

# A Matter of Language or Culture: Coverage of the 2004 U.S. Elections on Spanish- and English- Language Television

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This article fills a gap in the communication and political science literature by comparing how Spanish- and English-language television stations cover U.S. elections. A content analysis of more than 400 national network news

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stories and nearly 3,000 local news stories reveals that local and network Spanish-language stations provide less election coverage than their English-language counterparts. Although Spanish-language stations are more likely to focus election coverage on “Latino” issues or interests, the results indicate only moderate differences in how stations in each language frame their election stories, with stations in both languages concentrating more coverage around campaign strategy and the horse race than substantive issues.

## INTRODUCTION: WAKING THE SLEEPING GIANT

For many years pundits and scholars alike have predicted the rise of Latino<sup>1</sup> political power, a trend that is partially explained by recent demographic changes (Leal, Barreto, Lee, & de la Garza, 2005). In 2004, Latinos officially passed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. Given current growth patterns, Latinos are expected to become a majority in California by the mid-21st century and to form an even more sizable minority group in several key battleground states including Florida, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Illinois, and Wisconsin (<http://www.uscensus.gov>).

Moreover, the last 2 decades have witnessed a continuous rise in the number of Latino elected officials in the United States (Hero, 1992; Hero & Tolbert, 1995; Moore & Pachon, 1985; Pachon & DiSipio, 1988; Welch & Hibbing, 1992) along with a slow but steady increase in Latinos voting in U.S. elections. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos cast 3.7% of all votes in the November 1988 elections. By November 2000, this figure had reached 5.5%, and in 2004 it increased to 6%. In the 2006 midterm elections, the center estimates that Latinos were 8.6% of all votes cast (<http://pewhispanic.org/files/execsum/48.pdf>).

Despite these gains, it is clear that Latino political participation in the United States is not proportional to its rapid population growth (Calvo & Rosenstone, 1986; Chapa & de la Rosa, 2004; DeSipio, 1996; Dutwin et al., 2005; Gómez Quiñonez, 1990; Leal et al. 2005). The obvious question is why? Although there are many influential factors shaping citizen behavior and turnout in particular, media influence is one of the most widely cited, as numerous studies have shown that messages conveyed by English-language television in the United States have a powerful influence on voter

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this article we use the term *Latino* as opposed to *Hispanic*. The term *Hispanic* carries a potentially negative association as it was created by the U.S. government as a way of defining a population; in contrast *Latino* is seen as a term originating from the population. In addition, *Hispanic* is linked directly to colonial Spain, whereas *Latino* is more broadly focused on Latin America.

knowledge, attitudes, and voting behavior (Bartels, 1993; Graber, 2005; Just et al., 1996; Just, Crigler, & Buhr, 1999; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995). In particular, studies have shown that the media have the power to set the agenda (Entman, 1989; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), prime particular attitudes (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Valentino, 1999), increase citizen knowledge (Carpini, Keeter, & Kenamer, 1994; Chaffee & Frank, 1996), and they may also affect cynicism and social capital (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Stevens et al., 2006; Valentino, Beckman, & Buhr, 2001).

Of course, the fact that English-language media seems to have a powerful influence on its audience does not necessarily mean the same will hold true for Spanish-language media operating in the United States. However, the limited literature on this topic shows that television has long been recognized as the most important information medium for Latinos (de la Garza, Brischetto, & Vaughn, 1983). Furthermore, the importance of Spanish-language television to Latinos has clearly grown with its increased availability during the past 20 years (DeSipio, 2003).

For example, early studies found Spanish-language news<sup>2</sup> produced in the United States to be the most trusted source of political information only among Spanish-only speakers, whereas English-language news was the most trusted source for Latino English-language speakers whether mono- or bilingual (de la Garza et al., 1983). In contrast, more recent surveys (DeSipio et al., 1998; DeSipio, 2003; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004) find that bilingual speakers today prefer to watch their news in Spanish, not English. DeSipio (2003) found a strong majority (57%) of bilingual speakers prefer to watch their news in Spanish compared to fewer than one in five (16%) who prefer English and roughly one fourth (27%) who prefer watching both. Similarly, another survey found that more than three fourths (78%) of Latinos believe that Spanish-only news media are *very important* to the economic and political development of the Latino population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). At the very least, this survey research indicates Spanish-language media are of growing cultural importance to Latinos in the United States. Therefore, it seems quite reasonable to argue that Spanish-language media *have the potential* to influence the attitudes, political or otherwise, of its viewers, as much as *if not more* than English-language television.

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<sup>2</sup>To be clear, we refer to Spanish-language news throughout this article to mean Spanish-language news programs aired and produced in the United States. We are not examining Spanish-language news programming produced in other countries but (via satellite or through a special subscription) available within the United States. DeSipio (2003) found satellite usage to be rare among Latino viewers in his survey sample.

### Taking a Step Back

In this article we argue that before scholars can ask, let alone answer, the important questions surrounding media effects, we must develop a baseline understanding of what actually airs on Spanish-language television. Unfortunately, there is surprising little empirical research about Spanish-language television news and even less about its coverage of campaigns and elections. Therefore, a primary goal of this article is to provide comprehensive information on what Spanish-language news airs about campaigns and elections, which will lay the foundation for future studies of Spanish-language media.

We accomplish this goal by offering two comparisons. The first is between election coverage on Spanish- and English-language news. Given what little is known about Spanish-language media in the United States, it makes sense to use well established features of mainstream English-language media—such as the tendency to focus on strategy and horse race coverage at the expense of substantive issues (Bartels, 1988; Patterson, 1993; Just et al., 1996; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Fowler, Goldstein, Hale, & Kaplan, 2007)—as a baseline for comparison. It is, of course, possible that the only major content difference is the language of delivery. In this case, our analysis will uncover important ways in which news content may affect all news viewers. If, however, significant content differences do exist, future research will be better positioned to understand the effects of Spanish-language news on its viewers.

