

A GUIDE TO HISPANIC, LATINO, AND LATINÉ TERMINOLOGY AND CONTEXTS

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The NAGC Rompiendo Barreras: Breaking Barriers for Gifted Hispanic/Latiné Populations Special Interest Group is committed to breaking down the barriers these students face in gifted education and advanced academic learning opportunities. As we strive to advocate for sustained systemic changes that improve opportunity and access for Hispanic/Latiné students in PK-16 education, we understand that one step is spreading awareness of important issues that affect these students. We recognize how language shapes how we identify, describe, and support students and communities. While some terms are often used interchangeably, it is important to understand the different historical, cultural, linguistic, and institutional contexts behind terms that we use to describe specific student groups.

In gifted and advanced academic education, understanding these distinctions matters because terminology can influence how students are represented in research, policy, data collection, and advocacy. Our goal is not to prescribe using one single term, but to promote greater cultural responsiveness, respect individual and community preferences, and encourage more precise language when discussing gifted and high-potential learners from diverse backgrounds.

Using shared terminology, we can support shared advocacy efforts. When students, families, educators, school administrators, researchers, organizations, and policymakers understand the distinctions and limitations of terms, we are better positioned to communicate across communities, interpret data accurately, and collectively advocate for improved access and opportunities for gifted and high-potential students, regardless of cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, or geographic differences.

We recognize that we did not begin this work; it is cumulative and builds on the important contributions of the scholars and advocates who came before us. As emerging scholars, we are honored to stand on their shoulders, build on their countless contributions, and strive to carry this work forward for gifted and high-potential students from diverse backgrounds in our school systems today and tomorrow.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS



Pan-ethnic terms have a broader classification, encompassing people from multiple ethnic or national backgrounds who share common historical, cultural, linguistic, or geographic similarities.

To establish broader **Pan-ethnic** categories for federal data collection beyond national-origin labels such as Mexican-American, the U.S. government adopted the term **Hispanic** in 1976 and added **Latino** to the federal classification in 1997; however, these terms are not widely used outside of the U.S. (Lopez et al., 2024). Newer terms, **Latinx** and **Latiné**, were developed to be more inclusive of gender, linguistic, cultural, and geographic differences.

Hispanic describes people who trace their origins to Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, and is derived from the Latin word Hispania (Castellano, 2011).

Latino is considered more inclusive than Spanish-speaking Latin American heritage and includes Native American, African, and Asian lineages, as well as other Western speakers of Latin-derived languages such as Portuguese and Creole (Castellano, 2011). While **Latino** is a masculine classification, **Latina** is the feminine form, with some scholars opting to use the more inclusive **Latino/Latina** combination.

Latinx emerged through LGBTQ+ activism to replace the gender-specific terms **Latino** and **Latina** and is used more commonly by English speakers living in the U.S. (APA, 2023). In Latin America, the term **Latinx** is often used for the same purpose, but it is pronounced out loud as it has an “e” instead of an “x” (i.e., resulting in the sound of “Latiné”).

Latiné began outside the U.S. and moves beyond gender inclusion; it is a **pan-ethnic** term that also considers cultural, geographic, and linguistic differences, extending beyond Spanish speakers by including English- and Portuguese-speaking communities (APA, 2023). **Latiné** is the globally preferred term because it is more inclusive of diverse groups and is more easily adaptable to the Spanish language than **Latinx**.

Similarly, Fernández Morgado, Castillo-Hermosilla, and Parra-Martínez (2026) defined the term as even more open, welcoming anyone who shares an identity through the origins of any language and culture with Latin roots, regardless of their current context.

They state that equalizing Hispanic with Latiné could be problematic because “Such framings can reproduce colonial logics by centering the legacy of the Spanish empire while obscuring multilingual and mixed cultural histories, including Indigenous, African, Afro-Latiné, Asian-Latiné, and Arab-Latiné, across Latin America and its diasporas” (Fernández Morgado et al., 2026, p. 544).

In other words, they invite people to use the term either as Latiné/x/a/o/e based on inclusion and not exclusion, where not only those who speak Spanish, French, or Portuguese could be included in the concept, but also those who share Latinidad(e) through values and traditions, as well as identities and perspectives from an umbrella that includes diasporas and post-colonial redefinitions of identity. This way, anyone who self-identifies as Latiné has the right to be included, instead of falling into the harms of exclusion, discrimination, and perpetuation of systemic barriers.

References/Resources:

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