



Report prepared for the

National Association of Hispanic Journalists

Network Brownout 2004:

**The Portrayal of Latinos & Latino
Issues in Network Television News, 2003**

Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis of the Coverage

BY
FEDERICO SUBERVI, Ph.D.

COLLABORATORS:
JOSEPH TORRES & DANIELA MONTALVO, NAHJ STAFF

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Federico Subervi, a native of Puerto Rico, is a media consultant and scholar living in Austin, Texas. For more than 20 years, he has been teaching, conducting research, and publishing on issues related to the mass media and ethnic groups, especially Latinos in the United States. He is the director of the Latinos and Media Project (www.latinosandmedia.org), and chair of the board of Latinitas Inc., a Web-based magazine (www.latinitasmagazine.org) and an organization dedicated to helping empower Latina youth via media and technology. Subervi has held academic appoint-

ments at the University of California-Santa Barbara, the University of Texas at Austin (where he also served as graduate advisor for the Department of Radio-TV-Film), and Pace University in New York City. **Joseph Torres**, **Daniela Montalvo** and **Marisella Veiga** worked on conducting the research and the analysis of the Brownout report. Torres is NAHJ's deputy director of communications and media policy. Montalvo is a graduate student at George Washington University in media and public affairs. Veiga is an English professor and a freelance columnist.

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For more information about the report, please direct publication inquiries to: NAHJ, 529 14th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC, 20045-2001. NAHJ's phone number is 202-662-7145 and Web site: www.nahj.org.

Executive Summary

NAHJ's ninth annual *Network Brownout Report* examined news stories about Latinos and Latino-related issues that aired in 2003 on *ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather*, *CNN NewsNight with Aaron Brown* and *NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw* as well as the networks' weekend nightly newscasts.

As in prior studies, Latino-related stories were identified by searching the index of Vanderbilt University's Television News Archives. Other network newscasts, including those on Fox and MSNBC, were not included in the study because they are not archived at Vanderbilt University.

This year's report contains a quantitative review of the number and length of stories about Latinos. However, distinct from previous years, NAHJ made a more exhaustive effort to identify, select and assess the "Central Involvement of Latinos" in news stories.

NAHJ also conducted a qualitative analysis of a sub-sample of stories about Latinos. For the first-time ever, NAHJ performed a content analysis of news stories that aired during a five-day period (Oct. 20-24, 2003) to further examine the portrayal of Latinos. The goal was to better understand how Latinos appeared in stories during a typical news week and to examine how non-Latino related stories were covered.

The quantitative analysis of the *Network Brownout Report* revealed:

- Of the more than 16,000 stories that appeared on ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC in 2003, only 131, or 0.82 percent, were about Latinos. While that was an increase from 2002, when there were 120 Latino-related stories, or 0.75 percent, it still remains a dismal record given the growth and importance of the nation's Latino community. Latinos make up close to 14 percent of the U.S. population.
- Overall, CNN aired 47 Latino stories that received almost an hour and a half of air time, the most of any network.
- Out of 639 hours of network news stories that aired in 2003 (38,325 minutes), a scant 0.63 percent (4 hours and 2 minutes) was dedicated to Latino stories.

- The majority of Latino stories covered a limited number of story topics. Overall, 44 percent of Latino stories were about immigration (30 stories) and crime (27 stories). That figure climbs to 55 percent when human-interest stories (15 stories) are included and to 73 percent when the topics of election politics (12 stories) and celebrities (11 stories) are added.
- A significant percentage of stories about Latinos lacked in-depth coverage. Of the 131 stories about Latinos that aired last year, 24 percent (31 stories) were less than 30 seconds long. Many of these stories were network news round-up segments.
- Stories about Latinos lacked diversity of viewpoint and opinion. Of the 131 stories about Latinos, 43 percent (56 stories) did not cite a single source. In addition, 58 percent did not feature an interview with a Latino.
- Latinos did not often appear in non-Latino related stories. Out of 16,000 stories that aired in 2003, Latinos appeared as sources in an estimated 285 non-Latino related stories (1.8 percent). Interviews with Gen. Ricardo Sánchez, California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson accounted for 40 percent of this total.

Positive trends:

- Despite the overall lack of news coverage, Latinos were more positively portrayed in 2003 with many news stories highlighting the contributions that Latinos are making to society. For example, the number of human interest stories increased from 3 in 2002 to 15 in 2003. Many of these stories profiled the service and sacrifice made by Latino soldiers.
- The overall number of crime stories about Latinos declined from 47 stories (39 percent) in 2002 to 27 stories (21 percent) in 2003. Most of these stories portrayed Latinos as the victims of crime.

Qualitative analysis of Latino stories found:

- Several stories about Latinos, regardless of topic, portrayed Latinos as immigrants seeking a better life in the United States in an effort to obtain the “American dream.”
- Immigration and crime stories portrayed Latinos as victims. In previous years, Latinos were more often featured as perpetrators of crime or burdens to society.
- Latino soldiers killed or wounded in Iraq were portrayed as heroes.
- Several stories about politics focused on the growing influence of the Latino vote.

Content analysis of all network stories during the week of Oct. 20-24, 2003 found:

- Out of 241 stories that aired, not a single story was exclusively about Latinos. Moreover, Latinos appeared only in four stories. One story featured interviews with Latino soldiers while two other stories contained an interview with Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. The last story featured Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar.

- When comparing Latino-related stories to stories that appeared during this five-day period, a greater percentage of Latino stories did not cite sources (42 percent) compared to non-Latino related stories (28 percent).
- In addition, 19 percent of non-Latino related stories cited sources with a mixture of opinions compared to 8 percent for Latino stories.

Conclusion

While we are encouraged by the improved portrayal of Latinos in 2003, this year’s report found several trends that continue to disturb us. The lack of coverage and air time devoted to Latino stories remained dismal and Latinos continued to be covered within a narrow range of topics such as immigration and crime. This is troublesome because it is rare for the network news audience to view a story about Latinos, and when they do, the coverage often does not reflect the totality of life for Latinos in the United States.

