

**ISSUES AND SOURCES IN SPANISH LANGUAGE TV: A COMPARISON OF NOTICIERO UNIVISIÓN AND NBC EVENING NEWS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents the findings of a comparative study of the topics and the information sources of two TV news broadcasts: the NBC Evening News and the Spanish-language news program, Univisión. It shows that there are no major differences between them in terms of the topics and the approaches followed, and that Univisión bases its reporting on Anglo-Saxon information sources rather than Hispanic ones.

In national news, the Spanish language broadcast devotes most of its time to high-ranking government officials and gathers its information in Washington and New York, not in the U.S. cities with the largest Spanish-speaking populations. On the international scene, even though Univisión gives more time to this area than does NBC it still follows the English-language network's tendency to emphasize incidents and violence in the Third World, specifically in Latin America, over other news.<sup>2</sup>

**RESUMEN**

El artículo presenta los resultados de un análisis de contenido sobre los temas y las fuentes informativas incluidas en el noticiero Univisión y los compara con el contenido del programa noticioso nocturno de la cadena NBC. El autor concluye que no hay diferencias radicales entre uno y otro programas en temas y enfoques, y que el noticiero Univisión proporciona mayor acceso a fuentes informativas anglosajonas que hispanas. En el plano nacional, el noticiero en español brinda la mayor parte de su tiempo a funcionarios gubernamentales anglosajones del más alto nivel, y difunde las noticias desde Washington y Nueva York, no desde las ciudades norteamericanas con mayor número de habitantes hispanos. En la información internacional, el noticiero Univisión -aunque dedica mayor tiempo que NBC a este renglón- parece reproducir la tendencia típica de subrayar accidentes y violencia en el Tercer Mundo, especialmente en Latinoamérica.

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IN the spite of a growing concern about the need to study Latino mass media in the United States, researchers have tended to neglect analysis of the major Hispanic television network in the country: Univisión.

Through more than 400 affiliates located in every Hispanic population center in the United States (cf. Norris 1986, S1; *Hispanic Business* 1986), Univisión Spanish-language programming reaches and estimated 4.2 million of the 5.2 million Latino households in the country. There are no reliable figures on the Hispanic population's exposure to Univisión, but some studies suggest that Spanish-language television in the United States is watched by a significant percentage of this ethnic group. Two-thirds of Hispanics interviewed by the Strategic Research Corporation in 1984 said they had watched Spanish-language television for an average of about two-and-one-half hours on the day before they were interviewed (Cf. Strategic Research Corporation 1984). A similar result was reported by Yankelovich et al., who found in 1981 that 70 percent of the estimated 17 million Hispanics in the country watched nearly ten hours of Spanish-language television each week (Yankelovich *et al.* 1981, 5). A recent study by Information and Analysis Inc. shows that even young Hispanics primarily watch Spanish-language television. These findings suggest that Univisión, the biggest Spanish-language network in the United States, is an important source of information and entertainment for the U.S. Latino community.

This paper focuses on the evening news program Noticiero Univisión, in an attempt to determine to what extent it emphasizes Hispanic issues and sources, and to what degree it departs from traditional, English-language news programs. Does Noticiero Univisión provide access to Hispanics who have something to say to their ethnic community but who do not have systematic access to mainstream media? Does it follow a Hispanic agenda in covering the news, or does it follow the agenda of the English-language news media? The paper then discusses the historical background of Univisión in the United States. A general description of Univisión's programming and the origins of Noticiero Univisión is followed by an examination of the lack of minority and subordinate group access to mainstream news media in the United States, and the implications of this lack for the existence of alternative media outlets. Finally, the paper presents the results of a content analysis of Noticiero Univisión and NBC Evening News.

#### *Spanish-language Television in the United States*

Spanish-language television in the United States was formally initiated in 1961 with the creation of Spanish International Network (SIN). Rene Anselmo, Export Division manager of the Mexican broadcasting company Telesistema Mexicano, contacted the major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) in hopes of developing an export market for his company. "Armed with statistics about the Latino population in the United States, Anselmo hammered in vain on the doors of the three networks" (de Uriarte 1984). Convinced that there was an important market for Spanish-language television, the owners of Telesistema Mexicano -which later became the powerful Televisa decided to look for U.S. partners in order to comply with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules limiting foreign ownership of broadcast properties in the

United States. Emilio Azcárraga ST., the company's principal owner; joined with Frank Fouce Sr, president of a chain of Spanish-language movie theaters in Southern California, and his U.S.-born employee Rene Anselmo to found the Spanish International Broadcasting Corporation, which obtained a permit to operate KMEX-TV in Los Angeles in November 1961. A month later the Spanish International Broadcasting Company (SIB), with the same partners, obtained a permit to operate KWEX-TV in San Antonio (cf. Balkan 1986,18; Arredondo 1988,38-39).

