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## Latinx Digital Memory: Identity Making in Real Time

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## Abstract

Recently, there has been an increase in cultural Latinx social media platforms, leading to a renaissance of digital visual cultural memory work around Latinidad. This work focuses on how Latinx digital memory participates in an ongoing identity formation in real time, both in resistance to and collusion with American cultural values. By looking at popular visual Latinx social media accounts, this article explores how Latinx identity is constructed and adapted in real time, through Latinx social media platforms. Three main trends are noted as arising from Latinx social media: nostalgia around Latinx identity, the corporate sponsorship of Latinx memory, and the resistance to hegemonic Latinidad narratives.

## Keywords

digital memory, Latinx identity, nostalgia, Latinx memory, social media, Latinidad

## Introduction

One day while scanning the “*veteranas\_and\_rucas*” Instagram, a social media account curated to celebrate Latina party culture in Southern California in the 20th century, I found an older black and white picture from Lawndale in the 1970s, the date and time period when my family, first and second generation Mexican Americans, had spent their childhoods. I sent a screenshot to one of my aunts, noticing that the hairstyles were similar to her disco-era look.

“That’s me at the top, oh yeah and I remember . . .” she told me, recalling the girls in the photo. My family was now hailed in by this Latinx digital memory archive.

Latinidad in the United States, or Latinx identity making, is a memory project, always under revision, never fully graspable. As digital tools are used to “remember” and recirculate Latinidad, this identity-making process has shifted to a constant revision in real time.

In recent years, social media has brought Latinx collective memory to the forefront of Latinidad. Latinx public discourse around Latinidad is now not only circulated and shifting but it is also up for debate in real time. Latinidad goes beyond previous “offline” conversations, now an even more fluid category with social media as the medium where this conversation and identity shaping takes place. Latinidad-making has shifted with these information technologies. I argue that Latinx digital memory acts as the site where Latinidad identity is constantly slipping and rebuilding in

real time. For memory studies, Latinx digital memory demonstrates that digital memory work is a moving process for underrepresented people that are both included into the United States for assimilation or kept at a distance because of difference.

A critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA) was conducted to examine the themes present among Latinx social media curators of Instagram accounts that circulate Mexican and Mexican American culture. In particular, this research is interested in how Latinxs remember identity and negotiate contemporary debates in Latinx politics and culture in the United States through digital platforms. Latinx digital memory through social media is always negotiating the hegemonic identity of both being the “Other” and outsider in the United States, and *also* the affordances of power within Latinx communities in the United States, most prominently in this article explored as race and gender.

Power in Latinx digital memory is a slippery conversation, with an unstable response that is reflected in Latinx Instagram account. Within memory studies, power is deployed as the individual or community remembering

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interprets memories, especially now in social media. What we see when looking at Latinx social media is that gender and race especially are a contested dialogue among Latinxs, particularly harkening to Niemeyer's (2014) *resistance nostalgia*: "Resistant nostalgias could, in this sense, be elements of other opposing forms that create spaces for 'taking' and thinking about time, sometimes critically, sometimes joyfully and sometimes calmly" (p. 19). For Latinx social media, digital memory is the place in which resistance nostalgia is negotiated, especially around the memory of Latinx gender.

### *Latinidad*

Previous literature has focused on how Latinx memory is productive; it *makes* Latinidad through invention and improvisation (Parédez, 2009). Latinx subject formation is always in process: "acts of cultural memory and collective mourning can generate and transform concepts of national, racial, and gendered identities" (p. 8). But there is a slippage in Latinx identity and subjectivity as politically incoherent in its "inability to index with any regularity with central identity tropes that lead to our understanding of group identities in the United States" (Muñoz, 2000, p. 67). Latinidad is a destabilized identity politics, without one identifiable ideology, class, gender, sexuality, race, language, or religion, it is always and already in a state of flux (Parédez, 2009, p. 23). Latinx digital memory, with social media platforms, finds itself in a cycle of remembrance, nostalgia, and revision around Latinidad, or the cross between shaping Latinx identity and being interpellated as subjects of the United States. Now Latinidad happens online and must be theorized as such. The quotidian conversation around Latinidad in social media had shifted from one of non-identity to a process of nostalgia for Latinx culture and memory for past times when identity was legible.

Many terms have been used to describe Latinxs, each with their reasoning and political positioning. This research chooses the term "Latinx" as an imperfect term that homogenizes a diverse group of people. By choosing Latinx, I have also made a choice not to use "Hispanic" and "Chicanx/a/o." The term "Hispanic" is contested among Latinx Studies because of its connection to colonialism and imperial politics, in colonized America; it was used to associate Spaniards with American Whites, rather than connect them to Indians and Mexicans (Cruz-Janzen, 2002, p. 159). Chicana/o can be defined as people of Mexican heritage in the United States who were early organizers, artists, teachers, scholars, and writers who sought egalitarian treatment of race, class, and gender (Segura & Pesquera, 1998, p. 193). "Chicana/o" was an identifier that signified not just ethnicity and race, but political movements for intersectional rights. But Latinx also comes with problems. "Latina/o" has been problematized as too homogenizing to describe a wide array of people from different ethnicities, cultural traditions, language, and nationalities. However, some prefer the term "Latino" as it is more unifying referring to the

Latina American heritages, rather than centering the Spanish origin of colonization in "Hispanic" (Asencio, 2010, p. 3). The term Latinx has recently entered the public and academic sphere as a way to supplement the gendered signifiers of "a/o" in "Latina/o," and to neutralize the gendered identity of "Latina/o" or "Chicana/o" (de Onís, 2017, p. 81). This language also resists gender binaries by including the potential for gender non-conforming outside of the a/o gender binary that signifies female/male. This study uses the term Latinx to identify a group whose cultural, social, and political experiences have often been similar in the United States.

