BETWEEN
Stereotypes
&Specificity

Latino Representation
in Popular Television

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¡Pa'lante!

**An initiative of the
USC Norman Lear Center**

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About the Norman Lear Center

The Norman Lear Center is a nonpartisan research and public policy center that studies the social, political, and cultural impact of entertainment. The Lear Center helps bridge the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through its scholarship, research, and partnerships, its events, publications, and outreach to the creative community; and its role in formulating the field of entertainment studies, the Norman Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice—and to illuminate and repair the world.

About ¡Pa'lante!

The USC Norman Lear Center's ¡Pa'lante! Initiative is a research effort examining the state of Latino representation in entertainment media. This initiative looks beyond broad Latino labels to assess visibility, cultural specificity, and storytelling across diverse Latino subcommunities. ¡Pa'lante! aims to inform industry conversations and support more accurate, nuanced Latino representation on screen.

Executive Summary

Sixty-eight million Americans, or one in five, are Latino. By 2050, Latinos are projected to make up one in four Americans. In addition to the notable size of this population, many Latinos have roots in North America (and the Americas more broadly) that predate the founding of the United States itself. Despite this, Latinos in the U.S. face many challenges, including dehumanizing rhetoric and increased scrutiny.

While decades of research indicate that scripted entertainment plays an important role in shaping attitudes towards historically-marginalized communities, the rise in anti-Latino sentiments has only increased the importance of nuanced Latino representation. Latinos have historically been both underrepresented and misrepresented in entertainment media, with minimal progress over time. Existing data aggregates across Latinos, classifying them under one umbrella category, when in reality, Latinos encompass individuals from 20 different countries. More work that disentangles data by skin tone, race/ethnicity, and nationality is needed to examine patterns *within* Latino communities in order to build a fuller picture of the state of representation.

The Present Research

To examine what it means to be Latino on screen today, the USC Norman Lear Center launched a multi-pronged research study, including:

○ **A content analysis of the top 20 U.S. broadcast programs with Latino characters in the 2024-2025 television season** examining the diversity, heritage, cultural specificity, and race-centrality (the degree to which race/ethnicity is central to a character's storyline) of Latino characters, along with how these factors intersect with stereotypes. Through the report, we refer to this component as our **broad sample**.
○ **A deep-dive into eight "Latino-led" shows featuring Latino main characters, half of which were also "Latino-created"** (defined as more than half of behind-the-camera talent—directors, producers, showrunners, writers—identified as Latino) exploring content themes, cultural specificity, and how these vary by the presence of Latino talent behind-the-scenes.

What We Found

Broad Sample

In our **broad sample**, **Latino characters accounted for only 6% of all roles.**
○ Fourteen of the 20 series in this sample featured four Latino characters or fewer, with half of these featuring only a single Latino character. Only six programs featured more than five Latino characters.
○ Though shows taking place in Los Angeles featured twice as many Latino characters as those set outside of Los Angeles, representation still fell well below population levels both in the U.S. and LA.

In addition, **diversity of Latino characters was lacking, and cultural specificity was rare.**
○ We identified only one queer Latino character, and three with darker skin tones.
○ Most Latinos were portrayed as middle class, underrepresenting both working class and upper class Latinos.

- Out of 69 characters, only 18 had heritage tied to a specific Latin American nation, most of whom were Mexican.
- The vast majority of Latino characters (91%) were in race-agnostic roles (race/ethnicity mentioned only briefly or not at all) and only 9% were in race-central roles (race/ethnicity is central to the character's storyline or motivations).

Criminality emerged as the most prominent theme; one in four Latino characters with evident professions were depicted as career criminals.
- Additionally, 11% were shown participating in drug-trafficking, and 11% were part of a criminal organization.
- In all of these cases, characters were either unspecified Latinos, meaning they showed no evident identification with any particular nationality or heritage, or Mexican.

Deep-Dive

Our **deep-dive** into Latino-led shows allowed us to identify additional themes that were not present in our broader sample due to the limited number of Latino characters on broadcast television. We found that **Latino-led shows featured nuanced portrayals of pressing social issues, cultural specificity, and complex explorations of Latino identities. This was particularly true for shows that were also Latino-created**.

In these eight Latino-led shows, markers of cultural specificity like food, music, and cultural events were plentiful. Five episodes specifically focused on depictions of quinceañeras, or celebrations of a girl's 15th birthday common in Latin America, particularly Mexico. Through this cultural event, characters wrestled with gender and generational dynamics in Latino families and the push-and-pull between tradition and identity.

Social issues in Latino-led shows were wide-ranging, including gentrification, displacement, colonization, immigration, gender roles, and family dynamics. **Latino-led content tackled stereotypes with humor,** and among these, **Latino-created shows in particular more often centered the perspectives of Latino characters.**

Conclusion & Recommendations

Together, **this research points to the untapped potential of Latino-led and Latino-created content.** To support more nuanced depictions that highlight the diversity and complexity of Latino communities, we propose the following recommendations for storytellers and decision makers in the entertainment industry:

1. **Aim for the inclusion of one Latino character for every five roles to reflect reality.**
2. **Diversify your Latino characters.**
3. **Exercise caution around depictions of Latinos as criminals, drug traffickers, or members of organized crime, particularly within smaller roles.**
4. **Capitalize on the diversity of Latino actors when appropriate by encouraging them to bring their lived experience into roles.**
5. **Prioritize Latino talent behind-the-camera.**
6. **Remember that Latino-led media is not just for Latinos.**

Introduction

Though often used interchangeably, the terms *Latino* and *Hispanic* have different meanings:

HISPANIC:
Refers to people with origins in Spanish-speaking countries. This definition includes Spain, which is a Spanish speaking country outside of Latin America. It excludes Latin American and Caribbean countries that speak a language other than Spanish, like Brazil and Haiti.

LATINO:
Refers to people with origins in Latin America, which excludes Spain but includes Brazil and Haiti.

In this study, we focus on representation of those with roots in with Latin America, and therefore use the term *Latino.*

Recent estimates indicate that one in five Americans are Latino, a historic high for a population that is now estimated to include over 68 million people.[1] The Latino population is growing 5.8 times faster than non-Latino populations[2] and is projected to account for 27% of Americans by 2050.[3] In addition, many Latinos have roots in North America (and the Americas more broadly) that predate the founding of the United States itself.[4]

Yet, many Latinos in the U.S. continue to face significant challenges. A 2021 study from Pew Research found that 54% of Latino adults had experienced some form of discrimination in the past year, such as being criticized for speaking Spanish, being told to go back to their home country, or called offensive slurs.[5] These experiences were even more common among Latinos with darker skin tones (64%).[6] In 2025, Pew Research polling found that 68% of Latinos thought the situation for Hispanics in the U.S. had worsened in the past year, and 32% had thought about leaving the U.S.[7]

The last decade has brought a tide of dangerous and dehumanizing rhetoric, includ-

1 Ramos, B. (2025, October 7). *U.S. Latinos hit new population and labor force records.* UCLA Newsroom. https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/u-s-latinos-population-labor-force-growth

2 Hamilton, D., Fienup, M., Hayes-Bautista, D., & Hsu, P. (2024). *U.S. Latinos shatter economic records: New population & labor force data.* Latino GDP. https://blogs.callutheran.edu/cerf/files/2025/10/Latinos_Shatter_Economic_Records.pdf

3 Gamboa, S. (2023, November 8). *Over 1 in 4 Americans will be Latino by 2060, census projects.* NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/1-4-americans-will-latino-2060-census-projects-rcna124244

4 National Museum of the American Latino. (n.d.). *Early Latino history.* https://latino.si.edu/learn/latino-history-and-culture/latino-history/early-latino-history

5 Noé-Bustamante, L., Gonzalez-Barrera, A., Edwards, K., Mora, L., & Lopez, M. H. (2021, November 4). *Majority of Latinos say skin color impacts opportunity in America and shapes daily life*. Pew Research Center.https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2021/11/04/majority-of-latinos-say-skin-color-impacts-opportunity-in-america-and-shapes-daily-life/

6 Ibid.

7 Im, C., & Noé-Bustamante, L. (2025, November 24). *Majorities of Latinos disapprove of Trump and his policies on immigration, economy*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2025/11/24/majorities-of-latinos-disapprove-of-trump-and-his-policies-on-immigration-economy/

ing references to Latino men as "bad hombres"[8] and claims by the highest levels of government that Mexican immigrants are "…bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." [9] Anti-Latino rhetoric has culminated in a new era of immigration enforcement that has terrorized Latino communities and sent over 230 Venezuelan men to a brutal maximum-security prison in El Salvador without due process.[10] In the lead-up to the opening of the Everglades Detention Center in Florida, nicknamed "Alligator Alcatraz," a prominent political activist joked on X that the alligators surrounding this detention center would have "at least 65 million meals," a veiled reference to the rough population size of the Latino community in the U.S.[11] While decades of research indicate that scripted entertainment can play an important role in shaping attitudes toward historically-marginalized communities, these events have only increased the importance of stories that humanize Latinos.