Introduction

Since 1996, NAHJ’s *Network Brownout Report* has annually tracked and assessed how Latinos and Latino-related issues were covered on the network evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC.

The report historically has found a lack of news coverage about Latinos and Latino-related issues. The number of stories and minutes dedicated to coverage of Latinos is negligible and discouraging when weighed against all the stories aired by the networks each year. Latinos currently make up close to 14 percent of the U.S. population but have, since the inception of this report, made up about 1 percent of all stories that air on the network evening newscasts.

Once again, NAHJ is concerned that U.S. households watching the network evening

newscasts learned very little about the Latino community in 2003. And too often, Latinos were portrayed stereotypically.

Crime and immigration have consistently made up the foundation for stories about Latinos since NAHJ started this report. The same was true in 2003. While the inclusion of Latinos in such stories is understandable, what is difficult to accept is the *dearth* of coverage in other areas that are certainly newsworthy and reflect the totality of the U.S. Latino experience.

While the ninth annual *Network Brownout Report* reveals improvements in the portrayal of Latinos, the underrepresentation of Latinos in the evening news in 2003 still remains disappointing. The network evening news continues to fail to reflect the racial and ethnic make-up of this country in its news coverage.

PART 1. The Quantitative Assessments

Overall Number and Length in Time of Stories

In 2003, an estimated 16,000 news stories aired on the ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC evening newscasts. The number of stories about Latinos or Latino-related issues totaled only 131, or 0.82 percent,¹ a slight increase from 2002, when 120 stories, or 0.75 percent of all stories, were about Latinos (see table 1).

The report found that the number of Latino stories that aired on CNN increased from 29 stories in 2002 to 47 stories in 2003 and for NBC from 26 to 27 stories. The number of stories covered by ABC decreased from 35 to 27 stories while remaining the same for CBS with 30 stories.

The amount of time – 4 hours and 2 minutes (242 minutes) – dedicated to stories about Latinos continues to be dismal. Out of 639 hours² of network news stories that aired last year (38,325 minutes), a scant 0.63 percent of that time was dedicated exclusively to stories about Latinos.

CNN devoted almost an hour and a half of air time to Latino-related stories, the most of any network. NBC devoted close to an hour to Latino stories while ABC and CBS each devoted close to 49 minutes, respectively.

The average story length of Latino stories on NBC was 2 minutes and five seconds, the highest for any network, followed by CNN with 1 minute and 54 seconds, ABC with 1 minute and 47 seconds, and CBS with 1 minute and 37 seconds.

A significant portion of stories about Latinos lacked in-depth reporting because many stories were part of a news round-up segment. Of the 131 stories about Latinos that aired last year, 24 percent (31 stories) were less than 30 seconds. Thirty-eight percent of CNN's stories about Latinos (18 stories) were 30 seconds or less, the most of any network.

Nevertheless, 67 percent of stories about Latinos on NBC and 51 percent on CNN were longer than two minutes. CBS's coverage was more evenly divided: almost half of its coverage was less than a minute while the other half was longer than two minutes. Forty-five percent of ABC's coverage was longer than two minutes.

Topics Covered

The networks continued to cover Latinos across a narrow range of topics in 2003. Overall, 55 percent of 131 Latino stories (see table 2)

Table 1.
Overall distribution of stories exclusively about Latinos by number, time and length

Network	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Total
Number of stories	27	30	27	47	131
Total time in minutes	48:30	48:31	56:11	1h 29m 2s	4h 2m
Average minutes per story	1:47	1:37	2:05	1:54	1:50
Distribution by seconds	n (%)	n (%)	N (%)	n (%)	n (%)
< 30 seconds	3 (11)	6 (20)	4 (15)	18 (38)	31 (24)
30–59 seconds	4 (15)	8 (27)	4 (15)	3 (6)	19 (14)
60-119 seconds	8 (30)	1 (3)	1 (4)	2 (4)	12 (9)
120-179 seconds	8 (30)	11 (37)	14 (52)	11 (23)	44 (34)
180+ seconds	4 (15)	4 (13)	4 (15)	13 (28)	25 (19)

were about immigration (30 stories), crime (27 stories) and human interest (15 stories). When the issues of election politics (12 stories) and celebrities (11 stories) were added, close to 73 percent of all stories about Latinos fell within these five topics.

While immigration and crime continued to make up a central theme of the networks' news coverage of Latinos, several positive trends emerged in 2003.

The number of Latino human-interest stories increased from 3 in 2002 to 15 in 2003. The war in Iraq dominated news coverage in 2003, including several stories that profiled the dedication and service of Latino soldiers. A number of these stories featured Latino soldiers who received their U.S. citizenship posthumously.

Latino stories about celebrities as well as politics also increased from four to 11 stories and eight to 12 stories, respectively. The growing importance of the Latino vote and the California recall election featuring the candidacy of Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante made up the majority of stories about Latinos and politics, while the death of Latin music legend Celia Cruz made up most of the celebrity stories.

While the overall number of crime stories about Latinos declined from 47 stories (39 percent) in 2002 to 27 stories (21 percent) in 2003, crime and immigration stories still made up the central theme for 44 percent of Latino stories. Crime stories declined for every network except for CNN. The majority of crime stories portrayed Latinos as the victims of crime as opposed to perpetrators of crime, in contrast to 2002.

For example, on Jan. 17, 2003, CNN aired a story about a Hispanic mother, Elena Colón, whose child was killed while under the care of the New Jersey child welfare system. Although the person accused of killing her child was also Hispanic, the story was told from Colón's perspective and focused on the failure of the system to protect her child.

In contrast, a significant portion of stories involving Latinos and crime in 2002 focused on the kidnapping and death of five-year-old Samantha Runion. In those stories, Alejandro Avila was a central figure. He was arrested and charged with the kidnapping and murder of Runion.

Coverage of immigration increased from 11 stories (9 percent) in 2002 to 30 stories (23 percent) in 2003. Many immigration stories profiled Latino immigrants putting their lives at risk in pursuit of a better life in the United States.