The use of the term Latinx is not a neutral or simply descriptive term but includes a politically engaged debate about the status of Latina/os as citizens or immigrants in the United States. In this article, I focus on Mexican American identity and use the word "Latinx" to describe what I am observing. Being Mexican American myself, this article hits close to home as I participate in these memory projects as a "follower" of Mexican and Latinx social media accounts. I encourage this topic to be explored more widely among the many diverse Latinx identities.

### *Latinx Digital Memory Through Social Media*

There is a long rooted national conversation around Latinx identity and subjectivity as Latinx communities through the United States continue to grow in population. Anxieties circulate around the influx of Latinx immigrants and the shifting demographics around communities of colors in the United States (Parédez, 2002), and Latinx rights in the United States are often advocated based on the ensuing census and consumer buying power of Hispanics. The anticipation and anxieties of Hispanic relevance according to voting and buying power is now a long rooted conversation (Parédez, 2002, note 7, p. 65). The anti-Mexican election campaign of Donald Trump from 2015 to 2016 and his subsequent win signaled long rooted xenophobia in the United States against Latinx immigration and Mexican American citizenship. Within days of the 2016 election, it was beholden to Latinxs in the United States to stop President Donald Trump from becoming president, due to sheer numbers (Gamboa, 2016). When that Latinx community, for all of its heterogeneity, did not manage to "save" the election, there was a national disappointment in Latinx voters (Gomez, 2016). These incidents demonstrate the subjective positioning that Latinxs are still caught in a position between illegality and production value that defines Latinx identity from the outside. However social media platforms have given rise to Latinxs determining their own identity amid political rhetoric.

There are a handful of culminating experiences that have led to the junction of a feverish remembrance of Latinx culture through social media. Communications has shifted, from a one-way relay of the message, such as the radio or television, to two-way interactivity via the Internet. With the development of social media, there was a move from

consumer of information to the “prosumer,” or an interactive consumer, and now to the “user” or the “co-creator” as an engaged agent who acts in multiple roles in consuming, producing, and circulating information in social networks (Bruns, 2007). Although “viewers” or “consumers” have always taken an approach of agency through communications and media, recently these “users” have become more active participants overall in new media: “What is different in the digital era is that users have better access to networked media, enabling them to ‘talk back’ in the same multimodal language that frames cultural products formerly made exclusively in studios” (van Dijck, 2009, p. 44).

Latinxs critical interactions with information communication technologies (ICTs) is not a recent phenomenon. Latinxs have been “online” and critically producing and consuming information technologies for decades, as well as heavily engaged in the information labor market in both US–Mexico border maquiladoras and telecommunications blue-collar sectors (Cowie, 1999; Marez, 2006; Peña, 1997). New to the formations of Latinx identities online and on social media in dialogue around Latinidad. Previously, Latinxs were discussed in terms of ICTs in conjunction with the “digital divide.” The national conversation has focused on a lack of access to information technologies to that community’s detriment, usually concerning communities of color. As the United States continues to diversify in communities and Latinx American identity, Latinxs have also gone “online” in higher numbers in recent years, especially with the onslaught of the smartphone (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Patten, 2013, p. 5). Latinxs are now active members of the online “user” community in consuming, producing, sharing, and creating digital content online. Because of the new phenomenon of participatory digital culture (Jenkins, 2009), described as “a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 3).

Latinx memory has since shifted since the wave of mourning and nostalgia prompted by Selena and shaping Latinidad in response to census projections and Latinx buying power, because of what Henry Jenkins (2009) calls participatory digital culture, “a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 3). In the past few years, Latinx digital memory has seen an especially large boost due to the many social media mediums of participatory digital culture. Latinxs find themselves in the same precarious position as other social media users—having both a platform to demonstrate their own unique identities and ideologies, as well as being reliant on private platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) that are embedded with

their political motivations (Noble, 2018). For many people of color in the United States, deleting social media for ideological purposes is not an option—access to their communities, communication with relatives, and many other daily necessities are reliant on these platforms (Noble, 2018). Latinx digital memory, then, is not immune to the embedded values of Instagram (owned by Facebook Inc.), but rather Latinidad is being shaped alongside and deeply intertwined with the culture of Silicone Valley.

I argue that Latinx digital memory acts as the site where Latinidad identity in the United States is constantly slipping and rebuilding. For memory studies, Latinx digital memory is significant because it demonstrates that digital memory work is a moving process for underrepresented people that are both included into the United States for assimilation or kept at a distance because of difference.