During the 1960s and 1970s the SIN Television Network -broadcasting *noticias* (soap operas), movies, and entertainment imported mainly from Mexico- grew impressively until it virtually dominated Spanish-language television in the United States. By 1980 SIN had thirty six affiliated stations. This network allowed them one hundred hours of weekly programming (Arredondo and Zermefio 1986,86). By the next year, SIN was aggressively using new technologies like satellite and cable to reach one hundred American cities.

Recently, after a ten year federal probe of illegal Mexican control of the media conglomerate, a federal judge ordered that SICC and Bahia Communications and their ten SIN affiliated stations be sold or stripped of their FCC licenses. The court eventually approved the sale of the stations to Hallmark Cards Inc. (Mejias-Rentas 1987,24).

In January 1987 the network changed its name to Univisión and become a subsidiary of the newly formed U.S. corporation Univisa, devoted to distributing Spanish-language programming to 463 television stations all over the United States. Still owned by Emilio Azcárraga Jr. and Televisa-Mexico, the Univisión network was in compliance with FCC regulations regarding foreign ownership.<sup>2</sup> However, by November 1987 Univisa decided to sell the Univisión network to Hallmark Cards Inc. and First Chicago, for \$286 million, keeping only its cable channel, Gala-vision. Hallmark purchased the Univisión Network in February 1988, for \$274.5 million (cf. *Hispanic Business*, December 1988:43). As part of the agreement, Hallmark got first refusal rights for the next ten years to ten thousand hours of programming from ProTele, the Univisa division that distributes Televisa's programs in the United States (*Hispanic Business*, May -1988:22). Hallmark and First Chicago have said they will keep the Spanish-language format of the stations they bought from SICC for the two years required by the sales contract, and they have expressed a commitment eventually to expand that format further (Veciana Suirez 1987,60).

Today, Univisión offers programming twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. In addition to the *novelas*, movies, and music shows imported from Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina, Univisión has increased the number of U.S.-produced programs, most notably in the area of news and entertainment. One of the most expensive and successful of these programs has been the evening news show, *Noticiero Univisión*.

<sup>2</sup> FCC regulations allow the existence of foreign-owned suppliers of television programming but stipulate that foreign ownership of U.S. television stations should not exceed 20 percent. While SICC was violating these regulations, the Univisión network (formely SIN) was not (cf. Arredondo 1988,45; Balkan 1986,19).

*Noticiero Univisión*

SIN began to produce its own news program, Noticiero SIN, on 1 June, 1981. A half-hour news program broadcast at 6:30 PM, Monday through Friday, Noticiero SIN covered major news from around the world, with full-time news bureaus in Miami, New York, Washington D.C., London, and EL Salvador, and with correspondents in Spain and Moscow. By 1986, Noticiero SIN reached at least 4 million Latinos in the United States and an additional 4 to 6 million Latin Americans in Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic (cf. Veciana Suárez 1987,58).

In late 1986, Univisión announced that Noticiero SIN would be absorbed by a new international news service, ECO (Empresa de Comunicaciones Orbitales). ECO, controlled by Azcárraga, was set up to optimize the gathering and production of television news for Univisión and other subscribers in the United States and Latin America. Azcárraga brought Jacobo Zabłudovsky from Mexico City to head the new agency, but charges by Latino journalists and politicians regarding Televisa news division's constantly praising the Mexican government prevented Zabłudovsky, anchorman of the Mexican TV program "24 Horas" for 16 years, from becoming president of ECO. Former SIN news director Gustavo Godoy, along with a great number of producers, journalists, and technicians left Univisión in protest of Zabłudovsk's appointment, and formed the Hispanic American Broadcasting Corporation. This new corporation then sold its news program to the Telemundo network, owned by the Reliance Capital Corporation - Univisión's only competition (cf. Veciana-Suárez 1987,58). Telemundo recently merged with Cable News Network (CNN), which now transmits a Spanish-language news program Monday through Friday (*Hispanic Link* 1988:6). Zabłudovsky was replaced as president of ECO by former UPI chief Luis G. Nogales, who initiated a radical restructuring of Noticiero Univisión. He and ECO's news editor, Sylvana Foa, stressed their intention of imitating American networks' style in Noticiero Univisión, stating: "We are making a U.S. style news program. It is fast-paced and it has correspondents all over the world" (*Clamor* 3, 1987:6). Noticiero Univisión anchorwoman, María Elena Salinas, said that the program's new structure would allow them to provide people with information faster: "a lot of information and sports in just few words" (*Clamor* 5, 1987:28).

