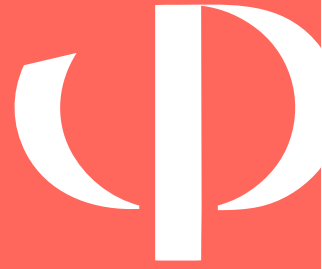


Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy



VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 2

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Hispanics, Latinxs, Philosophers

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How should we think about the nature of the social identity group commonly called *Latinos* or *Hispanics*, the nature of *Latina/o/x philosophy*, and perhaps relatedly, of *Latina/o/xs in philosophy*? If one wishes to address these questions, an especially instructive place to begin is with Jorge Gracia's writings. In his *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective*¹ and *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity*,² he offers a detailed account of these things. In later works, he extends and applies aspects of those accounts, but the core elements of his picture receive their fullest presentation in those two monographs.

The ambition of this article is to reconsider—and to rehabilitate, in part—some of the main claims from those works, especially given important concerns that have been raised about Gracia's approach. I focus on three questions: (1) What is the best way to understand Gracia's characterization of Hispanics?; (2) Should we accept his further characterization of Latinos, a group he regards as distinct from Hispanics, but overlapping?; and (3) Should

we accept Gracia's account of the situation of Latino philosophers within the US academy? The approximate answers are, in order, that Gracia's account of the unity of Hispanics is more capacious than is commonly acknowledged, and indeed, more capacious than Gracia himself acknowledged in print; however, on Gracia-like grounds we should resist his account of Latinos; and lastly, Gracia's own work on the status of Hispanics in philosophy suggests that we should resist some of his account of the circumstances of Latino philosophers. It is perhaps fair to say that the present account is critical in the details, but optimistic about many of the ideas in Gracia's work.

1. THINGS, CONCEPTS, AND TERMS

Anyone writing about the social ontology of Hispanics or Latinxs faces immediate difficulties. First, there is a messy but earnest politics concerning terminology, whether to use "Hispanics," "Latinos," or some other term. Second, the target of a given account is oftentimes variable: sometimes the stakes are labels, sometimes concepts, and sometimes questions about whether a given person is properly a member of the social identity group in question. Let's take these issues in reverse order.

Loosely following Cappelen and Plunkett,³ the present account will make use of a distinction between object-level phenomena (the things, bearers of properties, or bundles of those properties that we mean to refer to in direct discourse about the world), representation-level phenomena (concepts or representational devices), and our terms (the words of labels we use to talk about things). In the context of talk about social identity groups, this is a distinction between: (i) object-level questions, that is, for example, questions of whether some specific thing is a *member* or instance of the social identity group, whatever that comes to; (ii) representation-level questions, i.e., questions about our *concept*, or the representational device we have for the group; and (iii) *labelling* questions about what to call the objects and their concepts (going forward, I won't keep saying "or the representational device"—feel free to add it if you dislike talk of concepts).

These distinctions can sometimes seem subtle, but they are important. Take, for example, the term "woman." We might disagree about whether a given person is a woman. This is an object-level disagreement. We might also disagree about the concept. Some insist that the best characterization of existing thought and talk about *WOMAN*—the capitalization here indicating a concept, or a representation-level phenomenon—involves a category grounded in genes. Others insist that this is a mistake, and that the concept picks out, for example, a variably expressed social identity. There is also the question of terminology: one might hold that we do better to avoid some terms—"dame," "lady"—and that we should use some labels ("woman") in specific contexts and ways, saving related terms ("female") for yet other purposes.

If we are clear about these distinctions, it helps to make salient an important possibility: where there are potentially a variety of candidate specifications of the concept and potentially several terms to pick out the phenomena of interest, one might engage in some linguistic or

conceptual *negotiation*, advocating on behalf of a particular regimentation of thought and talk.⁴ That is, whatever our current ordinary concept may be, the theorist might seek to revise it or replace it, perhaps in the service of some instrumental, perhaps ameliorative, end. A given account of "woman" might be understood as a reforming proposal, as in Haslanger,⁵ marking a social status distinguished by subordination in view of one's perceived role in biological reproduction. Similarly, one might understand disputes about the extension of "marriage" and racial "Whiteness" to involve large-scale, collective efforts at conceptual and linguistic negotiation. In the context of theoretical proposals at the representation-level, philosophers have argued for explicitly revisionist accounts of race, propositional attitudes, free will, and moral desert.⁶

In the US, in the context of discussions about the social identity group that has been variously referred to with the terms "Hispanic," "Latino," "Latin@," "Latina/o," "Latinx," and "Latine," among others, there is robust disagreement at the level of labels. Activists, scholars, and members of the social identity group disagree about what term is preferable, and on what basis. Disputants variously cite facts about differential uptake, what a given term signifies, the history associated with it, what is foregrounded (e.g., the Iberian Peninsula, US social identity categories) or excluded (e.g., self-designation, Indigenous social identities), and concerns about pronounceability.⁷ Ongoing linguistic innovation seems to be the order of the day. For all that, disagreement about terms is the visible tip of an iceberg that includes disagreements at both the object- and representation-levels. That is, there are disagreements about whether given individuals and groups are in the extension, and ongoing disagreements about how to understand the intension or the concept.

