

Report prepared for the

National Association of Hispanic Journalists

Network Brownout 2002:
**The Portrayal of Latinos
in Network Television News, 2001**

*A Report Prepared by
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Executive Summary

The 2002 NAHJ *Network Brownout Report* presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the network evening newscasts as summarized by the Vanderbilt University Television Archives.

NAHJ's seventh annual *Network Brownout Report* examines news stories that aired on the evening newscasts of CBS, ABC, NBC and CNN during the 2001 calendar year. The study, for the second consecutive year, also analyzes a random subsample of stories examining how Latinos are depicted on the news.

Quantitative Study Findings

- Of the approximately 16,000 stories that aired on ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC in 2001, only 99 stories, or 0.62 percent, were about Latinos. In 2000, 84 stories (0.53 percent) were about Latinos.
- The use of Latinos as interview subjects in Latino-related stories increased substantially. Last year, of the 99 Latino-related stories, 67 (67.6 percent) featured interviews with Latinos.
- The report recorded a gain in the length of Latino-related stories, from an average of one minute and fifty seconds in 2000 to two minutes and 25 seconds in 2001.
- ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC aired approximately 728 hours of news during their prime-time broadcasts.¹ Latino-related stories accounted for just 3.98 hours (0.55 percent) of the total airtime.
- The second quarter of 2001 (April, May and June) accounted for the greatest number of stories on Latinos (37). There was a 50 percent reduction in the number of stories during the last quarter (October, November and December). The reduction followed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.
- The controversy over the military bombings of Vieques Island in Puerto Rico was the most frequently covered topic for the second consecutive year, with 25 stories.
- While the controversy about Elián González was a major story topic in the 2000 study, stories about him almost vanished from media coverage in 2001. This year's report found only six stories dealing with either Cuban Americans or Elián. In 2000, a total of 348 stories were devoted to Elián. NAHJ included stories about Elián in its report last year, but considered those stories a statistical anomaly and counted them in a separate category.

- Cities with large Latino populations continued to be underrepresented as locations where Latino-related stories originated. The greatest number of stories originated in Washington, D.C. (22).

Qualitative Study Findings

- News stories on Latinos frequently used the image of the border to suggest a divide between the Latino and non-Latino populations and to define Latinos as illegal immigrants.
- The stereotypical use of cultural artifacts and forms, such as music and food, continued to be a key device used by the networks to contextualize Latinos.
- A disproportionate number of stories portrayed Latinos living in "ghettos."
- Stories portrayed Vieques Island residents as violence prone rebels who cut fences, invaded shooting ranges, and screamed at the military, without much explanation for their reasons for protesting.

Conclusion

- Given that the percentage of network stories on Latinos only slightly increased in 2001 over the previous year, we must conclude that the nation's 35.3 million Latinos are still being relegated to the margins of U.S. news consciousness by ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN.
- While stories about Latinos continued to be underrepresented on the evening newscasts, this year's report found a marked improvement in the percentage of Latino-related stories that featured interviews with Latinos.
- The NAHJ believes that the lack of newsroom diversity is a major reason why there continues to be a brownout of Latinos on the evening news.
- NAHJ urges the network news chiefs to adopt the same openness about their employment record that the majority of local television and radio stations have been practicing for years.

Background and Introduction

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists' annual *Network Brownout Report* has been monitoring the representation of Latinos on the evening network news in the United States since 1996². While the *Network Brownout Report* has documented specific areas of improvement in the coverage of Latinos, the study's most significant finding has been the consistent underrepresentation of Latinos on the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN.

NAHJ has found that the portrayal of Latino issues and personalities has been disproportionately low when compared to the overall number of stories produced annually by the networks. The lack of a Latino presence in news coverage is troublesome. Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic and racial group in the country, making up 12.5 percent of the U.S. population, but account for

less than 1 percent of the annual network news stories.³ The dearth of a Latino presence has been hard to justify and explain since there are 8.94 million Hispanic television households in the United States, and Latinos tend to watch more television throughout the three viewing periods of the day than any other ethnic or racial group.⁴

More importantly, market researchers and advertisers consider the Latino market one of the most important emerging segments of the overall viewing audience. The *Network Brownout Report* presents the results of a comprehensive content analysis of network news as summarized by the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives. In addition, the report continues its qualitative analysis, using a random subsample of Latino stories to examine how images of Latinos are constructed on the evening news.

Findings

A Quantitative Look at the Representation of Latinos in Network News in the United States

In 2001, one of the major news stories was the extraordinary growth of the U.S. Latino population during the previous decade. The 2000 Census reported that the Latino population grew to 35.3 million.⁵ Latinos are the fastest-growing ethnic or racial group in the country. Since the 1990 Census, the Latino population has grown by 57.9 percent. One in every eight U.S. residents is now of Hispanic origin, and if current trends continue, one of every four will be of Hispanic origin in 2050. Despite this spectacular growth, a quantitative analysis of data from the 2001 network news stories revealed a continuing brownout of Latinos by television news.