For example, NBC aired a story on May 15,

2003 about the deaths of close to 20 undocumented immigrants who suffocated after being locked and abandoned in a truck in Victoria, Texas. A source in the story stated: "Every Hispanic has a dream to have a better life." By using this quote, the network frames this story as an example of the risks immigrants are willing to take in search of the "American dream."

On a separate note, NAHJ learned days prior to the release of this report that the networks aired two 30 second stories about former POW Shoshana Johnson. NAHJ did not include stories about Johnson, who is Panamanian American, because the networks did not identify her as Hispanic. She was identified as the first African American woman POW in the nation's history.

The coverage of Shoshanna Johnson serves as an example of why the networks must do a better job to understand the complexities in covering the Latino community. Latinos are an ethnic group and can be of any race.

In summary, the increase in the number of stories about human interest and politics was a positive trend in 2003. These stories focused on the contributions Latinos made to society and to the political landscape. Another positive trend was the overall decline in the number of crime stories about Latinos. However, despite these positive trends, Latinos remain almost invisible on the evening newscasts on a daily basis. Out of nearly 350 news stories the networks aired each week, a little more than two stories were about Latinos. In addition, the presence of Latinos was slightly better in non-Latino-related stories because of the number of times that New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, Gen. Ricardo Sanchez and California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante were quoted in news stories.

Coverage Totals by Networks

Overall, CNN aired 47 stories about Latinos in 2003 – the most of any network – with immigration (12 stories) and crime (17 stories) accounting for more than 60 percent of that total (see table 2).

CBS aired the second highest number of stories with 30 stories. Immigration was the most common topic covered by the network with seven stories (23 percent of the network's coverage) followed by five stories on human interest and four about crime.

NBC and ABC both aired 27 stories. For the first time, human interest was the most frequent topic about Latinos covered by a network. NBC aired five human interest stories (18.5 percent of

the network's coverage of Latinos) followed by four stories on immigration, crime and election/politics.

Immigration was the topic most covered by

ABC with seven stories, representing slightly more than a quarter of its coverage of Latinos, followed by four health/medical/science stories and three stories about foreign government.

Table 2.
Distribution of number and (percentage) of exclusively Latino stories by topic

Topics	Network	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Total
Business/Economy		-	2 (6.7)	-	-	2 (1.5)
Calamities (disasters)		1 (3.7)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.7)	-	3 (2.3)
Celebrity/Entertainment		2 (7.4)	3 (10.0)	3 (11.1)	3 (6.4)	11 (8.3)
Crime		2 (7.4)	4 (13.3)	4 (14.8)	17 (36.2)	27 (20.6)
Education		1 (3.7)	-	-	-	1 (.8)
Election/Politics		2 (7.4)	3 (10.0)	4 (14.8)	3 (6.4)	12 (9.2)
Government: Domestic		2 (7.4)	1 (3.3)	2 (7.4)	2 (4.3)	7 (5.3)
Government: Foreign		3 (11.1)	1 (3.3)	-	2 (4.3)	6 (4.6)
Health/Medical/Science		4 (14.8)	-	1 (3.7)	2 (4.3)	7 (5.3)
Homeland Security		-	-	1 (3.7)	1 (2.1)	2 (1.5)
Human Interest		2 (7.4)	5 (16.7)	5 (18.5)	3 (6.4)	15 (11.2)
Immigration		7 (25.9)	7 (23.3)	4 (14.8)	12 (26.0)	30 (22.9)
Sports		1 (3.7)	3 (10.0)	2 (7.4)	2 (4.3)	8 (6.1)
Total		27 (20)	30 (23)	27 (21)	47 (36)	131

Number of Minutes

Overall, more than 50 percent of the 4 hours and 2 minutes of air time devoted to Latino stories was on the topics of crime, immigration, and human interest (see table 4). Crime received the greatest amount of air time (close to 46 min. and 29 sec.), followed by immigration (45 min. and 21 sec.) and human interest (41 minutes).

CNN dedicated more than 50 percent of its coverage of Latinos to the topics of crime and immigration while CBS devoted close to half of its air time to human interest and immigration.

NBC and ABC each devoted more time to several story topics. NBC dedicated 22 percent of its air time to human interest stories while immigration made up 21 percent of the air time ABC dedicated to Latino stories.

Table 3.
The number (and percentage) of Latino stories by network over the past three years.

	2003	2002	2001
ABC	27 (20.6)	35 (29.2)	31 (31.3)
CBS	30 (22.9)	30 (25.0)	22 (22.2)
NBC	27 (20.6)	26 (21.6)	24 (24.2)
CNN	47 (35.9)	29 (24.2)	22 (22.2)
Total	131	120	99
Percent of number of Latino stories	0.82	0.75	0.62
Percent of time of Latino stories	0.73	0.78	0.55

Table 4.
Number of minutes and (average number of minutes) of exclusively Latino stories by topic

Topics	Networks	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Total
Business/Economy		-	5:40 (2:50)	-	-	5:40 (2:50)
Calamities (disasters)		2:10 (2:10)	:30 (:30)	2:30 (2:30)	-	5:10 (1:43)
Celebrity/Entertainment		2:20 (1:10)	1:10 (:23)	3:30 (1:10)	6:40 (2:13)	13:40 (1:15)
Crime		3:00 (1:30)	8:40 (2:10)	9:00 (2:15)	24:49 (1:28)	45:29 (1:41)
Education		4:10 (4:10)	-	-	-	4:10 (4:10)
Election/Politics		6:20 (3:10)	7:21 (2:27)	8:00 (2:00)	7:50 (2:37)	29:31 (2:28)
Government: Domestic		2:30 (1:15)	:20 (:20)	5:00 (2:30)	4:40 (2:20)	12:30 (1:47)
Government: Foreign		5:50 (1:57)	:20 (:20)	-	5:10 (2:35)	11:20 (1:53)
Health/Medical/Science		5:20 (1:20)	-	2:10 (2:10)	2:20 (1:10)	9:50 (1:24)
Homeland Security		-	-	6:29 (6:29)	4:20 (4:20)	10:49 (5:25)
Human Interest		4:40 (2:20)	12:30 (2:30)	12:52 (2:34)	10:56 (3:39)	40:58 (2:44)
Immigration		10:00 (1:26)	10:20 (1:29)	3:30 (:53)	21:31 (1:48)	45:21 (1:31)
Sports		2:10 (2:10)	1:40 (:33)	3:10 (1:35)	:46 (:23)	7:46 (:58)
Totals		48:30 (1:47)	48:31 (1:33)	56:11 (2:05)	89:02 (1:54)	4:02:14 (1:50)

