

The President on Spanish-Language Television News*

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Objectives. Different audience demographics and preferences should produce significant descriptive differences in the content of presidential news, with *Noticiero Telemundo* (Telemundo) newscasts offering more treatment of presidential news concerning issues pertinent to Latinos than *NBC Nightly News* (NBC). In addition, presidents can influence Spanish-language news by targeting policy issues and locations most relevant to Latinos. *Methods.* We offer a basic descriptive comparison of news features and also use probit methodology to predict the conditions that contribute to Spanish-language presidential news coverage over 85 days in early 2011. *Results.* Although Telemundo and NBC devote a similar amount of coverage to the president, Telemundo appeals to its Latino audience by reporting on issues relevant to Latinos. In addition, presidents increase the likelihood of Spanish-language news coverage by visiting border states. *Conclusions.* Presidential influence of the news extends to Spanish-language television, even though Spanish-language news covers different topics in comparison with English-language news coverage.

On February 21, 2008, at the University of Texas at Austin, Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton debated to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee. The debate was significant not only because the race for the 2008 Democratic nomination was fiercely competitive,¹ but also because it was the first presidential primary debate to be broadcast on Univision, a Spanish-language television station. This broadcast confirmed two important developments in American politics. First, it provided those who prefer Spanish-language media access to an important electoral event. Second, it confirmed the growing relevance of Spanish-language media coverage to presidential and American politics. Subsequently, Univision also broadcast the three general election debates between Senators Barack Obama and John McCain and

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¹According to the *New York Times*, Obama received 2,158.5 primary delegates and Clinton received 1920.0 (<http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/delegates/index.html>).

Telefuturo broadcast the vice presidential debate between Senator Joe Biden and Governor Sarah Palin. *Noticiero Telemundo* (Telemundo) sponsored its first presidential debate in December 2011. As president, Barack Obama has delivered numerous addresses on national television covered in Spanish, on Univision and Telemundo.²

Despite recent and growing participation of Spanish-language news stations in national American politics, we know very little about Spanish-language television news and how it compares with English-language news. For this reason, Federico A. Subervi-Vélez (2008a:1) has pleaded for additional research on Spanish-language media, especially as it pertains to presidential elections, and with good reason. Media play a strong informational and socialization role, especially among those who are not politically involved (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). It is possible that Spanish-language media effects, found to be substantial in recent research (Kerevel, 2011), are just as or more pronounced than English-language media effects given the relatively lower political involvement of Latinos than others in American politics.³

Such effects are not only likely for news coverage of electoral politics, but also for the everyday news coverage of the president of the United States, the focus of this study. Presidents engage in a permanent campaign for public support. And despite their difficulties moving public opinion with their speeches (Edwards, 2003), presidential speeches tend to influence presidential news coverage (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2011). Given the importance of a larger Latino population to American politics, the potential benefits to presidents who reach out to Spanish-language media could be significant. The costs to ignoring audiences of Spanish-language media may also be great.

The purpose of this article is to address whether Spanish-language news covers the president, how it differs from English-language news coverage, and under what conditions the president is likely to receive news coverage. We content analyzed Spanish- and English-language television news broadcasts, collected data on the amount and duration of stories, policy topics, and sources attributed on *Telemundo Noticiero*—Telemundo's national daily news broadcast—for 85 days of news coverage during the spring of 2011, and matched these days with corresponding *NBC Nightly News* (NBC) transcripts. We demonstrate that although limited news production resources produce a similar number and length of news stories, the topics covered by the networks differ considerably. We also present evidence that presidents can influence Spanish-language news by visiting locations and speaking about issues most pertinent to a Latino audience.

This article contributes in four ways to the small but growing literature that analyzes Spanish-language media in American politics. First, we target the American presidency given its primacy in English news (Cohen, 2010;

²Alas, these were not broadcast live, but were tape-delayed.

³The potential differences are significant, as only 49.9 percent (voter-eligible population) of Hispanics voted in the 2008 presidential election compared with 66.1% of whites and 64.9% of blacks in 2008.

Kumar, 2007) and to see how Spanish-language news covers presidents given Latinos' growing relevance in American politics. Second, we do not look at electoral campaigns that comprise the bulk of the existing literature, but focus instead on governance. As Arnold (2004:5–7) notes, news coverage of day-to-day politics and governance encourages greater political accountability and is the primary means by which citizens learn about politics and public policy. Third, we study television and not radio or newspapers in response to recent calls for a comparative examination of Spanish and English television news coverage (Branton and Dunaway, 2008). Latino preferences also justify a study of television. Although it is true that Latinos also consume television news in English, they prefer television news broadcast in Spanish. According to the 2006 Latino National Survey, 62.5 percent of Latinos watch television news everyday (Fraga et al., 2012:Q. A1).⁴ Moreover, 45 percent of Latinos rely more heavily on Spanish- than English-language news sources, with only 30 percent preferring English- to Spanish-language news sources (Q. A4).⁵ Therefore, studying Spanish-language television news helps us target the news preferences of most Latinos.⁶ Finally, because studying Latino politics separately from American politics is incomplete (Fraga et al., 2006), our comparative study with English-language news appropriately places Spanish-language media in this broad context.

