



NBCUniversal



LATINA CHARACTERS:
Authentic Representation and Storytelling

In 2021, the Association of National Advertisers' (ANA) SeeHer movement and NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises partnered to encourage and empower brands to apply an intersectional lens in marketing, advertising, media, and entertainment so that more Hispanic women and girls see themselves — and all of their potential — authentically reflected in content.

This Guide consists of a series of questions for creatives to ask themselves during the Latina female character development process. Not all questions apply to every character and the questions are posed as a creative challenge, not a directive. The Guide is meant to serve as a starting point resource to help illuminate the extensive opportunities for authentic and more nuanced depictions of Latinas, and to help empower storytellers to become aware of blind spots and potential unconscious biases.



While this guide uses the term Latinas to reference Hispanic women and girls, there are other descriptors that are currently in use. For more information on this topic, please see page 13.

AFFIRMATION and INSPIRATION — CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

CHARACTER TRAITS & CONTEXTUAL REPRESENTATION

DOES THE STORY INCLUDE A LATINA IN A MEANINGFUL ROLE?

- Is there a Latina lead or co-lead? Are there any Latina heroines?
- Have the artists portraying the Latina characters been invited to **share their own experiences**, in their own words?
- Are there **other Latinas** among the characters surrounding the Latina lead or co-lead, including Indigenous, Asian Latinas, and Afro-Latinas?
- Casting: Is there a **range in physical features** among these women that includes a variety of skin tones, eye colors, body types, hair colors, and hair textures?
- Casting and Wardrobe: Does the cultural presentation (clothing, jewelry, accessories, accent, demeanor, slang, etc.) of the Latina characters accurately reflect the local **community** or **neighborhood** represented in the story?



- Do the Latina characters have any **positive and healthy relationships** with key people in their lives (e.g., family, friends, romantic partners, or co-workers)? Are there positive relationships with other Hispanics or people of **different races or ethnicities**?
- Do the Latina characters have conversations about something **other than their race**?
- Could the script pass the **Bechdel test**? That is, does it include at least two Latinas talking to each other about something other than a man?
- Could any of the following words describe the Latina characters' **personality attributes**?
 - Compassionate, cautious, trusting, happy, patient, brave, adventurous, relatable, emotionally vulnerable, intelligent, ambitious, hard-working, charismatic, creative, trustworthy, successful, confident, self-sufficient, professional, proud, culturally and linguistically fluid, in-charge, nurturing, supportive, tech-savvy, entrepreneurial, and independent

DOES THE STORY UNDERSCORE THE HUMANITY OF LATINAS AND INCORPORATE THEMES THAT ARE CENTRAL TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE?

- Are the **motivations** for the Latina character's choices and actions clearly defined?
- Does internal or external **struggle and resilience**, or lack thereof, play a role in shaping the Latina character's life?
- Is the Latina character portrayed as being able to solve **her own problems**?
- Is the Latina character portrayed in a manner that suggests she feels empowered to control her own **destiny and future**?
- Is the Latina character grappling with **conflicting cultural values or narratives** (e.g., conservative Christian with a transgender child, or being in love with a non-Hispanic partner)?
- Has the Latina character's relationship to her **perceived limitations** or opportunities (i.e., what feels possible or impossible in her life) been articulated?



- Does the story indicate how those **perceptions** were shaped (i.e., by the church, parents, friends, etc.)?
- If the story utilizes a familiar narrative (e.g., immigrant story), does it incorporate an original twist that **humanizes** the character or gives a much more **textured understanding** and explanation of the narrative?

DOES THE STORY DIRECTLY ADDRESS OR DEBUNK STEREOTYPES ABOUT LATINAS, ENABLING THE AUDIENCE TO SEE THEM WITH COMPLEXITY AND EMPATHY?

- For the stories that incorporate **social justice themes**, are they primarily rooted in the Latina character's personal story in a manner that enables the audience to connect and emotionally invest?
- If the story explores a historical **Latina figure**, is there relevance to the present-day lives of Latinas that invites audiences to examine their own humanity in a new way?