Today, Noticiero Univisión has an evening addition at 6:30 PM (Eastern Time), and a nightly edition at 10:30 PM. It is anchored by Maria Elena Salinas and Jorge Ramos and includes a great deal of international news, mainly from Latin America. It has bureaus in Washington, Miami, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina, and London. Noticiero Univisión kept its original structure in spite of its change in ownership and its dissociation from ECO. Eco, not a part of the original agreement with Hallmark, stayed in the hands of Televisa. Produced in Mexico City in the CNN news-program style (the same news all day, read by different anchormen), ECO became a major international news agency headed by Jacobo Zabłudovsky on 1 September 1988. It is broadcast throughout Mexico over Televisa's main TV channel (XEW 2), and in the United States by Galavisión, a Spanish-language service carried on 300 cable systems (cf. *The New York Times*, 9 July 1988).

This paper's focus on Noticiero Univisión is justified in that the Noticiero is the main source of information for millions of Latinos who prefer to use Spanish and who tend to watch television rather than read Spanish or English-language newspapers (cf. Gutiérrez and Reyna 1981). Also, it has been argued by Univisión's executives that the Noticiero addresses the problems and issues facing the U.S. Hispanic community today and discusses the implications of national events for this ethnic group. It has been said as well that Noticiero Univisión provides more sensitive views of Latin American countries, thus overcoming some of the inadequacies of the three major U.S. networks (*Clamor* 5:28).

This study analyzes the sources and actors in Noticiero Univisión's news, and the issues selected and emphasized by it, in an attempt to determine to what extent the Noticiero departs from the traditional U.S. networks' approach to issues and sources. According to Gans (1980), Tuchman (1980), Gandy (1982), and other media sociologists, the U.S. news media characteristically rely on a very small number of sources in the power elite, mainly government officials. According to their findings, the poor, the working class, and minority parties and groups make the news only as protesters, victims, or criminals (Gans 1980,12). The news media, according to Tuchman, are more accessible to some social movements, interest groups, and political actors than to others: "those who hold recognized reins of legitimated power clearly have more access to the media than those who do not" (Tuchman 1980,133). Minority and ethnic groups in particular, long excluded from such power circles, are among those who do not receive systematic access to mainstream news media. As Parenti points out, the news media are largely an "affluent white male domain." They pay little attention to minorities' struggles for jobs, decent housing, safe neighborhoods, and viable political organizations, or to their overall cultural contributions (cf. Parenti 1986,11). When the mainstream media do provide access to minorities they tend to focus on individuals who have overcome racial, economic, and political obstacles (cf. Gans 1980,23). In the case of blacks, for example, Gans argues that non-affluent members of this ethnic group are newsworthy only as protesters, criminals, and victims: "Blacks already integrated into national institutions and those who make no attempt to enter them tend to be left out of the national news, as are poor blacks simply because they are poor" (Gans, 1980,23). News coverage of Latinos is similar, although to a lesser extent.

This hypothesis belies the democratic ideal of the press serving as a forum for a diversity of sources and competing interests. Instead, the press allows a power elite to control information and, as explained by Brown et al. (1987), to define and control the decision-making process. After a content analysis of sources appearing on the front pages of some leading national newspapers, Brown et al. concluded: "if we continue to assume that this society is a pluralist democracy, the press is simply not doing its job of including and identifying a variety of sources and viewpoints" (Brown *et al.*, 1987,53). The existence of alternative and minority news media channels should not excuse the lack of source diversity in mainstream news media, even though some would argue that a plurality of media outlets serving different segments of society serve to ensure democracy and political participation. Noticiero Univisión may be thus seen as providing access to all Hispanics who have something to say to their ethnic community and who do not have systematic access to mainstream media. The intent of this paper is to determine whether

Noticiero Univisión truly provides such an alternative to Latinos, or whether it imitates the source selection and newsworthiness criteria characteristic of the US English-language news media. A content analysis of the NBC Evening News has been included for comparison.