### Latinidad and Memory Studies

I discuss the phenomenon of Latinx memory and identity making on social media as *Latinx digital memory*, a culmination of collective memory, mediated memories, and personal cultural memory. Latinx digital memory takes the forms of memes and nostalgia through Instagram posts.

In Latinx digital memory, we see what French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) called collective memory, “a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present . . . individual memory is constructed within social structures and institutions” (42). Memory on Instagram is an active process of situating the self in the past, and that collective memory is socially constructive and performative (Didem & Humphreys, 2015). José van Dijck (2007) uses the term “mediated memory” to connote the mutual shaping between memory and media, questioning how these media tools shape the way that we remember, and vice versa (p. 2). In formations of Latinx digital memory, the tool, in this case Instagram, allows for memory to be circulated and contested, memory is a live dialogue that never fully reforms. Simultaneously, we see “personal cultural memory” in conversation, “the acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place” (van Dijck, 2007, p. 6).

Memes and nostalgia arise as two common forms of Latinx digital memory, though not always separate. In current form, “memes” act “as a prism for shedding light on aspects of contemporary digital culture” (Shifman, 2012, p. 190), “to the spread, distribution, replication, and propagation of memes in digital networks” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 5). Dawkins’ revised understanding of the meme is that “Internet memes are altered deliberately by human creativity. In the hijacked version, mutations are designed- not random- with the full knowledge of the person doing the mutating” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 6).

**Table 1.** Account and follower statistics.

Name; Instagram name	Followers	About statement
JD De Luna; @barriodandy	14,600	“Artist.Stylist.Curator.Preservationist”
Guadalupe Rosales; @Veteranas_and_Rucas	143,000	“SoCali Youth Foto Archive dedicated to women raised in SoCal & Preservation of our culture”
Jesus “Chuy” Garcia; @mexicanproblemas	1.2 million	“#1 Biggest Mexican Page”
Cassandra; @xicanisma_	113,000	“Dismantling oppressive isms through tears”

For Katharina Niemeyer, nostalgia through media enacts an endless repetition of *mimesis*. Whereas Niemeyer (2014) asks “what is nostalgia *doing*? And what role *do* media play in this context of progress and crisis?” (p. 2), my work shifts toward “what is happening with Latinx identity through nostalgia? And how has digital memory shifted Latinidad (Latinx identity)?” In facing the field of memory studies, I would argue that centering an underrepresented identity such as Latinxs (in the US context) helps us identify that social media is now the platform in which identity is remembered, negotiated, shifted, and influenced by the capitalist design of those platforms. While Latinidad is already a moving identity, on social media it attempts to re-gather itself through collective memory, while also remaining unstable through contestation. Latinx digital memory is embedded with American values, while it also struggles to re-member its own identity.

Hoskins (2018) asks for a new ontology for memory studies, and this article situates itself as one of many possible responses. I am interested in examining how the mode of Latinx digital memory through social networks provide many Latinxs with a discursive space to remember old narratives of culture, circulate contemporary Latinx cultural issues and activism, shape new formations of identity, and use authenticity as a departing and returning point to their belonging in the United States. Latinxs are using social media for “personal cultural memory” making, and producing mediated memories, which construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct Latinx past (nostalgia) and present notions of identity. A shift of identity is indicated in Latinx mediated memories, aligning with *and* in resistance to capitalism, as these mediated memories are inter-connected with social media platforms that are built with profit in mind. While Latinxs such as the Veteranas and Rucas account produce content that resists a larger hegemonic Western narrative about Latinas, accounts such as So Mexican are built around the phenomenon of mediating memories and identity making as a means to generate profit via the Mexican American experience for all of its instability.

## Method

### Digital Latinx Artifacts

Latinx social media as digital artifacts inhabit a virtual physicality that Wiggins and Bowers (2014) describe as artifacts that exist “in the human mind as well as in the digital

environment” (p. 6). These digital artifacts, then, can be seen as data that reveal the contemporary anxieties, collective memory building, and current shaping of Latinx identity.

Latinx identity is expressed on digital platforms that are built on Western ideologies of progress, religion, modernity, Whiteness, masculinity, and futurity (Dinerstein, 2006). In his CTDA, Andre Brock (2012) advocates that culture shapes technologies, and CTDA “works to subject instrumental or deterministic accounts of interactions between people and technology, by looking at the artifact’s interpellation (Althusser, 1971), by its users” (p. 531). Just as culture shapes technology, CTDA finds that technology influences and mediates racial and cultural identity. Applying Brock’s CTDA to Latinx digital memory is a way to look at the ideologies of Latinidad identity formation that is happening through social media, nodding toward technology as currently impacting the ways in which Latinxs remember, but also that Latinx digital memory is shifting information technologies using these platforms as a site for new identity formations.

Instagram, in particular, is a social media platform that chooses to highlight images over text. It was acquired by Facebook in 2012, though manages to appear distinct from Facebook in its brand, leading to many users unaware that it is a Facebook-owned platform (as well as WhatsApp and Oculus at the time this article was written). Safiya Noble (2018) advocates that when we discuss information technologies, especially those that use algorithms to organize data, we understand that technological racialization organizes these platforms.

