

The Press of a People: The Evolution of Spanish-Language News and the
Changing Political Community

by

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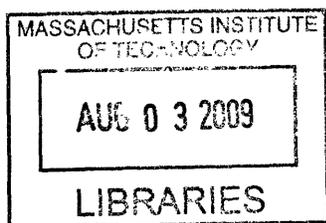
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ABSTRACT

Spanish-language news in the United States has grown over the last 20 years into a significant economic and social force. This growth has heightened concerns about the integration of Spanish-speaking groups into American political life and the ability of the media to affect democratic values. Evidence from other countries shows the dangers of fractured mass communication, and a theory based on (a) the treatment of minorities by the state, (b) the special functions demanded by consumers of the ethnic media, and (c) the norms held by both journalists and the community reveals deficiencies in the existing thinking on the mass media. Using content analysis and elite interviews with journalists and editors at a leading Spanish-language newspaper, this thesis examines the potentially polarizing effects of market forces on the Latino media. I find that, after the onset of competition and the transition to a new ownership structure, *La Opinión* of Los Angeles changed the information presented to minority audiences, pushing away from its mainstream counterpart and toward more community-based journalism. The most significant findings involve how ethnic groups and their interests are balanced in coverage, as seen through the selection of front-page topics and the representation of said groups within articles. The assignment of causal influence is not, however, as clear-cut as it initially seems; journalistic practices and dynamics with the news organizations shaped how competition would influence coverage.

Introduction

The mass media are recognized as salient actors within mainstream political science, yet there remain under-explored areas of political communication research. There is little disagreement over the normative function of news outlets, with theorists contending that these mass media create a public sphere where individuals share ideas and foment norms of tolerance and fairness (de Tocqueville 1840, Habermas 1985, Curran 2000, Lawson 2002). The media also perform a valuable watchdog function, enforcing accountability in democratic states (Graber 2002, Hallin 2000, Waisbord 2000) and improving elites' responsiveness in autocracies (Ungar 1990). Furthermore, dysfunctions of an open and responsible media have been shown to induce the breakdown of inter-group communication and the spiraling of unchecked myths and hate speech into violence (Posen 1993, Snyder 2000, Paris 2004). As attention-grabbing as these outcomes are, they betray how the balance of scholarly work has focused on the effects of mass media, rather than on their development. There is a limit, however, to the amount of knowledge that can be gained from only looking at how the mass media affects political processes without gazing upstream and unpacking how the news is made.

Literary glimpses inside the newsroom are not rare (Fallows 1997, Goldberg 2002, Alterman 2003, Thomas 2006 to name a few), but a key difference between popular accounts of the newsmaking process and the extant scientific research is that the latter is conducted with a particular variable in mind; the outcome of a specific election or the flowering of democratic journalism as a whole are two common examples. In this thesis, that motivation comes from the growing acknowledgement of the injurious effects of ethnic heterogeneity. Several authors have found inverse correlations between heterogeneity and the provision of public goods (Alesina et al. 1999, Miguel and Gugerty 2005, Putnam 2007). The portability of these findings suggests that

it is not something essential about ethnic identity or cultural values driving negative outcomes, but that their prevalence is indicative of a fragmented civil society and a dearth of inter-group network linkages.

Without delving deeply into the debate over how social capital works (Foley and Edwards 1998 and Portes 1998 are excellent summaries), a hypothetical causal chain can be constructed showing the impact of the mass media on this process. Working backwards, sub-optimal outcomes are driven by weak civil society, which in turn is driven by the existence of non-overlapping groups, attitudes, and identities. In addition to the aforementioned research on public-goods provision, the idea that individuals are less likely to cooperate or consent to the rules of government without some shared basis of norms is common to the study of ethnic warfare. Extreme cases of ethnic tension and conflagration also help illuminate the next link up our chain, namely the potential for exacerbated cleavages and animosities when the channels of mass communication prohibit the dispelling of aggravating myths or the moderation of ideas through interaction. In other words, the mass media has the power to propel both positive and negative political outcomes by controlling the worldview that its consumers internalize. Testing the veracity of each of these linkages, from outcomes to ideas to the mass media, is far beyond the scope of any single thesis, and the present goal will therefore be to test the next piece in the chain, the determinants of content within an already-segmented media landscape.

The concept of segmentation lies at the heart of this thesis' topic and helps define what will be a key term: the ethnic media. One can think of the mass media as a marketplace of ideas (Snyder and Ballentine 1996), where any effect on political outcomes results from a combination of three factors: monopolization in the supply of information, segmentation of audience demand, and the strength of regulatory institutions and norms. As in any economy, inefficiencies arise

when communication is restricted. Suppose two subsets of the media-consuming public receive differing information on a proposed law, or only one group hears instructions on how and when to vote. Come the day of the election, a democratically sub-optimal outcome will have been produced. In this case, the limitations on mass communication inhibit citizens from making fully-informed choices and having a voice equal to those of all other citizens. To put it another way, democracy benefits from a reasonably open marketplace of ideas because tyrannical persuasion and other attempts to create imbalances in the distribution of political voice require that interests be concentrated enough to allow for segregation.

The ethnic media therefore constitute a group of newspapers and broadcasters within the larger marketplace of ideas where one limitation on the perfect exchange of information throughout democratic society is fixed. Through the use of a language not spoken by the majority of the population, the ethnic media are by definition catering to a segmented audience. That a media outlet publishing in a minority language might also be hindered in its supply of information from a majority-dominated government or lack the protections afforded by a long history of journalistic norms are two possibilities explored in this thesis, but they are not foundational to the very idea of an ethnic media in the same way that a linguistically-segmented audience is. In short, asking what factors determine the content disseminated by the ethnic media is tantamount to exploring the extent to which inherent linguistic cleavages within a society translate into measurable distortions within the marketplace of ideas and why these effects would change over time. Imagining this process as namelessly as possible is important because, despite any connotation implied by the word "ethnic," the data shows that the divergences across linguistic subsets of the media owes more to the mere presence of rigid divisions than to any cultural content or otherwise unique properties that infuse these divisions.

In short, the ethnic media deserves special attention not only due to the potentially deleterious effects of imperfect mass communication, but because its behavior cannot be fully captured through the existing understanding of either the mass media or ethnic heterogeneity. This thesis addresses this lacuna by developing a unique theory of how an ethnic media outlet responds to external forces and illustrating this model through a single case. More specifically, this thesis investigates the effects of changing market conditions on the output of the Latino media in the United States. Increasing immigration from Mexico and Central America has spurred rapid growth in Spanish-language newspapers and TV stations across American cities, with some media markets witnessing greater competition and others consolidation and conglomeration. Adding to this flux is the sometimes erratic response of governments to diversification. With states passing laws banning bilingual education and endorsing English as an official language, the ability and desire of some political institutions to compensate for linguistic cleavages is justifiably an open question. In short, conditions are ripe for observing unique behavior within the ethnic media.

Through the case of the Los Angeles-based newspaper *La Opinión*, this thesis will demonstrate the powerful effect economic stimuli can have on the presentation of news. Primarily as the result of the introduction of a rival newspaper, the former monopolist *La Opinión* changed its domain, or focus, to much more community-oriented stories. The newspaper increased content emphasizing both the existence of a unified ethnic group and the status of *La Opinión* within that community. The role of the state is predictably secondary to the primacy of audience-maximization in the determination of media content, though its ability to define readers' interests through its treatment of immigrants remains significant. Overall, the differences across *La Opinión* and its mainstream counterpart *The Los Angeles Times* are largely devoid of

cultural content and simply reflect the social, economic, and political circumstances common to the region's Latino population. The actual effect of the ethnic media on the construction of this shared identity is not measured in this thesis, but is nonetheless considered an important theoretical issue to be discussed momentarily. The essential point, therefore, is that though the unique influences on the ethnic media may be waning, differences in content across linguistic subsets will likely persist as the Spanish-language news industry continues to develop.

In order to reach this conclusion, this thesis proceeds in three parts. Part I begins with a discussion of the ultimate political outcomes of interest, namely the ability of the media to construct ethnic identities and to influence its consumers psychologically. Existing theories of media behavior are then considered and used to create a new model specific to the ethnic media. Part II contains the study of *La Opinión* itself, which consists of two methods of content analysis and elite interviews with journalists currently working at the newspaper. Part III briefly explores the portability of these findings through the content analysis of another Spanish-language newspaper and then offers some generalizations and implications for future research.

Part I

In order to understand why competition might drive firms within the ethnic media to hinder democracy, I synthesize insights from several literatures. The first of these bodies of knowledge deals with the effect of the media on individuals' perceptions of groups, both in terms of the psychological effects of mass communication and the specific impact the media has on the development of ethnic identity. Although I do not critique this literature so much as merely introduce it, these concepts are crucial to understanding the "stakes" of media development. The interest in the special functions of the ethnic media derived from this context help to highlight the deficiencies in the extant research on the determinants of media content. Herein is the primary theoretical contribution of this thesis, the notion that the "usual suspects" of the state, society, and firm owners influence the ethnic media in ways unpredicted by existing models of the English-language media. Detailing the hypotheses that can be derived from this statement, with an eye on those variables suggested by the literature on the normative functions of the media, is the final step in developing the theoretical argument being tested in Part II, and concludes this section.

The role of the media in the construction of identity

The best way to begin thinking about how identities can be constructed through social processes is to start with this école's primary alternative, primordialism, which contends that certain preferences and subsequent behaviors persist in a fixed condition, either through biological or cultural predetermination (Geertz 1973, Van Evera 2001). A slightly more forgiving variation on primordialism, often discussed with regard to ethnic warfare and the amelioration of said conflicts, asserts that ethnic identities may theoretically be malleable, but

the weight of history and other empirical realities render such pacifying alterations effectively impossible (O'Brien 1993, Kaufmann 1996, Kaufman 2001, Petersen 2002). By their very nature, however, arguments using ancient hatreds and group identities as fixed exogenous variables do not claim to be universal. It must be remembered that the constant state of internecine violence between some groups creates something of a selection problem for the study of identity formation. If violence is a unique pathway for the hardening of identity (Mueller 2000, Fearon and Laitin 2003), then nonviolent processes of immigration and integration might still have varying effects that are simply overshadowed in more conflict-ridden cases.