Visibility of Latinos On-Screen

Despite the size of their communities and their long history on the lands now defined as the United States, Latinos have been consistently underrepresented in U.S. entertainment media. According to UCLA's *Hollywood Diversity Report,* Latinos accounted for only 5.7% of all roles and 6.1% of leading roles in the 2021-2022 broad-

Figure 1.
Latino Representation in Broadcast TV Over Time (Source: Hollywood Diversity Report, 2020-2023, UCLA Entertainment & Research Media Initiative)

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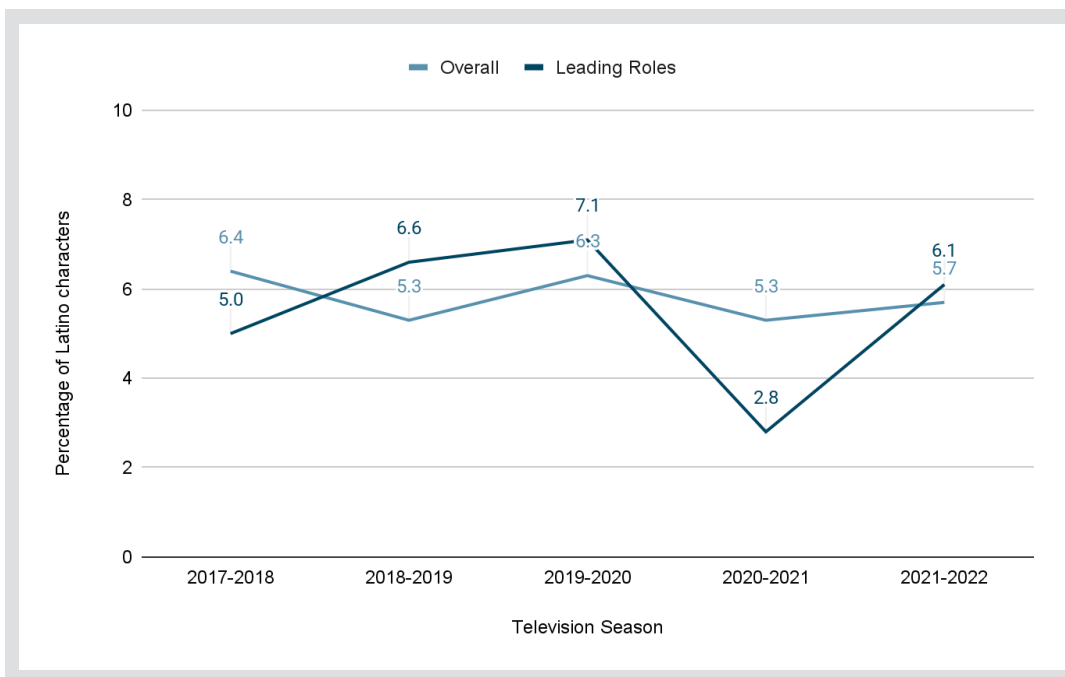
8 Causey, A. (2016, October 20). *To some, Trump's 'bad hombres' is much more than a botched Spanish word.* PBS News. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trumps-bad-hombres-draws-jeers

9 Deggans, E. (2015, June 29). *NBC dumps Donald Trump over comments on Mexican immigrants.* NPR. https://www.npr.org/2015/06/29/418641198/nbc-dumps-donald-trump-over-comments-on-mexican

10 Del Valle, G., Bonilla Suárez, A., & Corona Ramos, E. (2025, August 6). *Venezuelan men and their families share experiences after CECOT release*. The Texas Tribune. https://www.texastribune.org/2025/08/06/immigrants-imprisoned-trump-el-salvador-cecot/

11 Keane, I. (2025, July 3). *'Alligator Lives Matter': Trump pal Laura Loomer slammed for saying Florida 'Alcatraz' beasts will get '65 million meals'.* Independent. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/offbeat/alligator-lives-matter-trump-pal-laura-loomer-slammed-for-saying-florida-alcatraz-beasts-will-get-65-million-meals/ar-AA1HUOmt

cast television season.[12] When comparing this to the previous four years, it is apparent that these numbers have remained largely stagnant.[13]

These aggregated data provide a partial picture of the state of Latino representation and serve as important metrics for monitoring progress—or lack thereof—over time. However, aggregated data can also hide nuanced information about how representation varies *within* the broader Latino community.

The Latino community encompasses individuals from over 20 different countries, each with their own unique histories and experiences. These distinctions matter to many Latinos, half of whom (47%) describe themselves by their family's country of origin or heritage (i.e., Mexican, Nicaraguan, Brazilian, or Cuban).[14] The vast majority of Latinos (77%) say their group has "many different cultures" compared to 21% who say their group has "one common culture."[15] Latino racial/ethnic identity is further complicated when you take into consideration that "Latino" is an ethnic designation, and not a race. Thus, Latinos can be of *any* race. Aggregating data across Latino communities can obscure unique patterns of representation among Afro-Latinos, Afro-Caribbeans, and Indigenous Latinos. Additional research that disaggregates such data is needed to build a fuller picture of the state of Latino representation.

Quality of Representation

Understanding the representation of any community on-screen requires examining not just the number of roles across a given time, but also the *quality* of those depictions. Previous research indicates that Latinos are often depicted as criminals, domestic workers, less intelligent, or over-sexualized.[16]

12 In UCLA's Hollywood Diversity Report series, a "lead role" is defined as the first credited actor for a given series' list of cast members. Ramón, A.-C., Tran, M., & Hunt, D. (2023). *Hollywood diversity report 2023.* UCLA Entertainment & Research Media Initiative. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2023-Television-11-9-2023.pdf. Note: The UCLA Diversity Report examines actor race/ethnicity, rather than character race/ethnicity.

13 Ramón, A.-C. & Hunt, D. (2020). *Hollywood diversity report 2020.* UCLA Entertainment & Research Media Initiative. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2020-Television-10-22-2020.pdf; Ramon, A & Hunt, D. (2021). *Hollywood diversity report 2021.* UCLA Entertainment & Research Media Initiative. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2021-Television-10-26-2021.pdf; Ramón, A.-C., Tran, M., & Hunt, D. (2022). *Hollywood diversity report 2022.* UCLA Entertainment & Research Media Initiative. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2022-Television-10-27-2022.pdf;
Note: The UCLA Diversity Report examines actor race/ethnicity, rather than character race/ethnicity.

14 Gonzalez-Barrera, A. (2020, September 24). *The way Hispanics describe their identity vary across immigrant generations.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/09/24/the-ways-hispanics-describe-their-identity-vary-across-immigrant-generations/

15 Ibid.

16 For a review, see Campbell, C. (Ed.). (2017). *The Routledge companion to media and race*. Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315778228

At the Norman Lear Center, we have studied media representations of various historically-marginalized communities, including Asian Americans,[17] Native Americans,[18] and immigrants.[19] Our research on immigrant portrayals—approximately half of which involve Latino immigrants—has similarly found them to be highly associated with crime. In addition to examining stereotypical themes, our representation research has started to examine the concept of race-centrality, or the degree to which the race/ethnicity of a character is central to the storyline or the identity of the character.[20] In contrast to race-central depictions, where a character's race is central to understanding their storyline or motivations, race-agnostic depictions are those in which a character's race or ethnicity is mentioned only briefly or not at all, such as in roles in which an actor of any race or ethnicity could have been cast.

> **We have started to examine the concept of race-centrality, or the degree to which the race/ethnicity of a character is central to the storyline or the identity of the character.**

Neither of these categories are inherently negative or positive. A character's race or ethnicity can be centered through nuanced and authentic storylines, or through narrow and stereotypical depictions. Likewise, race-agnostic roles can indicate increased opportunity for Latino actors who do not need to be cast in roles defined by their Latinidad, but they can also lead to the erasure of uniquely Latino experiences or to depicting Latino characters only in proximity to whiteness. **Rather than defining race-centrality as "good" or "bad," our work has sought to identify patterns and document the range (or lack thereof) of contemporary depictions, and how these patterns change over time**.

The Present Research

To further examine what it means to be Latino on screen, the USC Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project launched a multi-pronged research study:

First, we set out to conduct a content analysis of the top scripted broadcast shows in the 2024-2025 television season.
- ○ This research—which we will refer to as our **broad sample**—sought to examine the diversity, heritage, cul-

17 Media Impact Project. (n.d.). *Asian representation in media*. USC Norman Lear Center. https://www.mediaimpactproject.org/asianrepresentation.html

18 Media Impact Project. (n.d.). *Native representation on TV*. USC Norman Lear Center. https://www.mediaimpactproject.org/nativerepresentation.html

19 Define American & USC Norman Lear Center. (2022). *Change the narrative, change the world 2022: The power of immigrant representation on television.* https://defineamerican.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ENT-Report-Final-2022.pdf; Rosenthal, E. L., Rogers, A. A., Peterson, E., Watson-Currie, E., & Shin, H. (2020). *Change the narrative, change the world: How immigrant representation on television moves audiences to action.* USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center & Define American. https://defineamerican.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Change-the-Narrative-Change-the-World.pdf; The Norman Lear Center and Define American. (2018). *Immigration nation: Exploring immigrant portrayals on television.* https://www.mediaimpactproject.org/uploads/5/1/2/7/5127770/immigration_nation_report_final_1.pdf

20 We began examining the concept of race-centrality in our work on Asian representation, conducted in collaboration with Gold House. Giaccardi, S., Jung, E. J, Weinstein, D., Valkenburgh, S. V., & Rosenthal, E. L. (2023). *A balancing act for Asian representation in streaming: Visibility doesn't always mean cultural specificity.* USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project. https://www.mediaimpactproject.org/asianrepresentation.html

tural specificity, and race-centrality of Latino characters, the presence of potentially stereotypical depictions, and where these concepts intersect.
  ○ Due to severe underrepresentation of Latino characters during the course of this research, we expanded our sample from the top 15 to the top 20 programs.
  ○ Student coders viewed at least three episodes from each series. For the methodology, see Appendix A.