### Sampling

Through CTDA, I look at three main Latinx memory accounts that circulate Latinidad, nostalgia, and memory to understand the contemporary shifting state of Latinx identity and culture. I take a sampling from these accounts as examples of common themes of conversation around Latinidad by Latinx content creators (Table 1).

Barrio Dandy is a clothing designer that specializes in “We are artists, designers & purveyors of fine vintage clothing and mens vintage modified and original hand made Mens Accessories. ‘Be you, Be Dandy’” (De Luna, 2019). Barriodandy is an Instagram account curated by JC De Luna, the artist, and designer of the Barrio Dandy clothing line, who designs a vintage clothing line that harkens back to the Chicana/o identities of the 1950s and 1960s. De Luna also

reenacts Chicana/o memory through style, performance, and photography. JC De Luna uses the hashtag #styleasresistance and especially remembers geographical spaces of Los Angeles that were and currently are being gentrified.

I include mexicanproblemas, “Original Mexican Problems,” an Instagram account that names itself the “#1 Biggest Mexican Page!” run by Jesus “Chuy” Garcia from the Bay Area of California as examples of meme and parody to discuss and create Latinidad. Mexicanproblemas functions as an account that uses meme to remember Mexican culture, interpellates Latinx followers through comedy, and recognizes difference between Mexican cultures and Western cultural habits in the United States. Garcia notes that he started generating Mexican memes when he was in 7th grade:

He started off with an \$80 camera with about 5 megapixels, a computer with no editing software, and himself. His first video that he ever published was called “How to be chingon on YouTube, which is private now since he states that it was not very good. (Garcia, Mexicanproblemas.com)

Garcia notes that he works for multiple companies and artists such as Vine, MexicanGueys, BeingLatino, and Coca Cola (Garcia, Mexicanproblemas.com). These accounts are certainly not the only Mexican American digital memory accounts on social media, but they display the spectrum of Latinx digital memory that is happening in real time, and how the curators and creators of this content identify their work from artists to a consumable product.

Guadalupe Rosales curates the Instagram account *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas*. *Veteranas and Rucas* is a curated digital photo archive of Chicana/Latina youth culture in Southern California. Rosas has been interviewed several times by such media outlets as *LA Weekly*, *NPR* (National Public Radio), and *ARTnews* on her archival project.

*Xicanisma\_* is run by a woman named “Cassandra” who also hosts the podcast “Bitter Brown Femmes.” *Xicanisma\_* is an Instagram account with 114,000 followers and is described as “Dismantling oppressive isms through tears” (Cassandra, 2019). *Xicanisma\_* discusses Latinx politics in the United States, immigration rights, and news about the borderlands. Cassandra also lectures at universities and public events on deconstructing machismo, racism, gender, and Latinx culture.

These Latinx social media memory projects are situated within the socio-political context from the past few years when these curated accounts have thrived. I conduct a CTDA of multiple Instagram accounts to look at the shifting landscape of Latinx memory, nostalgia, identity, and narratives of authenticity, and departures from the attempt at Latinidad cohesiveness. While examining the constantly constructed state of Latinidad and the slippage of identity formation is not new (Parédez, 2002), what is new is the move to these conversations in real time by all social media users on platforms, such as Instagram, that are for-profit and embedded in politic.

## Results

### *Nostalgia: Barriodandy*

Instagram user, artist, and vintage fashion curator *barriodandy*, JC De Luna (2019), describes his fashion design and art as “Style as Resistance,” focusing on Chicana style clothing that harkens back to the pachuco zoot suit styles from the 1940s through the 1970s style of such Chicana performance artists as *Asco*, and at times harkening back to the fashions of the Mexican revolution. De Luna’s (2019) Instagram displays his fashion and also remembers Chicana culture through photos and text to re-circulate Latinx memory. *Barriodandy*’s Instagram account parallels Hoskins’ notion that no external memory field is borrowed upon, as a print archive, but rather that the user is now the generator of memories (p. 21).

De Luna (2019), in partnership with photographer Jose LaLo Garcia Jr, uses Instagram as a medium of delivering Latinx nostalgia and remembering through performance and fashion, such as his recreation of the pre-gentrified Chavez Ravine through fashion, performance, and social media as a medium. On Instagram, De Luna targets Latinx issues such as the displacement and gentrification of the migrant valley Chavez Ravine, a rural like valley outside of downtown Los Angeles where Mexican Americans and Mexican migrants lived in affordable housing. The Los Angeles city council and housing authority saw Chavez Ravine as a threat to the urban appearance of Los Angeles around 1949, and the Federal Housing Act of 1949 allowed Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron to remove residents because of a proposed housing project (*Public Broadcasting Station, 2017*), which eventually resulted in the construction of Dodger Stadium. Chicana artists such as Judith F Baca, in her mural *The History of California*, have remembered the residents and culture of the once lively Chavez Ravine through street art. De Luna reframes Chicana remembering and nostalgia through Instagram as a digital archive. De Luna recreates Latinx fashion of the 1940s and 1950s and photographs Latinx imagination of Chavez Ravine with young Chicanas.