Reporters

Of the 131 stories about Latinos that aired in 2003, Latino reporters presented only nine stories. In addition, not a single Latino was anchoring the evening newscasts during the broadcast of a Latino-related story. The voices and/or faces of those Latino reporters accounted for 21 minutes³ of the 4 hours and 2 minutes of air time devoted to Latino stories.

NAHJ believes the lack of diversity in news coverage about Latinos results from the lack of Latino journalists working at the networks. While we are not stating that Latino reporters should cover only stories about Latinos, we are stating that the networks will continue to fail to adequately cover the Latino community unless they diversify their staffs.

Table 5.
Latino reporters in Latino-related stories by network, topic, date, minutes and location of report

Reporter	Network	Topic	Date	Minutes	Location
Taina Hernández	ABC	Operation of Guatemalan Twins	4/27	1:10	Guatemala City
John Quiñones	ABC	Education/Migrant Farm Workers	6/8	4:10	Austin, TX
Jim Acosta	CBS	Hispanic/Poll/Politics	8/2	2:56	NY/CT
Jim Avila	NBC	Chicago Shooting	8/28	2:30	Chicago
Thelma Gutierrez	CNN	Operation of Guatemalan twins	6/7	2:00	Los Angeles
Thelma Gutierrez	CNN	Democrats Seek Latino Votes	6/28	0:30	Phoenix
Maria Hinojosa	CNN	Death of Celia Cruz	7/16	2:50	NYC
Ed Lavandera	CNN	Cuban Musician's Defection	6/11	2:10	Dallas
Miguel Marquez	CNN	Latino family visit to Iraq	11/29	2:10	Los Angeles

Number of Sources

Of the 131 stories that aired in 2003, 56 stories, or 43 percent, did not cite a single source (see table 6). For CNN, 57 percent of their stories did not include a source, the most of any network. Many stories about Latinos did not include sources because several were less than 30 seconds long.

NAHJ is troubled about the absence of news sources for a significant portion of stories about Latinos. This indicates that Latino stories failed to provide various perspectives. This concerns NAHJ because it is vital for news organizations to provide

a variety of perspectives in news stories, allowing their audience to better understand the complexity of the issues they cover.

The Presence of Latinos on Camera

Of the 131 stories about Latinos, 76 stories, or 58 percent, did not feature an interview with a Latino. Of the 56 stories that featured an interview with a Latino, a total of 105 Latinos were interviewed.

NAHJ is disturbed that the majority of stories about Latinos failed to include a Latino as a news source.

Table 6.
Number of stories (and selected percentages) for each network by number of sources used for news exclusively about Latinos

No. of sources	Network				
	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Totals
none	9 (33%)	12 (40%)	8 (30%)	27 (57%)	56 (43%)
1	2	-	2	2	6
2	7	2	6	8	23
3	4	8	3	6	21
4 or more	5 (19%)	8 (27%)	8 (30%)	4 (9%)	25 (20%)
Total	27	30	27	47	131

Balance of Views

Of the 131 stories about Latinos that aired in 2003, 87 stories, or 66 percent, (see table 7) did not contain a point of view (that was applicable). These stories either had sources that did not align themselves with a particular point of view or were news briefs that did not include any sources.

Meanwhile, the sources in 34 stories, or 26 percent, expressed a viewpoint that was of one opinion or mostly of one opinion. In effect, more than 92 percent of stories about Latinos either expressed a point of view from mainly one

perspective or did not express a perspective at all.

Only 8 percent of the stories about Latinos contained a mixture of opinions. Once again, the report reveals a troublesome trend. Stories about Latinos did not present various perspectives.

News stories that cite a mixture of opinions or viewpoints allow the audience to better understand the complexity of issues that exist in our society. This is why NAHJ is disturbed by the lack of opinions that exist in the vast majority of news stories about Latinos.

Table 7.
Number of stories (and selected percentages) for each network by balance of views of the sources used for news exclusively about Latinos

Balance of views	Network				
	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Totals
All of one opinion	6	8	4	8	26 (19.8)
Mostly one opinion	3	3	1	1	8 (6.1)
Mix of opinions (none >75%)	2	1	5	2	10 (7.6)
Not applicable	16	18	17	36	8 (66.4)
Total	27	30	27	47	131

PART 2. Detailed Assessments of Selected Stories About Latinos

The first part of the *Network Brownout Report* displays the quantitative results of this year's report. The second part of the study features further analysis of a significant sample of the 131 Latino-related stories that appeared on the network evening news in 2003.

Locations

NAHJ purposely selected 45 stories for further analysis. These stories were selected because they were lengthier and provided more in-depth coverage of Latinos or Latino-related issues.

Of the 45 stories that NAHJ examined, California was the primary location for close to 40 percent (18 stories) of the news coverage. California was the only state that showed Latinos involved in the political process (except for one story that originated from Florida).

The second most common location was Florida (7 stories), followed by Texas and the District of Columbia (4 stories each). In Florida, almost half of the stories were about immigration, whereas most of the Texas stories involved crime. In Washington, D.C., half of the stories dealt with government.

Because of the kidnapping and murder of a female college student in Grand Forks, North Dakota, three long stories, all about crime, originated from that city.

The remaining stories had varied topics and locations but no particular pattern.