### *Methodology*

Noticiero Univisión was content analyzed during one chronological week (13-17 June 1988) and one composite week (29 Aug-30 Sep 1988). The chronological week was chosen to provide a typical one-week of news in the news program the composite week allowed the study to avoid the possible impact of a major news event. The days included in the composite week were August 29 and September 6, 14, 22, and 30. The same chronological week (June 13-17) was selected for the NBC Evening News. The unit of analysis was the news story. A news story was defined as a comprehensive and independent item with an introductory statement by the anchorman, followed by information normally accompanied by film. Related topics introduced again by the anchorman were coded separately.

Two different coding sheets were used by two coders to analyze the news stories, One coding sheet was used for national news, the other for international news. National news was defined as stories about events occurring within the United States with no direct participation of other countries. Discussions by presidential hopefuls of other politicians about how to handle U.S. policies toward other countries were considered as national news and coded under "foreign affairs." International news was defined as events happening in countries other than the United States, or events directly related with other countries but happening in the United States stories about Contra leaders asking for U.S. help in Washington, for example, were considered as foreign news and coded under "Nicaragua." The variable "origin of the news item" permitted differentiation between these types of stories and items reported from Nicaragua or neighboring states.

The coding sheet for national news included eight variables: 1) name of the news program; 2) date of the news program; 3) story number; 4) story length in seconds; 5) city where the information was gathered or where the event took place; 6) story theme; 7) origin of the news item; and 8) sources.

The coding sheet for international news included nine variables: 1) name of the news program; 2) date of the news program; 3) story number; 4) story length in seconds; 5) region of the world in which the event took place; 6) country in which the event took place (for news about Latin American countries); 7) story theme; 8) origin of the news item; and 9) sources.

Story themes were divided into noncrisis and crisis themes. Noncrisis themes were those that depict nonconflictive accounts of national or international events, including positive achievement in the economy, business, or science, and neutral accounts of activities in the government of other spheres. Crisis themes were defined as news items that portrayed individuals or groups in conflict with legitimate authority, disasters or accidents causing death or damages, problems affecting society (solutions to such problems were defined as non crisis news), or any event not desirable for the well-being of society. These categories were not meant to be totally inclusive, in that news stories frequently include both negative and positive

or neutral information. Coders were instructed to calculate the percentage of negative assertions vs. positive assertions in each item, and code it accordingly. These two categories reflect a news story's general tendency and are not precise indication its content.

Sources were defined as individuals directly interviewed or quoted by a reporter. Other individuals appearing in the news footage but not talking directly to the cameras were not included as sources. A single story could be coded in more than one category.

### *Results*

What kinds of information sources have access to *Noticiero Univisión*? Who are the "knows" and "unknowns" that appear in the Spanish-language news? Table shows that *Noticiero Univisión* overwhelmingly provided more access in national news to non-Hispanic sources than to Latino sources. In both "weeks" covered by the study the percentage of Hispanic sources in *Noticiero Univisión* was consistently low, 24 percent. On the NEC Evening News, on the other hand, only one out of ninety-nine sources was a Latino (see table 1).

In both news programs Anglo politicians and federal officials appeared most often as sources, with members of Congress and presidential hopefuls accounting for a large percentage of the total number of *Noticiero Univisión*'s sources (see table 2). Spanish-language television news followed the tendency of the English-language news media to give extensive coverage to leading federal officials and politicians (cf. Cans 1980). *Noticiero Univisión* appeared to follow mainstream criteria on the selection of sources in this regard, thus legitimizing the most powerful politicians' claims to represent all sectors of society. The NEC news program devoted an impressive 22 percent of its time to federal officials, and a combined total of 29 percent to President Reagan, members of Congress, and the two leading presidential candidates (see table 2).

