

Shifting the Latinx Paradigm: Latin* Inspires New Understandings of Identity and Experience



The term "Latinx" has encountered significant linguistic, cultural, and accessibility challenges, since its first usage in activist circles during the mid-2000s. The debate intensified last decade, particularly after the tragic 2015 Pulse nightclub shooting. Ultimately, a lack of consensus regarding "Latinx" within the Latin American community resulted in a mismatch between terminology and identity.

Recognizing the need for a more nuanced term, Cristóbal Salinas Jr., Ph.D., professor in Educational Leadership and Research Methodology and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, introduced the "Latin*" concept in 2016. Latin* challenges traditional notions of identity and encourages an understanding of individual experiences. The asterisk in Latin* offers a broader spectrum than terms like "Latino," "Latina," or "Latinx."

Rather than homogenizing Latinidad, Latin* embraces the complexity and invites reflection on the intersectionality of identity. By sparking an open dialogue, Latin* creates space for the future. "It's a way to honor the past while opening doors for new understandings of identity and experience," Salinas said. By placing an emphasis on individual preferences and the diverse ways people choose to identify themselves, Latin* fosters belonging and provides a framework for educators and institutions to engage in transformative change.



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For more than a decade, Salinas has provided valuable insights to help shape policies and practices in higher education. His mentoring, identity formation, and leadership frameworks help multicultural students and faculty navigate academic and professional challenges. Workshops and seminars have led to the development of specialized support services, improving academic success and retention rates among multicultural students. Additionally, Salinas's research on faculty members with foreign English accents prompted policy changes that provided resources for these educators to succeed in their respective roles.

Recognized among the top 15 scholars of 2023, Salinas has authored 85+ publications, received 2,000+ citations and provided 250+ presentations in 20 countries. Frequently sought by CNN, NBC News, NPR, Telemundo, and Good Morning America, Salinas has been dubbed “a rising star in academe” and “an expert on Latinx students in college” by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* and his research described as “futuristic” by *The New York Times*.

Advancing academic and public discourse, Salinas's research continues to expand the understanding of complex concepts and empower individuals and communities to envision a brighter future. By leveling the educational landscape, Salinas is paving the way for new perspectives, one asterisk at a time.