Gracia has made contributions to discussions about all these levels, and as I will argue, he might also be understood to be engaged in some degree of conceptual negotiation on behalf of his proposals. Even so, his central contributions are perhaps best construed as about the category, or at the representation-level. In the interest of clarity, I will default to using his terminology when talking about his views. I will otherwise use "Latinxs" as a putatively neutral term, and *LATINXS* for the concept, although I recognize that this choice has its own infelicities.

2. ETHNIC GROUP TERMS: THE CASE OF "HISPANICS"

The centerpiece of Gracia's work on ethnicity is his "Familial Historical" conception of ethnic groups. The core proposal is that ethnic groups are to be conceived of as "extended historical families whose members have no identifiable properties, or set of properties, that are shared by all the members throughout the existence of the familial groups, but that the historical connections that tie them give rise to properties which are common to some members of the group and, in context, serve to distinguish them from other groups."⁸ In the case of Hispanics, the relevant historical connections that distinguish them arise from the nexus of historical ties that arises out the events of 1492.⁹ This is, then, a representation-level account, focused on the

concept that figures in thought and talk about the group he refers to with the term “Hispanics.”

On the face of it, a striking feature about Gracia’s account is his recurring insistence that there is no common feature or property among members of an ethnic group. As he put it in his earlier work, “There is no need to find properties common to all Hispanics in order to classify them as Hispanics. What ties us is the same kind of thing that ties the members of a family, as Wittgenstein would say.”¹⁰ It is an attempt to characterize a category or concept in a way that avoids appeal to any essential properties. What makes this puzzling, though, is how this could be. In virtue of what would the category be a category? How would a motley of disconnected properties constitute a stable category, rather than a monstrous and unprincipled disjunction?

My suspicion is that the metaphor of family resemblance is being asked to do too much work, accounting for both *classification* (i.e., determining membership, or establishing what something is) and *resemblance* (i.e., sharing of first-order properties). Gracia is likely correct about Hispanics and resemblance—they don’t universally share first-order properties. It is unclear why this point about resemblance bears on classification, or the right representation-level accounts of Hispanics.

Consider the Wittgensteinian element invoked in both *Hispanic/Latino Identity* and *Latinos in America*, and Gracia’s repeated claims that ethnic groups are families, or like them.¹¹ On one understanding of Wittgenstein’s point, his idea of family resemblance is intended to show how some properties—for example, the property of resembling others in a family—depends upon a cluster of other properties where there is no single subordinate property that is shared by all members who resemble each other. That is, the property of family resemblance turns out to be the property of sharing any of a diverse set of properties distinctive of a given family. It is a higher-order property because it specifies other properties; it is not essentialist at the first-order, because there is no single property that is had among all in the family who resemble each other.

What Wittgenstein’s example does *not* show is that membership in a family, or that being appropriately classified in or out of a family, does not depend on a single property. Whether family members resemble one another is a different matter than the question of what makes them all members of the same family. Careful attention to the nature of families suggests that Wittgenstein’s point about family *resemblance* does not hold in the case of *membership* in a family. Under ordinary circumstances, we can identify a property that unifies families, and that is held by all members of that family. To do this, though, we need to be precise about the notion of family that is at stake.

For example, if we are interested in a *biological* notion of family (for example, to make assessments about the likelihood of hereditary diseases), then relations of biological descent from a breeding pair—as biologists inelegantly put it—will allow us to say who is in and out of a family. We can make relatively straightforward assessments about this matter, even allowing for degrees of genetic

relation. However, the core notion of family in this sense will be one that tracks biologically significant properties, such as being genetic descendants of a breeding pair.

If, we are interested in a *legal* notion of family—for example, to decide tax benefits and legal duties of care—we appeal to the governing laws that define what counts as a family. In this case, the property shared by all members is a legal one. Such a notion is not prior to human practices. However, social practices matter for creatures like us. The significance and importance of legal conceptions of the family has been no small part of the motivations for recognizing the legal status of gay and lesbian marriages, for example.

To be sure, there are interesting limit cases. It is conceivable that one can operate with something like an *emotional* notion of family. For example, one might think of a non-genetically related, non-legally related person as a “sister” or “cousin” in some sense of family that is neither legally nor genetically fixed. Some uses in this spirit may be honorific or metaphorical, but others may reflect an articulable notion of family that we do not yet widely recognize.

We need not take a normative stand on the proper range of folk notions of family and what properly constitutes family. No matter what range of uses we recognize as legitimate, there are bound to be marginal or liminal uses of the term. This fact is mostly orthogonal to the present issue. The point here is that on any useful notion of family, there is some property or cluster of properties that is relevant for settling questions of membership. If we wish to settle questions of membership, we need to know the relevant properties that determine categorization. Regardless of whether those properties are features of the world or our interests, neither evades this basic constraint on classification.