*Noticiero Univisión*'s Hispanic sources were grouped in the categories of state and local officials, members of Congress, and criminals. Again, *Noticiero Univisión* seemed to adopt the values of English-language media in granting access only to individuals holding the highest positions of political power. Latino "unknowns" were mainly criminals or victims, duplicating the pattern of the major networks: NEC Evening News devoted 12 percent of its total time to victims of disasters, sickness, or economic problems (see table 2). Interestingly, the only Hispanic source in an entire week of NBC Evening news was a state official (see table 2).

Latino political or activist groups did not enjoy systematic access to *Noticiero Univisión* in either the chronological or the composite week; only supporters of the various presidential hopefuls and the most moderate and institutionalized groups like LULAC were given occasional coverage. Many other Hispanic groups were entirely left out of public debate. As documented by Cans, the tiny fraction of time that the major news media devote to minorities tends to go to the moderate core of the political-ideological spectrum (liberals, moderates, and conservatives). Groups outside this narrow core are considered by the U.S. media to be ultraliberal

(or radicals) and ultraconservatives, and as such they do not enjoy systematic media access (cf. Gans 1980,30-31). *Noticiero Univisión* adhered to this moderate tendency of the mainstream, English-language media: Groups and grassroots leaders struggling to solve some of the major problems (housing, poverty, drugs, racism, civil rights, urbanization, education) facing Hispanics were often left out of the news. Moderate political groups like LULAC were able to get into the news, but even then only in a very narrow percentage. As with minority sources in the mainstream news media, only Hispanics who have overcome racial, economic, and political obstacles, and who have gained political or economic power, are entitled to speak to a national audience through *Univisión*.

Although *Noticiero Univisión*'s 24 percent Hispanic sources is undoubtedly much better than the 1 percent on *NBC Evening News*, it is disappointing that the only truly national Spanish-language television news program does not offer a forum for Latinos who do not have access to the mainstream English-language media. *Univisión*'s objectives may not necessarily include providing media access to those who are left out by the English-language media, and it has no obligation to provide that kind of access, but even so it is betraying the general objective of increased Hispanic participation and representation in television news.

*Noticiero Univisión* performed similarly in the international arena. As shown in table 3, government officials in foreign countries were by far the most sought-after sources (26-27 percent of the total), followed by political opposition leaders and Contra leaders in a distant second place. It is important to note that *Univisión* seemed to balance government and opposition sources, at least in the case of Nicaragua. President Daniel Ortega appeared frequently in news stories about Nicaragua, and a live interview with Contra leader Calero was immediately followed by a live interview with the Nicaraguan ambassador in Washington. The "unknowns" in foreign countries (mainly in Latin America) were either "men on the street" or war or disaster victims. The *NBC Evening News* was even less participatory: in the ten international news stories transmitted in the sampled week, *NBC*'s news program used only seven sources, four of them U.S. officials commenting on the 'foreign events' (see table 3).

*Univisión*'s coverage was balanced between the number of national and foreign news stories (thirty-three and thirty-nine of each in the chronological week, and thirty-seven national news stories and thirty-nine international news stories in the composite week). *NBC News*, during the sampled week, aired an insignificant number of international stories: ten out of a total of sixty-four (see table 4). Moreover, only one of those international stories was about Latin American country. This suggests that U.S. television viewers, particularly Hispanics, do need alternative sources of information like *Univisión* to keep up with Hispanic international affairs. Quantitatively at least, *Noticiero Univisión* does a much better job in providing information about other countries. In fact, thirteen of the thirty-nine foreign news stories in the *Noticiero Univisión* chronological week, and eleven of the thirty-six in its composite week were about countries outside Latin America, such as the Soviet Union, Poland, South Korea, Germany, Northern Ireland, and Greece. The number of general international news stories answering to a particular interest in Latin America, thus, was still higher than the total number of foreign news stories covered by *NBC*. Quantity does not imply quality of course, and as shown by theme

analysis most foreign news on Univisión was crisis news.

According to U.S. Census Bureau projections Mexicans represented 60.6 percent of all U.S. Latinos in 1985, Puerto Ricans 15.1 percent, Cubans 6.1 percent, and 10.2 percent were from Central or South America (*Hispanic Business*, 1986, 95). A look at the Latin American countries appearing on Noticiero Univisión shows that its coverage of Latin America does not reflect the origins of its audience members Table 5 shows that news stories about Central and South America accounted for 61 percent of the total in the chronological week (46 percent in the composite week), while Mexican news represented only 9 and 17 percent, respectively; in neither week was there a single story about Cuba. In national news, only one of the thirty-three stories in the chronological week was related to Puerto Rico, which received no coverage at all in the composite week.