Of the approximately 16,000 stories that aired on ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC in 2001, only 99 dealt with Latino-related issues — just 0.62 percent of the overall percentage of stories that aired on the evening news.

This represents only a slight increase from 2000, when 84 of 16,000 stories (0.53 percent) were about Latinos.

In 2001, ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC aired approximately 728 hours of news during their prime-time broadcasts.⁶ Latino-related stories accounted for just 3.98 hours (0.55 percent) of the total airtime (see Table 1). This is just a 0.20 percent increase over the time devoted to Latinos in 2000.⁷ In 2000, out of 728 hours of news — 2.56 hours (0.32 percent) were devoted to Latinos.

The distribution of stories by quarter (Chart 1) illustrates that the second quarter of the year (April, May and June) accounted for the greatest number of stories about Latinos (37 stories). There was a 50 percent reduction in the number of stories during the last quarter (October, November and December). The reduction followed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Among other relevant findings:

- The use of Latinos as interview subjects in Latino-related stories dramatically increased.

² From 1996 to 1999, the NAHJ Network Brownout Report was authored by Rod Carveth and Diane Alverio. Since 2000 the research, data analysis and final report, have been conducted by Dr. Serafin Mendez and Diane Alverio and have followed the same overall parameters and methodology established in previous years.

³ US Census Bureau. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: Census 2000 Brief." March 2001.

⁴ Nielsen Media Research. "Hispanic-American Television Audience." <http://www.nielsenmedia.com/ethnicmeasure/hispanic-american/>

⁵ These figures do not include the 3.8 million residents of Puerto Rico.

⁶ This figure does not include the many special broadcasts presented by the networks due to the horrific events of 9/11.

⁷ The coverage of Latinos during 2000 was the lowest documented percentage since the study was first conducted in 1996.

- For the second year in a row, ABC aired the most stories about Latinos: 31 stories, or 31 percent. It aired 26 stories in 2000, which also accounted for 31 percent of all Latino-related stories that year. There were no significant differences in the number of stories that aired on CBS, CNN and NBC from the previous year.
- Latino-related stories on CNN received the most airtime. The stories averaged two minutes and 54 seconds in 2001, while the overall network average was 29 seconds shorter. In 2000, Latino-related stories on CNN averaged the shortest length of time of all the networks.
- In 2001, Latino-related stories on CBS averaged two minutes and two seconds in length — 22.84 seconds shorter than the average network story on Latinos.

Table 1 — Number of Latino-Related Stories by Networks in 2001

	ABC	CBS	CNN	NBC	Total
Total Number of Stories	31 31.31%	22 22.22%	22 22.22%	24 24.24%	99
Total Number of Seconds	3690 (66 minutes)	2680 (45 minutes)	3820 (64 minutes)	3860 (64 minutes)	14320 (3.97 hours)
Average Seconds Per Story	127.74	121.81	173.63	160.83	144.64

Story Topics

The 99 Latino-related stories that aired in 2001 are distributed among 15 story topics (Table 2). For the second year in a row, the protests over the military bombings of Vieques Island in Puerto Rico was the largest topic, with 25 stories. In 2000, there were 27 stories about Vieques Island.

The next most frequent story topics involved government (15), migration (11) and sports (11).

Highlights of these categories included:

- The controversy over the nomination of Linda Chávez as U.S. Labor Secretary received considerable media attention during the early days of President Bush's administration. The networks zealously pursued the issue of whether Chávez knowingly employed an undocumented worker as her housekeeper. Although the main topic of the story dealt with government, migration played a central role in contextualizing and defining the issue.
- Migration continues to be a major network story. Many reports touched on the problem of illegal immigration by Mexicans into the United States. Migration has been a defining theme in the construction of Latinos in network news since the inception of this study, although the number of stories dealing with migration decreased from 16 in 2000 to 11 in 2001.
- Accidents are a new category in this year's report. In 2001, the crash in New York City of an American Airlines flight bound for the Dominican Republic was a major news story. Others in this category included the coverage of a liability lawsuit against Firestone brought by a Latino doctor whose wife became disabled after the failure of a tire led to the crash of their Ford Explorer.
- Sports, which disappeared as a story topic in the 2000 report, reappeared in 2001 with 11 stories. Prominent coverage was devoted to the controversy concerning the age of Danny Almonte, the Little League World Series pitcher who played for a team from the South Bronx and captured national attention when he hurled a perfect game during a play-off contest. It was later learned that he was too old to play in Little League, that his birth certificate had been falsified, and that he was living illegally in the country. Almonte's status as a "Dominican immigrant" became a central element of the story.
- While the controversy about Elián González was a major story topic in the 2000 study, stories about him almost vanished from media coverage in 2001. This year's report found only six stories dealing with either Cuban Americans or Elián. In 2000, a total of 348 stories, or 2.9 percent of all news stories, were

devoted to Elián. NAHJ included stories about Elián in its report last year, but counted them in a separate category as a statistical anomaly.