Table 1.
Latino-led shows in our deep-dive sample

	Non-Latino-created show	**Latino-created show**	**Premise**
Pair 1	*Good Trouble*	*Vida*	Coming of age dramas set in Los Angeles focused on two sisters, at least one of whom is Latina.
Pair 2	*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*	*Superstore*	Workplace comedies with several Latino main characters.
Pair 3	*The Baker and the Beauty*	*With Love*	Multigenerational romantic comedies with at least two Latino main characters.
Pair 4	*Griselda*	*Mayans M.C.*	Drug cartel dramas focused on bordertowns with Latino main characters.

We also wanted to take a closer look at the themes present in "Latino-led" content (defined as content with Latino main characters) and the additional benefits of "Latino-created" content, with Latino talent behind-the-camera.
  ○ Due to the limited number of Latino characters on broadcast television, this was not possible within the broad sample. Instead, we conducted an exploratory **deep-dive** of eight **Latino-led** shows featuring Latino main characters.
    ● Four of these Latino-led shows were also **Latino-created**, meaning that more than half of behind-the-camera talent (directors, producers, showrunners, writers) identified as Latino.
    ● The other four Latino-led shows did not have Latino talent behind-the-camera (these were selected to match by similarity of genre and plot set up).
  ○ Student coders viewed four episodes from each series, for a total of 32 episodes. For detailed methodology, see Appendix B.

What We Found

Underrepresentation On-Screen

Though we expected to see underrepresentation in our **broad sample,** the severity bears repeating—even after expanding our sample to the top 20 programs, we identified just 69 Latino characters, accounting for 6% of the 1130 total credited roles, whereas Latinos comprise 20% of the U.S. population.[21]

Fourteen out of the 20 series in our broad sample featured fewer than 5 Latino characters, with half featuring only a single Latino character. Only 6 programs featured 5 or more Latino characters (Figure 2).

Of the 69 Latino characters, nearly one in three Latino characters (27%) were in shows that primarily took place in Los Angeles. In fact, shows that were set in Los Angeles averaged twice as many Latino characters as those that took place outside of LA (6 characters compared with 3). This may seem promising initially, but even in Los Angeles-based shows, Latino characters comprised only 10% of all characters, compared to 48% of the Los Angeles population (Figure 3).[22]

Of the 69 Latino characters, most were in supporting roles (64%), followed by 26% in minor roles and only 11% in leading or co-leading roles. There were no significant gender differences in role size.

Figure 2.
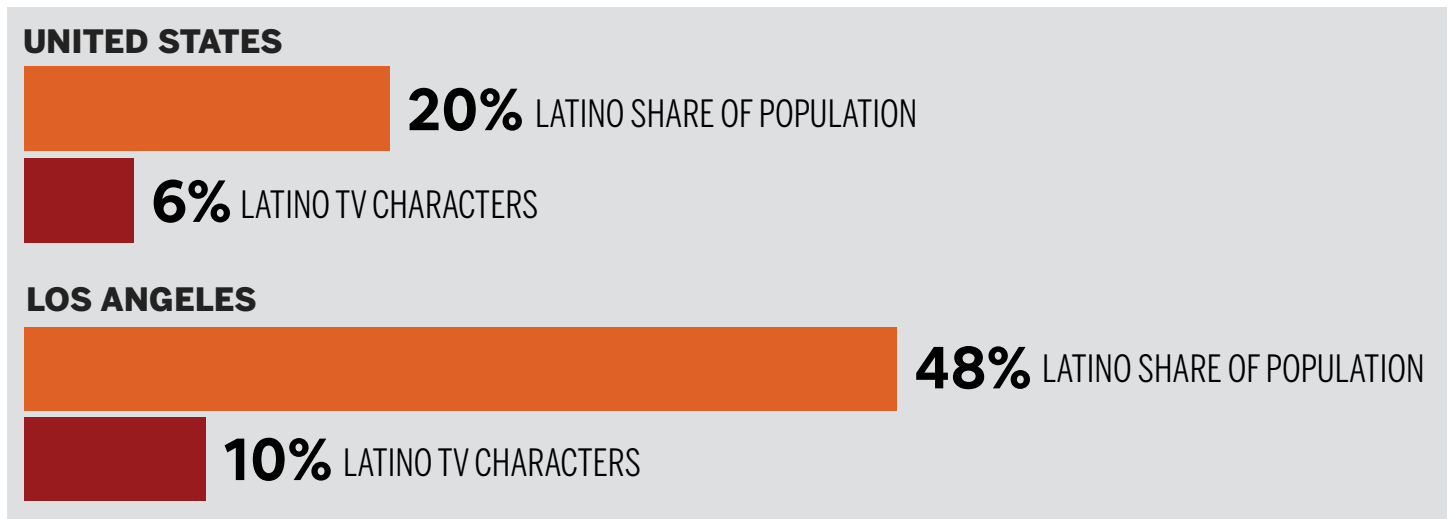Latino Character Representation in 20 Sampled Series

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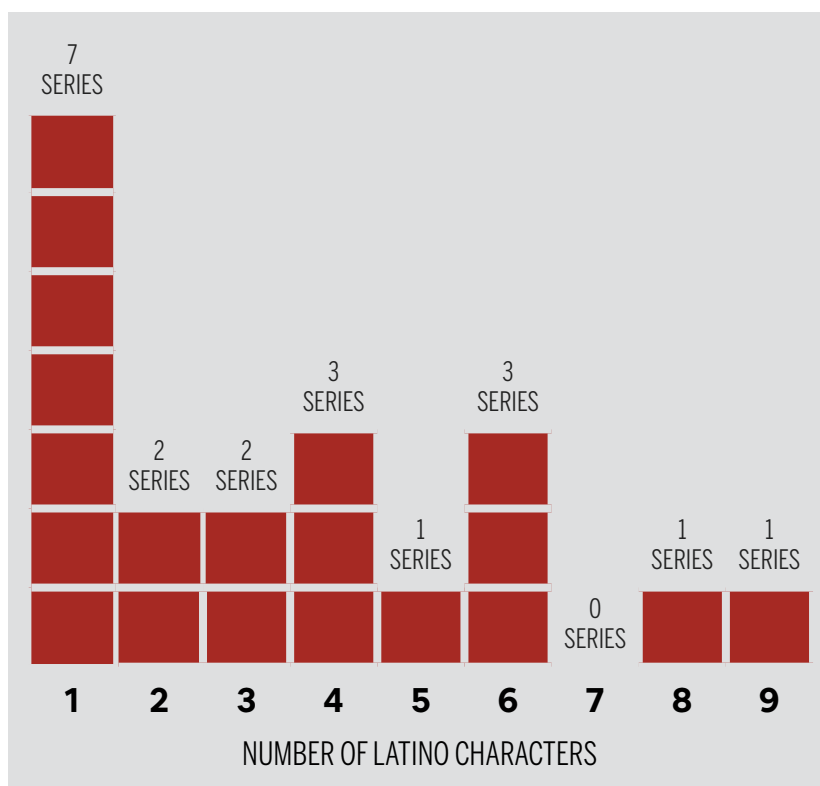
21 We identified the total number of characters by looking at the full cast list for each individual episode on IMDb.

22 Los Angeles Almanac. (n.d.). *Hispanics/Latinos in Los Angeles County—By the numbers*. https://laalmanac.com/population/po722.php

Figure 3.
Latino Representation Compared to Population

UNITED STATES

20% LATINO SHARE OF POPULATION

6% LATINO TV CHARACTERS

LOS ANGELES

48% LATINO SHARE OF POPULATION

10% LATINO TV CHARACTERS

Demographics of Latino Characters

Male characters accounted for 55% of roles while female characters accounted for 46% of roles. There were no trans or non-binary characters identified in our sample.

Queer Latinos were nearly invisible, with only one identified character (1%). In reality, 11% of Latino adults in the U.S. are part of the LGBTQ community.[23] Among Latino adults 35 and under, that percentage increases to 15.5%.[24]

The overwhelming majority of Latino characters had either medium (50%) or light (46%) **skin tones.** Only three characters were identified as having dark skin tones.[25]

We identified just 69 Latino characters, accounting for 6% of the 1130 total credited roles, whereas Latinos comprise 20% of the U.S. population.

Nearly one in three Latino characters spoke Spanish (29%), roughly half of whom were U.S. born and half of whom were immigrants. In the U.S., 75% of Latinos say they are able to carry on a conversation in Spanish, though this percentage drops significantly with third-or-higher generation Latinos.[26] **No characters spoke Portuguese**. Because the official U.S. census uses the term "Hispanic," for cap-

23 Jones, J. (2022, June 8). *Growing LGBT ID seen across major U.S. racial, ethnic groups.* Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/393464/growing-lgbt-seen-across-major-racial-ethnic-groups.aspx#:~:text=The%20growth%20has%20been%20greater,LGBT%20in%20the%20latest%20estimates.

24 Ibid

25 To assess skin tone, we utilized the Yadon-Ostfelt skin-color scale used by PEW research. For more information, see Appendix A.