If Noticiero Univisión does not use the countries of origin of its audience members countries of origin as a criterion for selecting news stories about Latin America, what criteria might it use? Table 6 suggests that Noticiero Univisión follows the lead of the major networks for covering Latin America: "coups and earthquakes," and domestic themes in foreign news. The emphasis on Nicaragua, by far the most covered Latin American country in the chronological week (25 percent of the total time devoted to international news), and the constant access provided to the U.S.-backed Contra leaders was indicative of this trend. The Noticiero aired no news stories at all on Guatemala, Honduras, or Costa Rica, and only one in each week El Salvador. Chile figured prominently in the composite week because of the coming referendum, but data from the chronological week suggest that country seldom makes the news in more normal circumstances, in spite of the obvious dictatorship in place there.

The propensity to define newsworthiness by "coups and earthquakes" criteria when covering Latin America was clearly present in Noticiero Univisión's coverage of the region. Instead of avoiding the U.S. media's oft-criticized emphasis on crisis news (cf. Larson *et al.* 1986) by using Hispanic sensibilities and awareness of Latin America's values and achievements, Noticiero Univisión followed the tendency to emphasize the spectacular and the negative. Table 7 shows that crisis news accounted for 74 percent of the total time devoted to international news in the chronological week and 91 percent in the composite week, while all NBC Evening News's foreign coverage was concerned with disaster and conflict. As shown in table 7, the predominant themes in Univisión's international news were war, terrorism, coups, and unrest and dissent. Due to hurricane Gilbert's toll in the Caribbean and Mexico, disasters were heavily represented in the composite week. This focus on crises may not be different from the traditional focus of the English-language news media, but it is disappointing that the New International Information Order criticism of treatment of the Third World by Western news media also applies to one of the few Western news programs produced for minorities with cultural and other ties to the Third World.

The 26 percent of noncrisis news in the chronological week was dominated by national politics and human interest stories. Of the 9 percent of programming time devoted to noncrisis news in the composite week, 7 percent dealt with national politics. In this area, Noticiero Univisión gave access to opposition groups and political analysts, as in the case of Mexico's presidential election where opposition

leaders like Porfirio Muñoz Ledo (of the Frente Cardenista) and Manuel Clouthier (of the PAN), and scholars like Jorge G. Castañeda, were interviewed. Similarly, NBC focused on problems like AIDS and euthanasia (because of the world conference on AIDS in Stockholm), terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland (also covered by Univisión), black protests in South Africa, and violence perpetrated by British football fans. NBC considered health epidemics like AIDS to be the most newsworthy of all crisis news, allowing them 45 percent of the time it devoted to international news (see table 7).

National news seemed to be given more balanced coverage in both program. Noncrisis news accounted for 46 percent of Univisión's national news time in the chronological week, and in the composite week Univisión's percentage of noncrisis stories was even better: 65 percent. NBC News was a little more sensationalist, devoting 63 percent of its national news time to crises and conflicts. Table 8 shows that Noticiero Univisión provided systematic and extensive coverage of the most important political figures and institutions in the United States (the White House, Congress, and presidential hopefuls), thus reconfirming its tendency to duplicate the news values of the English-language media. In percentage terms, Univisión seemed to focus more attention on national politics than NBC News while NBC devoted a significant 13 percent of its time to national politics, Noticiero Univisión gave the same topic 26 percent of its total national news time in the chronological week and 30 percent in the composite week (see table 8).

After national politics, the themes most emphasized by Univisión were crisis themes: health problems (the AIDS epidemic), political scandals (mostly regarding the pentagon procurement process), and the usual fare of crime, disaster, and drugs. Social problems, - perhaps the most crucial issues for the vast majority of Hispanics-occupied only 4 percent of total national news time in the chronological week, and none in the composite one. The subject of racism was also covered, but in reference to discrimination against blacks (as alleged in the case of Tawana Brawtley), not Hispanics.