- In 2001, six network stories examined the emerging role of Latinos in the country as a result of the 2000 Census.

- Economics- or business-related stories vanished as a topic.

- There continues to be a dearth of stories (2) about health issues related to Latinos.

Table 2 — Subjects of Stories Covered by Network News in 2001

Topic	Frequency	Percentage	Total Number of Seconds Devoted to Subjects	Average Length of Stories in Seconds
Accidents	4	4.04	1510	377.5
Arts & Entertainment	4	4.04	500	125
Bilingual Education	1	1.01	140	140
Census and Population Trends	6	6.06	780	130
Crime	6	6.06	860	143.33
Cuban Americans/ Elián González	6	6.06	1080	180
Economics/Business	0	0		
Government	15	15.15	3190	212.66
Health	2	2.02	180	90
Migration	11	11.11	1460	132.72
Politics	3	3.03	420	140
Race	3	3.03	550	183.33
Sports	11	11.11	1210	110
Vieques Island	25	25.25	2310	92.4
Weather	2	2.02	130	65
TOTAL	99	100	14320	144.64

Table 3 — Subject of Stories Covered by Networks in 2001

Topic	ABC	CBS	CNN	NBC	Total
Accidents	0	1	2	1	4
Arts & Entertainment	3	0	1	0	4
Bilingual Education	1	0	0	0	1
Census and Population Trends	3	0	2	1	6
Crime	1	2	1	2	6
Cuban Americans/ Elián González	1	1	1	3	6
Economics/Business	0	0	0	0	0
Government	5	3	1	6	15
Health	1	0	0	1	2
Migration	5	4	1	1	11
Politics	1	0	1	1	3
Race	0	2	0	1	3
Sports	5	2	2	2	11
Vieques Island	5	6	10	4	25
Weather	0	1	0	1	2
TOTAL	31	22	22	24	99

Chart 1
Percentage of Latino Stories in
Network Evening News: 2001

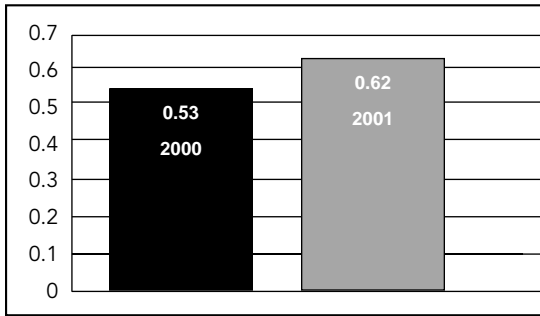


Chart 2
Number of Stories by Quarter in 2001

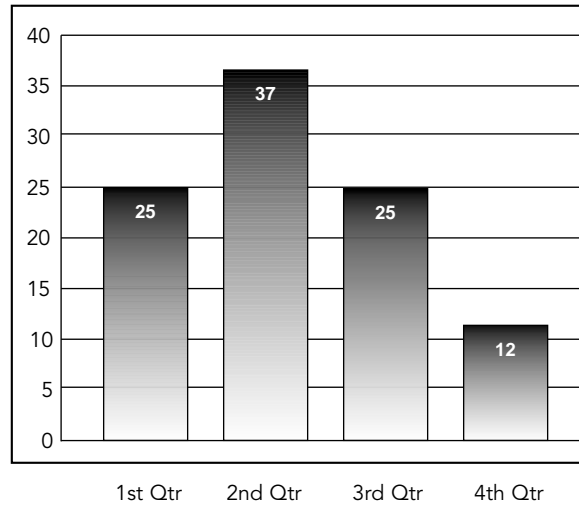
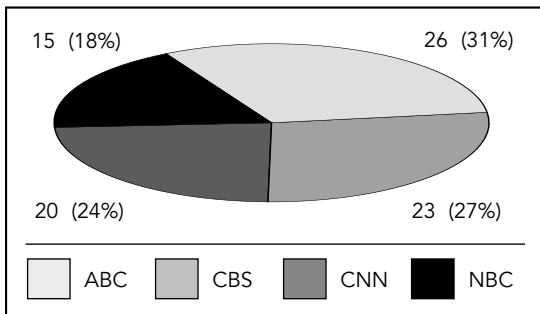


Chart 3
Number of Stories by Network in 2001



Geographical Peg

There were 37 stories that originated in the studio and did not include reports from other locations. The remaining 62 stories originated from various U.S. cities (Table 4). The greatest number of stories originated in Washington, D.C. (22), followed by New York (11), Los Angeles (8) and Austin, Texas (8).

Cities with large Latino populations continued to be underrepresented as locations where Latino-related sto-

ries originated. For instance, while New Mexico proportionately has the largest Latino population in the country (42 percent), no stories originated there. Most stories about Vieques began in the studio. Only in a few instances was a reporter deployed to Puerto Rico. While Texas has the second-largest Latino population in the country, most stories that originated in the state covered President George W. Bush at his Crawford ranch.