The properties that settle membership in an ethnic category may come in degrees, or otherwise allow some notion of centrality and peripherality as an instance of the kind. Just as remote family members can be marginal or liminal cases of family, so too can individuals be with respect to ethnic group membership. Even so, in the real world we might lack ready characterizations of the properties that fix membership in a group. However, once we have made our interest precise, none of these facts suffice to justify the conclusion that families are not picked out by some essential property or set of properties. Wittgenstein’s point about family *resemblance*, then, does not deny that we can give an account of family *membership*, which is the classificatory issue at stake.¹²

There is, though, a reasonable way forward. Even better, it builds on ideas already in Gracia’s work. So long as Gracia is prepared to acknowledge that *higher-order* properties, such as shared historical properties, can be properties, then there is a unifying membership or classificatory property for Hispanic/Latinos, i.e., the property of sharing some (to-be-identified) overlapping historical tie. Alternately, were Gracia inclined to insist that higher-order properties, cannot be properties, it would be good to know why not.¹³

Consider, for example this passage: “Hispanics are the group of people comprised by the inhabitants of the countries of the Iberian Peninsula after 1492 and what were to become the colonies of those countries after the encounter between Iberia and America took place, and by descendants of these people who live in other countries (e.g., the United States) but preserve some link to those people.”¹⁴ One way of glossing this passage is the following: *Hispanics are the group of people with socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula.* This sort of gloss is suggested by numerous remarks Gracia makes, including the following: “beginning in the year of the encounter, the Iberian countries and their colonies in America developed a web of historical connections which continues to this day and which separates these people from others”¹⁵ and “What ties them together, and separates them from others, is history and the particular events of that history . . . a unique web of changing historical relations supplies their unity.”¹⁶

I propose that we read these passages as identifying a minimal condition for someone being Hispanic, that is, that they have some socially meaningful historical tie to the events of 1492. It is minimal, in that one can supplement it in a variety of ways. It is higher order, in that it is a property about other properties, namely, the ones that are socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula. This account does not identify some specific common, substantive property that is shared by all Hispanics everywhere and when. Rather, it identifies a general and higher-order type of property (again, roughly, social meaningfulness in connection with 1492) that is shared, in different ways, and to different degrees, by anyone who is Hispanic.¹⁷

To be sure, we might want to say more about what socially meaningful historical ties are, whether there are any ties that cannot count no matter what, whether there is any interesting content that needs to be grasped for users of the concept to distinguish between cases where it applies and doesn’t, and so forth. Even so, we do not need to settle all these questions to appreciate that there is a *prima facie* theoretical option available to Gracia, one that allows him to deflect concerns about unprincipled disjunctions while delivering a story that makes sense of there being some basis for insisting that there is a group here at all.

If all of this is right, then we can and should acknowledge Gracia’s contention that the first-order properties had by members of an ethnic group might be analogous to resemblance within a biological family, with no one first-order property being possessed by all. It would not follow that there is *no* property that holds across all members of Hispanics. The claim here is that Gracia himself identifies a plausible enough candidate, i.e., socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492. We can therefore address a puzzle about the view as he has stated it, by cautiously amending it in a way consistent with the overall picture.

An important virtue of this recasting of Gracia’s account is that it is compatible with virtually all the main features of

his account. First, it is a property that can come in degrees, allowing greater and lesser amounts or degrees of ties to capture the notion of greater and lesser degrees of membership (or centrality) to the ethnic group. Second, it can be complemented with a contextualist story that explains more demanding notions of being Hispanic. For example, we can take the historical ties idea, and couple it to the idea that there are shifting and culturally contingent judgments about which sorts of historical ties are socially meaningful for identity in the group in each time and place. That is, the metaphysician’s minimalist higher-order notion of a socially meaningful historical tie to 1492 might be fleshed out with variable local estimates about which sorts of historical ties matter for membership in the group. In some times and places, fluency in specific languages might matter more and less, in others, specific cultural practices might have different social significance for meaningfulness, and so on. Context and intersubjective concerns will constrain which kinds of ties settle local estimates of membership in the group. Still, a minimal unifying notion exists, and the requirement of *some* socially meaningful tie to 1492 and thereafter is no less real a property because it has culturally and historically variable elaboration. Given that that social ontology is social, this seems exactly right.¹⁸

This is a *minimalist and higher-order tie* (HOT) account of Hispanics. It is a reconstruction of what Gracia could (and perhaps should) have held with respect to the concept *HISPANIC*. It captures his important insight that first-order properties (language, food, cultural practices more generally) can vary and that none are universally had by Hispanics. However, it also addresses what otherwise looks puzzling about his account—i.e., explaining how Hispanics meaningfully constitute a group, if there is no shared first-order property. The shared property explains why many (temporally, geographically) clustered bundles of properties that are taken to constitute being Hispanic aren’t an entirely unprincipled sets of disjunctions: they are ways communities have settled on socially meaningful ties to the events of 1492.