In short the Spanish-language news did not seem to pay a great deal of attention to Latinos' needs and problems. There was not a single report about any of the Latino community's most pressing problems: poverty, discrimination, unemployment, lack of urbanization, lack of educational alternatives, etc. Frank del Olmo's (1971) comments about the Spanish-language news media presenting only the usual diet of daily world, albeit in Spanish, certainly *appear* to be valid in the case of Univisión. Instead of providing access to those Hispanics who are rejected or ignored by the mainstream media, Univisión tends to repeat the tendencies of English-language television. Thus, the only Hispanic themes it treated were those related to politics and the few Hispanics in Congress or holding positions at the state or local levels.

Many of Univisión's stories, of course, had a Hispanic angle. In reports about AIDS, for example, comments were made about Hispanics being a high-risk group. In some national politics stories, references were made about the importance of the Hispanic vote, about Dukakis talking in Spanish, or about Bush's criticism of the English-only movement. Having Hispanic angles is no doubt significant in light of the consistent lack of Hispanic perspectives in the major networks, but most stories were reactions to national events or processes generated by non-Hispanics,

without a direct focus on the Hispanic community's needs.

Even on issues strongly affecting Mexican-Americans, like illegal migration to the United States, *Noticiero Univisión* demonstrated its own, unique understanding of balance and objectivity. On the one hand, it reported the statements of INS Commissioner Alan Nelson about the "honeymoon" resulting from the implementation of the IRCA being over. On the other hand, it showed two illegal aliens saying they knew crossing to the U.S. illegally and finding jobs would now be tougher. It did not solicit the comments of Hispanic lawyers opposed to IRCA, or spokesmen of organizations like Maldef and the American Friends Service Committee. As seen in table 9, the biggest chunk of national news originated in Washington (not a city with a large Hispanic population): 32 percent of national news time in the chronological week, 24 percent in the composite week. In contrast, Los Angeles, the city with the largest Hispanic population in the U.S., accounted for only 5 percent of total coverage in the chronological week and 10 percent in the composite week; New York, with the second largest concentration of Latinos, received 29 percent, but the stories dealt mainly with non-Hispanic matters, such as the Guardian Angels, deficit reduction, the Stock Exchange, AIDS, the Tawana case, and so on. San Antonio, with the third largest Hispanic population in the country, received only 5 percent of the time in the chronological week and none in the composite one, despite Univisión's San Antonio bureau. Thirteen of the twenty cities with the largest Hispanic populations were not in the news at all in the time periods studied. Miami, the sixth largest city in terms of Hispanic population, received an important 10 percent of the time in the chronological week, thanks to the presence of Michael Dukakis and the ADDS epidemic.

Not surprisingly, NBC news also paid the most attention to Washington (43 percent) and New York (20 percent), further evidence that *Noticiero Univisión* tends to replicate the "space net" of the major networks. These findings indicate that the largest Hispanic communities in the United States are not seen as regular beats by *Noticiero Univisión*.

### *Discussion*

The findings discussed above raise many doubts about *Noticiero Univisión*'s ability to fulfill the basic information needs of the vast majority of Hispanics. As suggested by such media sociologists as Gans, Tuchman, Parenti, and Altschull, organizational constraints and owner and advertiser interests seem to influence the kinds of sources and issues that make the Spanish-language news. Although participant observation studies are needed to prove this, the evidence from content analysis is clear enough: *Noticiero Univisión* apparently has adopted, without hesitation, most of the basic values or the major English-language news media. Thus, this Spanish-language news outlet provides access in its national section mainly to powerful sources entrenched in the highest positions of power, mostly non-Latino politicians and federal officials, and a few Hispanics in similar positions of power. While the access granted to these Latino politicians must be considered more than welcome, it is regrettable that they are the only ones with systematic access to the *Noticiero*. Many Hispanic

groups and individuals working to help their community overcome major social problems do not get news time to discuss alternatives and mobilize public opinion. Poor Latinos are condemned to occasional appearances as victims or criminals. At best, they may have the rare experience of being interviewed on the street for a 5-second segment on reactions of the Hispanic community to a particular event.<sup>3</sup>