Table 4
Geographic Distribution of Stories in 2001

City	Number of Stories	City	Number of Stories
Phoenix, AZ	1	Belle Harbor, NY	1
Los Angeles, CA	8	Williamsport, PA	1
San Francisco, CA	1	Vieques, PR	4
Washington, DC	22	Chattanooga, TN	1
Clearwater, FL	1	Austin, TX	8
Miami, FL	2	Dallas, TX	1
Atlanta, GA	1	Houston, TX	1
Chicago, IL	1	Laredo, TX	2
New York, NY	11		

There were 39 stories that originated in the studio. Forty-five other stories originated from the cities listed above, several of them included multiple locations.

Use of Reporters

Of the 62 stories reported from the field, the only Latino reporters featured were CNN's María Hinojosa and CBS's Vince Gonzales. Each presented only two reports. In 2001, no reporter seemed to specialize in

covering Latino issues. There was no continuity between the 2000 and 2001 list of reporters covering Latino issues.

Table 5
Network Correspondents Covering Latino Stories in 2001

Correspondents Reporting from the Field	Number of Stories	Correspondents Reporting from the Field	Number of Stories
Deborah Amos	2	George Lewis	1
Charles Bierbauer	1	Larry Lothian	1
Wolf Blitzer	2	David Martin	3
David Bloom	1	Jamie McIntyre	1
Jones Carroll	1	John McWethy	1
Virginia Cha	2	Jim Miklaszewski	1
Rom Claiborne	1	Andrea Mitchell	2
Lee Cowan	3	Terry Moran	1
Jim Cummins	1	Dan Morris	1
Bill Delaney	1	Judy Muller	1
Linda Douglass	2	Lisa Myers	4
Major Garrett	1	Michele Norris	2
Vince Gonzales	1	Michael O'Looney	1
David Gregory	4	Steve Osunsami	2
Robert Hager	1	John Palmer	1
Dan Harris	1	Byron Pitts	1
Dean Harris	1	Dean Reynolds	1
María Hinojosa	1	Tom Rinaldi	1
Sandra Hughes	2	John Roberts	2
Kiko Itasaka	1	Kerry Sanders	2
Kenley Jones	1	Jim Sciutto	3
Phil Jones	2	Anne Thompson	1
John King	1	Bill Whitaker	1
Jeffrey Kofman	1	John Yang	2
Hillary Lane	1	John Zarrella	2

Interview Subjects

The use of Latinos as interview subjects in Latino-related stories increased dramatically. In 2000, Latinos were interviewed in 31 out of 84 stories (24.4 percent). In 2001, 67 out of 99 stories featured interviews with Latinos (67.6 percent). Of the total of 228 interviews conducted, 99 (43.4 percent) featured Latinos. NBC and CBS stories contained the greatest number of interviews with Latinos. In 2000, out of 133 interviews, 69 (58.8 percent) featured Latinos.

Activists and community leaders (13) represented the largest category of subjects interviewed in Latino-related stories followed by individuals identified as illegal immigrants (9). This overrepresentation of illegal immigrants continues to be a worrisome trend in network news.

Table 6
Interview Subjects in Stories in 2001

	Number of Stories that Used Interviews	%
ABC	24	36%
CBS	14	21%
CNN	12	18%
NBC	17	25%
Total	67	

Last year, out of the 99 Latino-related stories, 67 (67.6 percent) featured interviews with Latinos.

Table 7
The Number of Interview Subjects in 2001

Network	Latinos Interviewed	Total Interviews	Interviews of Latinos as % of all Interviews
ABC	29	85	34.11
CBS	22	45	48.88
CNN	9	42	21.42
NBC	39	56	69.64
Total	99	228	43.42

Table 8
Labels Affixed to Latino Interview Subjects

Label	Number
Academics/Analysts/Consultants	5
Activists/Community Leaders	13
Artists/Entertainers	1
Business Owners	3
Convicts	1
Diplomats	2
Government Officials	6
Illegal Immigrants	9
Journalists/Publishers	6
Law Enforcement Officers	3
Medical Patients	3
Politicians	7
Sports Figures	3
Sports Fans	3
Unknown/No Label Affixed	17
TOTAL	82