Although the potential influence of the media on identity may be difficult to see when the forces presumed to be at work are culture or violence, the connection becomes more visible when one thinks about the role of language by itself. Although many works (Gellner 1983, Anderson 1982, Laitin 1992) couch the impact of language within a larger exogenous force such as modernization or colonialism, they all agree that the process of communication represents a unique mechanism through which the boundaries of social and political entities are defined. Laitin in particular argues that "culture" does not constitute a naturally salient cleavage, but that the necessities of ruling lead to the use of language standardization as a means of establishing legitimacy. Momentarily stepping outside of the political science canon and relieving the burden of explaining state formation, one can see ample evidence within the field of sociolinguistics on how the use of language defines groups in similarly developmental settings such as high schools (Eckert 1989, Bucholtz 1999, Eckert 2000, Duff 2002). What this means is that, contrary to the interpretation of identities as static and individuals' values and behaviors as fixed, the differentiation of languages within a single environment can have a dynamic impact on how group boundaries are perceived.

For movement within the ethnic media to be relevant to political outcomes, it must also be established that the news itself shapes political attitudes and perceptions of group identities. In political psychology, one pertinent phenomenon is referred to as "the third-person effect" (Mutz 1989, Duck et al. 1995, Perloff 1996, McLeod et al. 2001), wherein an individual's exposure to media messages inform how they conceptualize "the other," the out-group whose own attitude must be imagined and reacted against. The more distant a person feels to this imaginary group or the more dissimilar he feels toward its members, the more negative his perceptions about their own susceptibility to media influence will be, and the more strongly will he adjust his attitude to compensate. In short, whether out of ignorance or a belief in one's own cognitive superiority, individuals only perceive media messages as affecting others, and are more likely to do so when the consequence of this imagined influence would be negative. Though the "third person effect" describes perceptions of media influence rather than of direct threats, it is nevertheless worth noting as an example of how specific media messages regarding the salient groupings within a society can shape how individuals think and act with regard to those groups.

There is evidence to suggest, however, that the media's effect can go beyond this biased perception of the media's effect and directly influence how individuals shape their political identities (Sniderman 1991, Mutz 1992 and 1998). Through the presentation of events and persons external to an individual's personal experience, the media provide cues as to which elements of everyday life are shared and deserving of public expression. This transformation of personal experience into collective experience encourages the adoption of shared attitudes and their use within political decisionmaking. As societies grow relative to the range of one's personal interactions, individuals become more and more reliant on the media as a heuristic device for identifying others affected by, and with similar attitudes toward, the same issues. At

the same time, this widening scope promotes moderation in attitudes, as exposure to collective opinion encourages the well-informed to question their own attitudes and the less-informed to trust in the wisdom of the crowd. Given these powerful psychological effects of the mass media in forming individuals into like-minded cohorts and inducing the sublimation of individual judgment to collective opinion, it is not difficult to see how a segmented marketplace of ideas could have effects on an ideally unsegmented political process.

Grappling with how the media affects politically-salient grouping at the most basic level bypasses traditional theories of attitudinal change, such as agenda setting or issue priming. Although it would be a stretch to claim that the notion of strong media effects has been debunked, the hard-and-fast impact of the media on, for example, vote choice or changes in issue priorities, has been shown to be highly contingent on outside factors (Ball-Rokeach et al. 1976, Chaffee et al. 1986, Zaller 1992 and 1996, Schmitt-Beck 2003, Lawson and McCann 2005). More important, however, is the fact that these mechanisms are not relevant to the issue of divergence across linguistic subsets of the mass media. To argue that the most important effect of the minority media is the change in discrete values or attitudes would necessitate a return to the assumption that linguistically-differentiated audiences hold distinct, fixed values. Emphasizing the role the media plays in favoring assimilationist or pluralistic attitudes (to take one example) would also introduce subjective judgments about the virtue of these ideas. Setting the more fundamental notion that the mass media affects group boundaries and identities as the fixed point on the horizon to which this research is oriented not only avoids these complications, but produces a more basic conception of the media's value to democracy, and which of its elements merit measurement.

The Media's Democratic Elements

If we take as paramount this concern that the media can, through the presentation of news, influence group boundaries and thus the health of a democracy, it becomes evident which elements of the media's content are the most important. The scope of this thesis is set by the belief that the most salient characteristics of the news can be distilled into two concepts. These can be called balance and tradecraft, or how media outlets represent distinct groups and interests (in this case primarily ethnic groups, but also government/non-government viewpoints), and how well they hew to basic norms of investigation and verification. I make undue assumptions about the need for integration or homogenization; the "good" being pursued here is merely that of political participation. In addition to the previously mentioned works emphasizing how the media affects the perception of group membership, there exists the more prosaic argument (Ungar 1990, Curran 2000) that accurate representations of individual and group interests improve the communication of demands to state leaders. The common thread to all these arguments is that the societies that function the best are those with media systems (meaning all news outlets) where viewpoints are balanced in proportion to reality. Naturally, the achievement of any of the above goals is hindered by the linguistic separation of information flows.

If the media's role as a representative forum bonds individuals into larger political entities and improves democratic functioning, then it is the media's role as a watchdog that reassures the public of the government's fidelity. After all, in its most normative conception, journalism entails a commitment to reporting truth, or at least providing information (Kelley and Donway 1990, Abramson 1990). In more functional terms, journalism is a commitment to verification (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001). A desire to verify information is responsible both for the initial impulse to question or criticize the government, and for the use of reliable sources to convey credibility. In

addition to conveying a general commitment to factuality, sourcing practices can also indicate the level of access/investigative effort entailed in an article or the co-optation of the news by specific entities or interests (Herman and Chomsky 1988). It is no accident that individuals' mistrust of the media is correlated with a mistrust of government (Patterson 2000); lacking a window into government operation, there is little faith that government is working toward the common good. In short, just as the natural segmentation by language ratchets up the significance of the media maintaining a proportional representation, so too is there added importance that all groups in society feel secure in the fairness of government.

Who Moves the Media?: Theories on Behavior

One of the reasons the existing literature on the determinants of mass-media content suffers is precisely because there is not consensus around these most crucial aspects of the news, though to be fair there is usually agreement that open and independent coverage of political affairs is the normative ideal. This lack of precision in turn has caused a fracturing within existing theories of media behavior, none of which adequately capture the unique conditions faced by the ethnic media. To oversimplify, the three dominant perspectives on how the production of this news is influenced by external forces align neatly with three actors: the state, the market (more precisely, firm owners responding to market forces), and the community. Examining each of these in turn exposes their deficiencies, both in terms of their own merits and how they fail to capture the unique properties of the ethnic media, but also foreshadows how these perspectives can be synthesized into a unified theory.

The state-centric literature on the newsmaking process emphasizes two inter-related mechanisms: either actors within the government directly impede or manipulate journalists to

engineer favorable coverage, or they use their natural advantage in initiating communication ("the bully pulpit") to set journalists' agendas and steer even the most critical of discourse. Works that make the former assertion (Bennett 1990, Herman and Chomsky 1988, Entman 1989, Puglisi 2004, Louw 2005) range in how nefariously they conceptualize the state and its desire to control media messages and public discourse. To chastize some of these authors for making deductive leaps regarding antidemocratic sentiment within the state is not to deny that some of the tactics they outline, such as the threat of withholding access and the exploitation of personalistic ties, are used. There is, however, a frequent reliance on untestable claims and anecdotal evidence that erodes the confidence one can have in broad statements about the state's unified preferences and the media's role as an instrument of social control.

More charitable interpretations of the relationship between state and media actors characterize the newsmaking process as the "negotiation of newsworthiness" (Cook 1996), or as a coproduction where journalists are not necessarily collaborative or submissive (see also Zaller 1999, Kedrowski 2000, Patterson 2000, Graber 2002). During both the normal conduct of governmental duties as well as campaigns, lawmakers attempt to manufacture favorable coverage in the media, while journalists attempt to construct dramatic narratives that also carry their unique imprimatur. A consensus within these works is that the public interest, however it is to be defined, is rarely a consideration in the back-and-forth between political elites and journalists. This is interesting because, as both the literature on minority journalists and the data to be presented later suggest, the "public interest" may carry greater weight within in the ethnic press. More will be said on this topic momentarily, but for now it suffices to conclude that, given the greater evidence for self-aggrandizement and not social control as the motive driving state

interactions with the media, scant reason exists to think that government officials should behave differently when interacting with journalists of different subsets.

The elite domination of information flows could still theoretically drive differences across subsets of the media, though this effect is likely quite small in the United States. To borrow from the model detailed in Zaller 1992, attitudes are determined by an individual's ability to receive and accept messages from political leaders; the media serves merely as a conduit for the attributed opinions of its sources. Knowing that receptiveness is the product of cognitive engagement, and supposing that a media outlet will not continually supply information to which its audience is not receptive, it follows that media outlets with different audiences will perform their gatekeeping duties differently. Informally, if a political elite habitually sends messages X and Z, but only message Z concerns a topic with which a minority audience is engaged, the ethnic media will choose to channel news on this latter topic. In the United States, however, there is not any institutional basis to assume such a stark contrast between the messages different audiences are willing to hear. To be sure, there are policies that affect minorities disproportionately, such as healthcare spending or bilingual education, but the American state does not formally distinguish individuals by ethnic group, nor has its stance changed significantly over time. Movement within the ethnic media beyond whatever static level of difference exists across subsets therefore requires the introduction of another actor.