The second comparison is between coverage by national networks and local affiliate stations in both Spanish and English. We do this in part because, as Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw (2002) pointed out, the vast majority of empirical studies on English-language media and politics focus on network (national) news programming despite the fact that numerous surveys suggest that more Americans get their news and information from local television stations than from any other source (see especially Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Not surprisingly, there is even less research focusing on local Spanish-language television.

### Culture, Language, and Content

Given the lack of systematic studies on election coverage aired by Spanish-language television news, we ultimately contend that there is simply not enough empirical research in this area from which to draw firm expectations of how Spanish-language media will cover U.S. politics. However, there is a great deal of work that explores the underlying social, cultural, and structural characteristics of Spanish-language media and its audience. We begin our examination of this literature by identifying some important social

and cultural characteristics of Spanish-language television's audience. Next, we examine some central organizational and structural characteristics of modern ethnic institutions like the Spanish-language media. We then examine the concept of Panlatinidad and use it to link the characteristics of both audience and institutions into theoretically-grounded hypotheses about the content aired on Spanish-language media. As we explain next, a key assumption underlying the literature and therefore this article is that because Spanish- and English-language media companies cater to different audiences and cultures, we should expect that the content they provide will also be different. Therefore, the key questions become, what are these differences and how are these differences reflected in U.S. campaign and election news coverage?

### The "Politics of In-Between"

According to various surveys (DiSipio, 2003; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004) Spanish-language television is frequently watched by both new immigrants and Latinos born in the United States. It is clear, however, that immigrants (who are more likely to be monolingual) comprise a large part of the audience for Spanish-language television. For example, according to a Pew Hispanic Center (2004) survey, 24% of all Latinos prefer to exclusively watch Spanish-language news, but of this group 96% are foreign born. However, as noted earlier, the same Pew survey suggests that almost 8 in 10 Latinos, regardless of where they were born, characterize Spanish-language television as being very important to Latino cultural and economic development. As a result, Spanish-language television is important to, and watched by, both immigrants and Latinos born in the United States.

One explanation may lie in the fact that the integration of Latinos into the dominant U.S. culture follows a different pattern than the one followed by many other immigrant groups. The United States was once characterized as the great "melting pot." New immigrants arrived and began the process of shedding ties to their country of origin in an effort to become fully "American." The sociological literature describes this unidirectional process as the assimilation model, the definition of which is provided by Schafer (1979), who stated, "Assimilation implies, among other things, the process by which a subordinate group or individual takes on characteristics of the dominant group and is eventually accepted as part of that group" (p. 37).

More recently, scholars have challenged this "straight-line" assimilation theory, (Barreto & Munoz, 2003; Karpathakis, 1999; Park, 1999; Mayer, 2004; Karim, 2003; Naficy, 1993; Jones-Correa, 1998; Subervi-Vélez, 2005). In its place, these scholars argue that in an effort to fashion broader identities around being an "other" while living in the United States,

immigrants *and importantly their U.S. born family members* are much more likely to maintain connections to both home and host countries than those of the past.

This desire to develop a unified identity by maintaining connections in two different “worlds” has been characterized a variety of ways. For example, Jones-Correa (1998) poetically described it as the “politics of in-between.” Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994) and others have framed it as transnationalism, which they defined as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 7). In his recent groundbreaking work, Subervi-Vélez (2008) called this concept “selective distinctiveness” or “situational ethnicity” and argued specifically that “in fact, for Latinos, the reality is probably more of acculturation (learning and adapting selected cultural traits and patterns of the dominant society) and pluralism (selectively keeping and expressing cultural and other traits of their Latino heritage)” (p. 52).

Barreto and Munoz (2003) placed this concept squarely in the political realm by stressing that today, “political participation is negotiated on the immigrants’ own terms, which is done by keeping some distance and ties to both polities,” (p. 428). They went on to contend that “by acquiring full membership within the American Polity, immigrants would lose rights, privileges, and forgo obligations to their home country. These concerns are reinforced by a community that can be hostile to full political incorporation” (p. 430). In other words, the desire to maintain connections to a “home” country is not limited to actual immigrants, but is also felt by the larger “community,” which includes those born in the United States.

The politics of in-between permeates much of the literature. Yet the concept is most useful for our purposes by examining the structural and social causes of this cultural concept and how those are developed within the Latino community and within Spanish-language media, to which we now turn.

### Structural and Social Characteristics of the Politics of In-Between

Many scholars have begun to explore the structural and social characteristics of ethnic communities today that allow the politics of in-between to exist. Some focus on the role that ethnic organizations and institutions play in reinforcing the inherent tensions in the concept. For example, Jones-Correa (1998) argued that many Latino organizations operating in the United States are “oriented toward the home country, the autonomous space they create here lends itself (perhaps unintentionally) to the expression of multiple identities that allow them to avoid the closure demanded by formal politics” (p. 132). Other scholars (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Hall, 1990; Karim, 2003; Karpathakis, 1999; Naficy, 1993; Park, 1999) have

contended that because ethnic organizations and institutions (including the media of course) have a home country orientation, in a sense they skew immigrants' political involvement in the host country toward involvement in its foreign policy and away from involvement in domestic politics.

Another group of scholars focus on technological and structural changes. For example, Itzigsohn (2000) argued that structural changes in some home countries, such as allowing citizens living in the United States to vote in national elections, are driving new immigrants and those born in the United States toward more transnational identities. In addition, a host of scholars (Appadurai, 1996; Basch et al., 1994; Foner, 1997; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Vertovec, 1999) have contended that advances in communication technology (e.g., Internet, cable television, cell phones, wire transfers) facilitate transnational identities because they make it easier for people to contact friends and relatives and stay on top of news in their home countries.

