Political Communication in the Latinx Population of Delaware

An **exploratory** project to help the ACLU-DE **understand** and **expand** their social media presence amongst the **Latinx community.**

Thalia Lopez, Madison Keil, and Max Poruban
[The Message Inspectors]

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The ACLU-DE Proposal:

Our immigration is one of our newest campaigns and we are working on growing our presence in the community. As part of this goal, we need to:

- **Identify the best method to share information and opportunities** with community members
- **Hear about issues** going on in the community
- **Get connected** with members of the community who are already doing organizing work.

In order to facilitate this we need to:

- Create **a mass communication system** to spread information about events, opportunities, and other critical information and a way for community members to be able to directly reach out to ACLU staff about issues impacting them and/or their community.

Background Research:

Communication/ Social Media use in the US Latinx Population

- **46%** of Hispanic Americans use WhatsApp in some capacity.
- Chat apps such as WhatsApp are **particularly important** to diasporic and/or immigrant communities.
- Chat apps such as WhatsApp are considered **“crucial avenues of communication”** for immigrant communities such as Latinos/Hispanics (Glover, 2023).

Background Research:

Communication/Social Media in the US Latinx population

- Some Spanish-language news outlets have **already turned to WhatsApp** to spread news amongst the Latinx community. So far, these efforts have been **successful**.
- Most political discourse currently on WhatsApp is **informal**.

Background Research:

WhatsApp Communities and User Interface

Communities

- 5,000 Members
- General Communication
- Specific Groups

Privacy Considerations

- Only Administrators Can View Cell Phone Numbers.

Ease of Use

- Members can request to join.
- Members can be added by Moderators.
- Separate from Groups/Messages
  - Community Groups Still Displayed in Messages.

Background Research:

WhatsApp Privacy Concerns

Encryption and Privacy

- WhatsApp messages are only visible to the sender and receiver.
- Flagged messages are visible to WhatsApp and can be referred to law enforcement.

Collection and Management of User Data

- Collected, Stored, and Sold.
- Can include:
  - Time and creation of a message
  - IP addresses
  - Device used
  - Physical location of the device and the user

Client Side Scanning

- Could allow messages to be screened before encryption.
- Already used by other Instant Messaging Systems.

Rapid Assessment Methods

Participant Observation

Free Listing and Informal/Semi-Structured Interviews

- Do you identify as a member of the Latinx Community?
- Where do you get most of your political news and receive political communication?
- What do you think of WhatsApp?
- Do you use WhatsApp?
- Would you be open to using WhatsApp for political communication?

Field sites: **UD Center for Intercultural Engagement, Christiana Mall Target, Newark Farmers Market, Various Businesses in Sussex County**

Rapid Assessment Findings

The Latinx Community of Delaware is on WhatsApp

- Everyone we surveyed or spoke to was on WhatsApp.
- Primarily used for keeping in touch with family and friends.
- Moderate familiarity with "Updates" and "Communities".

Primarily Uses Other Sources for Political Communications

- Social Media: TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X.
- Traditional Media: Telemundo, CNN, NYT, AP News, Apple News, C-SPAN.

Apprehensiveness About WhatsApp for Political Uses

Discussion of Results

High prevalence of Latinx users on WhatsApp overall.

WhatsApp **could potentially be harnessed to** spread political information quite quickly.

There are potential **problems** with using WhatsApp in this capacity:

- **Misinformation** spread
- **Difficulty** spreading serious information such as political news

Our Recommendations:

WhatsApp as an ideal medium for communication and interaction, but with challenges

Bolster Presence on Existing Socials

- Facebook, X, YouTube Instagram

Utilize Existing Networks

- Advertise WhatsApp to create familiarity with the ACLU-DE.

Use WhatsApp with Caution

- Establish Community Moderators
- Ensure Clarity and Correctness

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