If the state is theoretically powerful but practically negligible, the market (roughly defined as the preferences of owners) remains strong on both counts. That profit-maximization is the guiding principle within a system of privately-owned media firms may not be a shocking revelation; what the extant literature has done a remarkably good job of showing, however, is the pervasiveness of this economic logic and its power to overwhelm other factors (the state, norms,

etc). Hamilton (2004) provides a model in which media behavior is determined by four considerations: ownership goals, product differentiation, audience demands, and the literal costs to produce news. According to Hamilton, the power to shape coverage and enforce a norm of behavior inconsistent with profit-maximization rests solely with the owner. In other words, "maverick" journalists, or those that seem to defy external influences with their coverage, can only survive when protected by an individual or familial system of ownership. The audience is equally impotent in this top-down interpretation of media behavior; historical trends such as the rise of objectivity or the decline of hard news were not the result of an audience proactively expressing preferences, but advertiser-dictated attempts at increasing revenue.

A second important contribution of the research modeling the economic logic behind newsmaking is the argument that firms not only prefer segmentation, but engineer their content to manufacture such an environment. Game-theoretic models of competition (Baron 2005, Mullainathan and Shleifer 2005, Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006) show that firms are frequently rewarded more greatly for confirming an audience's prior beliefs than for risking their base's future loyalty by making their coverage more widely appealing. Firms therefore naturally segment themselves, establishing monopolies over particular niches and only competing over a marginal slice of the potential audience. This phenomenon is most frequently employed as an explanation for partisan bias in certain news outlets, but could conceivably be applied to a linguistically-segmented marketplace as well. With the barrier to full competition intransigent, firms would face even stronger incentives to appeal to the lowest common denominator within its core readership. Of course, there are several potentially complicating factors. Firstly, the language barrier, though permanent, is porous, and it is conceivable that a desire to be informed of public affairs would actually drive the learning of another language. Furthermore, firms might

calculate their strategic movements based on competition both within and across linguistic subsets. In short, one need not question the portability of spatial models of media competition to see the value in independently exploring the movements of the minority media.

Without a doubt, the economic explanation for media behavior is both parsimonious and convincing. The research question pursued in this very thesis owes a debt to its common-sense appeal, specifically the expectation that changes to market conditions should spur new behavior. That said, the rationale for deeming there to be a gap in the existing literature goes beyond the superficial changes to the boundaries of competition. In a nutshell, the product being sold in the two linguistic subsets is fundamentally different. Hamilton defines the media's product as meeting four types of information demands: the demand for aid in consumption, production, entertainment, and voting. Owners and editors can deviate on how equally these four demands are met, but by and large the function of the mainstream media does not vary across outlets. It could be argued, however, that the ethnic media serves an additional function and may behave in unpredicted ways. Particularly with regard to immigrant communities, the media has value beyond the specific information provided, through its ability to both reinforce ethnic identity and to socialize its audience to a new environment (Chaffee et al. 1990, Hwang 1999, Johnson 2000, Zhou 2002, Viswanath and Lee 2007). If minority audiences are using different criteria for judging the returns to consuming a particular news product, then firms may respond in unique ways to commonplace stimuli, such as changes in the amount of competition.

Another way of saying this is that, despite the highly marketized nature of the American media, the influence of the community cannot be dismissed out of hand. There is some evidence to suggest that not only does the minority media's special significance create new patterns of usage within its audience, but that these unique functions feed back on the media and influence

future behavior. For example, Latino journalists in the U.S. have expressed a desire to both act as traditional reporters and as representatives of their community, using their coverage to help integrate their audience and increase the voicing of their specific concerns (Rodriguez 1999). These attitudes are by no means uniform, and previous studies (Subervi-Velez 1986, Downing 1992) that have acknowledged the assimilation vs. pluralism dichotomy have found wide variation in the types of news that minority journalists produce. To be sure, all these discussions are based on some notion that audience preferences are being expressed and addressed. What differentiates social norms from profit maximization as an explanatory variable is the assumption that the media itself exerts a socialization effect on its practitioners; firms are not merely responding to an audience that wants advocacy journalism, but the professional community is propagating this ideal as appropriate.

In addition to explaining how and why minority journalists might produce content in a manner unlike their mainstream counterparts, the addition of norms more generally to the explanation of media behavior can help explain continuity. Particularly within journalism, the ossifying effect the daily routine of producing the news could have on how journalists respond to exogenous shocks could be powerful. Although several authors have shown how historical trends within journalism are the result of new competitive environments (West 2001, Hallin and Mancini 2004, Hamilton 2004), it must be remembered that the introduction of new styles of journalism themselves created and reified new professional norms which in turn affected the next historical transition. To put it bluntly, one cannot know a priori the extent to which journalistic norms have acted as a countervailing force against market pressures, but it stands to reason that the added weight of what might be called norms of ethnic solidarity could slow or stunt any renovations asked for by advertisers or firm owners. As illustrated in Rodriguez (1999), this idea

fits with historical examples of advertisers pushing for the creation of a pan-Latino identity, and local journalists remaining community-oriented.

It is important, however, to qualify the power of social norms to explain outcomes not only as they relate to economic forces, but to the state as well. It has been a frequent pitfall in the literature on social capital (which in itself is an amalgamation of norms of reciprocity, fairness, and trust) to underestimate the ability of the state to not only receive the benefits of a vibrant civil society, but to contribute to it by shaping patterns of participation. Speaking specifically about the media, the state both explicitly places boundaries on their behavior through lawmaking, but implicitly shapes the tone or orientation of coverage through the natural interactions between reporters and sources. It remains to be studied whether or how the norms of interaction change across time as journalists adapt to new political figures, but two things are clear. Firstly, individual representatives of the state exert a powerful independent effect on the norms of conduct that journalists "bring to the table." Secondly, even in the friendliest of states, it is important to consider how the political setting is influencing the manner in which members of the ethnic media are performing their job.

Such a dizzying journey through our current understanding of how and why the mass media makes the news requires some recapitulation. There exists a defensible logic supporting the respective conclusions that either the state, the market, or society reigns as the shaper of the news. Even if we are to accept, however, that these theories are neither mutually exclusive or previously unsynthesized, a proper application of these ideas to the ethnic media has not yet been attempted. Additionally, what literature on the ethnic media does exist provides ample justification, in the form of both initial findings and grounds for speculation, for the theoretical differentiation of the mass media according to linguistic divisions. Because the state treats

minorities and minority journalists differently (even if only marginally so), because the consumers of the ethnic media demand a fundamentally different product from firms, and because both newsrooms and tight-knit communities have the potential to incubate their own norms of behavior, political science needs a new theory of the ethnic media's behavior.

Toward a theory of the ethnic media

The contributions of the literature enable the development of a model of how the ethnic media should uniquely respond to changes in market conditions. To briefly summarize, economic factors remain the primary driver of the media's content, though now the state plays a more important role. The fundamental mechanism is the desire to maximize the audience within the linguistic segment, and how it plays out depends on the immigration and legal status of that audience. The state's treatment of the ethnic media's audience functions as a kind of context, setting the static discrepancy between the news presented by the various linguistic subsets. If a large percentage of an ethnic group exists outside the governing political community, their interests will naturally lie outside this sphere as well, and it is to these interests that content will gravitate as competition increases. This effect is amplified when, as in the case of *La Opinión*, the style of ownership transitions to a corporation. As the potential for personalized leadership and non-economic directives decrease, the amount of overlap with the mainstream media will likely decrease as the overall quality of journalism increases.

Predictions about tradecraft are weak relative to those regarding balance, but the general growth of the Latino media industry means that, at least presently, the "soft news" being induced in the mainstream press should not be expected. If anything, tradecraft should increase as outlets hire more reporters and develop higher, homogenous standards for content. Norms may still

exert an independent effect on the content, but only to the extent that continuity within a firm's staff allows these norms to foment. Especially as competition increases and economic concerns become paramount, any extant norms of solidarity or a desire to practice advocacy journalism will be outweighed by the preference for objective professionalism. That said, it remains unpredictable the extent to which individual firms will use some expression of social responsibility as an avenue for demonstrating their connection to the community. Much remains open in a theory of the ethnic media, though the basic tenet holds that audience-maximization will drive them apart from the mainstream and into being more representative of the immediate community and its interests.

There are two circumstances under which this theory could be falsified: if there is no relationship between changes in the competitive environment and changes to media content, or if that relationship exhibits no special status for the ethnic media. The absence of any correlation between competition and a newspaper's balance or tradecraft would indicate that the media outlet is insulated from market pressure. For example, outlets such as CBS News used to be considered "loss leaders," or areas of tolerated unprofitability that conferred prestige on the larger corporate entity. In the present-day Latino media, with the existence of family-owned firms as well as growing media-specific corporations such as Impremedia, the acceptance of less-than-optimal profits is highly improbable. Nevertheless, an increase in competition might not spur changes to content if the assumed intermediary step, the translation of external stimuli into new ownership preferences, disappears. Confidence in the ability to defend market share without significant repositioning could be buffering the effect of a new entrant, and would likely be contingent on the new outlet's own initial positioning and ownership structure.

Additionally, if the ethnic media evolves as expected over time while still hewing closely to the journalistic product offered by the mainstream press, then any special effects wrought by the state or social norms would be effectively proved moot. This could be observed empirically if actors within the state nullify linguistic boundaries or if the firm experiences high turnover (which could indicate low resistance to top-down edicts). Such a result would place the ethnic media under the umbrella of the aforementioned models of market effects. Depriving the ethnic media of unique determinants would also place a significant cap on the presumed effects witnessed downstream. If the state and society are not salient actors in the newsmaking process, it would be difficult to assume that the mirroring of the mainstream media would not extend down to the existence of contingent media effects.

The centrality of the state to proving the uniqueness of the ethnic media makes it a good starting point for moving from these null hypotheses to a better detailing of the proposed theory. Given the relative inclusiveness (equal political rights, no official role for ethnic groups) and stability of American policies toward its minority citizens, the state serves more as a background factor in the shaping of both the static relationship between the minority and mainstream media, as well as the changes the latter undergoes across time. Following the assumption that owners and editors are responsive to audience concerns, the primary effect of the state should be seen in those issue areas that affect minorities disproportionately, such as immigration, labor issues, and health care. At the same time, one cannot dismiss the symbolic and practical value of having a government that includes or is led by a Latino, which increases the ease of a journalist's job and the audience's interest in political affairs. Assuming the extent to which a shared identity lapses into favoritism is limited by the overall egalitarianism of the governing institutions, the general

expectation is reinforced; The more inclusive the state, in terms of equal treatment and literal representation, the less likely an ethnic media outlet is to differ from its mainstream counterpart.