26 Mora, L. & Lopez, M. H. (2023, September 20). *Latinos' views of and experiences with the Spanish language.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2023/09/20/latinos-views-of-and-experienc-es-with-the-sp

turing racial/ ethnic identity, which excludes Brazilians, we don't actually know how many U.S. Latinos speak Portuguese. We do know, however, that there are an estimated 230 million Portuguese speakers in Latin America,[27] far more than the number of Portuguese speakers in Portugal itself.[28]

Among Latino characters, heritage tied to a specific Latin American country was rare. Out of 69 characters, there were only 18 (26%) for whom their heritage was specified, most of whom were **Mexican (14 characters)**. The remaining characters whose heritage was specified were **Colombian (1)**, **Dominican (1)**, **Panamanian (1)**, and **Puerto Rican (1)** (Figure 5). The majority of characters (74%) were unspecified Latinos, meaning that they showed no evident identification with any particular nationality or heritage, either through viewing or secondary research. Six characters were implied to be Afro-Latino, meaning that we identified them as such only when we examined the racial/ ethnic identity of the actor who played them. That is, all Afro-Latino actors played characters that were of unspecified Latino heritage.

This lack of specificity in heritage among Latino characters is a sharp contrast to the backgrounds of the actors cast in these roles, most of whom shared this information publicly.

The actors whose race/ethnicity we were able to confirm through secondary research[29] represented a broader array of Caribbean, Central, and South American countries.
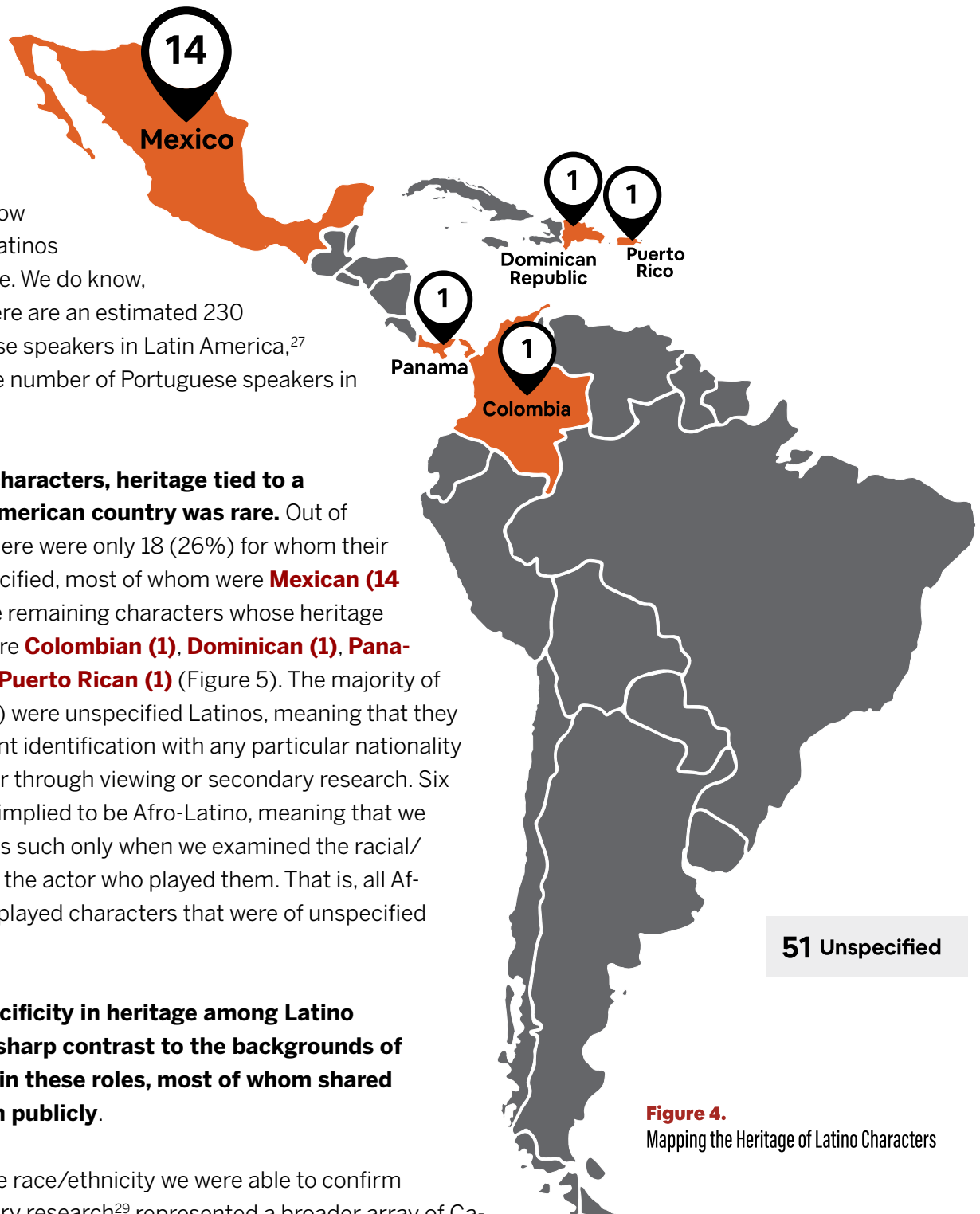
Figure 4.
Mapping the Heritage of Latino Characters

51 Unspecified

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27 UNESCO. (n.d.). *World Portuguese language day*. https://www.unesco.org/en/days/portuguese-language

28 Yates, Y. (2021, April 30). *How many people speak Portuguese, and where is it spoken?* Babbel Magazine. https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-portuguese-and-where-is-it-spoken

29 Characters were identified as Latino by the coding team, using various linguistic and narrative cues through viewing, and in some cases, through online secondary research. For more, see Appendix A.

This included **Mexico (17)**, **Puerto Rico (10)**, **Colombia (7)**, **Dominican Republic (6)**, **Cuba (4)**, **Venezuela (3)**, **Argentina (2)**, **Guatemala (2)**, **El Salvador (2)**, **Peru (1)**, and **Chile (1)**. An additional 2 actors identified as Native,[30] 7 were unspecified Latinos, and 6 were confirmed non-Latinos.[31]

We cross-referenced the 18 Latino characters with specified heritage against the heritage of the actors that played them, finding:

- ○ 3 characters were played by a Latino actor from a different background (e.g., a Mexican character played by a Colombian actor),
- ○ 7 characters were played by a Latino actor who shared the same background (e.g., a Puerto Rican character played by a Puerto Rican actor),
- ○ 3 characters were played by Latino actors whose specific heritage was not publicly available,
- ○ 1 character was played by a confirmed non-Latino actor,
- ○ And 3 characters were played by an actor whose racial identity and heritage were unconfirmed.

The majority of Latino characters (75%) were depicted as middle class, followed by 14% working class and 11% wealthy, with no evident distinction by skin tone. In reality, 39% of Latinos in the U.S. are middle class, 36% are upper class, 26% are working class,[32] and research has repeatedly linked darker skin tones with lower wages and fewer job opportunities, both in the U.S. and Latin America.[33]