Before turning to his account of Latino, it may be useful to address a handful of concerns that can be directed at the present reconstruction. First, one might worry that this is an unsatisfying account of an ethnic group, because it is not obvious that the HOT approach readily extends to other conventionally recognized ethnic groups. Not all groups plausibly have an equivalent of 1492 to provide a nexus for socially meaningful ties. That is, whatever the nature of other ethnic groups, they do not seem to have the particular HOT-ness characteristic of Hispanics.

While it is possible that some conventionally recognized ethnic groups are not genuinely ethnic groups, this seems an undesirable result. It is a better and more plausible regimentation of our categories to hold that commonly recognized ethnic groups may be characterizable in terms of socially meaningful ties in virtue of standard cultural categories (language, social practices, and so on). Indeed, this is standardly how ethnic groups are understood, that is, as groups centrally constituted by densely overlapping cultural norms and practices. We thus have two options here. First, we might grant that Hispanics are a distinctive

group in the way Gracia has claimed, irrespective of whether they are best thought of as an ethnic group. (I find this view tempting, but it is obviously a departure from Gracia's explicit ambitions.) Alternately, we might try to rescue his approach to ethnic group categories by holding that a higher-order tie story is available for other groups, even if it is unlikely to be given by socially meaningful connections to a specific historical event. This would require further work, of course, but it would allow Gracia to insist that socially meaningful historical ties are not a requirement for it being a HOT group, even if it is distinctive of Hispanics.

A second concern is that Gracia's picture seems to entail that, for example, prior to 1492, Queen Isabella and other historical figures in Spain like El Cid were not Hispanic. Gracia accepts this consequence, and it strikes me as a not unreasonable position.¹⁹ Still, nothing that his position precludes him from saying more or different things about this case. For example, he could supplement what he does say by insisting that there are different senses of "Hispanic," and that his notion comes apart from some folk usage. Indeed, Gracia notes that US usage of "Hispanic" is variable about what it denotes.²⁰

Below, I say more about how we might think about Gracia's methodology, but he is not much concerned to strictly respect whatever ordinary language gives us on this matter. His interest is in the best way to do the ontology of a particular ethnic group, regardless of what label we use for it. Sometimes, that will involve linguistic or conceptual revision of folk notions. So, it seems open to him to say that there is some group—call it whatever you like—that includes socially meaningful connections between the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, and their descendants. Thus, it might well turn out that we say that there are two notions here, Hispanic in a sense that includes pre-1492 Iberians (and others), and Hispanic in Gracia's sense. El Cid was Hispanic in the former sense but not in the latter.

A different possibility available to Gracia is to say that a way to have socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 just is to be a member of a nation or a people that *subsequently* came to conquer or be conquered by the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula after 1492. On this approach, pre-1492 peoples—El Cid, Nezahualcōyotl, and other pre-1492 members of peoples, nations, or communities—could be Hispanic with the right historical connections, irrespective of whether those labeled as such would have thought of themselves in that way. There is some appeal to this sort of account, given his picture, but it is not what he says about Iberians and Indigenous peoples prior to 1492.²¹

The general upshot to the foregoing is that there is ample reason to think Gracia's account is more capacious than many of his critics have realized. It contains resources for addressing a variety of familiar worries, and although it perhaps inevitably raises questions of its own, the present reconstruction of his account provides a principled story about how Hispanics might constitute an identity group despite diverse chains of descent, languages, norms, and cultural practices.

3. TWO CONCEPTS OF LATINO

In the previous section, I proposed a friendly amendment to Gracia's account, one that allows him to say that there is an important property that is had by all Hispanics, i.e., the property of having socially meaningful historical ties to the events of 1492 and the subsequent colonization of the Americas by the Iberian Peninsula. Those ties are not necessarily genetic, although they are in some cases; nor are the ties always the same ones, because the social meaningfulness of a given historical tie varies across time and place. However, someone is Hispanic *to the degree* to which he or she stands in socially meaningful historical relationships to 1492, where those first-order ties may vary by time and place.

In this section I consider Gracia's later account of Latinos. As Gracia uses these terms, *Hispanics* are a larger group, one that includes members of the Iberian Peninsula, Latin Americans, and people descended of either. *Latinos* are the specifically Latin American-derived subset of Hispanics.²² Although he is less frequently explicit about it, he appears to hold the same core account of the origin of the historical ties amongst Latinos. For example, he notes that Latinos did not exist prior to 1492²³ and that in both English and Spanish, "Latino" is used to refer to "people or things that are part of the region known as Latin America or originate there in one way rather than elsewhere."²⁴ Thus, on Gracia's conception, the term "Latino" applies to both Latin Americans and their descendants with the relevant socially meaningful historical ties to 1492. The Iberian element that is part of Gracia's HISPANIC is absent in LATINO, but Latinos include people of Latin American descent both within and without the United States.

