

Don't just call me Latinx: A Call for Data Disaggregation to Disrupt Monolith Views

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Abstract

This paper aims to illuminate how and to what extent non-disaggregated data continues to perpetuate and reproduce the oppression of people of colour within the Latinx community (Freire, 1998), who lay at an intersection of identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Non-disaggregated data may continue to allow the disproportionate distribution of resources, including educational and healthcare resources. This paper mainly focuses on the experiences of AfroLatinx people. This paper details why the authors call for disaggregating data about the Latinx community. Discussions of their findings focus on Anti-racism, intersectionality, and the dangers of single stories. Implications and recommendations for future scholarship, policy legislation, and community activism follow.

Keywords: *data disaggregation, diversity, Latinx, Black, Blackness, AfroLatinx, intersectionality, monolith*

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Introduction

In American civil rights lawyer Derrick Bell's (1992) seminal book *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*, he stated that: "Black people have been regarded as the magical faces at the bottom of society's well" (p. 1). Furthermore, Black people have historically been marginalized and deemed inferior in various regions worldwide. This paper emphasizes that this marginalization is not absent within the Latinx community and that Latinx people with intersectional identities are negatively impacted by such marginalization in the United States of America (US). In past decades, US census data has continued to aggregate all Latinx people into the Hispanic/Latino category (Taylor et al., 2012), leading to the generalization of Latinx people as a monolithic group. Due to this generalization, AfroLatinx people are forced to choose between identifying as Black or Latinx, highlighting one of their identities while denying the other. Today, there is a higher propensity to see AfroLatinx people affirm their blackness and choose to identify as Black instead of just Latinx (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barerra, 2016). This paper will continue to justify why data disaggregation is vital to understanding how racism impacts Latinx communities.

Background

In our paper, "The Myth of the LatinX Population" (Díaz & Díaz, 2021), we highlighted that race remains an important factor in determining one's success and unequivocally continues to impact Latinx communities worldwide due to widespread belief in the myth of the monolithic Latinx population. Further research should be conducted to review if specific forms of oppression like racism, stereotyping, and grouping may be due to media misrepresentation (Andrews, 2017) of particular communities. To eradicate racism, one solution is learning and teaching Antiracism. Taking an Antiracist approach supports the policy or practice of opposing racism through actions and expressions (Kendi, 2019). "The Myth of the LatinX Population" stemmed from the authors'

personal experiences, observations of the Latinx population, and anecdotal data shared by non-Latinx community members. “Don’t just call me Latinx: A Call for Data Disaggregation to Disrupt Monolith Views” continues the discourse in our former publication.

Who Exactly is an AfroLatinx?

Latina/o includes the traditional masculine/feminine binary variations in gender identity. We use the term Latinx to include Latinx individuals who wish not to be identified by gender and to be inclusive of those whose gender identity falls outside of the male/female binary. There are 33 countries in Latin America, and within these countries are many different variations of languages, cultures, music, religions, and skin tones (races). AfroLatinx refers to Latinx people of African ancestry who identify with their dual/combined Blackness and Latinx heritage. Referring to oneself as AfroLatinx does not necessarily mean they are half Black and half Latinx. The Pew Research Center (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022) found that 25% of Latinxs in the US identified as AfroLatinx, while 23% selected “other” and 16% selected multiple races. These figures suggest that the overall number of AfroLatinx individuals in the US may potentially be more than 23%, or it may be discovered that people who currently identify as Latinx may identify as IndigeLatinx or AsianLatinx, thereby discovering discrepancies across identities and/or races. As of right now, a quarter of American Hispanics identify as AfroLatinx.

Data Disaggregation Relevancy and Need

When data does not portray the necessary information to illustrate the inequities faced by historically marginalized groups, this damage is masked and therefore continues to be reproduced. Consequently, we call for a Latinx data disaggregation approach (Díaz & Díaz, 2021; Haywood, 2017). Disaggregating data by ethnic origin (i.e., Mexican, Dominican, Cuban) and racially into Black, White, IndigeLatinx, AsianLatinx, can be approached in the following way: people or

organizations who label Latinx folk as all the same or decline to provide an option for Latinx folk to identify both their ethnicity and race should consider reimagining how data is collected from these individuals to enhance resources allocated for to their communities. It is important to note that these are not exhaustive lists as many people may self-identify with various identifiers.

Data disaggregation may help researchers shed light on issues facing AfroLatinx communities through exploring key questions: do AfroLatinx, IndigeLatinx¹ (Indigenous Latinx), AsianLatinx, or Latinx people who identify with other forms of Latinx intersectional identities, perform at the same level as their White Latinx peers and community members? Do they receive the same healthcare? Are they provided with the same resources? It is crucial that data disaggregation takes place and is incorporated into all public, organizational, functional, and specific policies to highlight the nuances that would be otherwise undiscovered. This will help highlight disparities in the AfroLatinx community.