LIVELIHOOD & INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY

DOES THE STORY ENCOMPASS AN INTERSECTIONAL VIEW OF THE LATINA CHARACTER'S LIVED EXPERIENCE BASED ON THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF HER IDENTITY (E.G., RACE OR ETHNICITY, ABILITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, RELIGION, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS)?

- Do any of the Latina characters identify as **LGBTQ+**?
- Do any of the Latina characters have a **disability**?
 - Does the story incorporate **other aspects** of the Latina character's life beyond her disability (e.g., career, romantic life)?
- Are the Latina characters educated and/or represented in a range of **professional career fields**?
 - Are they **financially independent**?
 - Are they in **leadership positions**?
 - Do any of the Latina characters play **sports**?
 - If portraying Latina characters living in **challenging life circumstances** (abject poverty, incarceration, etc.), is there nuance and depth to their stories that extends beyond those circumstances?
 - Do the Latina characters have their own **functions** and **objectives** that do not revolve around male characters or their families?



FAMILY & HERITAGE



DOES THE STORY INCORPORATE MULTIGENERATIONAL EXPERIENCES AMONG LATINAS?

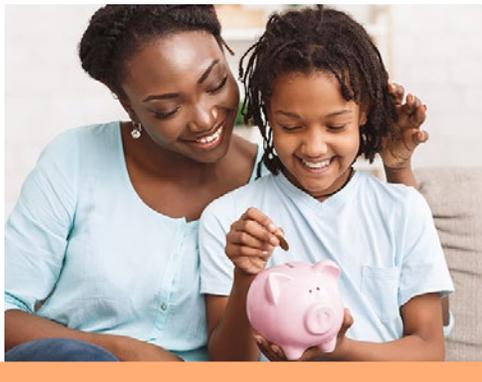
- Casting: Is there a convincing **family resemblance** that references key shared features among characters portrayed as biologically-related family members?
- Are there distinct differences between the **generations' views** on religion, fashion, taste in music, sociopolitical (conservative vs. liberal)? Are there **strong ties** that span and bind generations?

DOES THE STORY ILLUSTRATE HOW U.S. HISPANIC FAMILIES MAY HAVE BLENDED RACES AND CULTURES (E.G., PUERTO RICAN/MEXICAN, SALVADOREAN/COLOMBIAN), AND THAT SOME FAMILIES MAY BE MADE UP OF CHILDREN BORN IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD?

- Does the story illustrate the complex issues of **authenticity** and **identity** that some Latinas may grapple with within their families?
- Casting: Does the casting reflect the blend of ethnicities by showing a variety in **skin tones** and **hair textures**?
- If addressing **traditional portrayals** such as the matriarch or grandmother who are upholders of family/cultural traditions, how is this provided in a deep and truthful manner and not based on one-note depictions?
- Is **U.S. acculturation** and **adaptation** incorporated into how a family in native countries view the Latina character behaviors and attitudes, which may evolve over time spent in the U.S.?
- Does the story reflect how some Latinas are trying to keep **Hispanic heritage** and **cultural traditions** from disappearing within their families?
- Does the Latina character internalize **both Latin and American values**, ultimately arriving at her own unique conception of identity?



CULTURE & RELIGION



- Is pride in **cultural heritage** and **identity** included in the narrative?
 - Does the story celebrate the **nuance** among Latina cultures and nationalities (e.g., Central American, Caribbean, Puerto Rican, “Nuyorican,” etc.) as well as **intersecting identities** (e.g., Indigenous, Afro-Latina, Asian-Latina)?
 - **Casting**: Does the **ethnicity** of the artists match the portrayal of the Latina characters (i.e., Venezuelan actors portraying Venezuelan women)?
 - Is there **nuance** in the representation of slang, food, and music that accurately reflects **differences among Latin cultures and nationalities**?
- Does the **music** represent different regions of the U.S. (e.g., Miami vs. Los Angeles vs. New York) and does it extend beyond salsa or reggaeton to include other genres such as regional Mexican, rock, or hip hop?
 - Does the story delineate between Latina experiences and perspectives based on whether the characters are born in **the U.S. or abroad**?
 - For Latina characters who **immigrated to the U.S.**, does the story reference her heritage when it is critical to the plot and in a manner that provides distinction from other ethnicities?
 - Are the Latina characters’ **customs, accents, and values** portrayed according to their background story (i.e., nationality of the parents, country of origin, education, and whether born in the U.S. or abroad)?
 - If the **religious beliefs** of the Latina characters are incorporated into the story, are they defined according to their family heritage and reflected in their value system? In addition to Christianity and Catholicism, does the story expand the view of religions practiced by Latinas to include Jewish and Muslim Latinas?