6 Non-Latinos
7 Unspecified
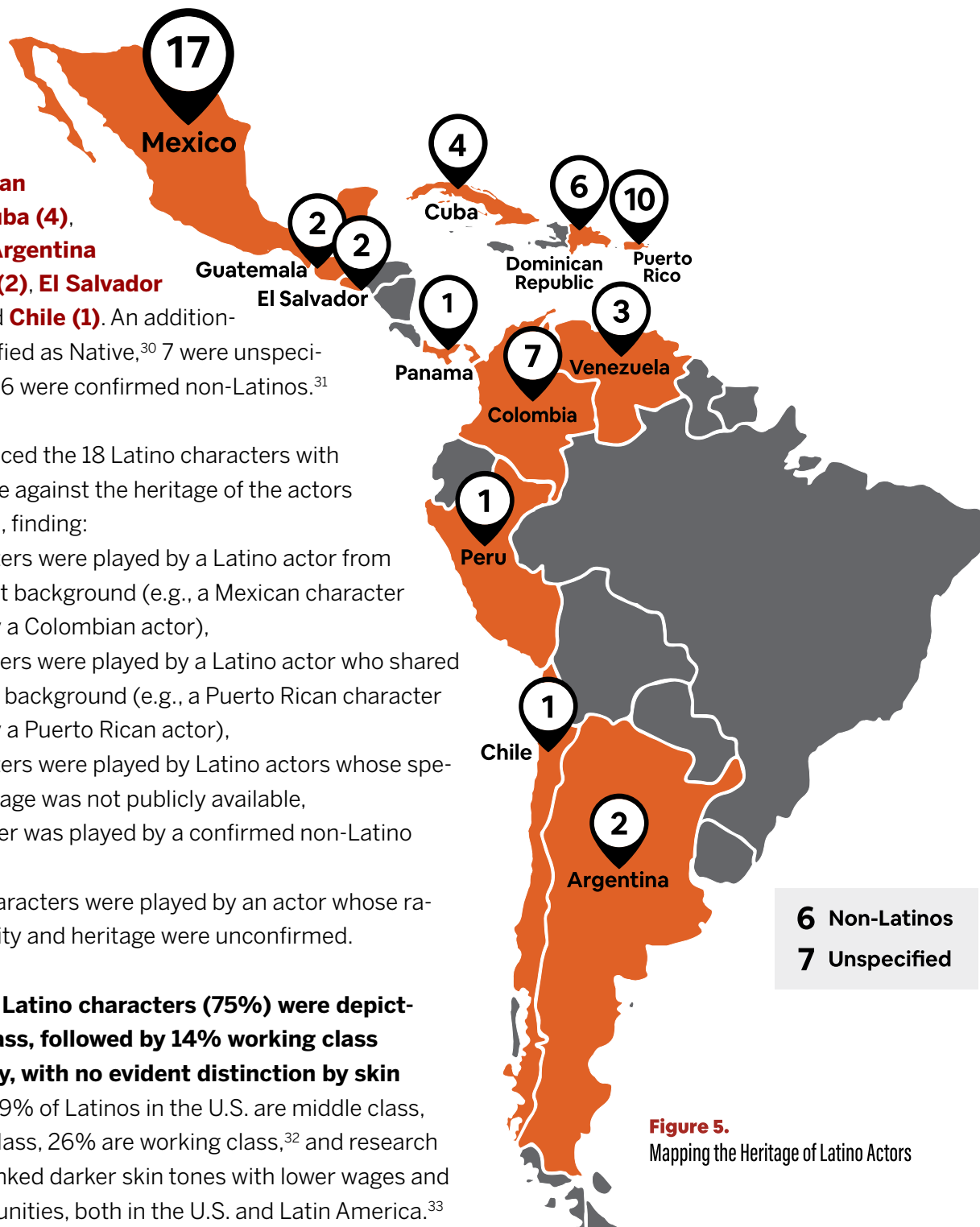
Figure 5.
Mapping the Heritage of Latino Actors

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30 One actor identifies as Mexican and Native American, and another identifies as Puerto Rican, Taino, and Aztec.

31 We were able to identify the race/ethnicity of 58 actors, 52 of whom were Latino. The numbers here total to 75 because many actors identified their heritage as being from more than 1 Latin American country.

32 Noe-Bustamante, L. & Moslimani, M. (2023). *Facts on Latinos in the U.S. in 2021.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-us-fact-sheet/#poverty-status

33 Woo-Mora, L. G. (2025). Unveiling the Cosmic Race: Skin tone and intergenerational economic disparities in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Journal of Development Economics*, *179*, 103594. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2025.103594

Figure 6.
Depictions of Criminality Among Latino Characters

AMONG ALL 69 LATINO CHARACTERS, 26% PARTICIPATED IN A CRIME
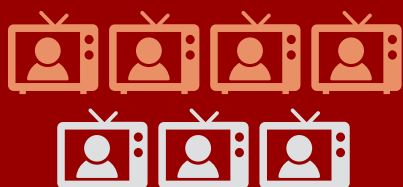
26%
Participated in crime
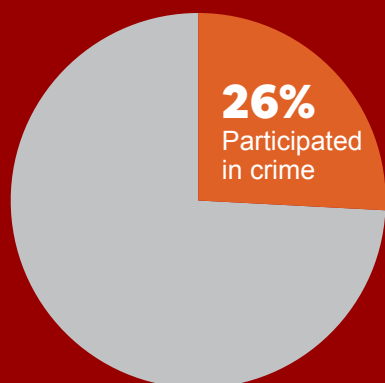
AMONG 56 LATINO CHARACTERS WITH EVIDENT PROFESSIONS, 25% WERE CAREER CRIMINALS

25%
Career criminals
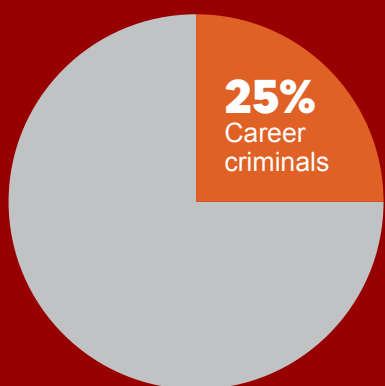
AMONG 7 WEALTHY LATINO CHARACTERS, 4 ACCUMULATED THEIR WEALTH THROUGH CRIME

One in four Latino characters were parents, 9% were married, and 8% lived in a multi-generational household. The majority of Latino characters were U.S. born (64%), while 18% were immigrants and another 18% were unknown. This is comparable to national demographics, where 67% of U.S. Latinos are U.S. born and 34% are immigrants.[34] Two Latino characters (3%) were identified as being explicitly undocumented, less than the 13% of Latinos in the U.S. who are undocumented.[35]

Themes in Representation

Within our **broad sample**, **criminality appeared as a prominent theme** in several different ways**:**

○ One in four Latino characters with evident professions (25%) were career criminals. In fact, career criminals made up the second most common occupational category in our sample. Nine of the 14 characters who were career criminals were unspecified Latinos, while the rest were Mexican. Put another way, five of 14 Mexican characters (36%) were career criminals.

○ In addition to career criminals, 26% of Latino characters were shown participating in a crime; 11% were shown participating in drug-trafficking specifically, 11% were shown as part of a criminal organization, and 9% were currently or previously incarcerated. In each of these cases, characters were either unspecified Latino or Mexican.

○ Among seven Latino characters who were depicted as wealthy, four of those had accumulated wealth through their criminal endeavors.

Because of the lack of diversity in skin tones, we were not able to examine whether darker-skinned characters are more likely to be criminalized.

Our **deep-dive,** which sampled Latino-led shows (half of which were Latino-created and half of which were not), allowed us to explore additional themes that were not present in our broader sample. Here, we found **meaningful, complex, and wide-ranging discussion of social issues** including:

○ **Bilingualism**, or talking about common experiences of codeswitching between Spanish and English

○ Connections between **gentrification**, **displacement**, and **colonization**, specifically as experienced by young people in Los Angeles

○ Immigration and "legal" status as a salient identity-related topic in Latino communities

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34 Piña, G., & Martinez, G. (2025, October 22). *Key facts about U.S. Latinos*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/10/22/key-facts-about-us-latinos/

35 Gamboa, S. (2021, September 30). *Americans way off on number of Latinos they think are undocumented, poll finds*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/americans-way-number-latinos-think-are-undocumented-poll-finds-rcna2464

"What, is that you doing Chola 101 or are you trying to kiss me?"

Representation in Focus

In *Vida* (Starz), gender and race stereotypes were brought up often and with humor, with some characters being labeled by minor characters as "pinches gringas" and other characters as "cholas." These discussions were thoroughly connected to identity, with one of the main characters telling the other it "freaks her out" when she speaks Spanish.

- **Gender roles** and **dynamics**, with special attention to transgender experiences being understood differently by younger and older Latinos and ways in which young Latinas negotiate their identity in relation to "chola" and "gringa" statuses
- **Racial stereotypes and Afro-Latino erasure,** such as an Afro-Cuban character in *With Love* who is assumed to not speak Spanish or be Latino-presenting
- And **drug culture,** often explored in relation to cartels and bordertowns in the U.S.

In Latino-led shows (both Latino-created and not), **generalizations about Latino culture were tackled with humor. While cultural stereotypes were brought up in most of the episodes in our sample, those in Latino-created shows were more likely to be shown from the Latino perspective**, speaking from cultural insiders to cultural insiders, meaning that these comments and jokes are not easily parsed by someone unfamiliar with Latino culture.

Cultural Specificity

In addition to assessing heritage in our **broad sample**, we looked for markers of cultural specificity like the presence of traditional foods, clothing, or events, dialogue that alternates between languages, or the use of nicknames based on physical appearance that are commonly used in Latino communities (e.g., Gordita, Flaca, Güero). **With the rare exception, these markers of cultural specificity were non-existent in our broad sample.** In addition, **the vast majority of Latino characters in the broad sample were in race agnostic roles (91%), and only 9% were in race-central roles.**

In contrast, our **deep-dive** into eight Latino-led shows found many instances of cultural specificity, often alongside complex depictions of Latino identity.

- **Over one-third of episodes** (11 of 32) **depicted cultural specificity or local cultural representations that could not be swapped with another place** (e.g., Colombian slang or music accompanying Grisel-

da, a Colombian character, a quinceañera, or a Mexican *grito*[36]). All of these episodes featured a writing staff that was at least 25% Latino, and half had a Latino showrunner.

○ **Ten of 32 episodes included particularly complex depictions of Latino identity,** such as conversations that wrestled with cultural identity or codeswitching. **Episodes that featured this complexity had a greater percentage of Latino writers** than Latino-led shows more broadly (45% compared with 36%).

The remainder of this section will focus on the various ways in which cultural specificity showed up in our deep-dive, including identity-related plot points, dialogue, and the use of language.

Identity-Related Plot Points in Latino-Led Content

Cultural specificity and race-centrality appeared in most of the Latino-led shows we studied. This was largely evident through a wide range of identity-related plot points, which focused on themes such as family (e.g., the nuances of large families and strong family ties), Catholicism, life in bordertowns, immigration, and gentrification. Visual references included traditional foods, quinceañera decorations, and cultural pastimes like salsa dancing.

We saw the greatest amount of cultural specificity through an exploration of identity among Latino-led shows that were also Latino-created.

Identity-Related Dialogue in Latino-Led Content

Our deep-dive also captured instances of dialogue between characters that specifically addressed Latino identity.