With the onset of competition, the effect of the state becomes more complicated. Under these new conditions, some forms of inclusiveness of the state exacerbate the gap between linguistic subsets of the media. If minorities enjoy full citizenship save for a proportion that is barred from political participation (i.e. they entered the country illegally), then increased sensitivity to market share will result in topics of wider interest (home-country news) crowding out news of less universal relevance as firms try to bring the latter segment into the fold. The reasoning behind this mechanism comes from the psychological literature on the collectivizing effect of the media. In essence, when the state restricts membership in the political collective, the value of, and interest in, related news drops for the audience. A media outlet that wants to maximize its audience but cannot provide an endlessly diverse news product will therefore emphasize those group allegiances that serve as lowest common denominators, such as the local setting or Latin America.

This effect is amplified when the changes to the market environment entail the introduction of a corporate actor, either on the part of the new entrant or through the conglomeration of the incumbent outlet. As the capacity for personalized directing decreases, the primary effect is not a descent into soft-news, but the aforementioned increased ethnification concomitant to the creation of a pan-Latino advertising base and an increase in journalistic quality. The shared incentives for broad appeal mean that the axis of competition (re: how rivals will attempt to differentiate themselves) will be the production of news that evinces a higher level of tradecraft. There also exists, however, a second reason for better-quality journalism outside of the mainstream: the information is of higher value. With broader social networks and a

greater variety of civil-society institutions, the mainstream consumer can learn a piece of news a variety of ways, and the urgency of the demand for that news from any one source is decreased. Ethnic enclaves have fewer informal opportunities for exposure to news, and the demand for high-quality, fact-based journalism is therefore higher. Of course, this structural deficit in the social networks of minorities decreases as the size of the community increases, but because the growing market size entails the proliferation of media outlets and competition, a decrease in tradecraft should not be predicted in larger cities.

The market shapes not only the development of the ethnic media across time, but also its relationship to the mainstream at a given point. There are several variables to consider: whether each subset contains a monopoly, whether the outlets within each subset are corporately controlled, and finally, the relationship or overlap between the relevant owners. For a short time, both *The Los Angeles Times* and *La Opinión* were owned by the same media conglomerate, the Tribune Company, which now controls the competitor to the latter newspaper. Under these circumstances, when both the English- and Spanish-language options share an owner, the resulting products will differ (to a reasonable extent) in their topics covered, so as to decrease their redundancy. This may seem illogical, with both the language barrier preventing substitution and the presumed cost-reduction from producing a single news product and merely repackaging it different languages. These assumptions are undercut, however, by two empirical realities: the existence of a bilingual segment of the media audience, and the known preferences of ethnic community members for news of the home country. In short, reprinting the mainstream paper in Spanish is not desirable because those who could read the English-language version would have no cause to consume both, and those that could not would likely have a low demand for a percentage of the news being offered.

Clearly, any theory of the ethnic media must be predicated on numerous countervailing forces working simultaneously. With regard to the impact of social norms, the open question is the extent to which working at an ethnic newspaper will layer additional feelings of responsibility on top of the extant norms of verification and investigation. It would be foolish to theorize how any individual journalist feels his job should be performed, but two lessons from the literature can act as guides; first, newsrooms are powerful incubators for norms of behavior, and secondly, knowing the ownership structure can provide clues as to the type of content likely preferred at the top of the organization. It follows that high turnover within a staff are indicative of a weak office culture, or at least a culture not entirely congruent with the preferences at the top. Of course, there is also something of a paradox, since small papers are where individual owners are most likely to have the ability to exert their will, but the expansion of newsrooms at larger outlets is likely to dilute any norms developed independent of management. Specialized norms are not insignificant in the determination of content, but the actors capable of enforcing them are rarely the journalists themselves, save for when their tenure allows them to rise to editorial positions that reinforce the downward communication of preferences.

This model for explaining changing media content favors top-down mechanisms, and it is important to state the assumptions about the audience that are being made. The biggest of these is that audience members have fixed preferences for what they want from a media outlet; change results from firms wanting to satisfy a greater percentage of these preferences. To date, it has not been tested how consumers of the ethnic media may develop new tastes across time. Similarly it is unknown how well the audience is able to express its preferences, fixed or not. This speaks to the question of how exogenous a shock really is; if a newspaper is perceived as unsatisfactory, individuals may start their own alternative or request that an outside competitor enter the market.

In this case, either the audience or the incumbent's internal failings would be the omitted variable driving the whole scenario. At least in Los Angeles, the relatively constant circulation numbers prior and immediately after the introduction of competition would not suggest such dissatisfaction. In the next part, the sentiments and preferences of the audience, as they are perceived by the journalists serving them, will be a topic of investigation.

Part II

The Latino Media

Over the last decade, the ethnic media in the United States has grown at almost exponential rates. Between 2000 and 2006, the advertising revenue reaped annually by Spanish-language newspapers as an industry nearly doubled, from \$596 million to \$1.1 billion¹. That said, the total circulation for the top publications has been relatively stagnant, and an overwhelming 82% of the money raised through advertising comes from local sources². What these figures indicate is a key transitional period for Spanish-language news; media firms remain tied to their community, but are also becoming more powerful economically. The response of firms to these peculiar circumstances has generally been to conglomerate or to find new areas for competition. To illustrate this point, the table below lists the top 15 Spanish-language newspapers produced in the United States (according to 2007 advertising revenue), with notations for their ownership structure and presence of competition:

Table 1: U.S.-published Spanish-language newspapers by advertising revenue³

El Nuevo Herald (Miami)‡	Hoy (N.Y.)*	Al Día (Dallas)‡
La Opinión (Los Angeles)*	Washington Hispanic (D.C.)	TV y Más (Phoenix)
El Diario La Prensa (N.Y.)*	La Raza (Chicago)*	Vida en la Valle (Fresno)‡
Hoy (Chicago)**	El Norte (El Paso)	La Voz de Phoenix (Phoenix)
Hoy (Los Angeles)**‡	El Sentinel (Miami)	Diario Las Americas (Miami)

‡ shares owner with local English-language newspaper

* owned by Impremedia

** owned by Tribune Company

The case of Los Angeles is a perfect example of this state of flux. In January of 2004, the Tribune Company sold the 50% share of the daily *La Opinión* that it had acquired in 2000,

¹ "State of the News Media: Ethnic/Alternative" Available 23 May 2007 at <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com>

² *Ibid*

³ "Advertising Age: Hispanic Fact Pack 2007" Available 16 August 2008 at <http://adage.com/images/random/hisfactpack07.pdf>

selling its interest back to the founding Lozano family, which had controlled the paper since its inception in 1926. Shortly thereafter, in March of 2004, the Tribune Co. began publishing a Los Angeles edition of *Hoy*, which previously was based solely in New York and Chicago. In its first year and a half, *Hoy* rose to an audited weekday circulation of 72,365⁴. In the same time period, *La Opinión's* circulation fell slightly, from 125,624 to 124,057⁵. Shortly after the extension of *Hoy* into the greater Los Angeles area, the ownership of the incumbent *La Opinión* decided to merge with *El Diario La Prensa*, the largest New York newspaper, to form a parent company, Impremedia. Since that time, Impremedia has acquired or launched 8 more publications, including weekly newspapers in San Francisco and Houston. Naturally, the coexistence of these twin trends, a rapidly expanding corporate ownership structure and the entrance of a competitor backed by a similarly flush parent, makes the assignment of causal influence more difficult, but the opinions of those present favor the latter in the evolution of media content.

If the flurry of changes to the business landscape in Los Angeles' Latino media make it a ripe case for the examination of why ethnic newspapers change over time, the demographic and political setting also lend themselves to better understanding the growing difference between Spanish- and English-language news. Los Angeles, California is a city of 3.7 million people, 46% of which are considered Hispanic by the U.S. Census Bureau⁶. Furthermore, the population of undocumented immigrants has been estimated as ranging around one million⁷, although the nature and politicization of the issue make a reliable count difficult to obtain. Los Angeles also

⁴ "Hoy Announces Circulation Increases in Los Angeles and Chicago" Available 23 May 2007 at <http://www.hoyinternet.com/acerca/hoy-pressrelease10nov2005,0,6076533.story>

⁵ see footnote 1

⁶ "United States Census Factfinder: Los Angeles" Available 23 May 2007 at <http://factfinder.census.gov>

⁷ "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services" Available 23 May 2007 at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

features one of the highest rates of gang-related violence in the country, a phenomenon that disproportionately affects the Latino population. These two issues, immigration status and vulnerability to crime, are just two examples of the divergent circumstances experienced by local residents. The open question is the extent to which these differences that are linked to ethnicity translate into a decreased amount of overlap between the linguistic subsets of the local media. As one reporter at *La Opinión* phrased it, "We pick stories that are appealing to the Spanish community. They [*The Los Angeles Times*] are trying to be a national newspaper."⁸

This discrepancy in perceived aims highlights a final reason why Los Angeles makes for an attractive case; the external stimuli of changing economic and political conditions has already brought changes internally to the newsroom. At the Times, the cutbacks in staffing and resignation of the publisher amid declining circulation have been widely reported. Conversely, *La Opinión* has been quietly growing, adding more reporters and establishing permanent positions in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Although it is conceivable that media content and styles of journalism could be adjusted without a change in personnel, the knowledge that there have been tangible changes within the Los Angeles media relieves the pressure to locate these elusive "marching orders." In short, even before formal analysis, one can be reasonably certain that changes have occurred within the Los Angeles ethnic media, thus enabling a more fruitful investigation into exactly what shape these changes have taken and why and how they occurred.

