

U.S. Born Latinos Missing from Nielsen samples.

A Commentary by Robert G. Rose, CEO AIM Tell-A-Vision Group

Forty-one million strong, Latinos are the largest minority in the U.S. According to the 2000 U.S. census, the majority (60%) are U.S. born. Despite those facts, Nielsen's system of monitoring U.S. Hispanic viewing skews towards non U.S. born Hispanics and costs English language TV (local and national) precious audience, millions in revenue and cost marketers valuable market share by under-sampling U.S. born Latinos.

Nielsen Hispanic ratings services were developed years ago with cooperation from Spanish language television, which funded the research. To monitor Hispanic viewing, Nielsen currently uses Language Preference Stratification (e.g., Spanish Only, Mostly Spanish, Bi-lingual, Mostly English and Only English). Three glaring problems emerge using this methodology:

(1) **Language preference is subjective and extremely difficult to measure. Answers to language preference questions vary**, depending upon many factors, such as where was respondent asked (home, work or with friends), when asked, age, NATIVITY (U.S. born / Immigrating), respondent's honesty, etc.

(2) **Language stratification takes an already small sample (about 1,200 meters) and divides it into five TINIER samples** based on language preference. By the time the sample is sliced and diced, less than 100 national meters could conceivably represent "English only" television viewing. A small sample divided into five smaller samples based on purely subjective data is unstable, unhelpful and unnecessary in the market.

(3) **Besides Nielsen, who things there is a correlation between what language one speaks with what television one chooses to watch?**

NATIVITY is easier to measure and more accurate than LANGUAGE PREFERENCE:

Study after study (Tomas Rivera Policy Inst., Pew Hispanic Center, etc.) consistently indicates that the number one factor that determines television viewing patterns of Latinos (Spanish TV or English TV) is NATIVITY. Latinos born in the U.S. watch only or mostly English language television and Latinos born outside the U.S., tend to watch mostly Spanish language television.

Language stratification needlessly complicates our search for an accurate picture of Hispanic television viewing. Determining one's nativity is simple. It's publicly available via U.S. census data, and confirms very predictable behavior patterns (i.e. median age, income and **TV viewing habits**).

The Nielsen Hispanic Ratings service was developed with the cooperation of Spanish TV years ago to monitor U.S. Latino viewing. When that service was introduced, it focused on language preference (using the five subjective and hard-to-monitor categories), instead of nativity, which is much more relevant, accurate and easier to determine using U.S. census data.

Nielsen's flawed "language stratification method" has been transferred to the Hispanic sample in Nielsen's general market ratings service and to this day, Nielsen has done nothing to ensure that there is the proper mix of U.S.-born (60%) and Non U.S.-born Latinos (40%) in their sample.

In early 2005, Nielsen assembled an "independent" Task Force on Television Measurement whose mission was to evaluate the accuracy of Nielsen's measurement of minority viewers. This Task Force worked for months and released a report that included a variety of recommendations but NEVER mentioned the importance of NATIVITY in sampling Hispanics. Why didn't the Task Force catch this?

THE FOREST FOR THE TREES ANALOGY: Nielsen takes great pains to balance their Hispanic sample by identifying participants via country of origin outside of the U.S. (insuring correct percentages of Peruvian, Ecuadorian, etc), **but incredibly, Nielsen has no way of definitively telling us how many U.S.-born compared to immigrating Latinos are in their samples** (by far the most important factor of all when it comes to television viewing)?

Wait a minute? **You mean Nielsen can tell us how many participants from Honduras or Spain are in their sample but NOT how many U.S. born Latinos are represented?** Wow!

If U.S. born Latinos, who are the majority of Latinos and tend to watch English-language TV are underrepresented in the sample, then Spanish TV benefits with artificially inflated audience ratings at the expense of general market outlets. It's amazing but true. **A simple accounting of U.S.-born Latinos in Nielsen's Hispanic samples benefits almost everyone EXCEPT the Spanish language television industry.**

The impact of this misstep is far reaching. There are few network shows targeted to Latinos in English. The Latin Grammys switched to Spanish TV this past season. Spanish language media gets 90% of all marketing budgets targeted to Latinos despite catering to only 40% of the population (immigrating Latinos). Latinos represent only 6% of all primetime network characters on TV despite making up over 14% of the population. The list goes on.

Many argue that Nielsen has broader sampling issues, but the failure to accurately address the U.S. born Hispanic issue is broadly damaging. It can be easily addressed, and if fixed, will quickly and positively right a wrong that is long overdue.

Spanish language TV is fighting to protect its slipping hold on its \$3 Billion turf. Nielsen, as an objective arbiter, needs to weight their Hispanic sample NOW to insure that U.S. born Latinos are properly represented. This simple adjustment will provide media and marketers with a more accurate picture of Hispanic television viewing. Anything less than immediate corrective action is unacceptable.

More Information: www.ChangeTheSample.com