### "Panlatinidad"

Among Latino scholars, this new form of ethnic identity and the social structural characteristics that facilitate it are most often described using the framework of "Panlatinidad," which Mayer (2004) defined as encompassing "the cultural, economic and political phenomena behind the constitution of a Pan-Latino identity, particularly in the United States" (p. 114). Furthermore, Mayer contended that although the origins of the term itself are unclear, it signifies "the emergence of a cross-cultural unity promoted by Spanish speakers themselves" (p. 114). Similarly Flores (1993) argued that the term is "at one time a marker of plural cultural identities and a uniquely different cultural group in opposition to the assimilating and acculturating processes associated with being 'American' in the United States" (p. 2).

The concept of Panlatinidad is so powerful and pervasive that Mayer (2004) characterized it as a "paradigm," among scholars studying Latinos in the United States. As is often the case, paradigms invite challenges and criticism. The Panlatinidad concept has faced criticism on two fronts. First, some scholars (Davila, 2001; P. Johnson, Lindsey, & Zakahi, 2001; Mayer, 2004) argue that the Panlatinidad framework ignores important differences between Latino subgroups in that scholarship and representation focuses attention exclusively on the three largest Latino subcultures in the United States (Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban). Mayer called this the "homogenizing tendencies" (p. 115) of Panlatinidad. Given that Mayer and P. Johnson et al. both documented clear differences in the communication competencies and patterns between different Latino subgroups, these scholars found the Panlatinidad concept troubling and incomplete.

The second major critique is that Panlatinidad is *not* organically driven by Latinos attempting to construct a unique (if dual) identity but is instead constructed by the media<sup>3</sup> as a means gathering an audience (Davila, 2000, 2001; Fox, 1996; Husband, 1994; Mayer, 2003; Rodriguez, 1997). For example, Husband (1994, as cited in M. A. Johnson, 2000) described the creation of a “media-invented heritage” as a first step toward abandoning distinct subgroup identities. Fox (1996) argued that the media generally and television in particular create a “virtual Hispanic-land” (p. 7) and along with others (Davila, 2000, 2001; Mayer, 2004; Rodriguez, 1997) contended that advertisers, marketers, and the media construct Panlatinidad as a “commercial ethnicity,” where Latinos are distinguished only by language, physical characteristics, religion, and family values. Furthermore, Fox argued that “no other minority now or in the history of the United States has had such an extensive apparatus [meaning primarily media] for maintaining its language and propagating its myths” (p. 40). If true, the construction of a Pan-Latino identity by the media is built in part by highlighting or perhaps even defining the connection between Latinos living in the United States and their countries of origin. For example, Davila (2000) described Univision, the oldest and by far the largest of the two television networks as a

self-appointed keeper and broker of Latin American culture and primary conduit between US Latinos and their culture. Univision thus positions itself as the primary venue in which US Latinos can connect or reconnect with the world that they may or may not have experienced, but nonetheless, as they are continually told, is a representation of Latin America and thus their heritage. (p. 79)

In essence, Davila argued that in an effort to locate Latin America as the foci for Latinos living in the United States, Univision and to a lesser extent Telemundo ignores domestic events that may be of interest to U.S.-based Latinos. She cited the failure of both networks to cover President Clinton’s 1998 State of the Union Address as an example, contending that the dominant role of Spanish-language media is to help Latinos maintain (or perhaps create) ties with Latin America, not the United States.

We have thus far argued that Latinos, most of whom watch at least some Spanish-language television, have a desire to maintain social and cultural connections to both their “home” countries and “host” countries even if they were born in the United States. In addition, the literature suggests that a variety of

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<sup>3</sup>This view is not universal; see, for example, Bonilla (1998), Fox (1996), and Torres (1998), who argued that the media is in fact following, rather than leading, the move toward a Pan-Latin identity.

organizational, structural, and technical factors help facilitate this politics of in-between. Finally, we demonstrated that many scholars contend that the Spanish-language media may play a pivotal role in either constructing or reinforcing this desire for dual identities under the rubric of Panlatinidad.

### Key Expectations

The theoretical concepts surrounding the politics of in-between and Panlatinidad, just described, suggest two exploratory hypotheses about what we might expect to see in Spanish-language television's election coverage and how this might differ from election coverage on English-language television. First, the demands of Latinos living the politics of in-between may lead Spanish-language media to limit the amount of coverage it devotes to domestic political campaigns. Second, the desire of Spanish-language media to facilitate the construction of a Pan-Latino identity may lead it to tailor any political coverage broadly around Latinos and Latino interests in an effort to further homogenize its audience.

Before turning to our methodology and results it is important to point out a few less theoretical, though empirically sound realities that may affect our existing expectations and lead to additional ones. Although social, cultural, and structural differences between audiences are important in determining news content, we do not mean to imply that language differences are irrelevant. The fact that Spanish-language television is broadcast in Spanish while the vast majority of U.S. political campaigns take place in English may also have significant effects on how Spanish-language stations cover U.S. campaigns. For example, Spanish-language stations must either translate candidate sound bites into Spanish or simply not air candidates speaking directly. Our third expectation is that Spanish-language broadcasters will take the latter course and air fewer candidate sound bites than English-language stations.