Spanish-Language News in the Literature

Spanish-language media are important to Latino voters in political campaigns. Not only is Spanish-language radio vital to political participation by Spanish-speaking citizens in Seattle (Nielsen, 2009), radio advertisements also increase mobilization of Latino voters in congressional elections (Panagopoulos and Green, 2011). Subervi-Vélez's (2008b) research on Spanish-language newspaper coverage of the 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential elections shows that, especially in earlier elections, daily Spanish-language newspapers covered campaigns with a partisan slant and with wide variation in the amount and type of coverage. Moreover, although each newspaper offered an adequate amount of campaign coverage, none typically made substantive connections to issues relevant to Latinos. This contrasts with Branton and Dunaway (2008),

⁴How frequently would you say you watch television news? Would it be daily, most days, only once or twice a week, or almost never?

⁵For information about public affairs and politics, would you say you rely more heavily on Spanish-language television, radio, and newspapers, or on English-language TV, radio, and newspapers?

⁶There is an important distinction between Latinos and Latino citizens. Presidents hope to target Latino citizens and given that there are a smaller percentage of Latino citizens who watch Spanish-language television news, the audience that the president is really reaching—for the benefit of his electoral and policy goals—is smaller than this. Concerning responses to the question written in footnote 4, for example, 24 percent of Latino citizens rely more heavily on Spanish-language media. The percentage is 72 when asked of Latino noncitizens. Still, knowing the preferences of Latinos regardless of citizenship is vital to explaining what types of stories will be on the news.

who document, outside of a campaign context, how Spanish-language newspapers offer more stories, and more positive stories, on immigration than English-language newspapers.

Much research on broadcast television reveals considerable similarities between Spanish- and English-language news coverage of presidential campaigns, with only few differences across two major Spanish-language news channels. Primarily, Spanish-language news broadcasts, like mainstream English-language media, focused predominately on horse race coverage in the 2000 (Alexandre and Reh binder, 2008) and 2004 (Hale, Olsen, and Fowler, 2008) presidential election campaigns, and the 2008 Democratic presidential primary (Vigon, 2010). An important study of the 1988 presidential election campaign confirms no significant differences between Spanish-language newscasts, as both Telemundo and Univision also covered the horse race more than policy issues (Constantakis-Valdes, 2008).

The similarities between English- and Spanish-language newscasts appear to be driven by four primary factors. First, Washington, DC, is the primary source of news for both media. Second, available sources for news are similar. Much like English-speaking reporters, Spanish-speaking journalists also rely on a set of similar news services—CNN, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the news wires—to generate their own reports (Rodriguez, 1999:92). Third, media indexing is as prominent in Spanish- as in English-language broadcasts. This promotes similarities with English-language news on coverage of crime, healthcare, and other policy areas (Vigon, 2010). Fourth, television newscasts, unlike newspapers, are constrained by a fixed broadcast time, which should produce a similar level of detail and focus across television news stories.

There are differences in coverage, nevertheless, which are explained by Spanish-language media's "dual orientation." Unsurprisingly, Spanish-language television news includes Latino experts in a story and references the Latino community (Subervi-Vélez, 1999). Moreover, Spanish-language television often has elements of both assimilation (encouraging the Latino audience to adapt to broader American society) and pluralism (encouraging diversity and uniqueness of Latino culture and identity) (Subervi-Vélez, 1999). Unlike other immigrant populations, Latinos tend to want to assimilate into U.S. politics and society while they maintain clear connections to their country of origin. This is facilitated by the power of Spanish-language media (see Jones-Correa, 1998). Indeed, Rodriguez (1999:85) remarks that "Latino-oriented journalists embrace these dominant [American] values, including US ethnocentrism, albeit with a Latino ethnoracial context." If journalists embrace assimilation, then this should also pervade the types of stories covered on Spanish-language news.

In addition, both Telemundo and Univision offer a substantial percentage of Latino perspectives in their news coverage, with Univision significantly more likely to have offered a Latino perspective in its news coverage of the 2004 presidential election campaign (Hale, Olsen, and Fowler, 2008:188). Just as both English- and Spanish-speaking reporters rely on similar news services,

Spanish-speaking journalists also use news services from Mexico and *CNN en Español*, which influences the issues covered and sources referenced. Another significant difference is the locus of stories. Although 80 percent of ABC News' national broadcast covers U.S. news, Spanish-language news broadcasts 43 percent of its stories about the United States (Rodriguez, 1999:94).

Along with Mathews's (2008) glimpse at local Spanish-language news coverage, other studies appear to suggest that Spanish-language news is much more detailed and politically relevant than its English-speaking counterpart. One study shows that local Spanish-language news broadcasts are more substantive, with significantly more coverage of foreign affairs (Fowler, Hale, and Olsen, 2009). In contrast, Hale, Olsen, and Fowler (2009) found that English-language news broadcasts offered significantly more coverage of the 2004 election at both the network and local broadcast television levels. Overall, however, there are few if any studies on everyday Spanish-language news coverage that are not issue specific (see Branton and Dunaway, 2008; Subervi-Vélez, 1999), and none that we know of that examines news coverage of the president. If it is true that the audience for Spanish-language news values more substantive news coverage, then we should witness this in our comparison of Spanish- and English-language news coverage of the American presidency.