LANGUAGE

- Does the backstory — including whether they grew up in a **Spanish- and/or English-speaking** family/community, how long they have been in the U.S., first- or second-generation immigrant — of the Latina character correlate with whether or not they have an **accent** or speak Spanish?
- Does the story include Latinas who have a **range of proficiencies** with Spanish, including those who may speak with an American accent?
- Are the Latina characters’ **accents individualized** according to the region where they live (e.g., the Heights vs. Los Surres) and their ethnicity? (e.g., Puerto Rican character speaking with a Puerto Rican accent)



- Does situational context realistically reflect when the Latina characters **would speak Spanish** (i.e., when around family or other Hispanics)?
- Are any of the Latinas **linguistically fluid 200%ers®** (fully embrace both sides of themselves as 100% Latina + 100% American) who switch depending on their circumstances?
- Are the Latina characters **multilingual**, speaking languages in addition to/other than English and Spanish?

BODY & BEAUTY

DOES THE STORY ENGENDER A VERSATILE VIEW OF BEAUTY FOR LATINAS?

- Is there a range in **body types, facial features, skin tones, hair textures, and hair styles** among the Latina characters?
- Are any of the Latina characters **over the age of 45**?
- Do any of the professional or affluent Latina characters have **tattoos or body piercings**?



BEHIND THE CAMERA



ARE LATINAS REPRESENTED ON THE CREATIVE AND LEADERSHIP TEAMS?

- Does the **writers' room** include storytellers who can uniquely speak to and/or relate to the Latina experience, in a myriad of ways, with a firsthand perspective?
 - Have the writers who are not Latinas **proactively educated** themselves on Latinas' experiences so they can portray Latina characters with specificity and authenticity?
 - Do people in charge of **visually reflecting Hispanic cultures** through hair, makeup, costume, lighting, set design, props, etc. have **firsthand experience or deep understanding** of the culture they intend to portray?
- Has **research** been conducted on critical elements of the Hispanic culture, including but not limited to food, music, clothing, customs, and traditions?
 - Do the **casting and production** teams reflect the diversity of backgrounds portrayed on screen?
 - For **bilingual content**, does the creative team include people who speak both languages fluently?



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LATINA CHARACTERS: Authentic Representation and Storytelling

Latinas have a strong connection to their culture and Spanish language, which they believe gives them an edge. This feeds the desire to see themselves and their cultures genuinely reflected in the media they consume.

“

I yearn for the day that Latinas will be represented in the media, at least, as often as we are a part of real life. When that day comes, we will have more opportunities to offer varied and authentic portrayals of who we are. But because we’re not there yet, it becomes all the more important to make sure that the ways we are actually being portrayed are accurate, authentic, multi-layered, and have the depth and nuance that Latinas embody. ”

— Gloria Estefan

PITFALLS and MISCONCEPTIONS — CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

CHARACTER TRAITS & CONTEXTUAL REPRESENTATION

IF ALL THE LATINA CHARACTERS WERE COMPLETELY REMOVED FROM THE STORY, WOULD IT BE INCONSEQUENTIAL TO THE PLOT?

- Would the **absence** of Latina characters make the **narrative** unrealistic given the time period and/or setting?
- Does the Latina character have no apparent **ties** to her cultural heritage?
- Does the Latina character’s primary plot contribution involve being the **victim of violence** or deciding whether or not to have a **romantic** or **sexual relationship** with a male hero?
- Is the primary Latina character a **sidekick** or **best friend** to a white protagonist and accordingly lacks a storyline of her own?