It is also important to remember that a sizable percentage<sup>4</sup> of the Spanish-language audience is actually incapable of voting in a domestic election even if they wanted to (DiSipio, 2003; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Although Barreto and Munoz (2003) pointed out that voting is just one form of electoral participation, it seems that this fact reinforces our expectation that Spanish-language television stations may be less likely than

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<sup>4</sup>The Pew Hispanic Center (2004) study suggests that as much 77% of those watching Spanish-language TV are immigrants, whereas DiSipio (2003) placed the figure at 61%. Even if a sizable number of these viewers have or are in the process of obtaining citizenship, the results still support the point that many viewers of Spanish-language television are not eligible to vote.

their English-counterparts to cover domestic U.S. politics. In addition, this fact also leads us to expect that Spanish-language television stations may be less likely focus on stories about the voting process for the simple reason that a greater proportion of its audience cannot vote.

Finally, given that a host of studies (Bartels, 1988; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Fowler et al., 2007; Just et al., 1996; Patterson, 1993) indicate that English-language television focuses its election coverage on campaign strategy and the horse race at the expense of substantive issue coverage, it is important to also explore this dimension for Spanish-language media. The expectations, however, are less clear. On one hand, Spanish-language stations might be less inclined than their English-language counterparts to cover some substantive issues because they perceive their audience as less interested in campaign issues, such as campaign finance reform, tax policies, or environmental protection, which are often not (rightly or wrongly) perceived as important to Latinos. On the other hand, perhaps for the same reasons, Spanish-language stations may be more inclined to cover other campaign issues such as foreign policy especially as it relates to Latin America, immigration, or economics, which are (again rightly or wrongly) perceived as more directly relevant to Latinos.<sup>5</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

Our study is based on a detailed content analysis of more than 400 network news stories and nearly 3,000 local news stories<sup>6</sup> broadcast in both Spanish and English in the New York, Los Angeles, and Miami<sup>7</sup> media markets during the 29 days<sup>8</sup> leading up to the 2004 election.<sup>9</sup> During this time, we

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<sup>5</sup>To extend the argument we might expect that Spanish-language news would cover more foreign policy, immigration, or economics *outside of the campaign context* in more substantive way than English-language stations. This, however, is a subject for another article.

<sup>6</sup>An election story is defined to be about (a) a single/multiple race story or (b) a voting issue/process problem, ballot initiative, or bond issue. See Appendix B for an explanation of all relevant coding definitions.

<sup>7</sup>Although these three markets are obviously not the only local markets with Spanish-language television, they are the three of the largest Latino markets, and as a result, local Spanish-language television is well developed.

<sup>8</sup>The dates were chosen to coincide with the final month of the 2004 election in response to a recommendation by the so-called Gore Commission (see <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/pubintadv-com/piacreport.pdf>). The choice of 29 days was made to maximize capture of weekday (as opposed to weekend) news programming, which is less likely to preempted by sporting events.

<sup>9</sup>These data were collected as part of a larger project, which captured news in 11 markets: New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Dallas, Seattle, Miami, Denver, Orlando, Tampa, Dayton, and Des Moines.

TABLE 1  
Breakdown of Media Markets Analyzed

<i>Media market</i>	<i>Market rank</i>	<i>TV homes (in Millions)</i>	<i>% Hispanic<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Competitiveness (by State)</i>	
				<i>President<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>U.S. senate<sup>b</sup></i>
Los Angeles	2	5.5	40.3	Solid Kerry	Likely Dem
Miami	17	1.5	40.3	Toss-up	Toss-up
New York	1	7.4	18.2	Solid Kerry	Solid Dem

*Note.* Market information from Nielsen Media (see <http://www.nielsenmedia.com>).

<sup>a</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000); all numbers based on Metropolitan Statistical Area.

<sup>b</sup>Source: Cook Political Report (2004, October 26). The Cook Political Report is a non-partisan publication that is highly regarded for its independent analysis of election campaigns.

captured all prime-time programming (5:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.) airing on the four major English-language channels (ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC) and the two major Spanish-language channels (Univision and Telemundo)<sup>10</sup> in each of the three markets from October 4 through November 1, 2004 (for more information, visit <http://www.localnewsarchive.org> or <http://www.polisci-wisc.edu/uwnewsrab>). Because we captured all prime-time programming, the data include both the affiliates' local news programs and the networks' nightly news broadcasts. Table 1 displays the characteristics of each of the three media markets analyzed.

The UW NewsLab system captured 100% of all network broadcasts and 97% the targeted local broadcasts, a notably high rate. Of the 18 local stations analyzed for this study, only 1 had a capture rate below 90%. This station was the FOX affiliate in Los Angeles, which had a capture rate of 77%. A full listing of each station along with its capture rate can be found in Appendix A.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Our decision to focus on broadcast channels as opposed to either cable news channels or satellite programming was driven by the current public policy debates regarding the effects of increased access to the digital spectrum and broadcaster public interest obligation. In addition, although there is evidence that cable news stations (e.g., CNN, MSNBC) may actually have higher ratings than traditional nightly news broadcasts though both rank below local television (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004), it is still true that more people have access to over the air broadcasts than cable.

<sup>11</sup>The basic structure of local newscasts is actually quite similar regardless of language. Local news broadcasts in both languages are generally half-hour programs that air during the early evening (5:00–6:30 p.m.) and at 11:00 p.m. The exception is the hour-long 10:00 p.m. newscast aired by the English-language FOX news in all three markets, which makes up for the lack of early-evening news broadcasts. Our data contain overall percentages and averages, which, given the high capture rate, are unlikely to be significantly or systematically affected by either the small amounts of missing data or differences between news broadcast

All Spanish-language coding was conducted by bilingual coders who underwent the same intensive training process as English-language coders. Intercoder reliability checks, conducted by randomly sampling 10% of stories to undergo a second round of coding, showed an extremely high level of percentage agreement between coders (upwards of 85%) and the chance corrected statistics were consistently more than 0.8 for all questions.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, this study examined 424 network news election stories (205 aired on the Spanish-language networks and 219 aired on the English-language networks) and 2,724 local news stories in the three markets (1,942 aired on the 12 English-language stations, 4 in each market) and 782 aired on the six Spanish-language stations (2 in each market). Although this study includes stories about all types of races, ballot and bond initiatives, and voting processes, it is important to recognize that the competitiveness of certain races affects the quantity of election news coverage within local markets. Of the three local news markets, only Miami was considered to be competitive in the presidential race. Florida also had a highly competitive race for the U.S. Senate. As a result, 49% of all English-language campaign stories and slightly more than 4 in 10 (43%) of all Spanish-language campaign stories aired in Miami.