Univision's "coups and earthquakes" mentality in coverage of the countries of origin of its audience seems to be another important deficiency. Despite all the criticisms by the New International Information Order and numerous complaints by Latino leaders and scholars about the U.S. media distorting the image of Latin American countries, *Noticiero Univisión* does exactly the same thing. If, quantitatively, the time devoted to Latin America is necessary to offset the major networks' frequent neglect of the region, in qualitative terms it is highly questionable. Instead of fostering a more comprehensive understanding of processes and events in those countries, -their achievements and progress as well as their endemic conflicts and insufficiencies- *Noticiero Univisión* reinforces the same stereotypes as the English-language media. One positive aspect of Univision's coverage of Latin American countries, however, is its interviewing of opposition leaders and its political analysis of electoral races. The frequent manipulation of local news media by Latin American governments makes opposition leaders' access to local newspapers and television news programs very difficult. In this sense, *Noticiero Univisión* helps to provide more accurate depictions of the political situation in Latin American countries.

With respect to national news, this Spanish-language news program may make a difference only to those Hispanics who are well integrated in the American system and who, due to their social and economic class, have access to multiple sources of information. The vast majority of Hispanics, those living in the barrios and struggling to make a decent living, will have to wait for another, more committed Spanish-language national news medium.

<sup>3</sup> Recently, *Noticiero Univisión* began to devote the last segment of every program to specific Hispanic issues and topics. One of the *Noticiero*'s two anchormen reports for a whole week from a heavily Hispanic city in the United States, and presents Hispanic topics. Of with the help of an anchorman or anchorwoman from the local affiliated station. If *Noticiero Univisión* continues with this particular segment, it will help make amends for its emphasis on non-Hispanic issues and sources.

**TABLE 1**

**SOURCES IN NOTICIERO UNIVISIÓN AND NBC EVENING NEWS  
JUNE 13-17, COMPOSITE WEEK (AUG. 29-SEPT. 30), 1988  
NATIONAL NEWS**

Sources	Noticiero Univisión		NBC Evening News			
	June 13-17	%	Composite	%	June 13-17	%
Non-Hispanic Sources	35	76%	33	75%	98	99%
Hispanic Sources	11	24	11	25	1	1
Total	46	100%	44	100%	99	100%

$\chi^2 = 19.098$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$  Significant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>  $\chi^2$  was calculated using only the June 13-17 sample of Noticiero Univisión and the NBC sample.

**TABLE 2**  
**SOURCES IN NOTICIERO UNIVISIÓN AND NBC EVENING NEWS**  
**JUNE 13-17, COMPOSITE WEEK (AUG. 29-SEPT. 30), 1988**  
**NATIONAL NEWS**

Sources	Noticiero Univisión		NBC Evening News			
	June 13-17	%	Composite	%	June 13-17	%
<b>Non-Hispanic Sources</b>						
White House	2	4%	4	9%	6	6%
Member House/ Senate	4	9	4	9	12	12
Michael Dukakis	3	7	4	9	4	4
George Bush	4	9	6	14	7	7
Jesse Jackson	2	4	--	--	--	--
Other Federal Officials	4	9	8	18	22	22
State and Local Officials	1	2	--	--	3	3
Political and Economic Experts	2	4	--	--	2	2
Business Leaders	--	--	1	2.3	5	5
Labor Leaders	--	--	--	--	1	1
Religious Leaders	1	2	--	--	1	1
Professional/ Experts	1	2	1	2.3	12	12
Civil Rights Groups	--	--	1	2.3	2	2
Anglo Media Victims	1	2	--	--	12	12
Protesters	1	2	1	2.3	--	--
Criminals	3	7	--	--	2	2
Man on the Street	--	--	2	4.5	7	7
Polls	1	2	--	--	--	--
Other	2	5	--	--	--	--

Hispanic Sources						
Member House/ Senate	2	4	1	2.3		
Federal Officials	--	--	1	2.3		
State and Local Officials	3	7	--	--	1	1
Political and Economic Experts	--	--	--	--		
Business Leaders	--	--	--	--		
Labor Leaders	--	--	--	--		
Political and Civic Groups	1	2	1	2.3		
Grass Roots Leaders	--	--	--	--		
Man on the Street	--	--	2	4		
Protesters	--	--	1	2.3		
Victims	1	2	1	2.3		
Criminals	2	4	--	--		
Religious Leaders	--	--	--	--		
Professional/ Experts	1	2	2	4.5		
Partisan Activists	1	2	1	2.3		
Other	--	--	1	2.3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100%</b>

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