De Luna’s work not only performs Latinx memory and nostalgia but also uses social media to recirculate the all too invisible and gentrified histories of Latinxs in Los Angeles. But beyond activism, there is rewriting with nostalgia. De Luna depicts three women walking down a street in the imagined “Chavez Ravine” while being checked out by three men. Then, De Luna flips the script and reverses the gender roles, so that the women are whistling at men as they walk by with their groceries. These photographs are not historical documents, but a reimagining and the use of Chicana memory and nostalgia to engage contemporary dialogues around performative gender roles.

Chicana nostalgia on social media remembers disappeared Latinx histories, performs and revives Latinx memory, and also imagines nostalgia in a contemporary context.

The re-membering of Latinx histories and the performance of these histories also does anti-colonial work. About nostalgia and memory, Mexican performance artist and theorist Diana Taylor (2007) notes that “the history of colonial violence, dominance, rape, and desire never quite frees itself of the gendered and racialized bodies that live it” (p. 100), and she goes on to describe a “continuum of the past and present” (Taylor, 2007, p. 100) that occurs within nostalgia. Barriodandy’s Instagram curations and performances embody and re-perform the same colonial violence that it spoke to during the gentrification of Chavez Ravine and previous generations of Mexican response to colonization in Borderlands. In an Instagram post from 4 June 2017, in which three Chicanxs model vintage 1940s Latinx style in a black and white image in Downtown Los Angeles, barriodandy labels the image, “Time traveling with my carnales” (De Luna, 2017b). Social media nostalgia is not only recirculating and performing Latinx nostalgia, but as De Luna notes, it uses nostalgia to time travel and rewrites the colonial past in which Latinxs communities were removed and erased. Latinx social media memory accounts time travel through embodiment and technology to recall the past, rewrite the past, and reimagine the past onto the present. Barriodandy implements what Katharina Niemeyer calls “resistance nostalgia” into his work. In the context of nostalgia in social media, Niemeyer’s “time studies” argues that there is a malaise with the accelerated times experienced in contemporary nostalgias. In nostalgia, time collapses as past and present collide and imagine the future through representation or artificial repetition (Niemeyer, 2014).

For Latinx memory online, nostalgia is productive in multiple directions: as a political signifier, a mode of impermanent identity, and as a site of consumption that works with US capitalism. Diana Taylor (2007) thinks about cultural memory, specifically, *mestizaje*, as “site and as recuperative practice ushers us into the spectacle of the lost and found in terms of race, gender, and cultural memory” (p. 97). With Taylor’s definition, we can proceed thinking about Latinx digital memory as a site and a recuperative practice, always in the process of redefining itself through nostalgia. Nostalgia harkens back to a fixed Latinx identity culture of the past to define current Latinidad movement and presence in a digital society. Barriodandy’s account deals with the unease that is deployed by Latinxs in remembering Chavez ravine: the migrant communities in Chavez Ravine were gentrified out of their homes, like many Latinx experiences around Los Angeles, but they also experienced power and gender roles within their own everyday lives among each other. Barriodandy flips those gender roles that are brought into memory with resistance nostalgia, both remembering Chavez Ravine and deploying new memories into Chavez Ravine.

This method of nostalgia among Latinx Instagram accounts also resists Western hegemony in the sense that it will not serve the function of the *future* Latinx that hoped for in US discourse. For Latinx communities, life chances are

deemed valuable on what Jonathan Rosa (2016) calls *social tense*, in that there is always a potential for Latinxs to assimilate into lighter skin, English speakers, in which they hold potential for consumption and buying power, Liberal voting, and conservative family values. In Latinx digital memory and nostalgia, Latinidad, in this case Mexican and Mexican American communities in the United States, hold their cultural significance in the past. However, barriodandy’s reckoning with gender roles both resists nostalgia and nods to discomfort of hegemonic values embedded in Latinidad that many Latinx Instagram account confront.

*Latinidad, a Sponsored Conversation: Mexicanproblemas.* Often, Latinx digital memory is circulated through memes. In many ways, Latinidad is performing the essence of the meme; the meme, as a cultural idea, “sought replication for the purpose of its own survival” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 4). Wiggins and Bowers (2014) note that the meme as an artifact is reproduced by members of a participatory digital culture who have agreed to a set of rules and resources for generating a meme in an intentional interaction between the agent and social system (p. 6). We can apply this beyond the meme to collective memory making and Latinidad when viewing accounts like *mexicanProblemas*.

Prevalent to the national past of Latinx identity and belonging in the US national body is the discourse around Latinx “buying power” as a force in commerce, and there was a significant turn in the 1990s as viewing Latinxs as a potential for capital. *Mexicanproblemas* uses traditional photograph memes that usually capture a part of Mexican culture and include a phrase that identifies and interpellates the viewer as either Latinx or non-Latinx. Often, *mexicanProblemas* is not the creator of the meme, but rather the curator and circulator.