Although it is not a focus of this study, it is interesting to note the role that Latinos in each market play in overall electoral competitiveness. In Miami, the largest Latino group is Cuban American, who traditionally vote Republican. In New York and Los Angeles, the largest Latino subgroups (Puerto Rican American and Mexican American, respectively) traditionally vote Democratic. So in all three markets there is a large and identifiable Latino subgroup that traditionally votes in similar ways. However, this may have different effects. In Miami, the right-leaning Cuban Americans may counterbalance other large populations in South Florida (e.g., African American and Jewish voters) that are traditionally left leaning, thus making the area and state more competitive. In New York and Los Angeles an opposite effect may be occurring; the left-leaning Latino population might bolster similar left-leaning and large populations, which given the size of each city within New York and California essentially makes each state less competitive.

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times. Television news broadcasts are often preempted or replaced by late-running sporting events, particularly on weekends. As a result, the number of broadcasts for each station is based on regular news programs actually aired between 5:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., not the number of broadcasts a station would have aired without being preempted or replaced.

<sup>12</sup>In this analysis, we used Scott's Pi for nominal variables and Krippendorff's R for ordinal variables. As there is no standard in the literature, we compared both statistics to other widely used measures and found no notable difference in the results.

The coding definitions for the framing variables and conventions used in this study follow previous work (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Fowler et al., 2007). A complete list of the relevant coding definitions is contained in Appendix B.

## RESULTS

As stated earlier, our objective is to provide comprehensive information regarding what Spanish-language stations air about campaigns and elections to facilitate future research. We accomplish this by comparing Spanish-language news to English-language news on two basic dimensions. The first is the quantity of election coverage. The second is how election stories are framed. For each dimension we also explore differences between network and local news coverage.

### Percentage of Broadcast Time Devoted to Election Coverage

To assess differences in election coverage by type of media, we compute the percentage of time per station per day focused primarily on U.S. campaigns and elections. Overall, the national network news devoted much more airtime to election coverage than did local stations in either language. This is, at least in part, because of differences in format as local stations incorporate sports and weather, whereas national networks do not. The results, in Figure 1, also show that the English-language networks devoted substantially more time to election coverage than Spanish-language networks. On average, English-language national broadcasts devoted more than one fourth (26%) of their time to coverage of U.S. elections compared to less than one fifth (17%) of Spanish-language national broadcast time. The

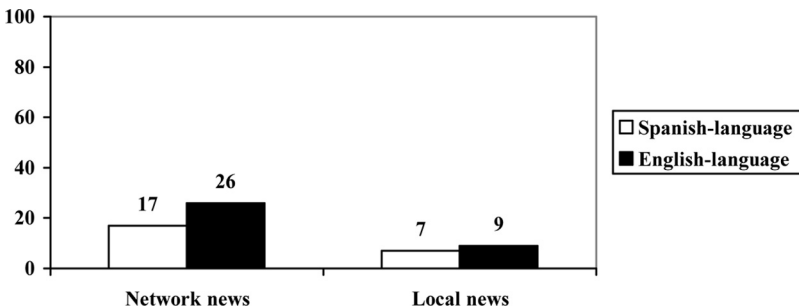


FIGURE 1 Percentage of news time devoted to campaigns and elections.

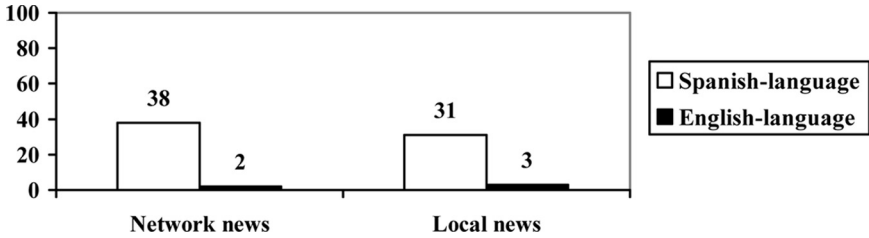


FIGURE 2 Percentage of all election stories mentioning “Latino” issues.

English-language findings are consistent with previous studies (Lichter, 2004). The difference is statistically significant and supportive of our expectations ( $t = 3.76, p = .000, df = 127$ ).

This trend holds at the local level as well. On average, English-language stations at the local level also devoted more of their broadcast time to campaigns and elections compared to Spanish-language local news (9% compared to 7%). Although the difference is smaller, it is still statistically significant ( $t = 3.93, p = .000, df = 467$ ). In actual minutes of airtime, local English stations devoted almost twice the broadcast time to stories focused primarily on U.S. political campaigns (almost 3 min compared to 1.5 min for Spanish).

### Percentage of Election Stories Covering Latino Interests

All election stories were coded if they mentioned or focused on “Latino interests.”<sup>13</sup> As displayed in Figure 2, the results follow our expectations and show that stories featuring Latino interests are more prevalent on Spanish-language stations, and the difference is statistically significant for both national ( $t = -9.97, p = .000, df = 240$ ) and local ( $t = -16.72, p = .000, df = 857$ ) news comparisons between languages.<sup>14</sup> These findings clearly show that in comparison to English-language stations, Spanish-language stations do in fact actively frame many of their elections stories around a Latino identity.