Restricting the Los Angeles media landscape to two newspapers, regardless of their status as leaders in circulation and ad revenue, naturally omits many of the relevant firms and potential processes at work within the ethnic media. There has been a concomitant rise in the number of Spanish-language media outlets across television, print, and radio, but of these three, Hispanic

⁸ Author's interview with Ruben Moreno, 15 July 2008

radio stations have no significant news coverage and television does not provide the depth and breadth of information provided by newspapers.⁹ In addition, an exhaustive review of the media in a region of Los Angeles' size would be a practical impossibility. The ambition in analyzing the changes to *La Opinión* and its relationship to the English-language mainstream is therefore not to be able to precisely document how all Spanish-language news has evolved, but rather provide an illustration of how a leading firm has responded to stimuli that are common across multiple settings. In completing this task, the first step is to identify exactly what effects have been wrought, and from there to explore how and why these changes were pursued.

From Concept to Measurement: Manual Content Analysis

Several discrete elements of a newspaper's front page were used to capture the aforementioned variables of balance and tradecraft. For the operationalization of this "balance" variable, the first element of content examined was simple story selection. This was done by physically measuring the front-page space devoted to news from various regions. Consistent with the hypothesis that the media tells its audience "what to think about," the amount of coverage on the front page, where broad categories are shirked in favor of editorial judgments on the importance of individual topics, captured the extent to which a newspaper considers itself, as well as its audience, to be a member of a particular community. Linking balance to a geographic distribution of the news also alleviated the fear of negative stereotypes, as the balance being measured deemphasizes the treatment of individuals in favor of individuals' interests. In other words, because the audience in the Los Angeles case was clustered within a single area and of a

⁹ The Project for Excellence in Journalism. *The State of the News Media 2006*. Available at <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/index.asp> on 22 December 2008

common ethnicity (though not necessarily a common nationality), the news does not reflect who or where they are, but what they care about.

For the sake of capturing the extent to which the media represents people of specific groups, balance was also measured through the examination of to whom the media was literally giving voice. To be sure, the people that a journalist speaks with can be categorized an infinite number of ways (some of which will be discussed with regard to the next variable), but here the primary interest was how sources broke down along ethnic lines. The motivating assumption was that, in order to demonstrate closer ties with the community, the ethnic media might increase the prevalence of Latino viewpoints independently of overall story selection. The level of engagement between the media and its audience was also measured through the appearance of individual-centric feature news, or stories that were not centered on an event, but rather on the life of a non-public figure. These stories, which may or may not be meant to encapsulate broader societal trends, demonstrate a newspaper's desire to be viewed not only as a conduit of information, but as an agent of the ethnic community as a whole.

The sources cited within individual articles were also categorized as a means for measuring tradecraft. Other authors have argued that both the quantity and the types of sources used by journalists are good indicators of overall investigativeness, with the most common danger identified as an over-reliance on government bureaucracies (Herman and Chomsky 1988, Livingston and Bennett 2003). By limiting themselves to information and opinions from easily-accessible spokesmen and officials, journalists not only cede control over the framing of the issue at hand, but harm their credibility with readers looking for unbiased information. In order to measure the distribution of sources according to their relation to a story, this paper adapts a coding schema from Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998), whereby individuals, organizations, or

documents cited as providing a quote or other information are categorized. For the purposes of this paper, the categories used were government officials and agencies, experts/outside analysts, directly involved parties, and unaffiliated citizens ("man-on-the-street" interviews). Again, there was no set value for what constituted good sourcing practices, though there was a scholarly preference for some distribution across types that curtail the use of government statements, as well as an overall increase in the number of sources used.

The second means by which tradecraft was measured was through the factualness of the reporting style. Capitalizing on research showing the acceptability of story leads (the opening paragraph of an article) as proxies (Althaus et al 2001), the intention here was to measure how many of the traditional four W's of who, what, where, and when are conveyed in an article. Patterson (2000) argues that "soft news," or news without significance to public affairs, tends to be written in a much more personalistic, literary style. Using story leads as an indication of evolving journalistic practices thus enabled the measurement of the rise of soft news without engaging in subjective judgments over the worthiness of specific topics, which were also recorded during the coding. As Mutz points out, event-centered reporting, and the four W's specifically, impact the way in which members of the media's audience perceive the news as a shared experience. In short, declines in the factualness of the news are not only indicative of decreasing political knowledge, but have diminished political engagement as well.

An example taken from the English-language portion of the sample helps to illuminate what exactly is meant by the terms "balance" and "tradecraft," as well as how these variables were measured. Below are the leads taken from two stories published on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, one of which is clearly written in a more factual style, while the other does not convey information so much as us a narrative format to hook the reader:

Car bombs exploded almost simultaneously outside three police stations in the Southern city of Basra early today, killing at least 30 people and injuring dozens others.

Any day now, amid the Spanish moss and Georgian manors of the Garden District, Anne Rice will descend the long stairs of her home, her shoes leaving behind dimples in the blood-red carpet, her graying bob reflecting one last time in the mirrors of her double parlor.

Both these stories were published in the April 21, 2004 edition of the newspaper, illustrating the high variability in tradecraft from article to article. The second lead is not devoid of information, introducing the "Who" of the article as Anne Rice, but the descriptions of the other relevant facts are vague at best, leaving readers unsure of exactly what is happening and when. By contrast, the first article explicitly states a wealth of information right up front, conveying both the significance of the event and the amount of research necessary for that level of precision. Describing a hypothetical jaunt by Anne Rice does nothing to tell the audience that this is something they should care about, although the lush imagery might nevertheless entice curious readers to continue with the story. By literally counting the number of facts in a story lead, it is therefore possible to measure the extent to which journalists are doing their job of disseminating the news to the public.

The "sourcing" aspect of tradecraft, as well as the implementation of the balance variable, are not immediately apparent in the above example, but can be explained nonetheless. One would be correct in the assumption that the first article features quotes and information from multiple types of sources, including both military officials and affected Iraqis. The article thus demonstrates itself to be a well-verified, complete picture of events, and not a "press-release" issued by a government body wishing to skew the news. The Anne Rice article, on the other hand, only quotes her son, and thus might be considered a press-release of a different sort, with little effort to contextualize what amounts to a celebrity profile. The contrasting ways in which

these two articles convey the quality of their journalism illustrates the need to count both the number of sources used for verification, and the types of sources as well. For the purposes of this study, these attributes were tallied at the level of the individual article, but aggregated into the same geographic categories used for balance. This was done to detect any preferential treatment across types of news, as might be expected if a staff is directed to devote time and resources away from a less-favored topic.

The importance of measuring the physical space devoted to a story about international news versus a feature piece on a national figure may seem questionable, but it is important to remember that the intention is not to directly measure the presence of groups in the newspaper, but rather the presence of group interests. For example, the first article does not reveal that the newspaper is catering to Iraqis, but to people who care about the news from Iraq. Were the amount of this type of news to drop, it would indicate that the newspaper no longer represented those individuals to the same extent as before. To be sure, inferences about the connection between one's interests and one identity are easier to make when contrasting, for example, Mexican news versus American news than it is when comparing the levels of local versus state coverage. The central point remains, however, that by manipulating the balance of coverage according to geography, a newspaper is not only picking its target audience, but informing them of the boundaries of their community.

Translating the amorphous concepts of balance and tradecraft into measurable pieces of a newspaper's physical product enabled a first cut at capturing the changes at *La Opinión*. The study itself was divided into two time periods: March-August 2004 and March-August 2006. The rationale behind these selections was a desire to allow enough time for the effects of competition to "sink in." As per findings on the appropriate size and style of newspaper samples, two

reconstructed weeks of front-pages (two of each day of the week) were selected at random from each time period. Numerous studies have used front-pages as proxies for news coverage (McCombs and Shaw 1972, Erbring et al 1980), pointing out how the physical prominence and the implied importance of a story not sequestered in an interior section augment the agenda-setting effect relative to the interior content. In addition to *La Opinión*, the *Los Angeles Times* was added to the sample using the same randomly selected dates. As will be seen momentarily, doing so added a valuable baseline for comparing the trends seen in *La Opinión* to those of the mainstream print media.

Growing Apart: The Results

The results of the content analysis bear out the validity of the coding schema, capturing a reshaping of *La Opinión's* content that would be verified by its staffers. For example, looking at those elements capturing balance, it is clear that a shift occurred in what news was presented, and by extension whose interests were represented. The largest changes in the geographic distribution of front-page stories were the increases in the proportional amount of space devoted to news of Mexico and of the local area, which rose by 19.8% and 12.1%, respectively. This reshuffling of the media's priorities came with the cost of decreased state and national news, both of which took up around 11% less space in 2006. Stories covering foreign countries dropped 14%, and Latin American news was given 6% fewer column inches. Although several of these categories do not graft well onto a dualistic conception of balance (i.e. local news cannot be said to be more or less representative of a particular audience without first measuring its preferences), this two-pronged polarization of the news is a move away from the comprehensive style evinced by the *Los Angeles Times* over the same time period. In the latter paper, no changes were

statistically significant, and the largest gain in any of the aforementioned news categories was 4% in city news, hardly an indication of an editorial sea change.