The Dangers of Single-Stories

Adichie (2009) explains that if we only hear about a people, place, or situation from one point of view, we risk accepting one experience as the whole truth. In highlighting the dangers of single storytelling, we would also like to highlight the dangers of monolithic thinking about the Latinx community. Not all Latinx are White, Black, or both; some Latinx folks are Indigenous, while others may identify as Asian (Takenaka, 2004). An example of a monolithic view would be treating a Peruvian, a Dominican, and a Mexican as if they are all the same, when truthfully, their racial, cultural, and political intersectional identities and values differ in various ways and should therefore not be ignored in data collection that aids policy-making decisions.

¹ IndigeLatinx refers to a Latinx person with indigenous features/phenotypes.

It is essential to state that dominance - who is in power - and intersectionality are not static; both have the potential to evolve as identities shift (Pearson Waugaman, 2016). Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as class, race, and gender, and it is thought to contain overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage to a given individual or group (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, from an intersectional standpoint, a person who identifies as Latinx, Black, and LGBTQIA+ is oppressed and empowered simultaneously from their social identities. The intersectionality of social identities works on multiple layers, resulting in unique experiences, opportunities, and obstacles for each person. Therefore, injustices and suffering cannot be reduced to only one part of an identity; each form of oppression is dependent on and shapes the other (The University of British Columbia, 2021).

Reimagined Possibilities

Latinx people should be allowed to identify their ethnicity as Latinx and their race as Asian, Indigenous, Black, or White, among others. This freedom will provide a sense of belonging (hooks, 2009) to various groups within the US and provide institutions with a better understanding of whom they serve. Many cultures and heritages, including Asian, Alaskan Native, Jewish, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander, to name some examples, should have the freedom to do the same. We should not allow the heightened xenophobic nature of American politics, which the Trump era arguably expanded, to dictate this reimagining. Disaggregated data may inform policies, resource allocations, disparities, and the needs of the communities served. Disaggregating the data will potentially make way for disrupting racism on a global scale.

Implications for research

To obtain liberation, Freire (1998) states that the oppressed must be included in their liberation because their voices have significance. We must continue to call for intake data

disaggregation in service of communities who identify with ethnicity and intersectional racialized identities; this will help liberate such beings from oppressions that they may endure daily (Freire, 1998). This call continues to be needed after reflecting on our initial piece, “The Myth of the Monolithic Latinx Population” (Díaz & Díaz, 2021), and our York University Graduate Students in Education Conference presentation, “Rethinking racialized identities and well-being.” Future researchers should conduct a study where they explore how Black and Brown parents and grandparents feel about standard data collection processes. Such studies could shed light on the importance of allowing groups and individuals the ability to identify how they choose.

We recommend that scholars review and analyze why data disaggregation regarding race does not occur. We recommend a study of two similar communities; one that does not disaggregate the data pertaining to race and one that disaggregates the data pertaining to race. We suspect such a study may illuminate disparities that affect the Latinx community. Researchers should question: How can institutions and people with intersectional identities prepare themselves for issues that may arise as they come across data highlighting oppressions or the mishandled allocation of resources? How can data disaggregation be used to disrupt racial inequities because of the invisibility of people with intersectional identities? How can organizations distribute this new data to combat dangerous misinformation?

This research also has implications for working with diverse populations, as scholars may not be well versed in the cultures of exploited groups. Scholars should immerse themselves and learn the history of such communities’ oppressions and how these exploitations have shaped their cultures. The mannerisms and cultures of ethnic groups and the Latinx community vary, although they all identify as a particular ethnicity. As reflected in the feedback from the audience amidst conversations with participants at York University’s Graduate Students in Education Conference

(2022), diverse learners have complex knowledge, experiences, and ideas that are often ignored in organizational and public spaces.

Looking ahead

Data disaggregation has a body of literature within studies on healthcare (Weinick et al., 2004), and research shows that White people also benefit from sharing a classroom with diverse groups (Petts & Garza, 2021). However, work must be done to understand how White people can genuinely benefit from non-disaggregated data. Next, it would be beneficial to understand how data disaggregation may affect the workforce (i.e., hiring practices, and DEI initiatives). Furthermore, reviewing our post-presentation notes and the literature on data disaggregation, we conclude that more research must be conducted on how White people approach policy and the intersections of identities.

Our presentation: “Rethinking racialized identities and well-being,” has also sparked some emerging questions: How can we reinvent diversity training to incorporate an understanding of the dangers of a monolithic viewpoint? How can we incorporate such research into implicit bias and antiracist training? How much do employees know about data disaggregation and single storytelling? Are organization employees reproducing monolithic data collection? Addressing these questions could allow members of these communities to hear their voices.

Recommendations

Based on our conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested for consideration:

1. When an administrator or staff member progresses through their training program, the training should not consist of monocultural data but of many cultures, respectfully acknowledging that there are many different forms of learning.

2. Staff and administrator preparation programs should include diverse and multicultural data to better prepare for engagement with diverse populations who may identify with more than one identity.
3. Scholars of various races and ethnicities may replicate the study that this paper focuses on to obtain different perspectives.
4. Institutions such as social service organizations, colleges, and hospitals may consider providing a space for data disaggregation on collection forms to collect accurate self-identification from participants, which remains the sole decision of the individual completing such document.

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