Representation in Focus

Superstore's (NBC) portrayal of a quinceañera is laden with insider humor, when Mateo, a non-Latino character, asks the party DJ to play the "dead grandma song from *Coco*" with the implication that that song is one of the few cultural references Mateo has, since he has little knowledge of Latino culture.

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36 Wikipedia contributors. (2025, May 5). *Grito*. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved December 9, 2025, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grito

Representation in Focus

A *grito* or *grito Mexicano* is a loud, spontaneous shout or yell that expresses strong emotion, most commonly joy, passion, or pride, and is a vital part of celebrations like Mexican Independence Day and Mariachi music. The custom appears during a traditional Mexican wedding scene in the series *Vida* (Starz).

On average, Latino-created shows had 2.4 dialogue turns[37] connected to Latino identity compared with 1.8 dialogue turns in non-Latino-created shows.

○ In non-Latino-created shows, these conversations focused on language, who counts as "real" Latino, borders, traditions, celebrations, stereotypes, race, and ethnicity. For example, Mariana from *Good Trouble* explains the gender and race pay gap to her coworkers, identifying as a Latina woman of color.

○ **Identity-related talk between characters was more explicit in Latino-created shows, in part because there were more plot points that had to do with Latino identity.** These conversations focused on gentrification, immigration, Whiteness, othering, traditions, colonization, generational differences, language, ethnicity, class, stereotypes, and celebrations.

○ **Latino-created shows were more likely to engage with the concept of *othering*.**

● In *Superstore*, the Latina character Amy is asked to be more Mexican and to speak with a Mexican accent in order to sell jars of salsa, in an exploration of identity commodification. In the episode, Amy tries to push back and is told, in response, "I don't know who made you the Latino police."

● In *Vida*, the main Latina sister characters actively talk about gentrification in Boyle Heights and how it is damaging their community. As a white woman reviews birria tacos, they comment, "I see you trying to Columbus our sh-t."

Language Uses in Latino-Led Content

In our sample, there were plentiful examples of codeswitching, which we defined as using Spanish, English, or a mix of the two to address different people and in different locales. We counted codeswitching (at least one dialogue turn in Spanish) and loanwords (using one Spanish word in an English sentence) separately.

Our sample of **Latino-led shows included many instances of codeswitching and loanword usage between English and Spanish.**

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37 A dialogue turn count is a metric used to quantify the number of back-and-forth exchanges in a conversation, where a single turn typically comprises one speaker's contribution and the subsequent response from another participant.

CODESWITCHING:

DEFINITION: Using alternation between two or more languages in a single conversation

EXAMPLE:
In *The Baker and the Beauty*, in a single conversation, the dad speaks to the mom in Spanish, but turns to his son and switches to English.

LOANWORDS OR PHRASES:

DEFINITION:
Single Spanish word/phrase in English sentence or vice versa

EXAMPLE:
"Everything alright, carnal? - "Just a long day, jefe." (*Mayans M.C.*)

Within the sample, **non-Latino-created shows had 39 instances of codeswitching and loanword usage, while Latino-created shows had 56 instances**. The most common functions and contexts of codeswitching and loanwords included:

○ Family titles ("hija") and use of Spanish to talk to family members and loved ones
○ Colloquialisms and slang ("mi gente", "pinche", "gringos")
○ Namecalling ("son viboras these people")
○ Pet names ("mi amor", "mijita")
○ Greetings ("hola, señorita")
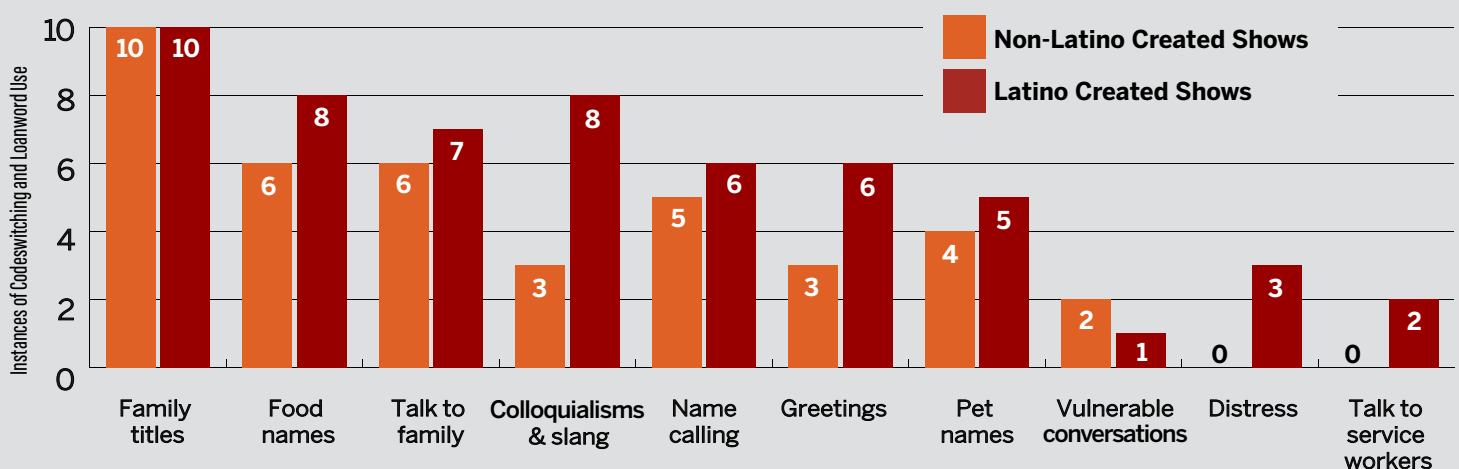○ Food terms ("los chilaquiles are 100% vegan")

Overall, the **Latino-created shows in our samples had more instances and had a wider range of social contexts where instances occurred**. For example:

○ Distress (for example, Eddy in *Vida* switches to Spanish when frightened)
○ Addressing service workers (for example, Griselda in *Griselda* switches from English to Spanish when addressing waiters and dishwashers)

Figure 7.
Use of Codeswitching and Loanwords in Latino-Led Shows

Instances of Codeswitching and Loanword Use

Legend:
- Non-Latino Created Shows
- Latino Created Shows

Category	Non-Latino Created Shows	Latino Created Shows
Family titles	10	10
Food names	6	8
Talk to family	6	7
Colloquialisms & slang	3	8
Name calling	5	6
Greetings	3	6
Pet names	4	5
Vulnerable conversations	2	1
Distress	0	3
Talk to service workers	0	2

Representation in Focus: Quinceañeras

A quinceañera is a celebration of a girl's 15th birthday common in Latin America, particularly Mexico.

The five quinceañera episodes (two in non-Latino-created shows, three in Latino-created shows) in our deep-dive focused on gender and generational dynamics in Latino families through the depiction of the celebration itself and in the lead-up to the celebration.

Two of the episodes featured transgender characters and explored the push-and-pull between tradition and identity. In part because all of these episodes involved family members coming to visit, these episodes featured older family members speaking Spanish and often showcased young people codeswitching between friends and family, using English for friends and Spanish for family. In Vida, the quinceañera is specifically referred to as a "rite of passage" showing informed engagement with tradition, as the young people in the show chose to elevate and partake in some traditions passed down through generations, but not others.

These celebrations were fertile ground to discuss identity, as well. For example, the religiosity of characters from older generations was often pitted against the self-expression of characters—especially queer characters—from younger generations. In the episodes, family ties were connected to Latinidad and the value of family was expressed by most Latino characters in the quinceañera episodes. All of the episodes also focused on gender and gender identity, and most depicted language dynamics, showing the nuance in more intersectional portrayals.

Clockwise from top: *Good Trouble* (Freeform), *The Beauty and the Baker* (ABC), *With Love* (Amazon Prime), and *Vida* (Starz).

Conclusion

Latino representation on television has historically been both limited and stereotypical. Our two-pronged study aimed to examine how the cultural specificity and race-centrality of Latino characters in contemporary television intersects with such stereotypes, to take a closer look at the themes present in Latino-led content, and to examine what happens with content when Latino talent is also included behind-the-camera.

Findings from our **broad sample** point to a **continued and severe underrepresentation of Latinos on broadcast television**, with only 69 Latino characters among a sample of 1130 credited roles in the 2024-2025 season. Though shows set in Los Angeles featured twice as many Latino characters as those set outside of Los Angeles, this still corresponded to only 10% of all characters, well below the proportion of Latinos in the U.S. (20%) and even lower than the proportion of Latinos in Los Angeles (48%).

Among the most popular broadcast programs, diversity, heritage, and cultural specificity were rare. We identified only a single queer Latino character, and only three with dark skin-tones. The vast majority of characters (74%) were of unspecified Latino heritage, and only 18 characters were portrayed with heritage tied to specific Latin American countries, most of whom were Mexican. Nearly all Latino characters (91%) were in race-agnostic roles, and only 9% were in race-central roles.

When it comes to prominent themes in the depiction of Latino characters, criminality comes up again and again. Most striking, **one in four Latino characters with evident professions were career criminals.** Latino characters who were depicted committing a crime, participating in drug-trafficking, or as part of a criminal organization were most often of unspecified Latino heritage or Mexican.

Our **deep-dive**, which focused on Latino-led shows, sharply contrasted with our broad sample. Here, we found that **Latino-led shows featured nuanced portrayals of pressing social issues, cultural specificity, and complex explorations of Latino identity.** This was particularly true in cases where the show was not only Latino-led but also Latino-created.