Chart 4
Network Coverage:
2000 Versus 2001: Number of Latino Stories

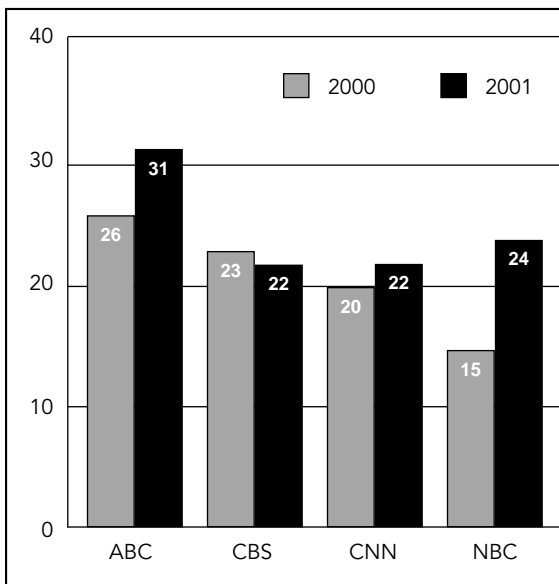


Chart 6
Percentage of Latino Interviews by
Total Number of Interviews

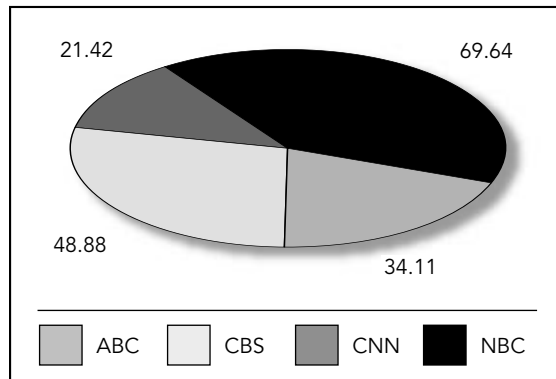
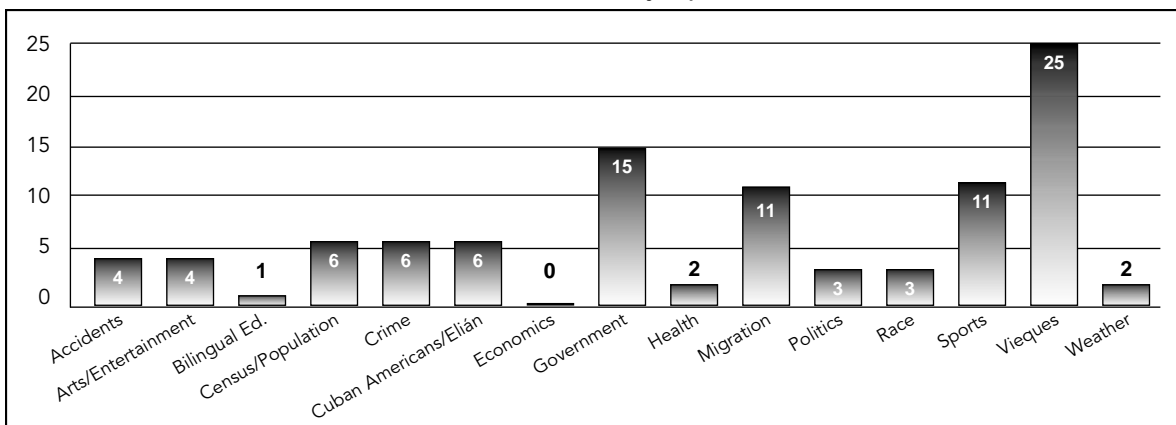


Chart 5
Distribution of Stories by Topics: 2001



Trends

Charts 7 and 8 represent the most significant historical trends revealed by the longitudinal plotting of the quantitative data. When compared with last year's data, there is an across the line increase in the average

story length and the number of stories covered by the networks. Both of these numbers, however, seem to be somewhat lower than the general trends presented during the first four years of the study.