Table 2: Geographic Focus in *La Opinión* and *The Los Angeles Times*, 2004-2006

% of front-page space for:	2004 <i>La Opinión</i>	2006 <i>La Opinión</i>	Change in <i>La Opinión</i>	2004 <i>LA Times</i>	2006 <i>LA Times</i>	Change in <i>LA Times</i>
National News	36.4	25.9	-9.18%	37.6	39.4	+1.78%
State	18.0	6.2	-10.6%*	14.3	8.93	-5.36%
City/County	10.3	22.3	+12.1%*	4.13	8.27	+4.15%
Mexico	10.1	30.0	+19.8%***	0	2.46	+2.46%*
Latin America	9.30	3.00	-6.25%	2.41	.846	-1.57%
International	15.9	1.81	-14.1%***	26.2	20.1	-6.10%
Latino Features	0	9.87	+9.87%***	1.06	1.91	+8.51%

*p < .1 ** p < .05 *** p < .01

This populist re-orientation of *La Opinión's* agenda-setting priorities is also seen in the topics of the front-page articles. With losses of 3% in the number of stories on political leaders or "politics-as-usual," 14% on Iraq and American foreign policy, and 9% on crime or security, one effect of competition appears to be a de-emphasis on stories featuring the state. The minimal increases in the number of articles on either "Health/Education" or "Other Public Services" do little to disprove this conclusion. The two exceptions to this trend are the double-digit rises of 11% and 12% in coverage of corruption or government dysfunction and of immigration, of which neither type tended to cast the state in favorable terms relative to ordinary individuals. The significance of these findings is tempered by the matching directions of the *Times's* trend lines on most of these topics, signifying that at least a portion of the variation might be accounted for simply by the change in the events to be covered. Given that the Mexican election cycle took

place during the second sample period, it is possible that the disparities seen in *La Opinión* across the two years is simply the consequence of exogenous events.

Two facts drawn from the data show that the hypothesis of an ethnic outbidding process cannot be rejected. Firstly, two indicators of ethnic content besides Mexican news increased in 2006: the amount of front-page space devoted to feature-style news on Latino individuals, and the proportion of named individuals in all stories with Latino surnames. Secondly, the "gap" between *La Opinión* and the *Times* on all variables related to ethnic representation (save for Latin American news) widened in 2006, meaning that, even with a day's events controlled for, the Spanish-language outlet grew more ethnic at a faster rate than its mainstream counterpart. The fact that the *Times*' own coverage of the Latino community increased also works to disprove the notion that it was forced off the topic when its parent company introduced *Hoy*, a market segmentation that would have negated any cross-newspaper comparisons. Clearly, the same scope of the world was available to both incumbent newspapers in both time periods. Faced with a new competitor, *La Opinión*'s changes were measurably more drastic than the *Times*'s, and were all pointed toward the coherent goal of redefining its ethnic balance.

With regard to measures of tradecraft, the overall trends are much more ambiguous, with no similarly definitive statement possible. Using story leads as a proxy for the informativeness of *La Opinión*'s content yields mixed results, with more basic facts being presented in national and Latin American news stories, but all other categories experiencing a decline in informativeness. Out of this noise, however, it is possible to see that the two areas of increased emphasis, city news and Mexican news, also softened in their writing style, with an average of .66 and .22 fewer facts per story lead. To *La Opinión*'s credit, snapshot comparisons with the *Times* during both time periods reveals that the former paper is, on average, more informative in its leads in

both these two categories as well as national news. More relevant to the question at hand, though, is the fact that of the three story categories most prominent in *La Opinión*, only national news became more informative, with an average of .33 more facts. By contrast, the *Times*' three largest foci all increased in the informativeness of the leads, with national news gaining an average of .38 facts, state news .49, and international news .40.

Table 3: Indicators of tradecraft in *La Opinión* and The Los Angeles Times, 2004-2006

	Difference across <i>La Opinión</i> 2004-2006				Difference across <i>LA Times</i> 2004-2006			
	Average 4 W's	Type 1 Sources	Type 2 Sources	Type 3 Sources	Average 4 W's	Type 1 Sources	Type 2 Sources	Type 3 Sources
National	0.33	0.31	0.51	0.028	0.38	-0.44	0.35	0.12
State	-0.17	-0.33	0.25	-0.17	0.49	-0.64	0.2	-0.04
City/County	-0.67	1.93	-0.63	0.067	-0.028	0.083	-0.28	0.22
Mexico	-0.22	-2.62	-0.089	0.039	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lat. America	0.67	-1	0.44	0.78	-1	-2.5	-0.5	0
International Lat.	-0.67	-0.83	-0.33	-0.17	0.39	0.27	0.46	-0.165
Features	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.5	2	0	0

The effect of competition on tradecraft is muddled because, despite the promotion of a "softer" approach in both the selection and writing of news, there is a general improvement in the paper's sourcing practices. Here, the main indicators to watch are the total number of sources used, which conveys the credibility of the information, and the number of government officials cited, as this indicates a potentially uncritical press. Of the most prominent story categories, only articles on national and state affairs experienced an increase in the use of official sources. This, coupled with the decreasing amount of space given to these topics, suggests that these articles have been "stripped down," with the time and effort needed to track down sources other than readily-available officials being spent elsewhere. With the exception of these stories, all articles in the sample had an average increase in the citation of either experts/analysts or of involved parties not in government, with most seeing increases in both. While these increases certainly do

not denote a rise in content critical of the government, they do indicate that *La Opinión* has been doing a better job at basic journalistic investigation and verification, or at least of demonstrating these practices to its audience. Again, this is consistent with the already identified trend of the paper reorienting itself away from politics and toward "the people."

Unlike the balance variable, tradecraft exhibits a much higher variance between dates in the sample, and even between individual articles. This highly clustered nature of the chosen elements thwarted the use of a tally of statistics as a measurement of verification. Through the process of coding it was revealed that the use of statistics was incredibly inconsistent, with the majority of articles featuring few if any numerical quantities, and a small number of "press-release" articles on a newly published study or other document piling on dozens of unique statistics. The high variance of tradecraft also manifested itself in a less troublesome way, through the unpredictable size of *La Opinión's* total front page space. In 2006, the area under the newspaper masthead varied day-to-day, with extra space occasionally given to advertisements or larger teasers. This fluctuation contrasts against the consistent space allocation of both the *Times* and of *La Opinión* in 2004. Competition forced *La Opinión* to be literally more flexible in its presentation of the news, making occasional concessions to either advertisers or to an audience capable of being grabbed by brightly colored graphics.

A curious type of content also worth mentioning is the prominent placement of self-referential articles in *La Opinión*. Articles celebrating the newspaper's anniversary and the honoring of its founder could be found above the fold in both time periods, with no comparable pattern seen in *The Times*. The only available conclusion is that *La Opinión* has had an interest in aggressively linking itself to the Latino community by reminding its readers of its quality and the inseparability of the news and the *La Opinión* brand. Again, it is difficult to assign static

normative values without asserting what the media "should" be doing, but the prioritization of self-reference over other news highlights the potential for marginalization of other topics. Knowing that a news outlet is credible and respected is certainly a defensible preference for a reader to hold, but the disparity between *La Opinión* and the *Times* on how prominently this information is presented calls into question the extent to which such an audience demand is really driving content.

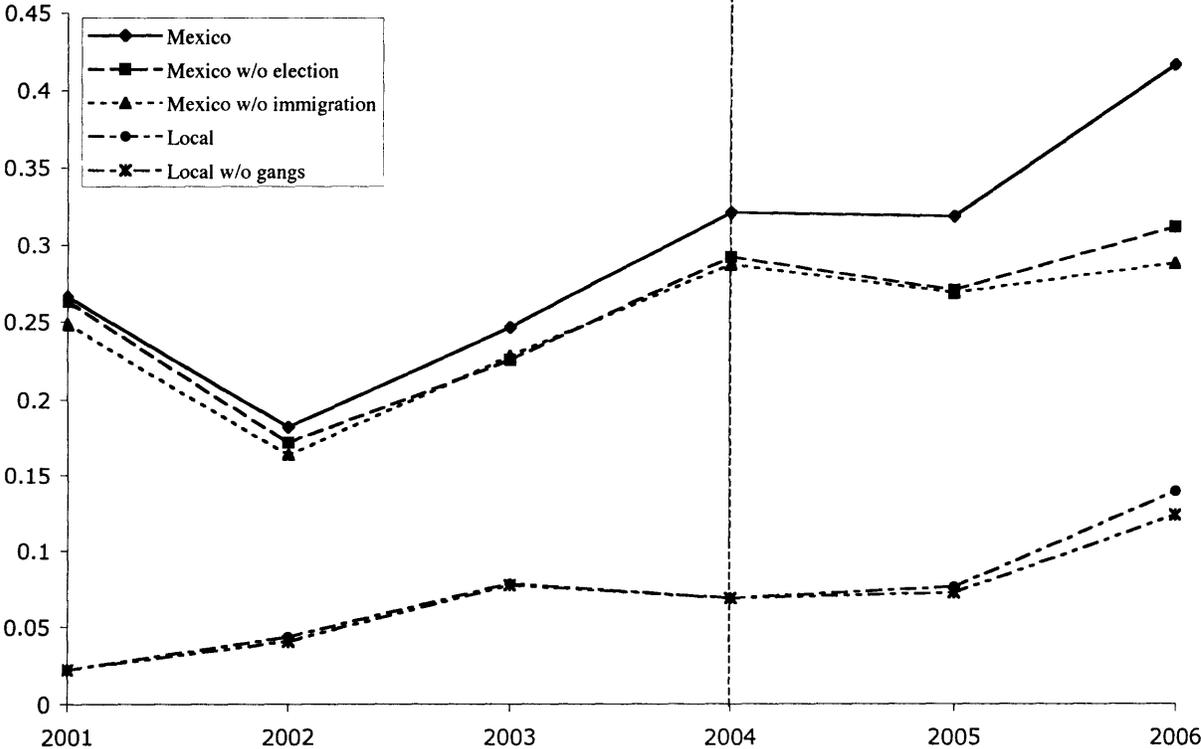
La Opinión's eagerness to emphasize its achievements aside, the evidence reveals a clear set of changes being implemented as the realities of the competitive environment set in. Not only did competition spur changes aimed at broadening the newspaper's appeal, it did so in a unified fashion. In other words, the issues of who gets represented and the style of journalistic practices were not used as separate levers for drawing in more readers, but were both adjusted with the same end goal in mind. With the qualifier that change was not uniform across all types of news, this strategy confirms that (at least within certain areas) elites can push media content in a chosen direction often dictated by economic impetu. To be sure, changes were muted compared with media transformations in other contexts with less institutionalized political and economic settings. Nevertheless, manual content analysis has shown an identifiable purpose to the shifts in *La Opinión's* news coverage.