Theory

We build our expectations for the content of Spanish-language news coverage on a simple and well-accepted premise of news production: it is a business. That is, news broadcasts will appeal to their viewers because a larger audience means larger profits (see Compaine, 1980; Hamilton, 2004; Sigal, 1973). Audience demand for news drives news content, and shows with different audiences should differ in terms of their substance and topics. Thus, differences in audience preferences should generate coverage differences, such that Spanish-language news stories should have a larger percentage of Latino-oriented policies supplemented by a significant percentage of Latino sources. In addition to describing differences between English- and Spanish-language media coverage of the presidency, we examine whether presidents can increase the likelihood of Spanish-language news coverage by speaking about issues pertinent to a Latino audience and visiting border states and Latin American countries.

Audience Preferences

It goes without saying that the American president is newsworthy to the English-speaking audience. The president has been and continues to be the single-most covered individual in American politics (Gans, 1979:9; Graber,

2006). This is in no small part a response to audience demand for presidential news, and the public's recognition that the president is an important, if not the central, figure in American politics (see Hamilton, 2004). Thus, we expect substantial coverage of the president on English-language news broadcasts for the 85 days in our sample.

Just as audience demand drives television broadcasts in English, it also affects Spanish-language programming (Rodriguez, 1999). For example, a growing Hispanic population in the United States correlates highly with increased programming options and revenue on Spanish-language television (Coffey, 2008). Yet, Spanish-language audience demand for presidential news is less clear. There are few polling organizations that target Latino voters or ask about news preferences. Even the Latino National Survey, which asks a few media usage questions, does not ask about preferences for types of news stories or stories on government officials. Therefore, we cannot measure directly whether Spanish-language audiences also prefer news on the president.

Indirectly, we can gauge whether Spanish-language news broadcasts reflect audience interest in the American president by answering two questions. First, do Spanish-language channels engage in assimilation or a pluralistic presentation of their programming? If pluralistic, we would expect less news about the United States and more about Latin America. The reverse should be true if Spanish-language news engages more in assimilation, which entails offering news that is of similar interest to viewers of both English- and Spanish-language media. According to Dávila (2008), Telemundo tends to assimilate Latinos into the political and social culture of the United States. If true, then we should find substantial coverage of the president on Spanish-language news broadcasts for the days in our sample, which provides indirect evidence that viewers of Spanish-language news prefer coverage of the American president. Second, does Spanish-language news cover presidential election campaigns? Previous research shows that indeed it does, which provides additional, indirect evidence that consumers of Spanish-language news audiences are interested in the president, an interest that could carry over into daily coverage of the American presidency.

Even if both media cover the president, there should also be two primary differences between English- and Spanish-language news coverage. First, English- and Spanish-speaking journalists rely on different sources from different locations. Rodriguez (1999) noted, for example, that despite some similarities in news sources and story location, Latino journalists tend to search for news outside of the United States and use news wires from Latin America. Journalists who rely on news wires from Latin America are more likely to include Spanish-speaking sources in their stories. Spanish-speaking viewers may also be more likely to identify with Latino sources on the news broadcasts, perhaps because, given a shared language, they are more likely to view these individuals as credible. Credibility is important to attracting viewers to a news broadcast (Arpan, 2009). To provide a credible Latino perspective in a story, therefore, Spanish-language news broadcasts are more likely to interview individuals

with a Latino surname. This, in turn, *should lead to a greater number of Latino sources in Spanish-language news when compared with English-language news broadcasts.*

Second, audience preferences should affect the topical content of news stories. Some issues, such as immigration reform, are more salient to Spanish- than English-language news audiences (Branton and Dunaway, 2008; Rodriguez, 1999). The drug war may also be more relevant to Spanish-speaking news audiences given that it is more relevant to border states and their larger Latino populations. In the interest of appealing to their audience, Spanish-language news broadcasts should cover policies that are of particular interest to Latinos. For these reasons, *Spanish-language media should emphasize different policy areas on their news broadcasts than English-language news broadcasts.*

Differences aside, English- and Spanish-language broadcasts should be quantitatively similar due to limited resources and the costs to producing news. These resources—such as the fixed time for a broadcast, the limited number of reporters available to cover a story, and the effort it takes to produce a news broadcast—are constrained similarly across television media. Moreover, national news broadcasts tend to provide an overview of a day's events, which necessarily limits the amount of detail in any single story. These parallel constraints should produce a similar number of stories per broadcast and story length, just as research has shown similarities in the number and length of stories covering presidential election campaigns. In short, we hypothesize *that English- and Spanish-language news will be similar both in terms of the number of stories per broadcast and the length of these stories.*

Presidential News Influence

Presidents engage in a permanent campaign to generate public support. To reach the public, presidents deliver hundreds of speeches annually, and given limited direct access to the public, attempt to manage news coverage to influence public opinion (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2011). According to Cohen (2010, 82), presidents attempt to affect news coverage by reducing the cost to producing news or increasing demand for it. The White House can lower costs to news production by providing reporters with access to the president's words, making it easier for reporters to cover the president. Presidents increase demand for news about their administrations by speaking about issues that are salient to viewing audiences. Doing either should increase the profitability of a presidential news story and, therefore, the likelihood of news coverage. Presidents appear to be particularly successful generating news coverage of their appeals by "going local" and targeting local news audiences throughout the nation. A national address should also stimulate demand and generate news coverage (Kernell, 1997; Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008),

even though evidence of press conference influence is mixed (Cohen, 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha, 2013).⁷

Although scholars have only examined presidential influence over English-language media (Cohen, 2010; Kumar, 2007), we find no reason to think that presidents would not also attempt to influence Spanish-language news given the increasing relevance of Latinos to American politics. If they do, then presidents will engage in public activities that reduce the cost of Spanish-language news production, increase audience demand for presidential news in Spanish, or a combination of both.⁸ Having already established that Spanish-language news content is a function of profit and audience preferences, the president will hold interviews with Spanish journalists and visit Latin American countries and border states to reduce the cost to producing news for Spanish-language media, and presidents will talk about issues that are relevant to Spanish-speaking audiences to increase demand for presidential news.

