



Bonus Episode: An Inside Look at a New Report on Latinos from Nielsen

Stacie de Armas, Nielsen's Senior VP of Diverse Intelligence and Initiatives shares fascinating insights from Nielsen's new report, "Inclusion, Information and Intersection: The Truth about Connecting with U.S. Latinos." Plus, her thoughts on how Latinas can use the data to help others understand the power of our communities.

Alicia Menendez:

Hey, you're listening to Latina to Latina. This is a bonus episode presented by Nielsen.

Latinas don't want to be seen as a monolith. You know that, of course, you know that, because you live it, and Nielsen's latest diverse intelligence series consumer report, Inclusion, Information, and Intersection, the Truth About Connecting With U.S. Latinos dives into what we mean when we say we want to be seen and spoken to in our complexities. The places we're consuming our news and entertainment, and of course, our hyper use of social media. I sat down with Stacie de Armas, she's Nielsen's Senior VP of Diverse Intelligence and Initiatives to get her take on how we use data like this to help others understand the power we possess.

Stacie, thank you for doing this. I want to start with the report, as you were putting it together, what most jumped out at you?

Stacie de Armas:

Alicia, there's so much on Google and just in the industry about our community and how big we are, and you hear a lot of the narrative around Hispanic Heritage Month and there's so much content. So of course, as we're going through and updating the community power, some of that data, we look talk about the trajectory and the growth, but within all of that, there are two things that really surfaced to me as incredibly interesting. One is not just our lack of representation on screen, in board rooms, that narrative has been there, but when you really break it down the importance that has to us individually, right?

Not just the industry, but individually when we think about identity formation. In particular, I think about young women, I think about my daughter, and I think about the challenges that teens have today as a result of COVID lockdowns or social media interactions, and I think about how we see ourselves in content and how often we see ourselves and in what types of content and thematically, how that influences identity formation of young girls and women and men, but how much that informs it and equally, how much all of that content informs how others perceive us.

So that really jumped out to me and the data around that and taking a cultural angle or a sociological angle to this data, and not just saying, "Latinos are not represented on screen. When we're present, we're in stereotypical roles." That's known, but when you really break it down and you think of about the societal impact, not only to our community, but how others perceive us and hate crime, you're like there's really something here we need to break into, so that was one. And then the other, how much misinformation is impacting our community and in many cases, how deliberate it is and how it is designed to further fracture our community, which I think we're seeing now along political lines, those are the two things.

Menendez: Right. Both our politics and a ton of COVID misinformation out there.

de Armas: If you look back, even before the vaccine misinformation attacking our community, there was definitely a political angle, and each of us, based on our countries of origin or the countries that our families have come from, have a specific and unique political view of the United States that's informed by the politics of our home countries and how our families got here. And that's understood, but I think what we see is a lot of that being weaponized. And it's not always because there isn't good content moderation and fact checking in language, a lot of it goes under the radar and so it's not caught as easily or as quickly as we would see necessarily in English language media, and it just proliferates and it's shared.

And it's so deliberate. I saw some specifically designed for the Cuban community in Miami. There's been some narrative around this lately about how the community has been somewhat radicalized in some cases, and this is my community. I'm Cubana, my family is from Miami and Havana, so I have seen some of this as well, but really using political angles that are entirely untrue to bring back some of the pain that our community has felt, as a result of the circumstances that unfolded 60 years ago, and that narrative being used to fracture our community here from the rest of the Latino community. That's one.

And then of course, vaccine mis and disinformation, and they're entirely different, right? Misinformation, mischaracterize, the wrong angle, but then there's disinformation that's deliberately designed to take our community down another corner, another street. And both of those really deliberately being targeted to our community because we are more likely to share content on encrypted apps and technology, right? WhatsApp, Telegram. Those are under the cover of regular visibility and content moderation.

It's because of how we use communication tools that this information is being targeted to us because they, whoever they are, or it is known that it perhaps would spread and disseminate more quickly and widely. So that's something that is critically important and brings me, I think, to why news and information in our community. Social influencers are so important, they have an additional layer of responsibility to disrupt some of this misinformation that is taking place because it's not happening through regular moderations.

Menendez: Let's talk about some of those numbers because they are really striking. The youngest members of our communities over twice as likely to use WhatsApp and Telegram as the general population, 69% use Instagram, 65% use Facebook. Stacie, what is driving those numbers?

de Armas: Those are big numbers, but when you compare them to what the total market uses, in some cases they're double, right? So it's the use of the technology of course, to communicate with family and friends. And everyone uses technology, so many people are on Instagram and we know why we're all there, we're catching up with our friends, we're following content that's important to us. But when you think about messaging apps where Latinos, as you said 18 to 34, are twice as likely to be using WhatsApp, we know that's because it's a tool that we all use to communicate with our families back home. There's no cost. It's just what we use, and so communicating abroad and in the U.S. actually, it's such a useful tool.

