Ethnic-Racial Breakdown in Psychological Research among Latinx Populations in the U.S.

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Abstract : The 21st century has seen an increase in the amount and variety of psychological research on Latinx, the largest minority group in the U.S., with great variability from the individual's cultural origin (e.g., ethnicity) to region (e.g., nationality). We were interested in exploring how scientists recruit, conduct and report research on Latinx samples. Ethnicity and race are important components of individuals and should be addressed to capture a broader and deeper understanding of psychological research findings. In order to explore Latinx/Hispanic work, the Journal of Latinx Psychology (JLP) and Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences (HJBS) were analyzed for 1) measures of ethnicity and race in empirical studies 2) nationalities represented 3) how researchers reported ethnic-racial demographics. The analysis included publications from 2013-2018 and revealed two common themes of reporting ethnicity and race: overrepresentation/underrepresentation and overgeneralization. There is currently not a systematic way of reporting ethnicity and race among Latinx/Hispanic research, creating a vague sense of what and how ethnicity/race plays a role in the lives of participants. Second, studies used the Hispanic/Latinx terms interchangeably and are not consistent across publications. For the purpose of this project, we were only interested in publications with Latinx samples in the U.S. Therefore, studies outside of the U.S. and non-empirical studies were excluded. JLP went from N = 118 articles to N = 94 and HJBS went from N = 174 to N = 154. For this project, we developed a coding rubric for ethnicity/race that reflected the different ways researchers reported ethnicity and race and was compatible with the U.S. census. We coded which ethnicity/race was identified as the largest ethnic group in each sample. We used the ethnic-racial breakdown numbers or percentages if provided. There were also studies that simply did not report the ethnic composition besides Hispanic or Latinx. We found that in 80% of the samples, Mexicans are overrepresented compared to the population statistics of Latinx in the US. We observed all the ethnic-racial breakdowns, demonstrating the overrepresentation of Mexican samples and underrepresentation and/or lack of representation of certain ethnicities (e.g., Chilean, Guatemalan). Our results showed an overgeneralization of studies that cluster their participants to Latinx/Hispanic, 23 for JLP and 63 for HJBS. The authors discuss the importance of transparency from researchers in reporting the context of the sample, including country, state, neighborhood, and demographic variables that are relevant to the goals of the project, except when there may be an issue of privacy and/or confidentiality involved. In addition, the authors discuss the importance to recognize the variability within the Latinx population and how it is reflected in the scientific discourse.
Keywords : Latinx, Hispanic, race and ethnicity, diversity