- Is the Latina character a **caricatured prop** in her scenes, primarily functioning as a punchline or comedic relief?
- Does the Latina character’s empowerment and ambition center on being **unpleasant** or **bitter**, flattening other characters in order to achieve her goals?
- Does the story **normalize inequality, abuse, or violence** against Latinas?

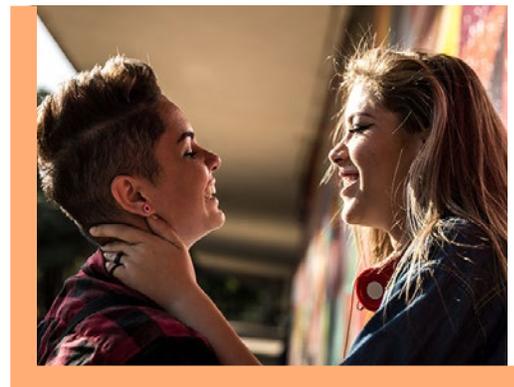
DOES THE STORY PERPETUATE STEREOTYPES BY PAINTING THE LATINA CHARACTER WITH BROAD STROKES AS OPPOSED TO A LAYERED MULTIDIMENSIONALITY, IMPLYING THAT LATINAS ARE MONOLITHIC?

- If the audience never has **real-life interactions** with Latinas, does the Latina character in the story provide a **narrow view** of Latinas?
- Do the Latina characters perpetuate patriarchal roles where the woman must be **submissive, silent, and servile**?
- Are the Latina characters **linked to corruption and crime**, or portrayed as scandalous and problematic?
- Are the Latina characters presented as people who need to be **spoken for** or **rescued** by a “White Savior” trope?
- Do the Latina characters lack common elements of the **human experience** (e.g., hesitation, fallibility, or messiness)?
- Could the Latina character be classified as one of the following **tropes**?
 - Immigrant, maid, “spicy Latina,” temptress, dangerous gang member, drug dealer’s wife, “chola,” sweet and loving grannies, day laborer, farm worker, succulent, sexy bombshell, hot-headed, loud, fun, scandalous, hysterical, stubborn, a bit tacky, overly made up
- Does the dialogue of the Latina characters tend to include more **profanity** and focus more on sexuality than their white counterparts?
- Does incorporating a **social justice** theme make Latina audience members feel **burdened** more than seen?

LIVELIHOOD & INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY

IS THE LATINA CHARACTER’S EXPERIENCE PRIMARILY DEFINED BY HER RACE AND NOT OTHER ASPECTS OF HER IDENTITY (ABILITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, RELIGION, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, ETC.)?

- For Latina characters who immigrated to the U.S., are their **immigration status** and history their sole defining character trait?
- For stories that **incorporate religion**, is it primarily an older Latina character (e.g., the grandmother) lighting a candle to “la virgencita?”
- Does the **disabled** Latina character’s story center around what she can do despite her disability rather than celebrate who she is because of her disability?
- Are the **LGBTQ+** Latina characters portrayed as **promiscuous** and/or incapable of **monogamy**?



- Are the Latina characters more likely to have **personal-life oriented** roles (e.g., wife or mother) as opposed to **work-oriented** roles (e.g., business executive)?
- Are the Latina characters more likely to be an **assistant** as opposed to the leader?
- Are the only Latinas in the story working as a **maid/cleaner/cleaning lady** or the **nanny/caretaker** who has no lines?
- Are the Latina characters portrayed as having **lower socioeconomic status** than their white counterparts?

BODY & BEAUTY



DOES THE STORY PRESENT A NARROW STANDARD OF BEAUTY FOR LATINAS FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON MORE STYLIZED APPEARANCE AS OPPOSED TO MORE NATURAL LOOKS?