Gracia's expansive conception of Latinos has struck some as non-standard. For example, Renzo Llorente has objected that

it makes the most sense to use Latino for Latin Americans who have emigrated to a non-Latin American country, along with the descendants of these emigrants who are born and/or brought up in these non-Latin American countries of destination. Indeed, I believe that contemporary usage tends to reflect a conception of "Latino" along these lines: Peruvians in Colombia may view themselves as Peruvians or Latin Americans, or perhaps even some hybrid of Peruvian and Colombian, but I doubt that they tend to think of themselves as "Latinos." Yet these very same Peruvians might be apt to see themselves primarily as Latino were they to emigrate to the United States or some other non-Latin American country.²⁵

I share Llorente's linguistic intuitions that in standard US English usage, the term "Latino" picks out populations of Latin Americans and of Latin American descent in the United States, and that it excludes Latin Americans living in Latin America. That this usage is indeed standard is confirmed by authorities both pedestrian and august, including Wikipedia²⁶ and *The Oxford English Dictionary*.²⁷

If Llorente and I are right about the standard meaning of the term, Gracia is either mistaken, or instead, he is engaged in linguistic and conceptual negotiation. That is, he might be offering, or be construed as offering, a reforming characterization of the concept. On this reading, he would be tacitly arguing that we should speak in a way that reflects his account of the concept. Why might he want to do this? If Gracia's reforming account does a better job than current folk usage(s) in carving up practical or theoretically useful kinds, that might be a reason to advocate for it. If he were right, we would have reason to re-anchor our thought and talk in a way that comports with Gracia's usage, even if it conflicts with aspects of current folk thought and talk.

Entertaining this possibility requires a bit of regimentation. We need a way to distinguish the Gracia reforming proposal from the ordinary folk notion. We can use superscripts to regiment our discussion in the following way:

Let *Latino*^G, *LATINO*^G, and cognate terms employ Gracia's conception of *LATINX*.

Let *Latino*^F, *LATINO*^F, and cognate terms employ the folk conception of *LATINX*.

Given this convention, we can say that one can be *Latino*^G with no interesting relationship to the United States and its social practices. However, one cannot be *Latino*^F without being in the United States or standing in some non-trivial relationship to US social practices.

So, are there any reasons to favor the displacement of *LATINO*^F by *LATINO*^G? If so, what might they be? And, even if there are reasons to favor displacement, are there countervailing reasons to resist it, beyond the familiar fact that it is no easy thing to overturn existing ways of thinking and talking? That is what we now turn to consider.

4. HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY, LATINX PHILOSOPHY

Gracia offers a distinctive account of *LATINX*, one that is plausibly at odds with ordinary thought and talk. I've argued that this does not, by itself, mean the account fails, as the account can be recast as a proposal for revising or replacing ordinary usage. Could this succeed? It seems hopeless to try to adjudicate this question in a general, unrestricted way. More promising, perhaps, is to ask whether there are contexts that might favor one notion over the other, and whether there are specific interests that might favor a revisionary proposal along the lines we are here considering.

Recall that one of Gracia's enduring interests has been in the characterization of ethnic philosophies—especially Hispanic and Latinx philosophies. Part of the distinctive disciplinary appeal of having a category of *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY*, whatever label we use in conjunction with it, is that it picks out a practical useful thing, namely, a body of philosophical work that has a robust shared history.²⁸ One cannot adequately understand Francisco de Vitoria without taking account of how contact with the Americas affected his thought; the work of Las Casas and Sor Juana cannot be understood in isolation from scholastic thought in Spain; Spanish-born figures like José Gaos and José Ortega y

Gasset are central figures in how philosophy unfolded in parts of Latin America, and so on. These are not just incidental ties, according to Gracia, but the warp and weft of the history of Spanish-language philosophical work. It is that fact that justifies the urgency and necessity of thinking about *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY*, even if there is ample reason to contest labels that give some pride of place to the Iberian Peninsula.

Perhaps there is a parallel account to be made for *LATINO*^G, that is, Gracia's conception of *LATINX*? Gracia seems to think that there is, arguing that *Latino*^G philosophy is ethnic philosophy, in the sense that it is the philosophy produced by members of that *ethnos*, subject to all the contextual negotiations about its extension that one finds in any ethnic philosophy.²⁹ Further, he allows that we can divide up philosophical works along ethnic, sub-ethnic, regional, and national bases. So, thinking of someone as a *Latino*^G philosopher need not preclude us from thinking of the same philosopher as Uruguayan or South American. Still, he insists that his Familial-Historical View is the right account of *LATINX PHILOSOPHY*, and that "*Latino*^G" is the right label for that conception.

Notice, though, that the concept *HISPANIC PHILOSOPHY* earns its keep by usefully carving up the world in explanatorily helpful ways. It is less clear that *LATINO*^G *PHILOSOPHY* does the same, and thus, it is less clear that we have reason to supplant the folk notion of *Latino* for Gracia's revisionist proposal. Worse, we have reason to make a distinction that cross-cuts Gracia's notion in a way that is readily captured by the folk notion. That is, we have some reason to want to readily distinguish between *Latino*^G Philosophers in Latin America (conventionally: "Latin American philosophers") and *Latino*^G Philosophers in the United States (conventionally: "Latinx philosophers"): these groups are subject to importantly different experiences.