Together, **this research points to the untapped potential of Latino-led and Latino-created content.** U.S. Latinos hold $4.1 trillion in purchasing power, equivalent to the fifth largest economy in the world,[38] yet remain largely absent from the media they consume. An analysis by McKinsey found that the entertainment industry could generate an additional $12 to $18 billion a year in annual revenue if Latino representation in Hollywood

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38 Latino Donor Collaborative. (2025). *The 2025 official LDC U.S. Latino GDP report—Part one*. https://latinodonorcollaborative.org/reports/the-2025-official-ldc-u-s-latino-gdp-report-part-one/

improved.[39] Indeed, the latest data from Nielsen notes that **Spanish-language dominant Latinos watch broadcast television at a higher rate than the overall U.S. population** (26% vs 19% of total TV watch time), and **Latinos as a whole consume streaming content at a higher rate than the overall U.S. population** (56% vs 46% of total TV watch time).[40] Nielsen also finds that nearly half of the most "bingeable" shows on streaming include Latinos in front of and behind the cameras, and while Latino-led content attracted new viewers to streaming, those viewers then stayed to watch other content.[41]

While Latino-led and Latino-created content are essential to engaging Latino audiences, this content resonates beyond the Latino community. Research from the UCLA Center for Scholars & Storytellers has shown that young audiences are seeking connection, and want to see relatable content that features people like them.[42] When asked what specific topics they would like to see on TV or film, 10-24-year-olds included many themes that are prevalent in Latino-led media, including: friendships and social groups, family life and relationships with parents, lifestyles of the working class, systemic injustice, current events like political and social issues, and life as an immigrant.[43] Norman Lear, a fierce advocate for Latino representation, exemplified these principles, tackling social issues like racism, sexism, and politics through comedy and using humor to spark meaningful discussions.

Cartoon first appeared in *La Cucaracha,* and appears courtesy of Lalo Alcaraz and Andrews McMeel Syndication. ©2023

39 Becdach, C., Lajous, T., Lyn, S., Pérez, L., & Toussaint, T. (2024, March 7). *Latinos in Hollywood: Amplifying voices, expanding horizons*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/latinos-in-hollywood-amplifying-voices-expanding-horizons

40 Nielsen. (2025). *Curating the narrative: How Hispanic viewers are creating their media experiences*. https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/09/764-hispanic-dis-report-2025-d05.pdf

41 Nielsen. (2025). *Latino-led content and viewers. The building blocks for streaming's success.* https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/09/Sept-2022-Hispanic-DIS-report.pdf

42 Puretz, M., Hines, A., & Uhls, Y. T. (2025). *Get real! Relatability on demand. Teens & screens 2025*. UCLA Center for Scholars & Storytellers. https://www.scholarsandstorytellers.com/teens-screens-25

43 Ibid.

Recommendations

To support more nuanced depictions that highlight the diversity and complexity of Latino communities, we propose the following recommendations for storytellers and decision makers in the entertainment industry:

1. **Aim for the inclusion of 1 Latino character for every 5 roles to reflect reality.** Currently, Latinos make up roughly one in 20 characters. If your show takes place in Los Angeles, aim higher!

2. **Diversify your Latino characters** with regard to socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, race, and skin-tones. It's okay to tell working class or undocumented stories— these aren't inherently stereotypical if they're told with nuance and humanity. Show more characters who achieved wealth and success through means other than criminal careers.

3. **Exercise caution around depictions of Latinos as criminals, drug traffickers, or members of organized crime, particularly within smaller roles.** These stories have long overshadowed other kinds of Latino stories. If your story does focus on these, make sure your characters have the screen time necessary to show complexity and depth, rather than being one-dimensional, stereotypical, or reductive.

4. **When appropriate, capitalize on the diversity of Latino actors by encouraging them to bring their lived experience into roles.** Latino actors face limited opportunities in entertainment media, and thus, we are not proposing that Latino characters *must* be played by actors of the same background. However, cultural specificity can lend authenticity and counter monolithic assumptions among audiences. And since most roles are "unspecified Latinos," allowing actors to lean into the specificity of their own backgrounds requires little effort.

5. **Prioritize Latino talent behind-the-camera.** Our deep-dive indicates that the inclusion of Latinos in key decision-making roles, like producers, directors, showrunners, or writers, brings meaningful nuance and complexity to the screen, even beyond Latino main characters.

6. **Don't buy into the myth that Latino-led media is just for Latinos.** Themes in Latino-led media, like friendships, family life, and social issues appeal to all audiences, particularly younger ones.

Appendix A:
Broad Sample (Quantitative Content Analysis)

Sampling

We identified the top 20 scripted broadcast network programs from Variety's list of top-watched series in the 2024-2025 season.[44] For each program, student coders viewed 3 episodes in the season— the first episode, the middle episode, and the final episode.

In the case where there were no Latino characters in any of the 3 episodes we initially sampled, we conducted secondary research to confirm if there were any Latino characters present in the season more broadly. If we could confirm the presence (not just the speculation) of a Latino character elsewhere in the season, we sampled up to 3 new episodes that these characters appeared in. When we couldn't confirm the presence of Latino characters elsewhere in the season, we dropped it from the sample and replaced it with the next series on Variety's top 100 list.

Table 2.
Content in our Broad Sample

Series	Season	Network	Episodes	Air Dates
Tracker	2	CBS	○ E1 "Out of the Past" ○ E10 "Nightingale" ○ E20 "Echo Ridge"	10/13/2024 02/23/2025 05/11/2025
High Potential	1	ABC	○ E1 "Pilot" ○ E7 "One of Us" ○ E13 "Let's Play"	09/17/2024 11/12/2024 02/11/2025
Matlock	1	CBS	○ E1 "Pilot" ○ E10 "Crash Helmets On" ○ E19 "Tricks of the Trade-Part Two"	09/22/2024 02/06/2025 04/17/2025
George & Mandy's First Marriage	1	CBS	○ E1 "The 6:10 to Lubbock" ○ E11 "Working for the Enemy" ○ E22 "Big Decisions"	10/17/2024 02/20/2025 05/15/2025

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44 Schneider, M. (2025, May 29). Most popular TV series. *Variety.* https://variety.com/2025/tv/news/most-popular-tv-shows-2024-25-squid-game-adolescence-1236412566/

Show	Season	Network	Episodes	Dates
Ghosts	4	CBS	○ E1 "Patience" ○ E11 "Thorapy 2: Abandonment Issues" ○ E22 "The Devil Went Down to Woodstone"	10/17/2024 02/06/2025 05/08/2025
Will Trent	3	ABC	○ E1 "I'm a Guest Here" ○ E9 "This Kid's Gonna Be Alright" ○ E18 "Listening to a Heartbeat"	01/07/2025 03/11/2025 05/13/2025
9-1-1	8	ABC	○ E1 "Buzzkill" ○ E9 "Sob Stories" ○ E18 "Seismic Shifts"	09/26/2024 03/06/2025 05/15/2025
Watson	1	CBS	○ E1 "Pilot" ○ E7 "Teeth Marks" ○ E13 "My Life's Work Part 2"	01/26/2025 03/23/2025 05/11/2025
Shifting Gears	1	ABC	○ E1 "Restoration" ○ E2 "Accommodations" ○ E4 "Grief" ○ E5 "Jimmy" ○ E10 "Kiss"	01/08/2025 01/15/2025 01/29/2025 02/05/2025 03/19/2025
The Rookie	7	ABC	○ E1 "The Shot" ○ E9 "The Kiss" ○ E18 "The Good, the Bad, and the Oscar"	01/07/2025 03/11/2025 05/13/2025
NCIS	22	CBS	○ E1 "Empty Nest" ○ E10 "Baker's Man" ○ E20 "Nexus"	10/14/2024 01/27/2025 05/05/2025
FBI	7	CBS	○ E1 "Abandoned" ○ E11 "Shelter" ○ E22 "A New Day"	10/15/2024 02/11/2025 05/20/2025
Chicago Fire	13	NBC	○ E1 "A Monster in the Field" ○ E11 "In the Trenches: Part I" ○ E22 "It Had to End This Way"	09/25/2024 01/29/2025 05/21/2025
Blue Bloods	14	CBS	○ E1 "Loyalty" ○ E9 "Two of a Kind" ○ E18 "End of Tour"	02/16/2024 05/10/2024 12/13/2024
Chicago PD	12	NBC	○ E1 "Ten Ninety-Nine" ○ E11 "In the Trenches: Part III" ○ E22 "Vows"	09/25/2024 01/29/2025 05/21/2025
Chicago Med	10	NBC	○ E1 "Sink or Swim" ○ E11 "In the Trenches: Part II" ○ E22 "...Don't You Cry"	09/25/2024 01/29/2025 05/21/2025

Latino Representation in Popular Television

Fire Country	3	CBS	○ E1 "What the Bride Said" ○ E10 "The Leone Way" ○ E20 "I'd Do It Again"	10/18/2024 02/07/2025 04/25/2025
NCIS: Origins	1	CBS	○ E1 "Enter Sandman" ○ E9 "Vivo o Muerto" ○ E18 "Cecilia"	10/14/2024 12/09/2024 04/28/2025
Abbott Elementary	4	ABC	○ E1 "Back to School" ○ E6 "The Deli" ○ E11 "Strike" ○ E14 "District Budget Meeting" ○ E19 "Music Class" ○ E22 "Please Touch Museum"	10/09/2024 11/13/2024 01/22/2025 02/12/2025 03/26/2025 01/22/2025
Law & Order: SVU	26	ABC	○ E1 "Fractured" ○ E11 "Deductible" ○ E22 "Post-Rage"	10/03/2024 01/30/2025 05/15/2025

Coding Procedure

Training

Five student coders from the University of Southern California went through several rounds of training that included tests for inter-rater reliability and refining the codebook and coding procedures. Once the codebook was finalized, all five coders coded the same initial 12 episodes that included 16 Latino characters, equivalent to 26% of episodes and 24% of characters in our final sample. This coding was used to calculate final reliability statistics. The remaining episodes were divided up among coders.