NAHJ is concerned that the networks will fail to capture the range of viewpoints that exist in the Latino community if Latino stories are covered primarily from a few states with the largest Latino populations.

Critical Viewing of Selected Stories

The following section is a critical reading of the 45 news stories about Latinos that NAHJ selected for more detailed analysis. In this section, we discuss several trends we witnessed from viewing these stories.

Latinos and Crime Stories

Crime is one of the issues that has come to define network news coverage of Latinos. While

the number of stories about Latinos and crime declined, it was still the second most covered topic about Latinos in 2003.

In contrast to 2002, the number of stories that featured Latinos as victims of crime increased. For example, one CNN story featured how the New Jersey state government failed to protect a Latino child who was killed in foster care. The story is told through the perspective of the mother.

In another incident, the deaths of undocumented immigrants who suffocated in a locked truck in Victoria, Texas, after being abandoned by their "coyote" was a major news story for the networks.

However, several stories still portrayed Latinos as perpetrators of crimes involving kidnapping and murder. For example, in North Dakota, the arrest of Alfonso Rodriguez for allegedly killing missing college student Dru Sjodin was covered by all the networks.

Nevertheless, Latinos continued to be overrepresented in this particular news category in lieu of their presence in a greater variety of stories that accurately reflect the contributions of Latinos to society. A non-critically-minded news viewer could interpret the overrepresentation of Latino crime stories as an accurate reflection of the violence that exists within the Latino community.

Latinos and Immigration Stories

Immigration is another issue that has come to define news coverage of Latinos. In previous years, immigrants were often portrayed as a threat or a burden to our society. But in 2003, most of the stories focused on the victimization of Latino immigrants who risked everything or died illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in pursuit of a better life.

For one story, CNN traveled with the U.S. Border Patrol's search, trauma and rescue team along the Arizona-Mexico border's "corridor of death." The story featured scenes of undocumented immigrants being rescued by the border patrol in the Arizona desert. The story also showed the disturbing and heartbreaking image of the corpse of an undocumented immigrant who died clutching a cactus in an attempt to find shade and protection from the sun.

Several shorter stories featured the desperate attempt of Cubans trying to elude the U.S. Coast Guard and make it to the Florida shores, where they will receive political asylum once they step foot on “dry land.”

However, immigration stories still failed to focus on the contributions of Latino immigrants to U.S. society and their communities. In addition, little or no attention is given to the efforts of various groups, including immigration advocacy organizations, to resolve the challenges that exist on both sides of the border.

Latino Soldiers: Patriots and Victims

A new topic in coverage of Latinos in 2003 was the portrayal of the Latino soldier, including several stories profiling the heroism of soldiers who died or were wounded in Iraq.

For instance, several stories profiled Marine Lance Cpl. José Gutiérrez who became a citizen posthumously after being one of the first soldiers to die in combat in Iraq.

Another story featured Luis Calderón, a soldier in Iraq who was injured in a tank accident that left him a quadriplegic. The story highlighted and noted that the heroism of soldiers such as Calderón often go unheralded. It also focused on Calderón’s rehabilitation in a hospital with the help and support of his family.

The Role of Latinos in Politics

Several stories about Latinos in politics featured coverage of the referendum to recall California Gov. Gray Davis, including stories about the gubernatorial candidacy of the state’s Mexican American Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante. In addition, a few stories examined the impact and growing influence of the Latino vote. These stories positively portrayed Latinos as a growing political force that can impact the outcome of an election.

For example, various stories examined the impact of Arnold Schwarzenegger’s support of an anti-immigrant ballot initiative in the mid-1990s (Prop. 187). The stories focused on whether Latinos could vote for a candidate who supported an initiative widely denounced by the Latino community.

A handful of stories attempted to examine the impact of the growing Latino community on the nation’s economic and political landscape following the U.S. Census Bureau’s announcement that Latinos had become the country’s

largest minority group.

Even so, these stories failed to explore the complexity of the Latino community or the voting patterns of Latinos. Also, there was no significant follow-up story assessing the role of the Latino vote in the outcome of the recall election and the election of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The American Dream

The pursuit of the “American dream” was a recurring theme underlying many of the stories about Latinos in 2003. This theme was mentioned in several human-interest stories about Latino soldiers as well as stories about immigrants risking everything to migrate to the United States. It was also discussed in stories about how Latinos are changing the country’s economic and political landscape.

For instance, CBS produced a few stories based on a poll the network conducted with *The New York Times* about the Hispanic community. These stories examined the growing political influence of Latino voters. One story profiled how Latinos are demographically and economically changing the face of the South. The story featured several Latino immigrant business owners in Gwinnett County, Georgia, including Verónica Moreno, a tortilla factory owner who hoped to expand her company nationally.

While NAHJ applauds stories that feature the positive contributions that Latinos make to society, too many stories portray Latinos as immigrants living on the fringes of U.S. society and working hard to achieve the “American dream.” These stories, however, never define what the “American dream” is or examine the historical barriers that have prevented many Latinos from joining the ranks of the “American mainstream.”

PART 3. A Sample Week for Comparisons

For the first time ever in the nine year history of the *Network Brownout Report*, NAHJ conducted a content analysis of news stories from a typical five-day work week to further examine the portrayal of Latinos.

It was a challenge selecting a week to examine in 2003 because of the amount of coverage devoted to the war in Iraq. NAHJ, however, selected the week of October 20-24, 2003, because no particular news event dominated coverage.

Overall, homeland security received the greatest news coverage during the week, accounting for 29 percent of all stories, followed by domestic government issues and crime, each making up 13 percent of all stories

However, the content analysis of the week revealed the near absence of Latinos in news coverage. Of the 241 stories that aired during this five-day span, *not a single story was exclusively about Latinos.*

Only one story featured Latinos as central figures even though the story was not about

Latinos. An NBC story profiled the lack of proper medical treatment wounded and sick National Guardsmen and reservists received at Ft. Stewart in Georgia after returning from Iraq. Three Latino soldiers were among six sources featured in the story.