María Christina González and Nora Stigol have argued that Gracia's usage of "*Latino*," especially in the context of philosophy, obscures important differences between the situation of Latin Americans and *Latinos*^F, and correspondingly, between the situation of Latin American and *Latino*^F philosophers.³⁰ Among the differences they highlight is a comparatively higher degree of internal dialogue among *Latino*^F philosophers than Latin American philosophers, as well as distinct histories shaping these populations. Crucial to their case is the idea that *Latinos*^F and Latin Americans are distinct in their socially meaningful statuses *because they occupy different social positions with respect to the United States*. For example, to be *Latino*^F is to occupy a social status internal to the US, one subject to distinctive norms and forms of treatment.³¹ In contrast, Latin Americans living in Latin America do not occupy and cannot occupy the social status of *Latinos*^F inasmuch as they are in Latin America. Put simply, they are not subject to the distinctive norms and social meanings of daily life in the United States—unless they come to the United States.

Gracia is quick to note that some *Latino*^G philosophers in the United States share a similar history to Latin American philosophers, namely, those born and/or raised in Latin America. This is true enough, but it is mostly beside the

point. I take it that González and Stigol are noting that when one is Latino^f in the United States, quite apart from whether one is born inside or outside of the United States, one is subject to distinctive social statuses, norms, and forms of treatment that do not apply to one who has only been Latino^o outside the United States. For that matter, as Llorente's remarks suggest,³² this is also true as a matter of uptake or self-identification: ordinarily, one does not think of oneself as Latino until one has been in the United States.³³

I find these considerations decisive, but Gracia, or someone like him, might resist this diagnosis, insisting that Latinx philosophers are not particularly subject to distinctive statuses, norms, and forms of treatment. For example, Gracia has maintained that "what is discriminated against is not Latino philosophers but, rather, what I call Latino philosophy, and only indirectly Latino philosophers when they do Latino philosophy."³⁴ He has also asserted that the then-recent ascension of Latino/a presidents of divisions of the American Philosophical Association (Ernest Sosa, Linda Alcoff) demonstrated that Latinx philosophers can escape discrimination.³⁵

It is surely possible that some Latinx philosophers might evade being subject to distinctive norms and statuses that turn on their being perceived as Latinx, and that they might find success even in the face of discrimination. At the same time, there are accounts that predict that, for example, Latino philosophers who can more easily pass as white, whose English comports with stereotypical academic English, and whose names are not suggestive of out-groups, will be more likely to find visible success than Latinos who cannot.³⁶ Gracia recognizes all of this. Still, it is striking that he thinks that Latinx philosophers suffer from discrimination only in virtue of doing Latino^o philosophy.

I confess that I find Gracia's position on this matter surprising, in part because it is a marked departure from his prior views. His *Hispanic/Latino Identity* is as an eloquent articulation of the way Hispanic/Latinx philosophers, *qua* Hispanic/Latinxs, suffer from discrimination in philosophy.³⁷ Perhaps Gracia changed his mind about whether Hispanic/Latino philosophers suffer from discrimination. Or perhaps he thought Hispanics are subject to bias, but not Latinos^o? It would be puzzling, though, why a general anti-Hispanic bias would not produce an anti-Latinx bias. He never explains what changed.

Discrimination is undoubtedly a complicated matter. Still, contra Gracia's later assertions in "Latinos in America: A Response," the earlier Gracia suggests in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* that Latino^o philosophers *do* face distinctive forms of discrimination in the United States. So, there is an empirical issue here. It is not obvious to me that the most plausible position on this issue holds that US Latinxs and Latin Americans are on a par with respect to their US status, whether understood socially or phenomenologically.

If we accept that socially meaningful historical ties are an important part of the conditions on being a member of an ethnic group, this difference in the experience of social statuses and norms can matter for marking social identity groups. Given that we already have a term with a standard

usage that reflects this distinction—"Latino^f"—we would need an especially good reason to overturn it for a usage that reduces our ability to talk about and identify an already socially meaningful category. Other things equal, we should opt for more rather than less expressive power. Gracia's reforming proposal for LATINX leaves us with less precision and expressive power. Absent further considerations, it is unpromising as a proposal for semantic and conceptual reform.

5. THE SITUATION OF LATINX PHILOSOPHERS

Even if we reject Gracia's account of Latinxs, and his later picture of the social position of Latinx philosophy, this does not mean there is nothing to be gotten from his account of Latinxs.