Recent presidents have done both, and President Obama has specifically targeted visits to border states, Latin America, and held interviews with a variety of Spanish-language news channels, both national and local affiliates. These presidents have had a clear incentive to reach out to Spanish-speaking audiences as Latinos continue to increase as a percentage of the overall U.S. population. Even George W. Bush recognized the importance of Hispanic voters by speaking in Spanish on the campaign trail and proposing comprehensive, and relatively moderate, immigration reform legislation. With a larger population comes greater potential for that group to influence politics and policy. Presidents are therefore wise to appeal to Latinos through Spanish-language television to bolster Latino support for their policy agendas and reelection campaigns.

This reasoning produces a number of hypotheses. First, presidential speeches are the primary means by which presidents attempt to influence the news and so *a presidential speech should increase the likelihood of news coverage on that day*. Speeches that target issues salient to Latinos, such as immigration, should especially increase the likelihood of news coverage. Second, different speeches, like nationally televised addresses and press conferences, simultaneously reduce the cost of news production and increase audience demand. Therefore, *national addresses and press conferences should increase the likelihood of news coverage of the president*. Third, location should matter. Audience preferences change relative to border proximity, which affect differences in Spanish- and English-language news coverage (Branton and Dunaway, 2008). And because the pluralistic model of Spanish-language news coverage predicts greater

⁷Although our focus is on the president's public activities, presidents have numerous private means to affect news coverage, such as by providing information to reporters on "deep background" (Cohen 2010).

⁸Kumar (2007) makes no mention of managing Spanish-language news in her comprehensive examination of the White House communications operation. This does not mean that presidents have not explicitly attempted to do so. For example, Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama have all held interviews with Telemundo, Univision, or both.

coverage of issues related to Latin America (Rodriguez, 1999:100), *presidential visits to border states or in Latin American countries will increase the likelihood of Spanish-language news coverage of the president*. Finally, we control for the larger political context with the president's daily approval ratings, a proxy for audience demand for news about the president. So long as audiences demand more news about a popular president, *an increase in the president's approval ratings should increase the likelihood that the president will make the news*.

Data

We have compiled an original data set of Spanish- and English-language national news broadcasts over an approximately three and a half month period. Specifically, we collected national news broadcasts or transcripts for 85 days between January 13 and May 26, 2011.⁹ For English-language media, we chose news stories from NBC. We collected the number and length of stories from the *Vanderbilt News Archives*, and then selected each news broadcast transcript from LexisNexis Academic for the purposes of coding the number and names of sources. For Spanish-language news, we recorded daily broadcasts from Telemundo and then coded the news content when viewing them. We chose to analyze only weekday broadcasts given the tendency for weekend news broadcasts to be preempted by sporting events.¹⁰ The day is the unit of analysis.

We collected data on the following dimensions. First, we counted the number and length of stories on the evening broadcasts. Second, we coded the policies covered in a particular story, such as immigration, Egypt, or the economy. Third, we identified and separated stories that made some mention of President Obama. These stories comprise our sample of president-centered stories. Fourth, we identified the number and name of each source in a specific story. We use the Census list of Spanish surnames to identify names that are of Hispanic origin.¹¹ In addition, we note the type of source, such as whether the source is the president, a White House or administration source, or a Republican or Democratic source.

We code a number of variables that should predict the likelihood that Spanish-language news broadcasts will cover the president on a given day. To account for the daily political environment and general demand for presidential news in our presidential leadership model, we control for the president's approval rating, both the daily approval rating and the daily change in

⁹Given recording difficulties, the first two full weeks in March are missing from our data set.

¹⁰Although we do not disaggregate by ethnicity because our data do not allow it, we have not concluded that Latinos are a homogenous group with similar preferences because doing so is overly simplified and stereotypical (see Álvarez-González, 2010; Dávila, 2008).

¹¹This is not perfect as, conceivably, a married Hispanic could have changed her (or his) last name from a Spanish surname to an English one. Still, it is an accepted approach (Baretto, 2005).

approval, as provided by Gallup's daily tracking poll. We also note whether the president delivered a speech in a day, the type of speech—national address, press conference, or interview—and whether the president spoke about immigration or not. We control for location in three ways: whether or not the president spoke in Washington, DC, a border state, or in Latin America.