Chart 7
Latino Stories: Longitudinal Trends, Average Story Length

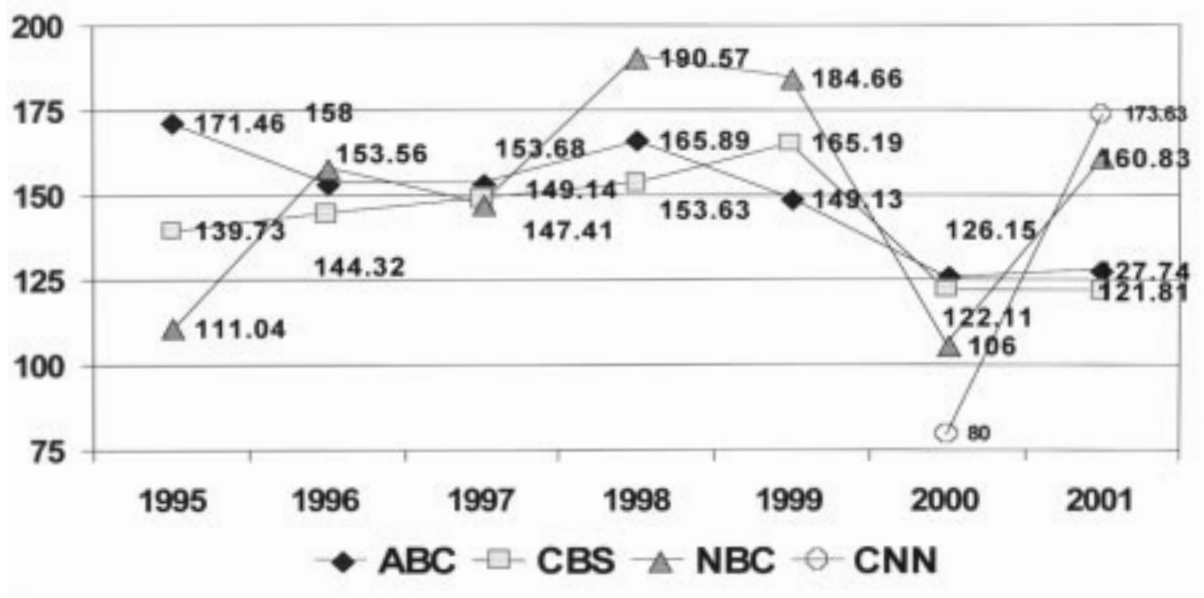
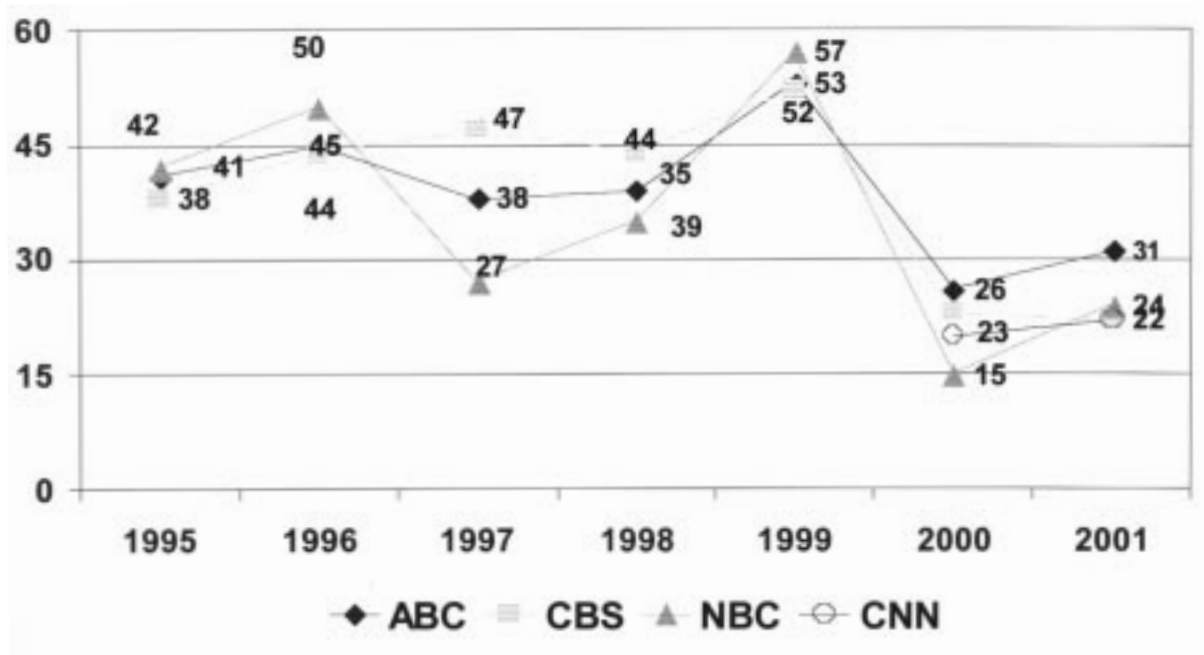


Chart 8
Latino Stories: Longitudinal Trends, Number of Stories Covered by the Networks



Critical Reading of Television News

While quantitative patterns are important for understanding the lack of Latino representation in network news, it is also important to continue assessing the nature of the Latino image constructed by the networks. The 2001 *Network Brownout Report* randomly selected a sample of 20 network broadcasts in order to examine the portrayal of Latinos by the network news. As in 2000, it found a series of images that perpetuate ethnic and racial stereotypes.

The Border

The U.S. networks continued to place a great degree of emphasis on the border as a defining metaphor for Latinos, specifically Mexican Americans. Many stories used images of Mexican immigrants trying to elude INS officials in their quest to cross “the border.” The networks presented images of emaciated immigrants who have faced many dangers and perils to come to the “dreamland” offered by the United States. The border is used frequently to illustrate a powerful linguistic, cultural, social, political and economic divide between Latino and non-Latino populations. The image of the border plays an important role in creating a divide between Latino and non-Latino populations and serves to define Latinos as illegal immigrants.

The Festive Image of Latinos

The stereotypical use of cultural artifacts and forms continued to be a key device used by the networks to contextualize Latinos. Whether trying to introduce new statistics from the 2000 Census with salsa music or explaining the growing popularity of Houston mayoral candidate Orlando Sánchez with the sounds of mariachi music, the networks relied on indigenous Latino music and cultural forms to frame stories and issues. The music and cultural forms were irrelevant to the issues at hand. This may be better understood by a statement used in a voiceover that aired on a network story about the census: “Tortilla chips are now more popular than French fries; salsa more common than ketchup.” The networks’ reliance on stereotypical music or cultural artifacts is a serious issue for Latino audiences to reckon with.