Consider the following remarks from *Hispanic/Latino Identity*:

The perception of foreignness is a major obstacle to Hispanics in the philosophical community. The American philosophical community is cliquish, xenophobic, and tilted toward Europe. If one is perceived as not being part of one of the established American philosophical families, European in philosophical tradition, or part of the American community, then one is left out: one is thought to belong elsewhere or what one does is thought not to be philosophy. These are the two ways of disenfranchising philosophers: locating them in a non-European or non-American tradition, or classifying what they do as non-philosophical. Hence, Hispanics in general are excluded unless we can prove that we truly belong to one of the accepted groups, think in European terms, or are part of the American community. And we can prove this only by forgetting most of what has to do with our identity as Hispanics, by becoming clones of American philosophers, and by joining one of the established philosophical families. We must forget who we are; we must forget where we came from; and we must forget our culture and values. Don't wave your hands; don't speak enthusiastically; speak slowly and make frequent pauses; adopt the Oxford stuttering technique; look insecure; be cynical and doubtful; buy yourself tweed jackets if you are male, and try to look like Apple Annie if you are female. In short, become what the others want you to become, otherwise there is no place for you.

Hispanics who are fast and articulate in conversation are perceived as glib and arrogant. Hispanics who have a strong sense of humor, and laugh freely, are regarded as not serious. And Hispanics who speak with an accent are thought to be uncouth and unintellectual.³⁸

Let's suppose that Gracia's remarks resonate for many, although presumably not all, self-identified Hispanic/Latinx philosophers. An important aspect of Gracia's discussion is that these phenomena get their significance from the structure of disciplinary incentives and ordinary in-group/

out-group dynamics. At risk of oversimplifying his nuanced account, Gracia's picture in *Hispanic/Latino Identity* holds that

- 1) Philosophers are members of groups, and those groups are typically defined genetically, that is, by advisor or institution, and by one's subfield.
- 2) Many individual philosophers want attention on their work.
- 3) Attention typically comes from overlapping or allied groups (i.e., in-groups), but there is a limited quantity of attention available in professionally recognized fora (e.g., journals and conferences).
- 4) So, there is an incentive to control access to attention. Those efforts to control attention manifest in hostile referee reports on work by those perceived to be out-group members. Similar judgments affect access to journals and conferences.
- 5) Philosophers marked as out-group members, or as marginal cases of in-group membership, will have more hurdles accessing disciplinary tools of influence, prestige, and visibility.
- 6) These challenges are endemic for Hispanic/Latinx philosophers, in virtue of their being perceived as foreign, and given their very small numbers in the profession.
- 7) There is a double estrangement when Hispanic/Latinx philosophers work in fields (such as Latin American philosophy) that lack robust genetic networks in the US, and that are thus perceived as neither part of the analytic world nor part of the Continental world of philosophy.

The first five points are difficult to dispute as a characterization of the profession. Indeed, they plausibly generalize to other academic fields.³⁹ Importantly, they have a motivationally recognizable basis. No one has time to read everything, and given the fact of finite time and attention, academics rely upon heuristics and other filtering tools to shape and direct their attention. Where matters are more complicated is the degree to which these factors play greater and lesser roles in the outcomes of individual cases, and the contexts in which locally sensible mechanisms have systematically unreasonable effects.

For present purposes, though, Gracia's remarks on the last two points are especially telling. First, he holds that there are various markers of foreignness that Hispanic/Latinxs will disproportionately give evidence of—the ways in which they will be coded as outsiders because of their (variable) distance from the cultural norms that are paradigmatic of the profession. Second, these markers of foreignness will be compounded if one has an interest in philosophical matters outside those things regarded as canonical in the major social groups in Anglophone philosophy. As Gracia puts it, "Hispanics who show any interest in Hispanic issues,

or Hispanic thought, are perceived as foreigners because they do not fit into the philosophical groups that dominate [U.S.] American philosophy. . . . The only way Hispanics have of entering the world of Hispanic philosophy is to become what [U.S.] American philosophers consider acceptable; Hispanics must prove we belong."⁴⁰

To my ear, Gracia is substantially anticipating the point made by his interlocutors in response to Gracia's later work *Latinos in America*.⁴¹ That is, within philosophy in the United States, Hispanics and Latinxs^F face discrimination *qua* Hispanics and Latinxs, and especially if they are interested in philosophy produced by Hispanics. If that is right, then being a Latino^F in philosophy (and elsewhere, presumably) *involves being subject to distinctive social meanings and experiences*.

These considerations suggest that we do well *not* to revise or replace LATINX in the manner he suggests. This conclusion does not vitiate the thought that there are important and contextually salient links between Latinxs^F, Latin Americans, and Hispanics more generally. There are surely some contexts where focusing on Latinxs is not especially explanatory, or where even if it is, we do better to use other categories. He is surely right that recent work Latinx philosophy shares important intellectual ties to the larger Latin American and Hispanic philosophical lineage,⁴² and we might reasonably ask what sorts of pictures are ignored, undermined, or obscured when we focus on those connections. It might be true that Latin American philosophy is, to an important degree, Hispanic philosophy; it might also be true that thinking in these ways is not especially useful if we are interested in, for example, the present and history of Indigenous thought in the Americas and its influence in thought and practice in Latin America.