It also offers, Alicia, privacy, and that's one of the things our community has learned, unfortunately, the hard way. In some cases that is critical, it's really important to us. And so those are some of the things that encrypted apps like Telegram and WhatsApp offer, it's they offer privacy for our communities so we can share the information we need to share, talk about things that we need to talk about knowing that some of that is just among that we are dialoguing with. And I think as I said, our community has suffered as a result of lack of privacy. We saw that happening with ICE raids and stuff just a few years ago and still going on, and so that has become important. And as a result of that, and as we said before, Alicia, as a result of circumstances in our home countries that still weigh heavily on the generations that are here today, things like that are really important. And so as these technologies are more used, unfortunately, it means that we're a little bit more vulnerable.

Menendez: When we talk about the representation piece, there's a finding in the report that our listeners will say, "Yes, of course." And that is that we want to be seen in our complexity, that we want to be spoken to intersectionally, some of those words that always makes me feel like I'm back in a women's studies class. So yes, I am a Latina. That is a huge core part of my identity.

de Armas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Menendez: I'm also a mother. I'm also a Jersey girl. I'm also a millennial. An old millennial, but a millennial nonetheless. What would it look like for media, for campaigns to talk to Latinas in a way that captures that truth?

de Armas: You've really nailed it there. That is what I think we've seen organically grow over the past certainly 18 months, and to say that intersectional representation wasn't on the radar before wouldn't entirely be true, it's been happening in a lot of places, but really mostly grassroots. So think of, I don't know, BuzzFeed. There's a lot of places on social where our complex identities were being brought forward early on.

Menendez: One of the things I think those places understood and got right is that there is universality in specifics that being really clear about this is a short video, not about all Latinos, but about Puerto Ricans. Or even better, this is a short video about Puerto Ricans in New York, that I, as a Cuban from New Jersey, I will still find it very funny, I may still relate to it, but they weren't trying to make everything pan Hispanic.

de Armas: And I think that's what people have really been most drawn to, or at least as I said, I was trying to contextualize the past 18 months, really felt like they had permission to not just explore that intersectionality, but demand that it's represented in ways that it wasn't before and saw that unfold with major movies this year where the intersectional identities within our Latino community, within the Latino community in New York, there was not just us feeling like we wanted to be seen, but really a demand for that sort of visibility.

And I think that is ... The narrative that's changed in the past 18 months is one that it's not just that permission, there is permission now to explore that, it's that audiences are demanding to see those intersectional stories and they're demanding to see them because they're demanding with their dollar. I don't know if that's the best way to say it, but people don't want to be represented in this big sort of homogenous bucket anymore. They do see the value in being connected culturally together with a group and advancing together and demanding justice together. And we're stronger in doing this as a community, but we also are demanding to be seen in our cultural plurality as well.

Menendez: The group leading a lot of this effort is Afro Latinas, and the report really digs into those numbers. The number of Latinas that identify as Afro Latina, the number of Black Americans that identify as Latino. This feels like something that is in this year's report that might not have been there, let's say, five years ago.

de Armas: That's exactly right. And I think Afro Latinidad and the ethnic plurality of our community has ... It's just shining and center stage. And to your point, it is so true that the Black community in general, across different ethnic groups are really leading the change that we're seeing in the world. And think about Cuba specifically, which you mentioned you're Cubana, so am I, and the struggles for freedom there have been not entirely new. The San Isidro Movement erupted around 2018 really, or that's sort of the formal beginning, but again, led by Afro Cuban artists and have brought that all the way to the main stage. And there isn't someone within our community who hasn't heard of Patria y Vida nominated for Latin Grammy Song of the Year, and it is about this struggle, but again, featuring Afro Cuban artists. So bringing forward these stories and these intersectional areas of our community has done so much good for the visibility of all of our communities.

Menendez: Stacie, this all brings me back to podcasting. Podcasting among Latinos 25 to 39 has doubled in the past three years.

de Armas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Menendez: Seventy percent of Latinas. Hello? That is all of you. Listen to podcasts one to five times a month. Stacie, there is so much opportunity in this space.

de Armas: Is because the demand for content has changed. People want to hear stories, as we were just talking about, that are about them that are granular, deeply intersectional, that are nuanced and specific. And oftentimes that's missing in mainstream media, and so there's only a few places you can find stories where you really feel seen, feel represented, and where you feel you have space. And podcasting is one of those mediums that has just emerged beyond center stage, really leading. There is a podcast for everyone on everything, yet even though there is, the space doesn't seem to be tremendously cluttered.