### Percentage of Election Stories Covering the Voting Process

The results show almost no differences between Spanish- and English-language stations in the amount of voting process stories at the network

<sup>13</sup>See Appendix B for the complete coding definition of this question.

<sup>14</sup>Interestingly, 80% of English-language network stories about Latino interests aired on NBC, whose parent company, General Electric, also owns Telemundo.

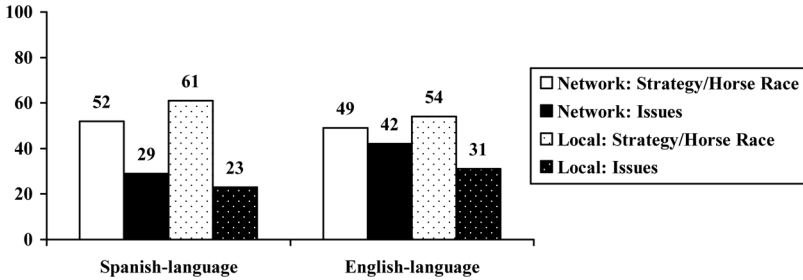


FIGURE 3 Percentage of network and local race related campaign stories about strategy and issues.

level, contrary to our expectations. At the local level, where voting process stories are more prevalent, there again appears to be little difference between Spanish- and English-language stations. Overall, slightly more than one in five (21%) of all local Spanish-language stories and nearly one in five (19%) of all local English-language stories focused on the voting process. This difference was not statistically significant.

#### Percentage of Election Stories With Candidate Sound Bites

As expected, the results show that Spanish-language stations at both the network and local level aired significantly fewer sound bites than their English-language counterparts. At the network level, 59% of the English-language stories contained a candidate sound bite compared to 29% for Spanish-language stories ( $t=6.20$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $df=371$ ). At the local level, 34% of the English-language stories contained a candidate sound bite, whereas just 14% of the Spanish-language stories did ( $t=11.88$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $df=1929$ ).

#### Strategy and Horse Race Versus Issue Stories

The results (shown in Figure 3) indicate that the Spanish- and English-language networks each devoted around half of their stories to strategy and horse race coverage.<sup>15</sup> The primary difference at the network level is that the English-language network news focused significantly more of their stories (42%) on issues than the Spanish-language networks (29%) ( $t=2.78$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $df=374$ ). The primary reason for this difference was that the

<sup>15</sup>For this section, we excluded non-race-related coverage and “voting process” stories, as they are not related to particular races or candidates. See Appendix B for coding definitions.

Spanish-language network aired more stories coded as “other” (17%) than the English-language networks (5%). The content of these stories was actually quite similar in both languages, but Spanish-language networks simply aired more of them. About one third of these stories in both languages focused on legal issues concerning who can be on the ballot or voter fraud allegations. The majority of the remaining stories again in both languages were about “early voting” in some states<sup>16</sup> or what we characterized as “quirky” stories about the campaign, like a congressional candidate who was robbed or the number of Halloween masks of presidential candidates sold. The Spanish-language networks aired a small number of stories (fewer than five) about the importance the Latino vote in various states, which did not appear on English-language networks.

At the local level (shown in Figure 3), the results indicate that primary difference was one of degree, not direction.<sup>17</sup> On the local Spanish-language stations, a strong majority (61%) of the stories focused on strategy or campaign horse race, whereas less than one fourth (23%) focused on issues. On the English-language stations more than half (54%) focused on strategy, whereas almost one third (31%) focused on issues. In both languages, stories coded as “other” were less than 15% (14% for Spanish and 10% for English). The differences in both strategy and issue coverage were statistically significant ( $t = -3.01$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $df = 1144$  for strategy, and  $t = 3.83$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $df = 1221$  for issue coverage).

## DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We began this article by arguing that, with the recent growth in Spanish-language television, today there is virtually no difference in the ability of viewers to access Spanish- and English-language programming. Given the rise of Spanish-language television, the virtual absence of this medium in the scholarly literature, and the resurgence of media effect findings in traditional English-language media, it is high time that scholars examine Spanish-language television and its effects on the public. More generally, before scholars can attempt to explore effects questions, it is important to understand what is aired by Spanish-language television. This article is an initial step in this direction.

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<sup>16</sup>Mentions of early voting had to be in the context of coverage of a particular office, generally presidential or multiple race coverage, not about the mechanics of voting early, which would be included as voting process stories and therefore excluded from this analysis.

<sup>17</sup>As Benoit et al. (2004) indicated, people in nonbattleground states are less informed about issue differences between candidates than people in battleground states. Two of the three local markets studied (Los Angeles and New York City) were not in battleground states.

The results clearly show that Spanish-language stations air less coverage of U.S. elections than their English-language counterparts. This is an important and perhaps troubling finding. The results suggest that (at least at the local level) *neither* Spanish- *nor* English-language stations provide a great deal of election coverage. Because Spanish-language news is the preferred medium for the majority of Latinos regardless of language preference or proficiency (DeSipio, 2003) and local English-language news is the preferred medium for English-speaking Americans (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004), our findings suggest that most people are receiving a less than (from a normative perspective) optimal amount of election coverage. In addition, the results suggest that Spanish-language media—though it may be catering to its audience—is doing little to close the gap between Latino political participation and Latino population growth.

From a more theoretical perspective, the quantity disparities are important because they provide some evidence that Spanish-language stations are, like their audiences, in the words of Jones-Correa (1998), “keeping some distance from the traditional political sphere” (p. 139). Ultimately, this may indicate that the potential of Spanish-language stations to influence their viewers about U.S. political campaigns may, in fact, be more limited than that of English-language stations.