In short, we have reason to accept Gracia's account of Hispanics, reason to resist his account of Latinxs, and reason to take seriously his insights into the conditions of Latinx, Latin American, and Hispanic philosophers more generally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Lori Gallegos, Dan Speak, and Clinton Tolley for thoughts about the penultimate version of this paper. This paper has had a protracted gestation. I first sketched some these ideas in the wake of a conference on the Latino/a philosopher organized by Eduardo Mendieta in 2013. In 2014, Jorge Gracia and Ernesto Velásquez gave me generous feedback on an early draft, and Jorge and I talked about some of these issues again in 2017. Owing to entirely pedestrian academic distractions, I somehow never finished the paper until now. Although I'm happy to have the chance to draw more attention to Gracia's pathbreaking work, it is with considerable sadness that this paper is offered as a memorial to a mentor, friend, and co-author.

NOTES

1. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).
2. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).
3. Herman Cappelen and David Plunkett, "Introduction: A Guided Tour of Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics," in *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, ed. Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1–26.

4. David, Plunkett, "Which Concepts Should We Use?: Metalinguistic Negotiations and the Methodology of Philosophy," *Inquiry* 58, no. 7-8 (2015): 828–74.
5. Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" *Noûs* 34, no. 1 (2000): 31–55.
6. Manuel Vargas, "Revisionism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Free Will*, ed. Joseph Campbell, Kristin Mickelson, and V. Alan White (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming).
7. See Manuel Vargas, "Latinx Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/latinx/>; Andrea Pitts, "Latinx Identity," in *Latin American and Latinx Philosophy*, ed. Robert Eli Sanchez, 220–41 (New York: Routledge, 2020); and Paula Ramos, *Finding Latinx: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 2020).
8. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 18.
9. Cf. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48, 51.
10. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 50.
11. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 139.
12. The argument I am making here is compatible with there being natural language terms that pick out unprincipled disjunctions of properties that resist demands for orderly classification. For all I have said, it could still turn out that there is no unifying story to be told about Hispanics or families or games, which, on the present approach, would give us reason to regard these ordinary language terms as somewhat disorganized ways of carving up the world. My point is that this possibility does not, by itself, give us a reason for thinking there is never some unifying story to be told about kinds with diverse first-order substantive properties.
13. If one is comfortable with talk of properties, as Gracia is, then it seems one should countenance the existence of higher-order properties. See Chris Swoyer and Francesco Orilia, "Properties," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2011), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/properties/>. And again, quite apart from one's favorite views about the metaphysics of properties, it is useful for ordinary discourse to be able to say there is something (however abstract) that is shared by all members of the category, albeit in varying degrees.
14. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48.
15. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48-49.
16. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 49.
17. The minimalism of this ethnic group account is different than the minimalism of Michael Hardimon's notion of the minimalist concept of race. See Hardimon, *Rethinking Race: The Case for Deflationary Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 27–64. On that account, minimalist race involves common geographic origin, common ancestry, and patterns of visible physical features.
18. Cf. Ernesto Rosen Velásquez, "Is the 'Common Bundle View' of Ethnicity Problematic?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 3 (2011): 325–44.
19. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 48.
20. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 3.
21. Thanks to Dan Speak for pressing the question about what Gracia wants to say about pre-1492 Iberians.
22. Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 100.
23. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 38.
24. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 57.
25. Renzo Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 73.
26. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latinos>, accessed on January 31, 2022.
27. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, second ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989).
28. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 70–88.
29. Gracia, *Latinos in America*, 129, 139–43.
30. María Cristina González and Nora Stigol, "Gracia on Latino and Latin American Philosophy," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2013): 79–90.
31. González and Stigol, "Gracia on Latino and Latin American Philosophy," 81.
32. Llorente, "Gracia on Hispanic and Latino Identity," 73.
33. Lori Gallegos has observed that there is an interesting demographic pattern that may be worth noting in this context: in the last quarter century, a remarkably high number of prominent senior Hispanic and Latinx philosophers in the United States were born outside of the US (for example, Gracia, Lugones, Schutte, Alcoff, Medina, Mendieta, Ortega, Sosa, Rayo, Sartorio, Comesaña, Morton). My sense is that the demographic distribution on this is changing, but even allowing for the fact of small numbers, it is notable how few visible senior US-born Hispanic/Latinxs there are in philosophy. I don't know whether Gracia had things to say about this, and for my own part I am not sure what to say about this pattern. Nevertheless, we can imagine that someone might speculate that this demographic pattern partly explains the appeal to Gracia of construing LATINX in a way that counts Latin Americans not in the US as Latinx: for Latin American-born Latinxs, ongoing ties to Latin America remain especially salient in their identity conception as Latinxs.
34. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," 107.
35. Gracia, "Latinos in America: A Response," 107.
36. Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 226–46.
37. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 159–88.
38. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 182-83.
39. Michèle Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
40. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 186.
41. Gracia, *Latinos in America*.
42. Vargas, "Latinx Philosophy."