The Instagram account *mexicanproblemas* uses memes to relate to various Mexican experiences in the United States, they negotiate who is an authentic Mexican through memory and shared everyday cultural experiences, and interpellate “authenticity” through similar cultural experiences including consumption. Mexican authenticity as defined through the *mexicanProblemas* account, common types of memes include a cultural food or product of Latinidad, such as an image circulated in December of PanDulce and Abuelita chocolate, with the heading “Who’s ready for the Posadas?” Similarly, *mexicanproblemas* has a post with a picture of the “rosca,” a traditional Mexican dish used on the Three Kings Holiday, tamales, hominy, and a package of Abuelita, that states “When you get the monito in your piece of rosca starter pack.” This meme refers to the tradition on three king’s day of cutting the rosca. The person that receives a small figurine in the bread will host the next party, often with tamales. These memes refer to Mexican and Mexican American cultural traditions. They harken in a particular digital community that can relate, and encourage commentary, further interpellation, and “sharing.” However, upon looking more

closely, *mexicanproblemas*' corresponding text states "Boy is this true, some pozole, tamales, and Abuelita hot chocolate @nestleabuelita #ChocolateAbuelita #RoscaDeReyes #Ad" (Garcia, 2017). What is seemingly a cultural meme that builds and re-memembers Mexican Latinidad is an advertisement, sponsored by the Swiss company Nestlé. Chocolate Abuelita was first made in Mexico City in 1939 and was purchased by Nestlé in 1995. Often, then, these memes are not only a recirculation of memory and reinstating Latinidad culture and identity, but also a partnership between the digital creator or curator and a cultural capital product. Digital Latinidad through meme and social media functions for two purposes: in form it resists the narrative of assimilation from the United States *and* in function it merges Latinidad with globalized capitalist production.

These posts are not limited to cultural signifiers but also extend to political concerns of Latinx communities, such as warnings from *mexicanproblemas* on where the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (ICE) frequently been seen raiding or detaining immigrants, and warnings on recent ICE action on immigrants in the United States. This account calls in the viewer as already and immediately on the inside of the cultural topic, it has to assume that the viewer is Latinx to engage them and promote response, such as "comments," "likes," and "shares." But *mexicanproblemas* also uses Latinx buying power and identity making to profit from Latinidad through sponsorship. For some Latinx social media accounts, the negotiation and co-creation of Latinidad is not only a dialogue but also a product to be consumed and sponsored. Embedded within some Latinx memory projects on social media is product placement. Jesus Rodriguez, the founder of *mexicanproblemas*, has been sponsored by Coca-Cola.

A poignant shift in Latinx identity and belonging in the United States as a point of commerce is the merger of Latinx identity with social media. In previous discourse, Latinx buying power acted as a top-down marketing strategy from corporate interests and a bottom-up strategy from Latinx communities for recognition as a social group with political power in the United States. However, in social media, Latinx identity is a phenomenon to be "sponsored" or co-constructed by various interest groups that are not necessarily Latinx identified, but function as a funding source for those accounts. In real time, Latinx identity conversation is sponsored by or supported by various US interest groups. The Latinx memory meme, then, functions as a way to interpellate Latinx users into the community and also to digitally merge capital values into Latinidad.

*Resistance Veteranas\_and\_Rucas.* *Veteranas\_and\_rucas* demonstrate a community archive that has uniquely come into focus through social media, reflecting what Hoskins (2011) calls the "connective turn" of memory archives flooding online venues. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* does the memory work of remembering an underrepresented subculture of "party crews" in Southern California; Latinx digital memory uses

platforms that help Latinxs perform memory (Hoskins, 2015). As a memory project, *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* calls in a particular Latinx subculture of a geographic region and time period, including cultural signifiers of identity, fashion and style, and representation. A curated Instagram profile, Guadalupe Rosales has received recognition from major media outlets for her unique work on digitally archiving traditionally underrepresented groups that are not remembered in traditional mainstream archives. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* is also a collective memory project and archive. While Rosales is the head curator, images are submitted from the larger Latinx Southern California community. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* speaks to digital memory as a communal process that is non-linear in collective memory. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* engage activism and Latinidad as a part of the past, but they are called into the present as a reminder that Latinidad today is built on a particular Latinx protest culture. Online digital memory, through *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas*, is a remembrance of the past as a function of the present in Latinidad.

As a gender project, *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* centers young Latina women; however, the account is also unique because it includes Latino Southern California style and representation. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* shows young women's fashion, partying and dancing. The photographs themselves decenter gender hierarchy: when men are present, they are present in relation to Latinas and as a result of the presence of Latina women. *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas*, then, is not only a memory project but also one that rewrites gendered re-arranging of the past.

With regards to activism, *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* also harkens back to the activism of Latinx, Chicana, and Mexican activism from the 1950s through the 2000s. In January of 2017, Rosales posted an image of the Roosevelt High School Walkouts in the 1970s, in which Latinxs advocated for better public schools for their communities. "I want to give a S/O (shout out) to the past generations . . ." (Rosales, 2017), Rosales states, bringing to the forefront the generational activism that the Latinx rights movements have been built on. Images of activism over Latinx generations are often displayed in close proximity to each other in this archive, bringing to the forefront similarities in political issues and making visual underrepresented histories. In February 2017, an image from 1994 depicts Belmont High students walking out of school to protest the California bill Proposition 187, which would run a citizenship screening system and prohibit undocumented people from using public resources. As a result, many Mexican and Central American students were deported or had to leave the public school systems. Latinx activism, then, is not separated or cataloged in separate time-periods, through the visual aid and platform of Instagram, these images can be placed side by side, overruling time to demonstrate how Latinidad has acted to subvert racial hegemonomies over decades in the United States.

*Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* works to speak back to the larger assumptions of Latina identity in the 1990s (and previous decades). While the images depicted look like Latina "girl



gangs” from the outside, *Veteranas\_and\_Rucas* gives the follower a rare look and alternative narrative about these girls. The images that *Rosales* centers are Latina girls at the center, repositioning gender by centering Latina girls as the main character of Latinx digital memory. While *barriodandy* reimagined disappeared Latinx communities, *Rosales* reorganizes the archive in a way that demonstrates that Latinas were never actually *invisible*, but rather made peripheral by outsiders. In Latinx digital memory, performing memory is sometimes about prioritizing previously invisible images.

*Xicanisma\_ and Resisting Latinx Nostalgia.* Latinx digital memory has also emerged online in a new set of digitally *fostered values* “of unbridled commentary, open access, freedom of information, the ‘right to know’, the immediacy of instant search, and confessional culture, which all feed on and provoke the restless past” (Hoskins, 2018, p.3). Among these digitally fostered values emerged *call-out culture*, or the move on social media to publicly condemn acts of racism, sexism, and other organizations of power (Schwartz, 2018). In Latinx digital memory conversations and social media archives, *call-out culture* shifts the narrative of Latinidad and challenges Latinx memory, nostalgia, and memes. One example of this is the Instagram account *xicanisma\_*.

Latinx digital memory through social media can also serve as a “mirror” for Latinidad in the US context. *Xicanisma\_* emerging from these public conversations on private domains are conversations around the hegemony that exists *within* Latinidad, serving to resist a homogenizing narrative that all Latinxs have the same experience in the United States, and resisting an “all Latinxs” are victims of US xenophobia. The Instagram account *Xicanisma\_* does just this through meme, photos and text images. *Xicanisma\_* is run by the single user, solely named Cassandra. In some ways, *Xicanisma\_* may seem like a political commentary, one that is easy to find in social media. However, *Xicanisma\_* ruptures Latinx digital memory through responses that remind Latinidad that hegemony is always present within Latinx identity, even when Latinxs are a marginalized group within the United States. *Xicanisma\_* does not allow for nostalgia around Latinidad, because she names machismo, sexism, and racism that is embedded in the post-colonial identities. But *Xicanisma\_* uses the platform to hold a mirror up to the Latinx community about anti indigeneity, anti-blackness, gender discrimination, and sexism, cutting through main stream formations of Latinidad that group Latinxs together as a political identity that is marginalized in the United States.

While much of Latinx memory projects in social media draw on *difference* from Western values and formations of power, *Xicanisma\_* cuts through Latinx memory in a way that exerts van Dijk’s (2007) *personal cultural memory*, in dialogue with the larger cultural memory of Latinidad, but pushing Latinidad to shift in seeing its own organizations of race and gender:

Intentions and control change along with our revisions of memories in the passage of time, and revisions, in turn, reset the boundaries for what counts as public or private. Those boundaries are concurrently the outcome and stakes in the act of cultural memory. (van Dijk, 2007, p. 13)

In a 17 December 2018 post is of the cover of *Vogue*, México that features Yalitza Aparicio, *Xicanisma\_* says,

There’s an Indigenous woman on the cover of *Vogue* and all of a sudden people in Mexico want people to ‘acknowledge that not all Mexicans look the same’ and claim they ‘reject nationalism’ when they have no problem erasing Indigenous/Black people year round in the name of *Mestizaje* . . . ok. (Just read any comment section) (Cassandra, 2018a)

This critique is one of many that *Xicanisma\_* conducts throughout her account. It demonstrates a direct resistance to Latinx identity making as that of common ground, or as an identity politics that attempts to bring people together by overlooking race, gender, sexuality, and class within Latinx identity. Many of *Xicanisma\_*’s posts are about anti-Blackness in Latinx communities, and the disassociation of Black Latinxs in Latinidad rhetoric. While *call-out culture* is at play in many of these posts, Cassandra reflects personally on how she came to look at her own disassociation with Latinx identity in seeing it for the hegemonic practices that are overlooked in Latinx digital memory.

From an 22 August 2018 post, *Xicanisma\_* said,

Every time I post about anti-Blackness in Latinx community, I know I’m going to get with a bunch of comments denying or justifying it. I try my best to articulate my posts so that people will understand what is being said. If you do not understand why something is anti-Black, ASK. Say ‘I don’t understand, can you explain this further?’ DM me, if you don’t want to do that publicly. I promise if I don’t reply, someone in the comments will. When people get defensive from the jump and comment that I’m ‘reaching’ or that ‘what’s wrong with being pro-Latinx!?’ etc etc etc, I don’t even bother replying. That just tells me that you’re not actually trying to understand, you’re just further showing that you refuse to check yourself and engage in a discussion about anti-Blackness that doesn’t center your feelings. used to hold anti-Black sentiments when I first started this page. I tried to justify it and passed it off as me being ‘pro-Xicanx’ and refused to look past my own identity. It took me a lot to start undoing those sentiments and I got dragged (rightfully so) a few times for it. This is a reason that I try to post about anti-Blackness as much as I can, because I used to engage in it without realizing it and without understanding that what I was saying was hurtful. I’m not the expert on anti-Blackness, obviously. I will never experience it and will never know what it is like to be Black. Because of this, I am also always trying to find the balance between doing what I need to do as a non-Black person with a platform who benefits from anti-Blackness, but also not speaking FOR Black people and coming off as a non-Black savior (which I’m sure I have also done). The first step on