Only three non-Latino-related stories featured Latinos as news sources. Two stories included comments from Gen. Ricardo Sanchez about the war in Iraq. The other featured Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar commenting on the release of a videotape showing the Columbine High School shooters having target practice in the woods weeks before the tragedy.

Latino Reporters/Anchors

Out of 241 stories that NAHJ examined during the week of Oct. 20-24, 2003, six stories were presented by Latino reporters during that time period. In addition, not a single Latino was anchoring the evening newscasts.

Table 8.
Latino reporters presenting news during the sample week of Oct. 20-24, 2003

Reporter	Network	Topic	Date	Minutes	Location
Vince Gonzales	CBS	California fire	10/24	2:34	CA
Jim Avila	NBC	Chicago fire	10/20	2:04	Chicago
Jim Avila	NBC	College Tuition	10/21	2:08	Chicago
Jim Avila	NBC	NASA	10/22	2:14	Houston
Jim Avila	NBC	Chicago fire	10/24	2:21	Chicago
Miguel Marquez	CNN	California fire	10/24	5:48	CA

Number of Sources

NAHJ coded the first segments of the network evening newscasts to estimate how many sources were used in news stories during the week of Oct. 20-24. NAHJ then compared the sampled number of sources used during the week (table 9) to the number of sources used in the 131 stories about Latinos (table 6).

When comparing the findings, it is clear that except for CBS, the networks used fewer sources in stories about Latinos than in non-

Latino related stories. This troubles NAHJ because Latino-related stories featuring fewer sources do not offer a diversity of opinion that allows the public to better understand issues affecting the Latino community. The lack of sources also suggests that stories about Latinos were not covered with the same depth as non-Latino stories.

Overall, 43 percent of Latino stories did not include a source in contrast to 28 percent of non-Latino stories. Most of these stories were

short news segments.

Meanwhile only 20 percent of Latino-related stories had four or more sources compared to 31 percent for non-Latino stories.

CNN had the greatest disparity of any network in the use of sources. Sources were not used for 57 percent of Latino-related stories while that figure was 10 percent for non-Latino stories. In

addition, only 9 percent of Latino stories on CNN used four or more sources compared to 40 percent for non-Latino stories.

Furthermore, a greater percentage of stories about Latinos that aired on NBC did not include a source. In contrast, CBS used four or more sources in a greater percentage of Latino stories than for non-Latino related stories.

Table 9.

Number of stories (and selected percentages) for each network by number of sources used during on the first segment of the newscasts (first five to 10 minutes) for selected sample week of October 20-24, 2003

No. of sources	Network				
	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Totals
none	9 (32%)	13 (41%)	6 (22%)	2 (10%)	30 (28%)
1	3	4	5	2	14
2	4	5	2	5	16
3	3	5	3	3	14
4 or more	9 (32%)	5 (16%)	11 (41%)	8 (40%)	33 (31%)
Total	28	32	27	20	107

Balance of Views

NAHJ compared the balance of views from the week of Oct. 20-24 (see table 10) to the 131 Latino-related stories (see table 7). NAHJ found that overall, 19 percent of non-Latino stories had a mixture of opinions compared to 8 percent for Latino-related stories.

Once again, NAHJ is concerned that

non-Latino stories contain a greater variety of opinion than Latino stories. It is critical that news stories contain a mixture of opinion that allows the audience to understand the various perspectives that exist in issues affecting the Latino community. The lack of various perspectives also suggests that stories about Latinos received less comprehensive coverage.

Table 10.

Number of stories (and selected times) for each network by balance of views of the sources used for news on the first segment of the newscasts (first five to 10 minutes) during the week of October 20-24, 2003

Balance of views	Network				
	ABC	CBS	NBC	CNN	Totals
All of one opinion	5	6	8	5	24 (22.4)
Mostly one opinion	3	-	7	4	14 (13.0)
Mix of opinions (none >75%)	7	6	4	3	20 (18.7)
Not applicable	13	20	8	8	49 (45.7)
Total	28	32	27	20	107

PART 4. Other Representations of Latinos in the News

In this final section, we report on the presence of Latinos in news stories that were not exclusively about Latinos. We found that Latinos were underrepresented as sources in non-Latino related stories.

Out of 16,000 stories that were broadcast in 2003, 285 non-Latino related stories, or 1.8 percent, featured one or more Latinos as news sources. More than 40 percent of these stories were about homeland security. Other story topics that featured Latino sources included human interest (7 percent) as well as crime and calamities (almost 7 percent each).

While we applaud and encourage the networks to use Latinos as sources in non-Latino stories, we are still discouraged by how infrequently they appear. If it weren't for three Latinos in high-profile positions, the presence of Latino sources in non-Latino stories would have been even more dismal.

General Ricardo Sanchez was a source in

63 stories, commenting about the war in Iraq while California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante appeared in 25 stories about the California Recall Election. Additionally, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson was a source in 16 stories, discussing such topics as the war in Iraq and U.S.-North Korea relations.

In addition, 47 stories appeared in our research for mentioning Hispanics or Latinos in passing without elaboration. For example, CNN aired a story that paid tribute to several celebrities who had died in 2003, including Latin music legend Celia Cruz.

Finally, NAHJ identified 70 stories that covered issues that directly impact Latinos, but did not centrally involve or were not exclusively about Latinos. For example, stories about affirmative action have a direct impact on Latinos, but many of these stories did not feature a Latino or did not specifically address the impact of affirmative action on Latinos.

Conclusions

Once again, the *Network Brownout Report* found that less than 1 percent of all network news stories that aired on ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC were about Latinos.

Each year, NAHJ is optimistic that the networks will begin to make significant progress in fully integrating the perspectives of Latinos in their news coverage on a daily basis. But once more, the results of the *Network Brownout Report* leaves the association discouraged.

NAHJ believes that the lack of newsroom diversity at the networks is a major reason why there continues to be a virtual absence of coverage of Latinos on the evening news.

NAHJ still does not know how many Latinos work at the news networks. NAHJ has repeatedly called on the news networks to make public the racial and ethnic make-up of their newsrooms. But, so far, the networks have refused our requests.

As an organization of journalists, we are troubled by the network's refusal. NAHJ's mission is to improve the quality of journalism. This will not happen without diversifying our nation's

newsrooms. We believe it is in the public interest for the networks to improve their coverage of the Latino community and to disclose their employment numbers.

This year's *Network Brownout Report* found several trends that continue to disturb us. In addition to the lack of news stories, the total amount of air time devoted to Latino stories remains dismal and Latinos continue to be covered within a narrow framework. As in previous years, immigration and crime still comprised a central theme in the networks' coverage of Latinos.

This is troublesome for several reasons. The lack of network news coverage about Latinos fails to educate the majority of Americans about issues affecting the largest non-white ethnic group in the country as well as the contributions and influence Latinos are having in shaping our society. Instead, Latino stories are seldom featured and when they are covered, just a handful of topics have come to define the U.S. Latino experience, with immigration and crime being the leading themes.

While it is necessary for the networks to cover these issues, it fails to reflect the totality of life for Latinos in the United States.

This year's report, however, noted several positive trends that we applaud. The number of crime stories declined from 2002 to 2003 while the number of human-interest stories increased which helped humanize Latinos and give viewers a better understanding of issues affecting the community.

But once again, the sobering reality was that the 30 million people watching the evening newscasts every night were hard pressed to view stories about Latinos. Out of close to 350 stories that aired on the network evening news each week, a little more than two stories were about Latinos.

This is disturbing because we live in a diverse country. Latinos make up close to 14 percent of the U.S. population and will be 25 percent of the population by 2050. By early

next century, half of the U.S. population will be of Latino origin.

This reality is not reflected on the network evening news. NAHJ is worried about the impact that the near absence of Latinos will have on the majority of U.S. television viewers whose main source of news and information comes from watching television.

Despite the progress that has been made, we still live in a nation that has not resolved the racial and ethnic divisions that exist in our society. The Kerner Commission found in 1968 that the news media contributed to the social unrest that erupted across the nation in the late 1960s because of the lack of diversity in the newsroom and in news coverage.

This is why NAHJ is concerned about the negative consequences that can result from the failure of the news media to reflect the reality of Latino life in the United States.

Methodology

NAHJ used the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives (TNA) to collect and analyze data about news stories to determine the portrayal of Latinos on network news. TNA contains videotapes, indexes and summaries of all the network evening news programs of ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC. The summaries, accessible via the TNA web site (www.tvnews.vanderbilt.edu), provide the following descriptors for each story archived: 1) network and program in which the story aired; 2) date of the news program; 3) running title or topic of the story; 4) name of the anchor or studio correspondent; 5) the city where the story originated; 6) the field correspondent(s) who was/were part of the report; 7) an abstract of the story, including the names and title of any persons interviewed for the story; 8) beginning time, ending time, and duration of the story; and 9) last names of the reporters for the story.

Using the TNA's powerful search capabilities available via the Internet, key words (see below) were used to select stories related to Latinos that were broadcast by the four networks during 2003. All stories were then reviewed for subsequent selection or exclusion for analysis.

To identify the stories related to Latinos and Latino issues, we used some of the words and criteria that appeared in previous studies. However, we also enhanced the process.

With respect to the key words⁴ for the search of the TNA, we proceeded as follows:

- 1) Searches for stories containing the general and most important Latino designations were used. These were "Latino," "Latin-Americans," "Hispanic," and "Hispanic-Americans." The vast majority of the stories selected for the first phase were obtained from this search. The searches using the next round of key words produced the remaining stories.
- 2) Searches were made using a list of specific Latino subgroups. Examples were "Cuban," "Cuban American," "Puerto Ricans," "Colombian," "Ecuadorians," "Chileans," etc.
- 3) Searches were also made of the national countries of origin of Latino groups. Examples were "Puerto Rico," "Mexico," "Cuba," etc.

- 4) A comprehensive list of keywords such as “bilingual education,” “crime,” “undocumented laborers,” and “border” was prepared. This list consisted of more than 100 descriptors associated with Latino society in the United States, Latino surnames, etc.
- 5) Finally, a search was made of the top 100 Hispanic last names. These last names were from a 1996 U.S. Census Bureau working paper called: *Building A Spanish Surname List for the 1990s: A New Approach to an Old Problem*.

Using these very broad and encompassing words and last names, the search yielded more than 1,000 stories, including the following four descriptors: 1) network and program, 2) date, 3) running title or topic, which contained a live link to the abstract of the story; and 4) beginning and end time and duration of the story. All 1,000+ stories were downloaded from the TNA archives into an excel file.

We then proceeded to the second round of selection based on assessing the TNA's abstracts of each story for two key variables: *Central Involvement of Latinos*, and *Exclusivity*.

Central Involvement of Latinos (CIL) establishes the specific role that Latinos played in the news story, if any. Each of the 1,000+ stories was assigned one of the following codes:

- 1ST Primary newsmaker role: One or more Latinos clearly played a central role in the creation, development or resolution of a news issue being aired.
- 2ND Secondary for relevant specific issues: The topic of the story is pertinent to Latinos and/or a Latino community. However, it is not *explicitly nor primarily* about them.
- 3RD Mainstreaming: Regardless of topic of the story, one or more Latinos (excluding the reporter of the story) appear in medium or close-up shots and speak on camera. The main difference between categories 2 and 3 is that the topic here is not relevant or specific to a Latino or Latino community.
- 4TH Passing: The stories under this category are those that show up in the index search, but Latinos or Latino communities have no bearing as described by either of the previous three categories.

- 5TH None: Story showed up because of key word search only, but not related to U.S. Latinos.

Exclusivity establishes if the story was exclusively about Latinos or Latino-related issues. If such were the case, a code 1 was given for this variable. Stories coded CIL 1 could be coded 1 or 2. However, by default definition, stories coded CIL 2, 3 or 4 could only be coded as 2 in terms of exclusivity. Stories coded 5 for CIL were not coded for exclusivity and were given no further consideration in the analysis.

The coding for CIL and exclusivity was done by two trained NAHJ staff members who agreed on more than 90 percent of the codes given to the stories. Discrepancies for these variables, and for the ones that followed, were discussed with each other and, when necessary, with the principal investigator of the report. Very high inter-coder reliability for all the variables was thus assured for the study.

Upon excluding all the news stories classified as CIL 5, e.g., those about Latin America, Spain and other matters for which the key words were within the abstract yet had no reference to Latinos in the United States, the sample was reduced to 572 stories, all of which were then coded for the topics indicated in tables 1 and 2.

The next step was the selection of the stories in which Latinos were centrally involved and were exclusively about Latinos and Latino-related issues. A total of 131 stories fit those criteria. These 131 stories provided material for the first set of quantitative analysis. A second set of quantitative analysis was done on the stories to assess the use of Latinos as reporters and the number of sources and the balance of views of those sources.

For the qualitative analysis, another smaller subset of stories was purposely selected. This subset consisted of 45 stories that we considered the most prominent in terms of (a) repeated topic such as immigration and crime, (b) length of the stories, and (c) about issues we considered important for the Latino community such as immigration, crime, the death of Latino music legend Celia Cruz and Latino soldiers wounded or killed in the war in Iraq.

Videotapes of these 45 stories were then purchased from the Vanderbilt University Archives. The two NAHJ staff coders and the principal investigator critically viewed the videos to assess other matters related to the portrayals of Latinos in network news during 2003. Among the guiding questions for this part of the analysis were: What are the main character-

istics of the coverage and portrayals? More specifically, what were the characteristics of the roles and social functions of the Latinos selected for the interviews. NAHJ examined whether they had a personal voice in the story and whether the reporters use their voice to substantiate the arguments of the stories, and the overall tone of the stories. We also analyzed where these main stories took place, and the physical settings of the field stories. The systematic observations of these elements allowed us to also assess how similar the images presented during this year were in comparison to the images presented about Latinos in previous years.

The TNA's abstracts were the unit of analysis for the first phase of selection of stories and for the coding of CIL, exclusivity, and topics of the stories. An additional unit of analysis—as well as a source for enhancing the information that was often needed for coding those variables—was the transcript of each story. The transcripts were obtained from the Lexis-Nexis archives, which contain the full text of transcriptions for thousands of broadcast newscasts from major media across the nation, including the news programs studied for this report. Thus, while the individual news story remained as the basic unit of analysis, the source for obtaining the information needed shifted from the running headlines and the abstracts scrutinized from the TNA, to the Lexis-Nexis transcripts.

For the qualitative phase of the study, the

first unit of analysis was again the Lexis-Nexis transcripts, from which we coded the balance and views of the sources. For the additional qualitative assessments, the unit of analysis was the video segment of each story.

To compare the findings regarding the coverage of Latinos to coverage of other matters, the evening news during a sample week of the year 2003 was selected and analyzed. To choose the specific week to be coded, we searched the website of the Tyndall Report (www.tyndallreport.com), which provides data on the distribution of topics in the TV networks' news programs. Because of the heavy emphasis of news coverage on the war in Iraq, the particular week selected—October 20-24, 2003—was the one for which there was the least skew in the amount of time dedicated to any particular topic, including the war. All the newscasts aired from Monday through Friday by the four networks during that week were purchased from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives.

A total of 241 news stories were identified and coded from those tapes. All the news stories were coded for CIL, Latino exclusivity, topic, city of origin of the news event, anchor, and reporter. However, due to time constraints, only the stories presented during the first segment of the newscasts were coded for length of time, sources, views and balance of sources, and for the presence and role played, if any, by Latinos as sources.

Limitations

All efforts were made to find and include the universe of network news stories related to Latinos. That is why NAHJ conducted multiple category searches of the index of Vanderbilt University's Television News Archives. Yet we acknowledge that we may have overlooked Latino stories that were not indexed by using our search criteria. For example, we looked for stories that included the top 100 Spanish surnames as listed by the U.S. Census bureau. There are thousands of other last names we did not search. Likewise, there are many Latinos who do not have Spanish surnames. We may have missed stories about them, too. However, we attempted to capture any of those stories

with other key words.

We also acknowledge the possibility of stories that were not indexed with key words related to Latinos, but were about Latinos, nonetheless. The only way to capture the full universe of Latino-related stories would have been to observe each and every news story that aired in 2003, a task not possible given our time and human resources.

The qualitative analysis was based on the actual viewing of the purposeful sample of 45 of the 131 stories exclusively about Latinos that were longer than a minute long. While we are certain that these stories adequately represent coverage of Latinos, it is possible that we may

have missed some particular trend or characteristics because we did not view all 131 stories.

Finally, future studies should enhance the qualitative assessments of the news stories

about Latinos so as to analyze the metaphors and the frames used in the construction of news about Latinos. The visuals, frames, and other factors of the individual news also merit subsequent analyses.

End Notes

1. Estimates are based on a conservative calculation of approximately 9 stories per each half-hour newscast. The actual number of stories is most probably larger, possibly 12 stories per half-hour newscast for a total of more than 20,000 stories. Based on the estimate of 20,000 stories, the percentage of stories about Latinos and Latino issues is much lower, i.e., only 0.65 percent.
2. Based on an estimate of 21 minutes of news per half-hour program of the three broadcast networks and 42 minutes of news for CNN's hour-long program. In previous reports, these time estimates were based on 24 minutes of news per half-hour of broadcast. The average time of actual news declined to 21 minutes.
3. As with most news stories with field reports, the reporter participates in only part of the story. For example, the 5:50 minute CBS story, which was presented from two cities, showed reporter Jim Acosta in only one of those settings.
4. For a full list of the key words used in the TNA search, contact NAHJ.

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(202) 662-7145 • FAX (202) 662-7144

Web: www.nahj.org • E-mail: nahj@nahj.org