Covering Census 2000: Humps and Hordes

The networks actively covered the 2000 Census story and the growth of the Latino population (excluding Puerto Rico) from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000. While the reports tended to be factual, the visual and verbal signifiers used by the media to illustrate them were remarkable. In NAHJ’s 2000 report, Latinos were framed consistently as hordes of people with brown faces coming down from narrow spaces and alleys.⁸ In 2001, one story included commentary from an anchor about the increase of the Latino population while a Latina performer, who appeared pregnant, was shown rubbing her belly. Another story showed Latinas pushing their babies in strollers. In several instances, the language used by anchors was also remarkable. Latino population not only grows, it “surges,” one story noted. In another, a reporter said that Mexican immigrants don’t come to the United States, they “flock” here.

Continued Ghettoization of Latinos

The ghettoization of Latinos continued to be an extremely visible trend in network news. In 2001, there were once again a disproportionate number of sequences portraying Latinos within “ghettos.” Latinos tended to be presented inside geographical confines in metropolitan areas such as New York and Los Angeles. The networks tended to showcase Latinos only within those areas. Latinos were also constructed inside the “barrio” stereotype. An example is the story of Danny Almonte. Almonte, who played for a team from New York City, pitched a perfect game during a Little League World Series playoff contest. It was later learned that he was too old to play in Little League and that he was an illegal immigrant.

In covering the neighborhood where Almonte lived, the networks underscored and magnified its poor conditions. They presented a dilapidated baseball field and characterized it by saying, “the team was as tattered as their field.”

⁸ This was one of the most shocking findings of the “2000 Latino Brownout Report.” The networks consistently used images of large number of dark skinned people coming down narrow spaces or alleys to contextualize the Latino population. In Serafín Méndez-Méndez and Diane Alverio. “Network Brownout 2001: The Portrayal of Latinos in Network News, 2000.” Washington. NAHJ. 2001.

Vieques Island

The coverage of the controversy over the Navy's use of Vieques Island presented many interesting dimensions of the networks' construction of Puerto Rico. While Vieques has received worldwide attention, the networks have continued to present the island as a tiny speck in a world map. The stories contain very little historical background of the events that led to the problems in Vieques Island and interviewed only a few residents. The stories also portrayed the Vieques residents as violence prone rebels who cut fences, invaded shooting ranges and screamed at the military, without much explanation for their reasons for protesting. CNN did a better job covering Vieques than any other network. The consistent use of John Zarella to report from the island allowed CNN to develop the stories better. CNN Anchor Wolf Blitzer was better informed than the other anchors and demonstrated greater insight in his reporting. This marks a significant improvement from CNN's coverage of Vieques Island last year, when the average length for a story about the island was the shortest of any network.

Objectification of Latino Women

While the objectification of women has been a phenomenon widely documented in network programming in general, there have been few attempts to document the objectification of women or Latinas in news coverage. A network report on the swearing in of the first-ever female governor of Puerto Rico illustrated this phenomenon. The story used footage of Governor Sila Calderón removing a Puerto Rican flag from the balcony of the governor's mansion — wrapping it close to her body — and then kissing it in a sensual way before raising it towards the sky. This Perónesque image⁹ was powerfully framed. It did nothing, however, to explain her very solid administrative and political background or political agenda.

Conclusion

Given that the percentage of network stories on Latinos only slightly increased in 2001 over the previous year, we must conclude that the nation's 35.3 million Latinos are still being relegated to the margins of U.S. news consciousness by ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN. The network's dismal record of covering the nation's fastest-growing minority group undermines the information needs of all U.S. residents and distorts the public discourse so necessary for any democratic society.

Some network news executives have questioned recently whether the quantitative and qualitative methodologies utilized in this report are appropriate ways to measure news content. They correctly point out that most news stories affect a cross-section of U.S. residents, so numerical "quotas" for stories based on ethnic subject matter do not adequately reflect their coverage. But the NAHJ has never called for numerical or percentage "quotas" in coverage. Rather, we have used the quantitative or statistical approach as just one way of measuring whether news coverage of Latinos is

moving in a better or worse direction. We acknowledge that such an approach has its limitations. But we also believe it is possible to chart trends in news coverage by statistical analysis, just as the networks now measure so many other aspects of viewership statistically. In addition, we have adopted a qualitative analysis of coverage precisely because we recognize the limitation of pure quantitative analysis. And we invite all of the networks, if they are dissatisfied with either of our approaches, to work with the NAHJ to develop a more comprehensive method.

The NAHJ believes that the lack of newsroom diversity is a major reason why there continues to be a brownout of Latinos on the evening news. Having more Latinos as network correspondents, producers and executives will not guarantee better coverage of Hispanics, but we firmly believe that it will make such coverage more likely. NAHJ, however, has no idea how many Latinos work at the networks. Network jobs are among the most important and coveted positions in television,

⁹ The clipping resembled scene of Eva Peron speaking before the balcony of Casa Rosada in Argentina.