We collected data over this time frame and from these specific broadcast stations for a number of reasons. First, since Telemundo does not provide written transcripts to the public at a reasonable cost, we had to record our own broadcasts. Therefore, we could not go back in time to collect a specific range of broadcasts associated with a known, highly salient presidential event. Instead, we collected data live. Second, we compare Telemundo with NBC given that they are both owned by the same parent corporation. This allows us to minimize variation on the corporate dimension and to reject the alternative hypothesis that differences in news coverage are due to differences in corporate ownership and influence (see Dunaway, 2008). Although Univision has the largest viewing audiences among Spanish-language media outlets, Telemundo is second and growing larger.¹² Moreover, Dávila (2008) maintained that Univision is more Latin America centered than Telemundo, which is more U.S.-centric. If she is correct, then Telemundo will have had more coverage of the American presidency than Univision and, therefore, provide more data to analyze.¹³

Moreover, we collected data on everyday news coverage of American politics instead of election campaigns for a number of reasons. First, as most studies of Spanish-language media have explored presidential election campaigns (Subervi-Vélez, 2008), this article studies a relatively unexplored area of research. Second, examining coverage of governance provides more variation than campaign coverage. During a campaign, it is all but certain that the news will cover each candidate every evening. Outside of campaign season, we are more likely to witness variation in the amount and frequency of presidential news coverage, useful for understanding the likelihood of presidential news coverage and what predicts it according to our theory. Third, and as we illustrated at the outset of our article, daily news speaks more to issues of democratic accountability and citizen knowledge about public policy than campaigns and elections coverage does (Arnold, 2004).

¹²During Monday through Friday prime time, first quarter of 2012, Telemundo reported a +37 percent growth among adults 18–49 as compared to the first quarter of 2011 (931,000 vs. 679,000). In contrast, Univision is down –5 percent (1,903,000 vs. 1,998,000) and Telefutura is down –29 percent (328,000 vs. 459,000). Telemundo is also up +39 percent among adults 18–34 compared to the first quarter of 2011 (518,000 vs. 372,000), while Univision is down –7 percent (1,049,000 vs. 1,122,000) and Telefutura is down –31 percent (177,000 vs. 258,000).

¹³The Pew Hispanic Center shows that Univision was more U.S.-centric than Telemundo in its coverage of the 2004 presidential elections, however (Kaplan, Goldstein, and Hale, 2005).

Findings

The Descriptive Context

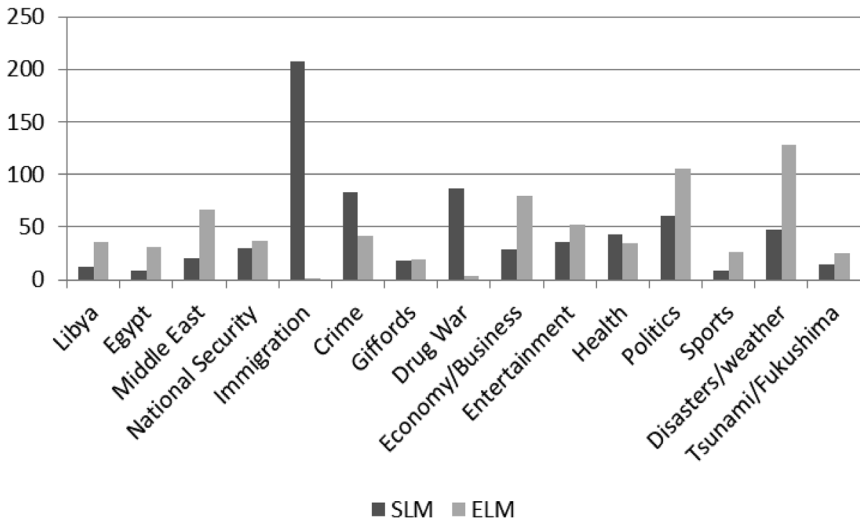
We begin by describing the content of our data in three primary ways. First, we describe the content of our sample of broadcasts according to the topical coverage of both NBC and Telemundo. Second, we examine the types of sources referenced within our sample of stories. Third, we summarize the structure of broadcasts, noting the average time, number of stories, and number of sources cited. In addition to presidential news, we also summarize data for all broadcasts to provide the reader with a broader context of coverage.

Our sample time frame of January through May 2011 is characterized by a set of highly salient domestic and international events. First, the Arab Spring dominated much of early 2011. This included rallies against the Mubarak regime for 18 days between January and February 11, 2011, when Mubarak resigned from office. It also included several months of coverage surrounding Libya, the defiant Gadhafi regime, and its eventual downfall well after the end of our sample time frame. Second, two other international events, the killing of Osama Bin Laden in early May 2011 and the Fukushima nuclear power plant meltdown in middle March, captivated the domestic and international community. Finally, the shooting of Gabrielle Giffords on January 8, 2011, was a prominent national event, one that included a national address by the president. Because we did not begin coding until January 13, 2011, we missed the majority of news coverage surrounding it.

Although both networks covered these events, Figure 1 shows how the amount of coverage differed significantly. Mainly, English-language media devoted many more stories to the Arab Spring in Egypt (31 vs. 7) and Libya (36 vs. 12). Moreover, Libya was a top story on NBC 16 times, but Libya was never a top story on Telemundo. Egypt was a lower priority for Telemundo, as it appeared as a top story only once. Even when NBC made the Mubarak resignation on February 11 a top story, for example, Telemundo favored coverage of the earthquake in Chile. What is most striking in our sample of data—but perhaps most predictable given previous research—is the vast differences in coverage for the drug war and immigration. Telemundo covered the drug war in 87, and immigration in 208, distinct stories. In fact, 27 percent of all of Telemundo's stories during the early part of 2011 covered immigration. NBC aired four stories on the drug war and covered immigration—the Arizona immigration law—only once. This is perfectly consistent with audience preferences, as 39 percent of Hispanics report that they “never” watch English-language evening network news (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2010). For national security issues that focused on Osama Bin Laden and the aftermath of the Gabrielle Giffords shooting, the number of stories is nearly alike.