I also think it's interesting as we look it closer within the report that the way our community responds to podcasts are a little bit different, of course, deeply leaning in beyond what we see non Hispanic white, but the topics that are most interesting to our community really reflect where we are at in our U.S. experience.

Menendez: Tell me more.

de Armas: So as an example, for Latino's education, ranking third, right? Of course, comedy and news, always great, top of the list, but education being a top ranking category for Hispanics, and it makes perfect sense, right? In our quest here, whether you're first generation, newly immigrated, or second generation, wanting to really better understand the educational journey in the U.S. in general, and that's specifically around U.S. education, but wanting to educate ourselves and learn more about what's happening.

Interestingly, that same spot, that number three spot, for Afro Latinos are society and culture, and if you think about the experience of being Afro Latino in the United States, it is, and we just talked about the community, being marginalized, not having the same visibility. It makes sense to me that the Afro Latino community would want to lean in hard on society and culture, because where is that content otherwise being presented? The podcast universe allows for topics that are very specific and allows topics that are very specific to really flourish online.

Menendez: So we know this, the question is how we get others to know this.

de Armas: So what we are doing is reshaping this kind of content. We're going to release the information. We want people to have it, and that's what's going to resource the masses, but we're also operationalizing it. Within the systems that agencies and brands use to evaluate media intersectional identities, to look at what people like, where they're watching content that they like, what it is about content that's meaningful to them. We're operationalizing this data within those systems so that it's not a double resource.

You're not looking over here at your report, and then going over here to make your decision where you're being balanced against efficiencies. That's really what ends up

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creating the biggest problem in the industry is that the industry still is run around efficiencies, and sometimes it's difficult for really targeted media to surface. And so when we operationalize this data, so it's on the desks, in the spreadsheets, it allows the value that is sometimes those newer metrics that illustrate the amplified impact of all of the things we're talking about today, right? We're not talking about straight KPIs, we're talking about KPIs where there's the value metric ...

Menendez: Can you define KPI?

de Armas: Oh okay, key performance indicators, so those are like the numbers, right? The percent, like this is what this delivers. Very simple. It's just the percent number, but those numbers are hard. And what I mean by that is the way it is today, those numbers are just hard static numbers, and so what we are doing is bringing in the ability to amplify those numbers with things that are maybe considered softer metrics, things like influence, things like equity, right? There are other measures that don't have a hard number behind them but they absolutely amplify the impact, and so as we operationalize those additional metrics, it makes it easier or more streamlined, I should say, for the buyers and planners and brands to understand the amplified value of content that features diverse people of identity groups and what they prefer to watch, what audiences like. Those sorts of things are things that we really want to operationalize so that we can advance this movement beyond just I know I should.

Menendez: Stacie, if our listeners want to learn more about this report, where should they go?

de Armas: We have a ton of data available at [Nielsen.com/Latinos](https://www.nielsen.com/latinos). All of the reports that we've done in this space. Additionally, they can look up Nielsen Seen On Screen, which is our annual report that we deliver around the visibility of diverse identity groups and content. I'll add there are a bunch of partners in this space who we love and support that are doing similar work. Learn, educate yourself, talk about it, share with your friends, and let's continue to march this journey together.

Menendez: Stacie, thank you so much for your time today.

de Armas: I'm so grateful. Thank you for the opportunity to share.

Menendez: Hey, thank you so much for listening. Latina to Latina is executive produced and owned by Juleyka Lantigua and me, Alicia Menendez. Sarah McClure is our senior producer. Our lead producer is Cedric Wilson. Kojin Tashiro is our associate sound designer. Stephen Colón mixed this episode. Jimmy Gutierrez is our managing editor. Manuela Bedoya is our social media editor and ad ops lead. We love hearing from you email us at [hola at Latinatolatina.com](mailto:hola@Latinatolatina.com). Slide into our DMs on Instagram or tweet us at Latina to Latina. Remember to subscribe or follow us on radio public, Apple podcast, Google podcast, good pods, wherever you're listening right now. And remember, every time you share the podcast or you leave a review, you help us to grow as a community.

CITATION:

Menendez, Alicia, host. "An Inside Look at a New Report on Latinos from Nielsen" *Latina to Latina*, LWC Studios. December 6, 2021. LatinaToLatina.com.

Produced by:

