(0.111)	−0.769***	(0.144)
Depends	−0.121	(0.350)	−0.532*	(0.253)	−0.653	(0.335)
Race (Ref: white)						
Black	0.228	(0.190)	0.250	(0.158)	0.478*	(0.186)
Asian	0.167	(0.487)	0.875	(0.460)	1.042*	(0.530)
Hispanic/Latino	0.270*	(0.132)	−0.352***	(0.100)	−0.082	(0.122)
Mixed race	0.153	(0.196)	−0.185	(0.148)	−0.032	(0.182)
Other race	0.249*	(0.127)	−0.247**	(0.095)	0.002	(0.118)
Citizen	−0.024	(0.130)	0.080	(0.104)	0.056	(0.122)
Female	−0.203*	(0.093)	0.249***	(0.070)	0.046	(0.087)
Age (Ref: 18–29)						
30–49	0.289*	(0.132)	0.032	(0.096)	0.321**	(0.123)
50–64	0.156	(0.146)	0.210*	(0.106)	0.366**	(0.138)
65 or older	0.093	(0.173)	0.104	(0.126)	0.197	(0.164)
Language (Ref: Spanish dominant)						
English dominant	−0.183	(0.169)	−0.094	(0.126)	−0.277	(0.159)
Bilingual	0.044	(0.119)	−0.138	(0.094)	−0.095	(0.112)
National origin (Ref: Mexico)						
Puerto Rican	0.810***	(0.207)	−0.406**	(0.148)	0.404*	(0.195)
Cuban	0.659***	(0.198)	−0.295	(0.153)	0.363*	(0.184)
Dominican	0.038	(0.230)	−0.371*	(0.169)	−0.333	(0.214)
Salvadoran	0.632**	(0.205)	−0.276	(0.174)	0.356	(0.185)
Other country	0.479***	(0.125)	−0.060	(0.096)	0.420***	(0.119)
College graduate	0.454***	(0.119)	−0.291**	(0.092)	0.163	(0.109)
Political party (Ref: Republican)						
Democrat	0.238*	(0.116)	−0.104	(0.086)	0.134	(0.111)
Independent/Other	−0.168	(0.162)	−0.250*	(0.113)	−0.418**	(0.153)
McFadden's pseudo R^2	.035		.035		.035	

Source. 2013 National Survey of Latinos.
Note. Standard errors in parentheses.
$^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$ (two-tailed test).

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Notes

1. We use the term "Latino" throughout this article rather than "Latino/a" to be consistent with the language used in the 2013 National Survey of Latinos.
2. Consistent with the Pew Research Center, we use the term "Latino/Hispanic" to refer to people who self-identify as having ancestry from a Latin American country. However, we use the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" separately to communicate when respondents preferred a specific term relative to the other.
3. The present study does not focus on the term "Latinx" as the term is relatively new, having emerged in recent years. As such, the 2013 National Survey of Latinos did not include questions about respondents' opinions of, or preference for, this term. Future research should consider a closer examination of the factors associated with Latinx identity formation. Nevertheless, before scholars can begin to interogate the utility of Latinx, whether it will become increasingly used among the public, and who is most likely to adopt it, we must first have a firm understanding of the factors that differentiate the preferences for "Latino" over "Hispanic," and vice versa.
4. Using listwise deletion for the inferential analyses resulted in the loss of 13.3 percent of cases from the full sample. The highest rates of missingness are associated with *Political Party* (5 percent) and *Race* (4.7 percent).
5. We estimated our models in Stata 15 using the "mi estimate" command for the multiple imputation and the "mlogit" command for the multinomial logistic regression. To test the IIA and collapsibility, we employed the *spost13* Stata ado package (Long and Freese 2014). We tested for multicollinearity using the *mivif* Stata ado package (Klein 2011).

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