The topical coverage of issues that featured President Obama varies significantly across the NBC and Telemundo national evening news broadcasts.

FIGURE 1
Number of Stories by Policy Area and Medium



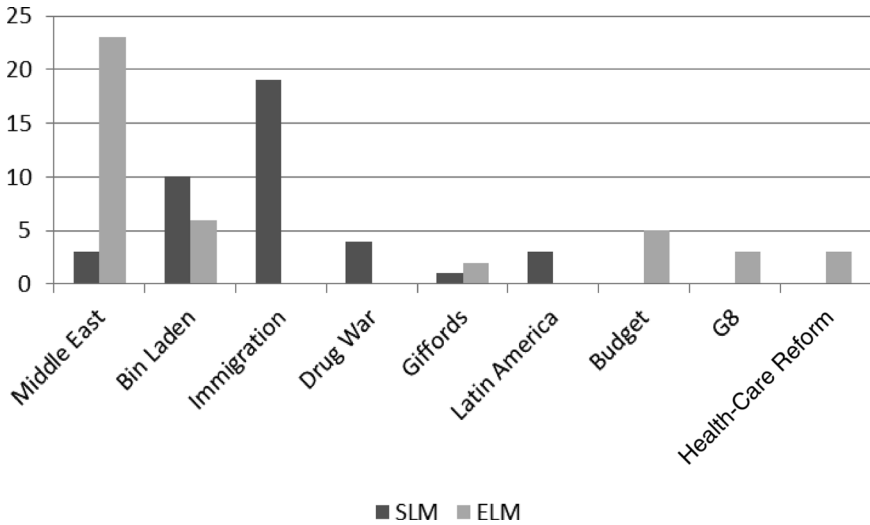
SOURCE: Daily broadcasts of *NBC Nightly News*, our English-language media (ELM) source and *Noticiero Telemundo*, our Spanish-language media (SLM) source. Data compiled by the authors. Middle East is an additive category of Libya and Egypt. Tsunami/Fukushima is also included in the larger, disasters/weather category. National Security includes stories specifically on Osama Bin Laden.

In Figure 2, we report nine policy areas that generated news coverage about the president, of which three topics were featured exclusively on Telemundo (immigration, the drug war, and Latin America) and three topics were featured exclusively on NBC (the budget, G8 meetings, and health-care reform). Specifically, Telemundo highlighted the president 19 times in stories on immigration, whereas NBC did not cover the president’s immigration policy at all. Several of these stories centered on the president’s speech in El Paso, Texas, on May 10, 2011, which was covered on Telemundo, but not on NBC. Although both networks devoted three stories to the president’s State of the Union address, NBC focused on the politics, content, and strategy behind the speech, whereas Telemundo covered the State of the Union through the lens of the administration’s immigration policy.

There are other stark differences. First, Telemundo covered the president’s reaction to the drug war, particularly as it concerned an attack that killed U.S. border agent Jaime Zapata. It also covered the president’s trip to Latin America, as expected. Even though NBC reported on the president’s trip itself, it was not because of the substantive reasons as to why he made the trip. Rather, NBC reported on the president’s comments concerning Libya while he was in Chile. Second, whereas NBC covered the president’s visit to Europe and the

FIGURE 2

Number of Stories Featuring Obama, by Policy and Medium



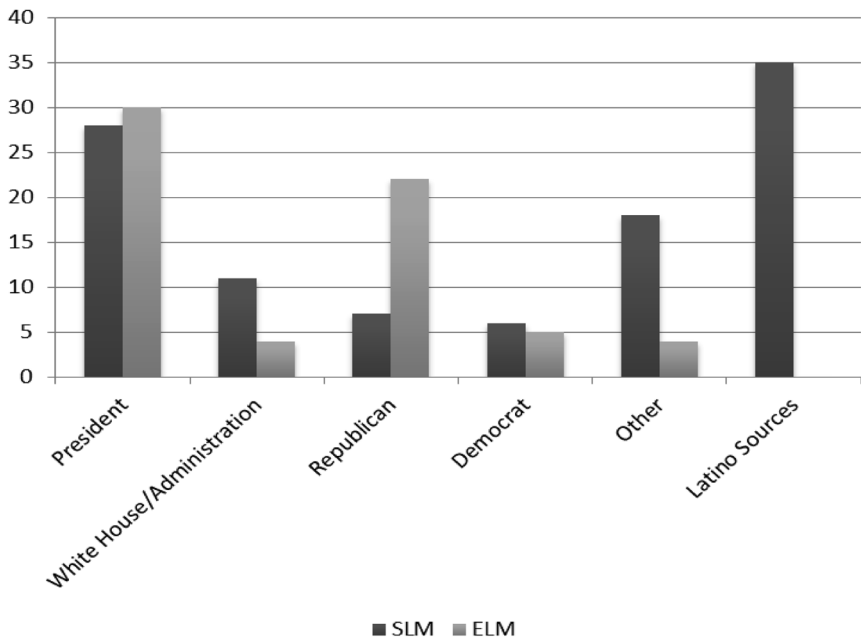
SOURCE: Daily broadcasts of *NBC Nightly News* (ELM) and *Noticiero Telemundo* (SLM). Data compiled by the authors.