It is, of course, important to not automatically conflate quantity of election coverage with its potential to influence viewers. As noted earlier a Pew Hispanic Center (2004) study found that more than three of four respondents indicated that having a thriving Spanish-language media was very important to the economic and political development of Latinos. Given that it is unlikely most viewers of English-language media hold it in the same regard, it is possible that Spanish-language viewers attach more significance to the U.S. election coverage they do receive on Spanish-language stations, perhaps negating the effect of the disparity in quantity. Clearly future research should examine this possibility in more detail.

In addition, although the three local markets we studied constitute the major Latino centers in the United States, they do not capture the diversity of Spanish-language television at the local level. It is possible that local Spanish-language stations in other local markets (e.g., Houston, San Antonio, or Phoenix) may cover campaigns with greater frequency and depth. Future research should explore this topic by including more markets or assessing the possible differences due to station ownership. In addition, it is also possible that there are significant differences between Spanish-language coverage at the local level. In future work, we plan to examine the three markets in more detail to determine if there are significant within-market differences.

In terms of how Spanish- and English-language stations frame their election coverage, our results also point to several avenues for future

research. The results show that while there are significant differences in how Spanish- and English-language stations frame election stories overall, the differences are more of degree than direction. Both Spanish- and English-language stations at the network and local level focused more of their stories on campaign strategy and the horserace than they did on substantive campaign issues, suggesting a “Pan-Journalist” approach to covering campaigns and elections. However, English-language network and local newscasts tend to carry more issue-based coverage than their Spanish-language counterparts. The results also show that viewers of Spanish-language news were much less likely to hear from political candidates directly. We anticipated these findings based on a plausible assumption that the need to translate candidate comments from English to Spanish would make Spanish-language stations less likely to air them. Future research, however, should test this assumption by examining the relationship between campaigns and bilingual candidates and how individual candidates are portrayed.

The results also show that Spanish-language stations were significantly more likely than their English-language counterparts to use “Latino interests” in their election coverage. This, combined with the other framing results suggests that the primary mechanism Spanish-language stations use to connect U.S. election coverage to their viewers is by focusing on or mentioning Latino interests. That is, viewers of Spanish-language media were much more likely than English-language audiences to receive information relevant to issues that are deemed important to the Latino population generally.

Although perhaps not unexpected, this is an important finding for two reasons. First, it suggests that Spanish-language news may frame its election coverage in ways that reflect the Panlatinidad concept. Although it is somewhat more apparent at the network than local level, it is still an intriguing result worthy of further research. In particular, qualitative research including interviews with news directors, reporters and executives at Spanish-language television stations is needed to identify whether an intentional Panlatinidad paradigm exists among those producing the news. Second, experimental studies show that the presentation of ethnicity in English-language news stories has measurable effects on minority viewers’ perceptions of the importance of the story (Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Neuwirth & Frederick, 2002; Rojas et al., 2005). Clearly, replicating these studies using Spanish-language media is also an important and potentially fruitful avenue for future research.

Finally, the results show that Spanish-language viewers were no more or less likely than English-language viewers to see information about voting processes. Although we actually expected Spanish-language stations would cover voting even less than they did, this is still an interesting finding because it suggests that Spanish-language news is not completely remiss in

providing its viewers with basic civic information about U.S. elections. If the Spanish-language media were focused entirely on linking or relinking their viewers to home countries, there would be no reason to cover domestic voting procedures. The fact that this information is provided in quantities similar to those provided on English-language stations suggests that broadcasters do not, as some (see Davila, 2001) have suggested, completely ignore domestic U.S. events.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide much needed evidence about how Spanish-language television stations cover U.S. campaigns and elections and how this coverage differs from that provided by English-language television stations. In addition, the study provides evidence of how the content of Spanish-language news reflects the social and cultural tensions inherent in the politics of in-between and the Panlatinidad that its audience experiences every day. Perhaps most important, however, these results, coupled with the rapid growth of the Latino population in the United States and the television stations that serve it, indicate that a great deal of additional research is necessary in this area. This article takes a first step in that direction.

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APPENDIX A  
TABLE A1  
Individual Stations and Capture Rates

<i>Market (DMA)</i>	<i>Station call letters</i>	<i>Network affiliation</i>	<i>Video capture rate</i>
Los Angeles (2)	KABC	ABC	99.7%
Los Angeles (2)	KCBS	CBS	100.0%
Los Angeles (2)	KTTV	FOX	76.7%
Los Angeles (2)	KNBC	NBC	100.0%
Los Angeles (2)	KVEA	Telemundo	92.3%
Los Angeles (2)	KMEX	Univision	92.3%
Miami (15)	WPLG	ABC	98.9%
Miami (15)	WFOR	CBS	98.9%
Miami (15)	WSVN	FOX	98.9%
Miami (15)	WTVJ	NBC	92.0%
Miami (15)	WSCV	Telemundo	97.1%
Miami (15)	WLTV	Univision	98.9%
New York (1)	WABC	ABC	99.7%
New York (1)	WCBS	CBS	99.5%
New York (1)	WNYW	FOX	99.7%
New York (1)	WNBC	NBC	99.5%
New York (1)	WNJU	Telemundo	99.7%
New York (1)	WXTV	Univision	97.4%

*Note.* All but 2 of the 18 local stations captured are owned and operated by their respective parent networks. The exception is in Miami, where the ABC and FOX affiliates are owned by smaller ownership groups. DMA = Designated Market Area.

## APPENDIX B

The data presented here were collected as part of a larger project conducted by the University of Wisconsin (UW) NewsLab in collaboration with the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. For more detailed methodology, see Hale, Fowler, and Goldstein (2007).