Identifying Race/Ethnicity

"Latino" is not a racial category, and as such, Latinos can be of any race. Because of this, Latino actors, especially those who are white or Afro-Latino, may not be shown depicting Latino characters on screen. Examples of this include Alexis Bledel, who is of Argentinian and Mexican heritage and played the white character Rory Gilmore on *Gilmore Girls*, and Cameron Diaz, who is of Cuban descent but has never been cast in a Latina role. Because the purpose of this work was to examine mainstream narratives about Latinos, it was important that audiences be able to reasonably assume a character to be Latino. Thus, we decided which characters to include in our sample based on the race/ethnicity of the character, and not the actor.

Students were instructed to code each Latino speaking character that they encountered during their assigned viewing. Determining whether a character was Latino was done by considering a number of factors, including:
- ○ Character name or surname,
- ○ Language and accents,
- ○ And narrative context.

If coders suspected that a character was Latino but could not confirm this through their assigned viewing, they were asked to confirm through secondary online research (e.g., Wikipedia, cast interviews, blog posts, fandom wikis, etc). Difficult cases were flagged and discussed as a research team, and then the final list of Latino characters was reviewed by the first author of this report in conjunction with our subject-matter advisor, Nina Linhales Barker.

Separately, students also identified the racial/ethnic identity of the actors cast in these Latino roles. This was done through extensive secondary online research that included Wikipedia, actor interviews, blogposts, fandom wikis, and social media. Listing "Hispanic/Latino" on their casting profiles was not sufficient for categorizing an actor as Latino because casting profiles often list various racial and ethnic groups that the actor could *pass* as. Difficult cases were decided by the first author of this report in consultation with our subject-matter advisor, Nina Linhales Barker.

Skin Tone

Character skin tone was assessed by using a validated 10-point version of the Yadon-Ostfelt skin-color scale utilized by PEW Research and academic scholars.[45] Codes were collapsed to create 3 categories: light (1-4), medium (5-7), and dark (8+). In addition to achieving inter-rater reliability, all skin tone coding was reviewed and verified by the first author of this report.
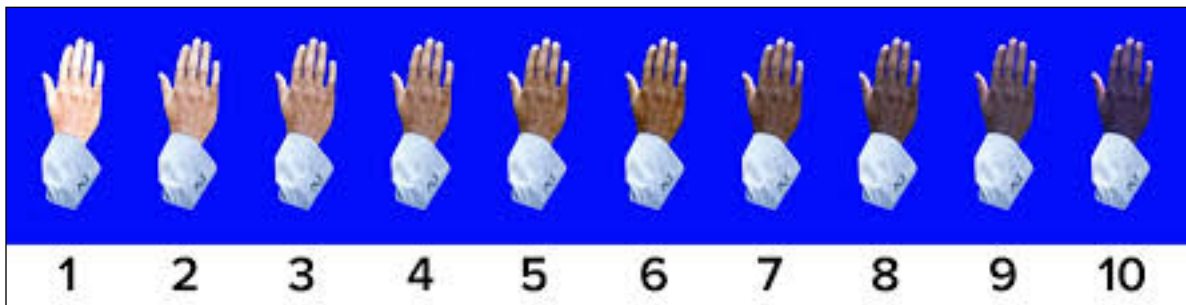
Secondary Research

Some variables were required to be confirmed through secondary research, in addition to viewing. These included:

- LGBTQ+ identity,
- Disability status,
- Whether they were U.S. born or immigrants,
- Occupation,
- And nationality or heritage.

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45 Ostfeld, M. C., & Yadon, N. D. (2022). ¿Mejorando La Raza?: The political undertones of Latinos' skin color in the United States. *Social Forces*, *100*(4), 1806-1832. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab060

Interrater Reliability

Table 3.
Interrater Reliability Scale

Variable	Alpha
Role Size	1.00
Queer	1.00
Trans	1.00
Disability	1.00
Immigrant	0.76
Age	0.91
Occupation	0.81
Gender	1.00
Skin Tone	0.78
Social Class	0.81
Parental Status	0.83
Relationship Status	0.81
Multigenerational House-hold	0.77
Participation in Crime	0.91
Narcotrafficking	0.91
Criminal Organization	0.89
Incarceration	0.81
Documentation Status (for Immigrants)	0.78
Language	1.00
Nationality/Heritage	1.00
Race-centrality	0.80

Appendix B:
Deep-Dive into Latino-Led Shows (Exploratory Qualitative Content Analysis)

Sample

Our approach was a comparative exploratory case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2019) involving a qualitative content analysis of **eight popular Latino-led TV shows** (i.e., with Latino main characters). We chose four sets of shows, matched by similarity of genre and plot setup:

- ○ **Latino-created:** Four Latino-led shows with multiple Latino creators behind the camera (including directors, producers, showrunners, and writers)
- ○ **Non-Latino-created:** Four Latino-led shows that had no or few Latino creators (including directors, producers, showrunners, and writers)

The initial match-ups were made using IMDb, to count members of the behind the camera team that are publicly identifiable as Latino. Further analyses categorized each member of the team.

Table 4.
Latino-led shows in our deep-dive sample

	Non-Latino-created show	Latino-created show	Premise
Set 1	Good Trouble	Vida	Coming of age dramas set in Los Angeles focused on two sisters, at least one of whom is Latina.
Set 2	Brooklyn Nine-Nine	Superstore	Workplace comedies with several Latino main characters.
Set 3	The Baker and the Beauty	With Love	Multigenerational romantic comedies with at least two Latino main characters.
Set 4	Griselda	Mayans M.C.	Drug cartel dramas focused on bordertowns with Latino main characters.

We studied 32 episodes in total (four from each show). For each show, coders watched:

- ○ The first 2 episodes, because characters are often introduced in these episodes;
- ○ At least one episode that focuses on themes related to the identity of one of the Latino/a leads (identified via secondary analysis).
- ○ Then, coders watched an episode in the middle of the season, emphasizing episodes that focus on Latino/a characters, chosen through episode summaries via IMDb.

This sampling methodology allowed us to pick up on themes and topics related to identity with diverse characters, since sitcoms tend to have episodes centering one or two lead characters

Open-ended and agreement-based coding was applied by two trained Spanish-speaking coders: disagreements were adjudicated by meetings and/or one of the two researchers.

Because the study centers identity, we collected screenshots of settings and timestamps for moments of identity-related discussions for an additional in-depth analysis.

Variables

General variables

- Name of show
- Episode number
- Secondary research
- When known, ethnicities of the top five (as listed on IMDb) main Latino characters and actors that play them (on-the-screen talent) using IMDb and publicity
- When known, ethnicities of producers, showrunners, directors, and writers (behind-the camera talent) for the specific episode using IMDb and publicity
- Setting / cultural specificity (relevant screenshots)
- Place (City, state, neighborhood)
- Decorations
- Music
- Dress and makeup
- Food / dishes
- Events / holidays
- Historical mentions
- Culturally relevant plot points

Language

- Location-specific slang/terminology
- Use of multiple languages
- Country-specific words
- Any new words
- Accented speech
- Using accents for emphasis/sarcasm

Translinguistic phenomena

- Codeswitching (using alternation between two or more languages in a
- single conversation), code mixing, borrowings or loanwords (single Spanish word/phrase in English sentence or vice versa), lexical innovations (new words that seem to reflect/mix English and Spanish)
- References
- Identity talk ("I am", "we are", "they are", mentions of race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, background etc)
- Time stamps
- Depth of discussion of identity (2+ turns of dialogue)
- Discussion of own identity and that of other characters [centrality of specific identity categories]

Training

Training of two student coders consisted of 3 hour-long online sessions, assigned readings, and 2 practice coding exercises, where each codebook item and coder answer was discussed at length. Biweekly meetings included discussions of edge cases and hard-to-code language examples.

Coding procedure

Each episode was independently coded by each of the two trained coders. Their answers were pooled and the third pass was conducted using agreement-based coding where the coders and the lead researcher discussed and agreed on items that had discordant responses, case by case. The merged data set consisted of agreed-upon codes.

Photo credits: Cover (Clockwise): Ryan Guzman, *9-1-1* (FOX), Lisseth Chavez, *The Rookie* (ABC); Judy Reyes, *High Potential* (ABC); Ramón Rodriguez, *Will Trent* (ABC); Gina Rodriguez, *Will Trent* (ABC) Wilmer Valderrama, *NCIS* (CBS). Page 8: Rome Flynn and Emeraude Toubia, *With Love* (Amazon Prime); Page 19: Melissa Barrera and Mishel Prada, *Vida* (Starz); Page 23: JD Pardo, Mayans M.C. (FX)

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