G8 summit, Telemundo did not. If a Spanish-speaking country, particularly one from Latin America, were part of the G8, we suspect that its meetings would have generated at least some coverage on Telemundo.

Another way to assess descriptive differences across news broadcasts is the types of sources referenced, which are moderately different, as shown in Figure 3. On NBC, the president was a source in 30 stories (in addition to four White House sources, such as the press secretary), or 64 percent of all stories related to the president. The president and other White House sources made 64 separate statements within our sample of stories, as well. In addition, Democrats were sources in five stories, and 22 stories included Republican sources, the latter providing partisan balance to stories on the Democratic president.

On Telemundo, the president was a source in 28 stories in addition to 11 stories that included sources from administration officials. Most of these administration sources were Latino members of the president's cabinet, including Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Under Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Francisco Sánchez. Telemundo offered fewer political sources, with only seven Republican and six Democratic sources in our sample of stories. Although NBC focused on the president and other political sources, it had only a handful of other sources. In addition to its reliance on Latino sources in government, Telemundo also offered a wider range of

FIGURE 3
Number of Stories Featuring Different Types of Sources



SOURCE: Daily broadcasts of *NBC Nightly News* (ELM) and *Noticiero Telemundo* (SLM). Data compiled by the authors. SLM averaged 0.61 Latino sources per story, with 32 percent of all sources being Latino.

Latino perspectives, whether from immigrants, Latino policy analysts, or local government officials. Overall, Telemundo referenced 35 Latino sources, whereas NBC referenced none.

A final comparison of all NBC and Telemundo stories reveals a mix of similarities and differences. Presented in Table 1, stories that covered President Obama were about the same length and offered roughly the same number of sources. Still, NBC's average of 277 seconds per story and 2.27 sources trumps Telemundo's shorter 215 seconds and 1.95 sources per story. There is another more significant difference in English- and Spanish-language coverage of the presidency. Although the president was covered in English on more days than he was in Spanish (42 vs. 34), Telemundo offered more stories on the president than *NBC Nightly News* did (57 vs. 47). The tradeoff here is that the president is less likely to catch the random viewer of Telemundo, but the regular viewer will see more presidential stories on the days that he is covered. Finally, the president was featured as the lead story in 21 and 15 English- and Spanish-language stories, respectively. This bodes well for presidential leadership of the

TABLE 1

A Descriptive Comparison of *NBC Nightly News* and *Noticiero Telemundo*

	<i>NBC Nightly News</i>	<i>Noticiero Telemundo</i>
Presidential news coverage		
Days covered	42	34
Number of stories	47	57
Average seconds per story	277	215
Average sources per story	2.27	1.95
Number of lead stories	21	15
All news coverage		
Average stories per broadcast	9.5	9.9
Average seconds per story	123.9	112.0
Average sources per story	3.2	2.99

NOTE: The president made 117 public appeals, with 65 of 85 days including at least one speech. There were 38, 4, and 3 days with public appeals from Washington, DC, border states, and Latin America, respectively.

public through the news, given that the lead story on national broadcasts is most effective in setting the public's agenda (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

Comparing these averages for all NBC and Telemundo broadcasts in our sample reveals more similarities than differences. The average number of stories on both broadcasts is virtually identical, with NBC averaging 9.5 stories per evening and Telemundo offering 9.9 stories per broadcast. Telemundo covers more stories, which tend to be shorter at an average of 112 seconds or just less than 2 minutes. NBC, on the other hand, averages just over 2 minutes per story.¹⁴ The average number of distinct sources presented in each story is also virtually similar. At 3.2 and 2.99 different sources per story, NBC offers only a slightly larger variety of perspectives, consistent with its tendency to offer slightly fewer stories at greater length than Telemundo. All in all, NBC news offers slightly longer and more detailed stories than Telemundo, with the greatest differences occurring between presidential news stories.

The Likelihood of Presidential News Coverage

Table 2 presents results for whether or not a Spanish-language news broadcast covered the president. Our unit of analysis is the day and since the dependent variable is dichotomous, we use a probit regression and report the predicted probabilities of the statistically significant independent variables in brackets. We focus our discussion on Telemundo given our theory, but present

¹⁴Although we cannot say for certain, perhaps viewers of Spanish-language news are more likely than viewers of English-language news to consult a secondary media course, such as the newspaper or radio. If so, then viewers may only want an overview of the day's news, which may help account for the Spanish-language stories being shorter and slightly more numerous.

TABLE 2
Determinants of the Likelihood of Presidential News Coverage

Variables	<i>Noticiero Telemundo</i>	<i>NBC Nightly News</i>
Presidential approval	0.15* (0.06) [+0.15]	0.12* (0.05) [+0.14]
Approval change	0.14 (0.13)	0.05 (0.11)
Speech	-0.04 (0.29)	0.23 (0.24)
Immigration speeches	0.21 (.45)	0.06 (0.46)
Border state	1.63* (0.72) [+0.58]	-
Latin America	0.16 (0.99)	-
Washington, DC	0.36 (0.35)	0.29 (0.30)
National address	0.04 (0.93)	-
Press conference	1.42* (0.61) [+0.53]	-
Interview	0.33 (0.78)	-
Constant	-7.83* (2.90)	-6.01* (2.59)
ROC curve area	0.75	0.68
Correctly predicted (%)	64.71	61.18
Wald χ^2	19.13*	8.58
N	85	85

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$. Robust standard errors in parentheses and predicted probabilities in brackets. Dependent variable is whether or not the president made the news on a day or not. Border state, Latin America, press conference, national address, and interview all predict English news coverage perfectly and are dropped from the model.

the NBC model as a means of comparison. In brief, the predictive tendencies of the NBC model are weak, even though presidential approval ratings matter at roughly the same probability level as in the Telemundo model.