Once news programming is captured, data analysis proceeds—through the use of an online media analysis system—in two steps. The first is “clipping” whereby UW NewsLab staffers identify the start and end point of each story within a broadcast and categorize each segment (‘clip’) according to primary and secondary topics (e.g., a story might be primarily about elections but also mention health and crime or vice versa).

In the second step, all stories with a primary or secondary focus of elections were coded in more detail for office of focus, primary frame, number of sound bites, and other relevant characteristics. This allows us to track the variance, focus, and quality of local news coverage.

For the 2004 election project, UW NewsLab employed and trained roughly 80 undergraduate and graduate students, including seven bilingual clipper/coders.

### Relevant Definitions

#### Clipping: Definition of an Election Story, Candidate, and Soundbite

An *election story* is defined to be about (1) a single/multiple race story or (2) a voting issue/process problem, ballot initiative, or bond issue. Stories that mention (rather than focus on) upcoming elections or a *candidate* (see definition below) for office are included.

A *candidate* is defined to be anyone running for office whose name will appear on the ballot in November or in a future election. Individuals who fit the following descriptions are excluded:

- Current office holders or politicians who are not currently running for re-election
- Individuals who were eliminated in a primary election prior to Sept. 19, 2004
- Politicians or other individuals who are suspected to run for office in the future but have not made an official announcement that they will campaign

In the case of a death or an individual dropping out of the race, the individual in question is coded as a candidate up until the day a

replacement is *officially* announced (any speculation over a replacement *does not* count).

For example: Suppose Candidate A drops out of the race on October 25, and a replacement, Candidate B, was not announced until October 30. Candidate A should be coded as the candidate up through October 29. On October 30, Candidate A is no longer considered a candidate for office, and Candidate B should be coded as the new party candidate.

*Candidate Soundbites* are defined as the intervals of time during a news story in which a candidate speaks for him or herself. Provided the candidate can be heard and there is no voice-over by the reporter or anchor this can include, but is not limited to:

- live interviews,
- debate footage,
- advertisements aired within a news story, and
- taped speeches.

A sound bite is the time from when the candidate starts speaking until they are finished or are interrupted by another non-candidate (reporter, anchor, etc.). There may be many soundbites within a story and multiple soundbites per candidate. Therefore, if two candidates are speaking at the same time (in a debate or some other exchange), soundbite coding should proceed as follows:

- The candidate who was speaking first should be allotted the total time from when he/she started speaking until he/she stops speaking *even if another candidate tries to interrupt*.
- When the first candidate stops speaking, a new soundbite should be created for the interrupting candidate provided they are still speaking at this point.

Note that this only applies to the case where candidates are speaking at the same time (not reporters or other individuals).

For Spanish-language news, soundbites were defined as the intervals of time during a news story in which a candidate speaks for him or herself or the instance in which a translator does a voice over. Paraphrasing by the anchor or reporter was not included as a soundbite.

### **Coding Variables**

#### **Latino Interests**

*Does the story discuss Latino/Hispanic interests?*

0. No

1. Yes, Latino/Hispanic interests are mentioned but are not a primary focus
2. Yes, Latino/Hispanic interests are a primary focus of the story

### **Voting Process/Issues**

What race is this story primarily focused on?

- *If the story features more than one office and CANNOT be divided so that each segment is only about one office, select 'multiple races' and please specify each race that is mentioned. If the story should have been clipped as more than one story, please check the problem box and select 'reclip.'*
- *Lt. Governor candidates should be coded as Governor candidates in states where they run on the same ticket.*

1. President
2. U.S. Senate
3. U.S. House of Representatives
4. Governor
12. State Senate
13. State Assembly (House of Representatives)
14. Lieutenant Governor
15. Secretary of State
16. Attorneys General
17. Mayor/Vice Mayor
18. Courts (judges, clerks, district attorneys, prosecutors, supreme courts, circuit courts)
19. Law Enforcement (sheriffs, police captains)
20. Education Related Offices (superintendents, school board officials)
21. Other Statewide Offices (comptroller, statewide treasurer, statewide auditor, statewide commissioner)
22. Other Regional/County/City Offices (City/County commissioners, city council members, aldermen, ward officials, county clerks/executives)
30. Other Race Related, please specify
40. Multiple Races, please specify
80. Ballot Initiatives (initiatives, propositions, measures, amendments, referenda, or questions – including lottery issues)
81. Bond Issues (spending, taxing, levies, – i.e. raising money for projects such as community parks and schools)
95. Voting Issues (absentee ballots, voting problems, polling times and locations, get-out-the-vote efforts)
99. Other not race related, please specify

## Story Frames

### 1. *Strategy*

The story focuses on the tactics of a candidate, party, or interest group. A strategy story tells you more about the “game” or “style” of politics and elections and less about substance or issues.

### 2. *Issue*

The story concentrates on an issue such as terrorism, taxes, or education, sometimes discussing candidates’ positions on issues.

### 3. *Personal characteristics*

The story focuses on aspects of a candidate such as his or her childhood, family history, past substance abuse, personality traits.

### 4. *Adwatch*

The story analyzes a candidate or interest group ad for the claims it makes or its use of imagery. If a story is about the strategy behind a series of ads or how one candidate attacks his or her opponent with ads but does not assess the claims made in the ads it would not be considered an adwatch. It would most likely be coded as strategy.

### 5. *Horse Race*

The story is primarily concerned with which candidate is ahead or behind in a race. Poll results are usually a part of these stories.

### 6. *Other (please specify).*

*Note.* The Web-based interface automatically links video with data collected by University of Wisconsin NewsLab staff and allows stories to be rewound, fast forwarded, or paused while coders answered questions about the recorded content. The system also integrates consistency checks and allows supervisors to monitor progress and answer coder questions. For more information on the InfoSite media analysis systems, see <http://www.commITonline.com>.

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