¹⁰ Available at: <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu>.

yet we have no regular public survey similar to those from the Radio-Television News Directors Association or from the American Society of Newspaper Editors that monitors how well the networks are doing when it comes to diversity. We urge the network news chiefs to adopt the same openness about their employment record that the majority of local television and radio stations have been practicing for years.

While stories about Latinos continued to be underrepresented on the evening newscasts, this year's report found a marked improvement in the percentage of Latino-related stories that featured interviews with Latinos. NAHJ attributes the increase to the growing awareness of the growth of the

Latino community as a result of the 2000 Census.

Our qualitative analysis found that Latinos continued to be covered stereotypically and were framed, for example, as illegal immigrants trying to elude the INS. The border was frequently used to illustrate a powerful linguistic, cultural, social, political and economic divide between Latino and non-Latino population. Latino-related stories continued to use cultural artifacts as key devices to contextualize Latinos, such as salsa or mariachi music, even though they were not relevant to the story. Also, a disproportionate number of story sequences portrayed Latinos as living within "ghettos."

Methodological Framework

As in previous years, the data for our study came from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives.¹⁰ Since 1968, the archives have videotaped each story aired by the networks during their evening newscasts. The stories are then indexed and summarized by the archives, which prepares abstracts for each story and each newscast. Each abstract contains "story level summaries" of the evening news which provide the following descriptors: 1) network on which the story aired; 2) date of the broadcast; 3) running title or topic of the story; 4) beginning and ending time of the story; 5) city where the story originated; 6) name of anchor or studio correspondent who introduced the story; 7) names of field correspondents who were part of the reports; 8) names and title of any person interviewed for the story; and 9) brief summary of the story. The archives have a powerful search engine, available through the World Wide Web, that allows users to search stories by date or by specific keywords. Through the use of a Boolean search engine, the archives identify each story containing the keywords. An abstract is shown in the screen with the above referenced descriptors. The unit of analysis for this study is not the story aired by the network per se but the "summarized abstracts" prepared by Vanderbilt.

In order to identify the stories portraying Latinos, we replicated the sampling method that has been used since 1996. The sampling consists of the following procedures:

- 1) Searches were done for stories containing the general and most important Latino designation: "Latino," "Latin-Americans," "Hispanic," and "Hispanic-Americans." Approximately 75 percent of the stories were found through this procedure.
- 2) A broad list of specific Latino subgroups was prepared. Examples were "Cuban," "Cuban American," "Puerto Ricans," "Colombian," "Ecuadorians," "Chileans," etc. Approximately 5 percent of the stories were found through this procedure.
- 3) A comprehensive list of keywords such as "bilingual education," "crime," "undocumented laborers," "border" and the like was prepared. This list consisted of more than 100 descriptors associated with Latino society in the United States — Latino surnames, etc. They yielded approximately 20 percent of the stories found and used.
- 4) The criterion followed in the selection of the stories was to focus on issues facing Latinos in the United States. For example, there was extensive coverage of the election of Mexican President Vicente Fox. Stories centered on Mexican politics were excluded from the study. If a story focused on Fox talking about immigration and Mexican Americans in the United States, however, it was included as part of our sample.
- 5) In order to verify the integrity of the process, we selected 20 stories at random from the stories available in the archive for the year 2001. We examined those stories to verify that any Latino

issues were covered that had not been identified by the procedures outlined above. No additional stories were found.

The sampling procedures this year yielded 99 stories that contained at least one of the descriptors used.

The story abstracts were categorized according to the descriptors available in the summaries and stored into a computerized database-management program. Each story was numbered sequentially according to date of airing and later sorted by the descriptors that characterized them. All its frequency distributions and statistics presented here were achieved by analyzing these descriptors.

This is the second time that the *Network Brownout Report* has had an additional level of analysis. Using the list of the 99 stories' abstracts dealing with Latinos

and Latino issues, 20 stories were selected at random from the list. Videotaped copies of the broadcasts were ordered from Vanderbilt and submitted for an in-depth critical reading, in order to unravel the qualitative dimension of Latino portrayals by U.S. networks. The guiding question in this analysis was: What is the nature of the image of Latinos portrayed by the networks? The analysis assessed the selection of interviewed subjects, the level of understanding that reporters demonstrated about Latinos, the physical settings of the field stories, the statistical data used to substantiate the arguments, the symbolic properties of the stories, the tone of the story and the themes that were selected and a broad range of theoretical perspectives used commonly in the analysis of media texts that will be explained later in our guided readings.

Limitations of Study

One of the limitations of this study is that the unit of analysis used for the quantitative content analysis portion was the story index rather than the story itself. The qualitative component helps offset this limitation as it gives the researcher access to a limited amount of actual stories. However, in order to continue assessing the nature of the media coverage about Latinos, there is a

need to increase the survey of actual broadcasts. Another limitation is the dearth of network data about the personnel involved in the process of manufacturing the news. It will be important to have data that will help us to assess the role of those gatekeepers that may be involved in this process.

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