A Second Cut: Computer Content Analysis

These findings are corroborated through the introduction of computer-aided content analysis. This second method, which entails keyword searches of an online database of news articles, offers some advantages and disadvantages when compared to human coding. The largest benefit is simply the ease and speed with which data can be collected. Concern over sampling

error is mitigated by the fact that a test for an entire population of articles (for example, all of *La Opinión's* front-page articles in 2006) can be done as quickly as one for a sample of dates. The drawback, however, is the loss of the ability to measure those elements of media content relying on contextual knowledge. For example, in the previous coding of the factualness of an article's writing style, it was possible to judge if the "Where?" fact was present through the recognition of a familiar proper noun. In a computer search, this kind of nuance is lost, as it would require search terms encompassing all possible locations that might be mentioned in the article. For that reason, computer analysis was most useful in testing those elements related to balance and story selection rather than tradecraft.

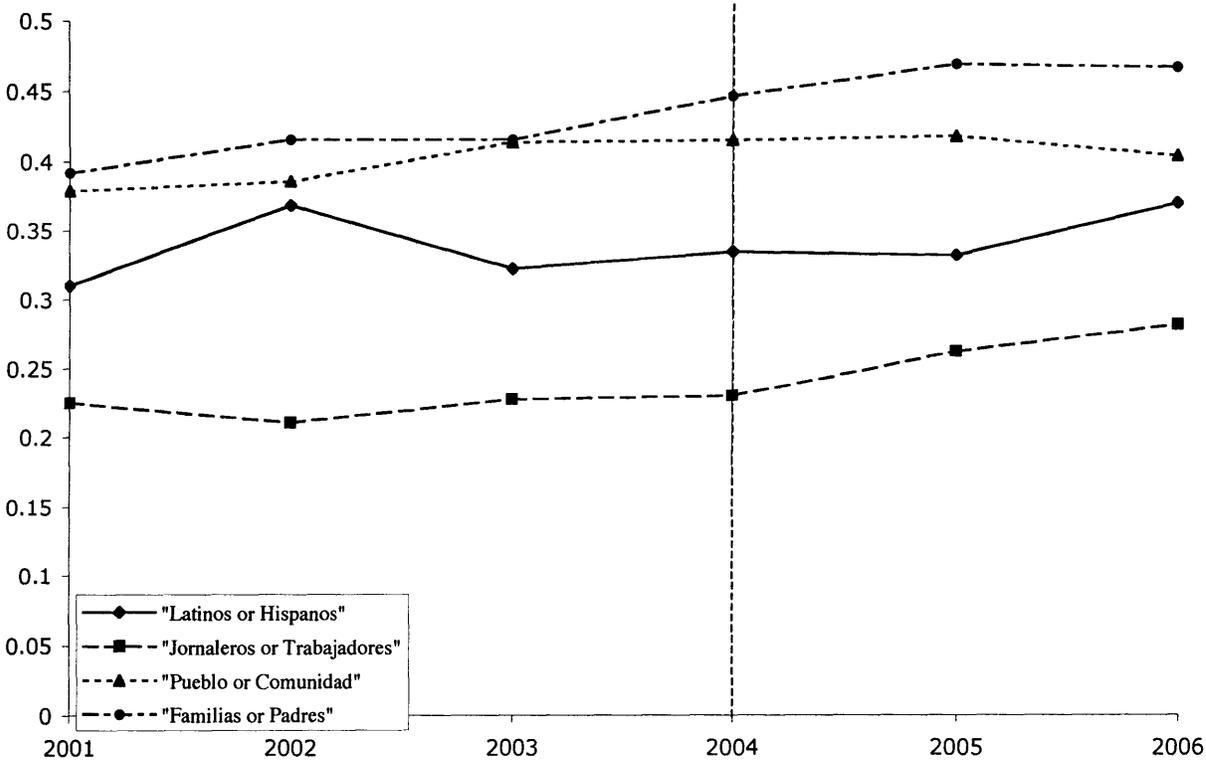
Figure 1: Stories with geographic keywords in *La Opinión* as percentage of all front-page articles



As Figure 1 shows, there is a visible shift in the geographic focus of *La Opinión's* front page in the period following the introduction of competition. The added significance of these findings is that computer analysis allows exogenous events to be controlled for, such as in the

case of news about Mexico. By including a search instruction to omit articles with the word "eleccion," it is now possible to see that the rise in this category in 2006 was not an artifact of the presidential election held that year. Conversely, if the term "inmigra*" is excluded, the rise is markedly less pronounced. A similar phenomenon is observed with regard to the increase in local coverage. Here, the rise in the amount of front-page coverage of Los Angeles and the surrounding counties is partly attributable to a rise in the coverage of gangs and violence. What this added evidence shows is the extent to which the indicators of *La Opinión's* balance were moved in tandem. In short, after the introduction of *Hoy* and the formation of Impremedia, *La Opinión* became more focused not only on those regions which were of immediate interest to the community, but the topics within those regions that its readers were most concerned about.

Figure 2: Stories using community-focused terms in *La Opinión* as percentage of all front-page articles



At the same time that *La Opinión* was becoming more responsive to the Latino community, so too was it attempting to become more representative of it. From 2001 to 2006, there have been small increases in the number of front-page stories that make references to the community or group identities as a whole. To be sure, this trend is modest, with references to ethnicity increasing only 4% since 2004 and usage of various terms for workers up 6%. Nevertheless, one journalist told me that there has been a concerted effort to have "reporters being out in the community" and taking a more active role in discovering new stories, which may be producing more stories based around common group identities. This grass-roots tactic was a direct response to *Hoy*, which entered the market with a preset emphasis on community-based journalism. In the reporter's own colorful words, the introduction of competition for the first time in *La Opinión's* history necessitated a shift from being "the refried beans of the LA Times" to reaffirming its status in the community. The aforementioned increase in *La Opinión's* self-referential articles post-*Hoy*, as well as the fact that multiple interviewees referenced the "trust" and "loyalty" shared between *La Opinión* and its audience as a result of its history, support the contention that the incumbent valued its ingrained status among the Latino population, and was willing to make moves to reinforce that sentimental connection.

Linking Cause and Effect: Inside *La Opinión*

Unfortunately, the coincidence of the introduction of *Hoy* with the reconfiguration of *La Opinión's* own ownership structure makes it difficult to be completely certain of competition's causal effect. Among some of the journalists at *La Opinión* interviewed for this thesis, there was skepticism about the degree to which *Hoy* was actual competition for the incumbent newspaper. Three justifications for this marginalization of *Hoy's* significance were common: its inferior

distribution, its smaller staff, and its lack of a history within the community. There was no denying that there had been deliberate changes to *La Opinión's* journalism over the observed period, but this shift was seen as a consequence of conglomeration, not competition. Two journalists, Agustín Durán and Ruben Moreno, specifically cited the sharing of articles across sister publications as a key development.¹⁰¹¹ Articles are now potentially distributed nationwide, and though no one commented on the exact selection criteria, it may be safe to assume that these are articles whose appeal is not limited to a specific region, i.e. feature articles or news from Mexico. Although there is an arguable benefit in sharing content across publications and thus providing readers with a wider range of news, the journalists themselves are skeptical of this trend's virtue, arguing that it is mainly a cost-cutting move.

Other journalists were more confident in the importance of *Hoy's* arrival in Los Angeles, citing the new entrant's ability to quickly generate advertising revenue. Carlos Aviles, *La Opinión's* crime reporter, worked at both newspapers and noted that the competitors designed their content in response to one another.¹² According to Mr. Aviles, the editor at *Hoy* deliberately chose for his paper to cover the more sensational, more local stories that were missing from *La Opinión*, and that *La Opinión* had since loosened its "conservative, responsible" style as a response. Additionally, the journalists at the former monopolist are now much more active in the pursuit of stories, motivated by both the personal desire to best their rival and by the directive to recapture the loyalty of readers that enjoyed *Hoy's* very specific community focus. In short, the common denominator to the explanations for the shift in *La Opinión's* overall content was an increased sensitivity to audience share, whether in Los Angeles or in other markets served by the

¹⁰ Author's interview with Agustín Durán, 7 July 2008

¹¹ see footnote 8

¹² Author's interview with Carlos Aviles, 18 July 2008

parent company. The executive editor of *La Opinión*, Pedro Rojas, who had previously helmed *El Diario La Prensa*, went so far as to deny any personalized impact on the part of either himself or the publisher, Monica Lozano.¹³ To be fair, he did not acknowledge the direct influence of *Hoy*, but he did describe the paper's task of "constantly reinventing itself to reach [the audience]" and the need to occasionally take his preferences as a reader out of the decisionmaking process.

The most significant attribute of the audience for the ethnic media in Los Angeles is its largely immigrant status. In setting their own internal agenda for which stories need to be emphasized on any given day, the journalists at *La Opinión* must consider the demands of the various groups that constitute the readership. An example of this is the difference between legal and illegal immigrants. As described by Mr. Durán, the latter group has very little interest in any news not tied to their immediate surroundings. With their economic livelihood and physical presence in the United States constantly in doubt, these readers use the newspaper in a much more instrumental fashion, often to track down work opportunities or keep tabs on immigration raids. Emilio Flores, a photojournalist and feature writer with *La Opinión*, also described the audience demand for the newspaper to function as a kind of "how-to" guide, with advice and instructions on what to do or who to talk to in situations that may be unfamiliar to immigrants.¹⁴ Readers also write regularly to reporters, whose email address is published with their byline, asking for more coverage on specific topics. According to Mr. Flores, prior to this newfound responsiveness and community focus, *La Opinión* devoted its coverage to "really dumb things," such as trivial press conferences and other government actions.