- Is there a lack of variety among the physical attributes of the Latina characters, implying there is a “Latina Look” that only includes Eurocentric facial features, straight dark hair, olive skin, and a relatively petite figure?
- Does the story overtly or subtly **perpetuate colorism** — prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone?
- Are Indigenous and Afro-Latinas more likely to be portrayed as **hypersexual** or of **lower socioeconomic status** than other Latina characters who have more Eurocentric features?
- Casting: Are **lighter-complexioned** actors cast in role(s) portraying historical figures that require makeup or digital alterations to **darken skin tones** in order to more closely match the person in real life?
- Are the Latina characters with **larger body types** presented as damaging stereotypes (e.g., lazy, physically slow, unintelligent, poorly dressed, clumsy, or a punchline)?
- Do the Latina characters over the age of 45 tend to be **opposite ends of a spectrum** — extremely beautiful, elegant, tall, and slim versus a caricature that is the object of scorn, ridicule, or disregard?

CULTURE & RELIGION

- Does the story suggest that Latinas who **do not speak Spanish** are not “Hispanic enough”?
- If the **religious beliefs** of the Latina character are incorporated into the story, are religions outside of Catholicism or Christianity (e.g., Voodoo or Santería) primarily practiced by Afro-Latinas and portrayed in a menacing light?
- Does the story utilize **narrow and overly used** representations of Hispanic food or music (i.e., tacos and Salsa music)?
- Does the story imply that all Latinas are **good dancers**?
- For stories set in Mexico and South American countries, are Mariachi bands, Merengue, and Salsa the primary **genres of music** represented?



BEHIND THE CAMERA



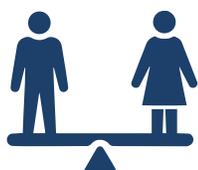
AMONG THE WRITERS WHO ARE NOT LATINAS, ARE THEIR PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF HISPANIC EXPERIENCES PRIMARILY SHAPING THE LATINA CHARACTER?

- Does the writers' room **culture** perpetuate **tokenism** by disempowering Latina writers and making them feel like “diversity slot” hires?

LATINA CONSUMER INSIGHTS:

DOES THE STORY REFLECT THE FOLLOWING PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES, NEEDS, OR CONCERNS OF LATINA CONSUMERS?

- **Cultural heritage is a source of pride and identity.** Bridging both American and Hispanic culture is the norm for most Latinas. As a part of this, Spanish is a critical component of identity.
- **Latinas are influencers.** Latinas see themselves as influencers of the larger American culture in terms of food, music, and sports and have a sense of pride in how they have influenced the larger cultural landscape.
- **Equality matters.** Ninety percent of Hispanic women say that gender equality is a very important personal issue to them. According to Latinas, the top 3 barriers to gender equality are: unwillingness to support women, the pay gap, and the lack of female role models in media and marketing.



90%

BELIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IS VERY IMPORTANT

- **Latinas desire more time for themselves.** There is a clear time deficit as these women attempt to find balance between their kids, spouses, families, work, and more.
- **Aspirations lie within their current realm.** Overall, Latinas aspire to live a happy and comfortable life characterized by financial security, freedom to pursue interests and opportunities, time to spend with family and friends, and the means to see and experience the world.
- **Health and wellness matter.** Health means taking care of the mind, body, and spirit.



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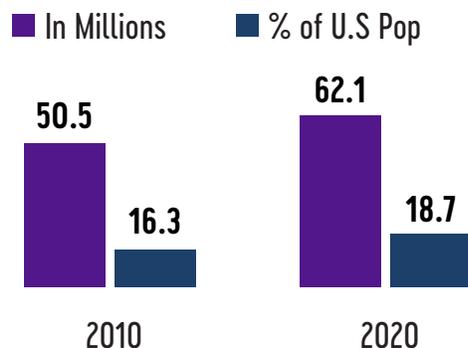
- **Education is a critical priority for Latinas,** both for themselves and their children. They see education as an integral component of achieving success in American society.
- **Most Latinas live in bilingual homes** where they fully embrace both sides of themselves as 200%ers® -- merging their heritage and their Americanness to their advantage as 100% Latina + 100% American. They live in two worlds at once and move easily between cultures.
- **Spanish language remains culturally rooted for Latinas,** despite the increasing number of U.S.-born Latinas. Even among the younger Hispanic generations, the vast majority speak Spanish at home.
- **Hispanics are more likely to live in multigenerational family households** compared to total U.S. population. [27% vs. 20%].