the path to liberation starts with understanding and examining our own oppression. But that should not be the end all. We need to move past our own oppressions and understand our role as oppressors. Whether you're a man, straight, cis, non-Black, etc. We can be part of a marginalized group and still benefit from someone else's oppression. The sooner we understand this, the sooner we can actually have these conversations without going in the same circle. (Cassandra, 2018b)

Xicanisma\_'s posts halt the process of Latinx digital memory by shining a light on power within Latinidad. Latinx followers of Xicanisma\_ and those commenting in her posts are at constant odds with each other and with her position with Latinx digital memory. While other Latinx social media accounts work to "remember" Latinx culture and reinstate it, Xicanisma\_ work resists nostalgia and recuperation through cultural signifiers, focusing instead on speaking from within the identity of Chicana to resist hegemony.

Van Dijck (2007) concludes that media and memory transform each other that mediated memories are the "activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relation to others" (p. 21). Xicanisma\_ demonstrates that call out culture and challenging hegemonic nostalgias of the past are changing Latinidad. While many Latinx social media accounts attempt to re-group Latinidad, Xicanisma\_ build a new formation of Latinidad through the ruptures of memory. The next question in this phenomenon is: can new Latinx identities rebuild in these new formations of Nieyemer's resistance nostalgias? Or do they continue to split in the flurry of digital memory that is being updated in real time? Xicanisma\_'s use of social media in Latinx digital memory may serve to speak to a future Latinidad, rather than to a nostalgic past. Xicanisma\_ also demonstrates that memory is being reorganized by the call out culture that has now shifted public conversations.

## Conclusion and Implications

Hoskins (2018) argues that digital memory is theorized as the most dangerous memory to date in human consciousness, as it has no sense of limitation, forgetting, or death (p. 20). In Latinx digital memory, Latinx identity making is always in negotiation, always slippery. While there is no sense of forgetting, there is also no sense of stable remembering. Some accounts point to the past, such as *barriodandy* or *veteranas\_and\_rucas*, establishing new archives. Some use memes to gather Latinx identity back in through hailing, while also serving larger corporate interests. And some, like Xicanisma\_, use Latinx digital memory to disrupt formations of homogeneous identities, instead pointing to the hegemony within those memories.

This article examined Latinx digital memory to understand how Latinidad, or the process of Latinx identity in the United States, has shifted and is constructed through social media information technologies. The influx of Latinx users of handheld devices and Latinx social media content curators

and producers has indeed shifted the conversation on Latinidad into one that updates in real time through nostalgia, activism, and as a product to be sponsored and consumed. Latinx digital memory exemplifies this new phenomenon.

Latinx digital memory demonstrates how social media as a medium of identity-formation acts as a "cultural communication medium" (Brock, 2012); likewise, Latinx users and producers of cultural memory exhibits the creative agency to utilize information technologies as a mode of activism and as a conduit of the same cultural norms that they present themselves as resisting, such as capitalist product placement, Western ideals of body image, and corporate sponsorship.

While I look at three patterns of memory through nostalgia, collusion, and resistance, more work is needed on the broader conversations of Latinidad and digital platforms, and on narrower focuses of specific Latinx groups. This work thinks about identity making in real time; however, further investigation on nuances of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other intersectional subjectivities are outside of the scope of this article in particular.

This study contributes to the literature on Latinx identity circulation and co-construction through digital media, particularly as it relates to Latinx-created online content, making a case for social media platforms to be taken as an archive of Latinidad making, noticing how Latinx identity is now a conversation through digital platforms, and reinterpreting memory and often sponsored by funding sources. It expounds on the types of themes that are popular within this particular community in Instagram, and it suggests that the discussion around Latinidad must shift toward a consideration of the digital, where a large part of this conversation and meaning-making is happening. Social media is now an avenue where Latinx content creators explore identity making through digital content. It is also a space where Latinx and non-Latinxs interact and further shift the conversation.

Latinx digital memory is an active process of Latinidad identity, nostalgia, activism, and capital sponsorship in real time, always in motion, a moving target without a center. It does the work of recalling the identities of the past while remapping that identity onto the present. Latinx digital memory came to online prominence through the creative uses of social media accounts, notably Instagram because of its focus on visual content. Drawing from Parédez' (2009) work on Latinidad memory, identity, culture, and consumption, I argue that Latinx digital memory is an ever-evolving moving project that is constantly updating in real time and that the digital must be taken seriously as part of the Latinx memory archive. While many Latinx social media accounts attempt to recuperate Latinx identity through nostalgia and meme, some, such as Xicanisma\_ point to the hegemonic power structures from within that identity.

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