The inclination for Telemundo to broadcast a presidential news story is a function of a handful of variables. First, if the president visits a border state to deliver a speech, Telemundo is 58 percent more likely to cover the president. Although Obama never made NBC when he visited a border state, Telemundo covered these visits often, and dedicated virtually its entire broadcast on May 10 (the day the president visited El Paso, TX) to stories on immigration and the president's speech.

Second, the larger political environment matters. As we measure it, the more popular the president is, the more likely he will be on the news. For every 1.3 percentage points added to the president's job approval rating, the probability that Telemundo will cover the president on a given day increases by 15 percent. This effect holds only for the absolute value of the ratings, not the daily change in his public support.

Third, the president's press conferences increase the likelihood of Spanish-language news coverage. Although this might seem surprising given that other types of speeches and national addresses had minimal effects, both press conferences in our sample were held in Chile and El Salvador, suggesting that

the location of press conferences matters to their influence. Press conferences drive this relationship, though, as visits to Latin American countries alone do not influence the likelihood of news coverage.¹⁵ This finding provides indirect evidence, as well, that Telemundo favors assimilation in its news coverage.

Finally, although immigration dominated Telemundo's broadcasts, all of the president's speeches on immigration together did not significantly affect news coverage. This does not mean his efforts were irrelevant. Rather, the purpose of his May 10th speech on immigration, delivered in El Paso, TX, clearly drove the Spanish-language news broadcast that evening. Thus, the president may not be able to generate news simply by talking about an issue of high salience to Latinos, but rather by delivering that speech in a geographic area populated by Latinos, perhaps supplemented by private outreach to Latino news organizations.

Conclusion

This study makes an important contribution to the literatures of Spanish-language media and presidential leadership of the news media. We find that both media are similar in terms of the number of stories covered, the amount of time devoted to each story, and the number of sources included in each story, on average, but not in terms of the topics covered. Although these characteristics also hold for our subset of presidential news coverage, our comparison reveals several unambiguous differences, each of which indicates that Spanish- and English-speaking news audiences have distinct interests and expectations for presidential news coverage. First, only Telemundo included Latino sources in their stories on the president. Second, these media cover different policies, whether in total or in reference to the president. Third, that NBC is more likely to make the president a top story than Telemundo suggests that the president is still slightly more newsworthy to an English-than Spanish-speaking audience.

This study also offers several important predictions concerning Spanish-language presidential news coverage. First, presidents are more likely to make Spanish-language news when they are popular, a finding that contrasts with research that unpopular presidents are more likely to make the news (Groeling and Kernell, 1998), or that approval has no impact on local newspaper coverage of the presidency (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008). Second, presidents appear poised to generate news coverage on Spanish-language television by visiting border states. Even though presidents have some difficulty influencing English-language news (Edwards and Wood, 1999; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, 2005), this finding suggests that presidents may have a better opportunity to reach Spanish-language audiences, much as "going local" helps English news

¹⁵The Latin America variable does not reach statistical significance if we drop press conferences.

coverage (Cohen, 2010), by visiting locations from which Spanish-language news typically emanates (and reducing the cost to producing presidential news). Given the clear priority Spanish-language news gives to some issues, moreover, there may be an increased likelihood of presidents reaching this audience as long as they speak about policies of particular interest to Spanish-language audiences—which increases viewer demand for presidential news. That we find limited impact of presidential speeches, except for press conferences held in Latin America, suggests, indeed, that location and topic matters most to whether Spanish-language news will cover the president.

This article stops short of extending our understanding of Spanish-language news in two additional ways. First, it does not examine how the public responds to Spanish-language broadcasts, so we cannot conclude whether presidential news coverage influences viewers' perspectives on the president or his policies. Our results are not promising for two reasons. One, the president was unable to use his speeches on immigration to consistently generate Spanish-language news coverage. If the president cannot garner airtime for his policy agenda, then he is unlikely to influence the public's opinion of it. Two, the president faces an uninterested audience. A full third of Latinos are not interested in politics and public affairs, with the modal category—somewhat interested—registering 44.7 percent.¹⁶ Second, this article does not examine the tone of the Spanish-language broadcasts. If they are negative and superficial, like English news, then the president is likely to face similar difficulties leading the tone of Spanish-language news. If they are more positive or even neutral, however, then presidents may benefit from targeting Spanish-language news audiences more than they currently do. Knowing how Spanish-language news covers the presidency will generate important hypotheses for the president-public relationship. And it will continue to be important for the current and future presidential administrations given the growth of Latino population in the United States and its continued participation in American politics.

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¹⁶Q. A6 (Fraga et al., 2012): How interested are you in politics and public affairs? Would you say you are very interested, somewhat interested, or not at all interested?

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