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2019.
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/hispanic-origin/2019-cps.html>
Nielsen, Latina 2.0, 2017, Perceptions of Progress, State of Women's Equality in the U.S., SeeHer & dentsu, 2020

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU DATA

1. **62.1M** Hispanics now live in the U.S., doubling their population in the last three decades
2. **18.7%** of the U.S. population is Hispanic
3. **51.1%** of the total U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020 came from Hispanics
4. The population that was not of Hispanic or Latino origin grew at a much **slower rate**, +4.3% since 2010.
5. Hispanics now account for **over one-quarter** of the total U.S. population under 18.

Hispanic Population



LATINAS BY THE NUMBERS:

Population: 31M — nearly 1 in 5 U.S. women are Latina

Ages:

- 34% Under 20 Yrs
- 23% are 20–34
- 26% are 35–54
- 17% are 55+

Education (among population 25+ Yrs Old):

- 29% high school graduate
- 23% some college or associate's degree
- 21% bachelor's or advanced degree

Country of Origin:



Nativity: 66% U.S.-born / 34% foreign-born

Household Type: 30% led by female householder

Occupation (among 16+ Yrs Old):



Earnings

(among full-time year-round workers 15+ Yrs Old):



ABOUT THE USE OF HISPANIC, LATINA/O, AND LATINX

The conversation on the use of the words Hispanic vs. Latina/o and Latinx is ever evolving. For more on this, see recent [Pew Research write up on the topic](#).

ABOUT SEEHER

Despite strides made in recent years to accurately portray women and girls in media, unconscious bias persists throughout advertising and entertainment. The average age, race, body type, and other aspects of a woman's identity depicted in media today still represent only a small fraction of the female population. A partnership between the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) and The Female Quotient (The FQ), SeeHer is a collective of leading marketers, agencies, media, and technology companies committed to creating advertising and supporting content that portrays women and girls as they really are. It launched in June 2016 in Washington, D.C. at the United State of Women. To help marketers benchmark success, the group developed Gender Equality Measure® (GEM®), the first research methodology that quantifies gender bias in ads and programming. GEM® shows that content portraying women accurately dramatically increases purchase intent and brand reputation, increasing return on investment by as much as 30 percent. GEM® has become the global industry standard, which led to a global rollout in 2018. In 2019 the movement expanded into new verticals, including sports (SeeHer In Sports) and music (SeeHer Hear Her). Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @SeeHerOfficial, and visit www.seeher.com

ABOUT ANA

The ANA's (Association of National Advertisers) mission is to drive growth for marketing professionals, brands and businesses, the industry, and humanity. The ANA serves the marketing needs of 20,000 brands by leveraging the 12-point ANA Growth Agenda, which has been endorsed by the Global CMO Growth Council. The ANA's membership consists of U.S. and international companies, including client-side marketers, nonprofits, fundraisers, and marketing solutions providers (data science and technology companies, ad agencies, publishers, media companies, suppliers, and vendors). The ANA creates Marketing Growth Champions by serving, educating, and advocating for more than 50,000 industry members that collectively invest more than \$400 billion in marketing and advertising annually. For more information, visit www.ana.net.

ABOUT NBCUNIVERSAL TELEMUNDO ENTERPRISES

NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises is a world-class media company leading the industry in the production and distribution of high-quality Spanish-language content to U.S. Hispanics and audiences around the world. Telemundo Network features original premium entertainment, news and sports content reaching 93% of U.S. Hispanic TV households in 210 markets through 31 owned stations, 54 affiliate stations and its national feed. Telemundo has cemented its position as the leading trusted choice and voice of the Latino community through its award-winning corporate social responsibility programs, community engagement efforts and empowerment initiatives focused on Latinas including its program Unstoppable Women. NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises is a division of NBCUniversal, a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation. For more information, please visit and connect with Telemundo on Facebook and Twitter, or visit us at telemundo.com and YouTube.