The shift in *La Opinión's* geographic focus not only lines up neatly as a move designed to increase and solidify the readership, but as a preference passed down from the top of the

¹³ Author's email interview with Pedro Rojas, 23 July 2008

¹⁴ Author's interview with Emilio Flores, 17 July 2008

organization. Mr. Rojas would not share the exact decisionmaking process that led to the redefinition of *La Opinión's* balance, but his own statements on the newspaper's current responsibilities, when coupled with statements like the one above, make it clear that such a shift was deliberate. According to Mr. Rojas, "Local [news] is our priority...Mexico is kind of local for us, because of our audience." While denying a diminishing emphasis on news out of Sacramento or D.C., he did say that "The cornerstone of *La Opinión*...[is to] work hand in hand with the community and help our readers integrate to this new land." Without more information on the inner workings of the newspaper prior to the introduction of competition, it would be impossible to know whether this is a new mission statement, or a longstanding philosophy now being more explicitly executed. After all, the analytical evidence shows the shift in balance to be a matter of percents, not a radical new direction. Rebalancing the newspaper to more fully capture universal interests may therefore have been simply the most cost-effective method for increasing appeal without sacrificing the niche identity and special purpose already enjoyed.

In a perfect mirroring of the analytical results themselves, the easily perceived and comprehensible shift in *La Opinión's* balance that is revealed in interviews contrasts against a muddled interpretation of how tradecraft has been affected. Journalists themselves are conflicted about whether the quality of work done at the newspaper is improving or deteriorating. One mentioned the fine line in how much the English media itself is used as a research tool, with one reporter being fired for direct plagiarism of a wire article. Another cited how the newfound freedom to investigate stories more fully is balanced against workloads of two stories a day and requests to "just fill the inches." Combining the results of the content analysis with this dissonance across staffers, it is safe to say that the effects of the changing market environment on tradecraft have not yet been fully realized. To frame it another way, *La Opinión* currently suffers

from two deficits relative to the *Times*: a lack of experience dealing with public officials, and fewer resources with which to perform intense or long-term investigations. The former may naturally decrease over time as the ethnic media as a whole continues to expand. Greater stability in the business strategy may be needed, however, before the mixed signals being sent through the newsroom regarding the extent to which the ownership is willing to invest in improving quality are harmonized.

As predicted, the movement along both the balance and tradecraft variables was affected not only by the dominant economic influences, but by lingering social and political forces unique to the ethnic media. For example, when asked directly about feelings of advocacy or solidarity with the audience, there was a resounding rejection of the notion that special norms are in some way influencing the style of journalism practiced at *La Opinión*. "We don't defend the community, we report the community," said Mr. Durán. At the same time, several examples were offered during interviews illustrating how a viewpoint unique from that offered in the mainstream press can still come to be expressed. Not only are Latino individuals more comfortable talking with journalists from *La Opinión* when pressed for a quote, but they are more likely to initiate contact. In another instance, a photo of an immigration protest was deliberately chosen to counterbalance an image in the mainstream press. For the most part, however, there is a conscious effort to leave advocacy or solidarity out of the written content, though this does not preclude the inclusion of voter-registration forms with newspapers or reporters helping readers gain grants and scholarships. In short, although there is widespread acknowledgement that *La Opinión* has a special function not shared by the mainstream media, there is little support for the notion that an increase in competition altered the prevalence of any group-specific norms or otherwise changed the tone of the journalism being conducted.

The impact of norms on either the shaping of content or the resistance to managerial directives is attenuated further in the specific case of *La Opinión* by the firm's high turnover rate. Although the longest-tenured reporter I spoke with had been with the paper for ten years, he felt that many employees view the newspaper as merely a stepping-stone and do not remain for very long, and those new staffers that are brought in often lack substantial experience. The ability of reporters to influence the direction of the paper is diminished further by the aforementioned practice of sharing stories across publications. Finally, one reporter complained to me that the increased profits being gained by Impremedia have not been channeled back into the newsroom. Salaries are stagnant and, after an initial expansion in the size of the staff, vacancies created by departing employees are now frequently left unfilled. While the analysis shows that these trends have not had a measurable impact on tradecraft, they do suggest the elite domination of the newsmaking process. This is not unexpected, given the hierarchical structure of modern newspapers, but the absence of an insulated or powerful actor capable of expressing preferences inconsistent with those of the ownership is significant.

The absence of either a strong newsroom culture or a desire to use the newspaper as a kind of community advocate does not, however, mean that the story of the ethnic media can be reduced to the market-driven narrative of the mainstream press. The state continues to have a unique impact on newspapers such as *La Opinión*. As was already hinted at, the first mechanism through which the state has pushed the domains of *La Opinión* and the Los Angeles Times further apart is through the existence of policies that expressly concern the Latino population. Obviously, immigration is chief among these issue areas, but housing, health care, and gang violence were also mentioned as specially-assigned beats at *La Opinión*. The common thread running through these topics is that they are areas in which the predominantly low-income Latino

community is not only more dependent on public services, but also in need of guidance on how to access or interact with the government apparatus. What is interesting, however, is the general absence of ethnicity as a driving factor. The state is relevant to *La Opinión* in a manner inapplicable to the Los Angeles Times, but the agenda-setting done by the state has little to do with linguistic or cultural differences. On the contrary, it is the socioeconomic circumstances that largely coincide with these ethnic divisions that seems to be forcing the two newspapers into divergent portrayals of the state. The executive editor, Mr. Rojas, feels that even this effect of the state may be diminishing, stating that the ability of the government to reshape the priorities of either the audience or journalists directly is "becoming less and less of an issue."

Although the state is not playing a significant role in the reification or exacerbation of ethnic divisions, it is still a factor in the development of the ethnic media due to another well-theorized aspect of press-state relations: the ability of the government to co-opt the news and exploit relationships with journalists. To put it bluntly, there is no such co-optation at *La Opinión* for the simple reason that its journalists lack the longstanding relationships and contacts within the government. Despite the fact that they conduct their duties in English, several reporters described the difficulty in scoring interviews or learning private information. Further underscoring the relative insignificance of ethnicity-as-cultural-content, even the presence of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was cited as minimally important in the strengthening of relations between the local government and *La Opinión*. As with the ability of the state to force the ethnic media to cover different news than the mainstream, however, the current disconnect between the Spanish-language press and the government may be waning. Mr. Duran in particular commented that journalists at *La Opinión* are now occasionally given lengthier deadlines in order to conduct

more in-depth investigations, and the newspaper recently added permanent correspondents in Sacramento and D.C.

The diminishing differentiation between the mainstream and ethnic press by the state, coupled with the self-reported insignificance of cultural or group norms in modifying the standard journalistic practices, suggests that Spanish-language news in the United States may soon be dictated by the exact same forces at work in the English media. Looking at the results of the content analysis, however, shows that this is far from synonymous with a convergence in terms of content. In the mainstream media, the conventional wisdom is that the dominance of market forces has created "soft news" that is light on investigation and favors the superficial and salacious. Mr. Moreno, the education reporter, doubts that this is a trend that will be mimicked in Spanish-language news, at least not in the same manner. The insights gained from the case of *La Opinión* support this viewpoint. At least at the present time, the axis of competition remains to be some conception of ethnic balance and the desire to be more fully integrated in the surrounding community. Qualifying this conclusion is the fact that the segmentation between the linguistic subsets of the media has been drained of cultural content. In deciding what needs to be covered, who will be used as sources, and how the government is impacting their duty, journalists are influenced by their membership in a distinct group, but the relevance of that group's shared identity as Latino is minimal.

From *La Opinión* to the ethnic media at large

Fully appreciating the significance of the picture painted by the analytical results and the interviews at *La Opinión* requires that we link back to the broader hypotheses from earlier. Some of the parallels between the theoretical and the empirical seem obvious, but others less so. For

example, the idea that shifts in the ethnic media's content depend on the political status of an untapped audience comes through clearly in the above discussion of *La Opinión's* change in strategy. Equally well-supported is the contention that the introduction of a corporate parent amplifies the redefinition of a newspaper's ethnic balance, as seen in the fact that the coast-to-coast reach of Impremedia contributed to new methods of story selection. Conversely, the hypothesis that the level of competition and the agenda-setting of the state actually interact to produce a new pattern in media content only has an analogue in the empirical findings if we assume that the observed shift in the geographic focus of *La Opinión's* front page would have been even greater if the California government was doing more to differentiate between ethnic groups, a claim that is plausible but untested.

The theorized influence of social norms is the most difficult to connect to the evidence from *La Opinión*. This should not be surprising, given the natural difficulty in quantifying or capturing something as ethereal as an unspoken code of behavior, though the case nevertheless provides some evidence of their role. With insignificant differences in the tradecraft indicators and staffers' avowed dedication to the basic principles of objectivity and fairness, the basic codes of journalist conduct seem to be at work just as strongly in the ethnic media as in the mainstream. With the emphasis on Latino sources notwithstanding (an artifact that can be chalked up to the natural advantage minority journalists have in eliciting responses from Spanish speakers anyway), there is no direct evidence that any additional norms are layered on top of these professional duties. That said, *sui generis* factors such as the addition of new journalists and the self-reported turnover among existing staffers would discourage the entrenchment of new norms in this specific case. A role for extra-professional feelings or emotional connections to the

audience cannot be disproved for a wider scale, though one does seem to be absent from *La Opinión*.

As for the general assertion that the ethnic media is special, the findings from Los Angeles confirm the belief that Spanish-language newspapers must behave differently, though with some qualifications. For example, whereas I previously theorized that the distribution of the types of sources minority journalists used would result from a generalized attitude toward the state and its reticence to grant political membership to some immigrants, it now appears that the absence of personalistic ties and general inexperience in dealing with state officials must also be considered significant. Similarly, if one looks at the marked shift in the geographic distribution of stories contrasted against the more incremental increases in the use of terms for the community, it becomes clear that the very idea of ethnic balance is incredibly complex. Based strictly on the frequency with which Latino-centric groupings are cited, it would appear that competition did not, in fact, spur *La Opinión* into being more bluntly ethnic, but rather prompted a newfound emphasis on those topics of the most universal appeal within predefined bounds. In other words, the community, as it was presented in the pages of *La Opinión*, was not redrawn or redefined after the introduction of *Hoy*. The new market environment did, however, cause enough of a reassessment of what constituted "news" for the Latino community of Los Angeles that a break from the patterns of the mainstream media was observed.

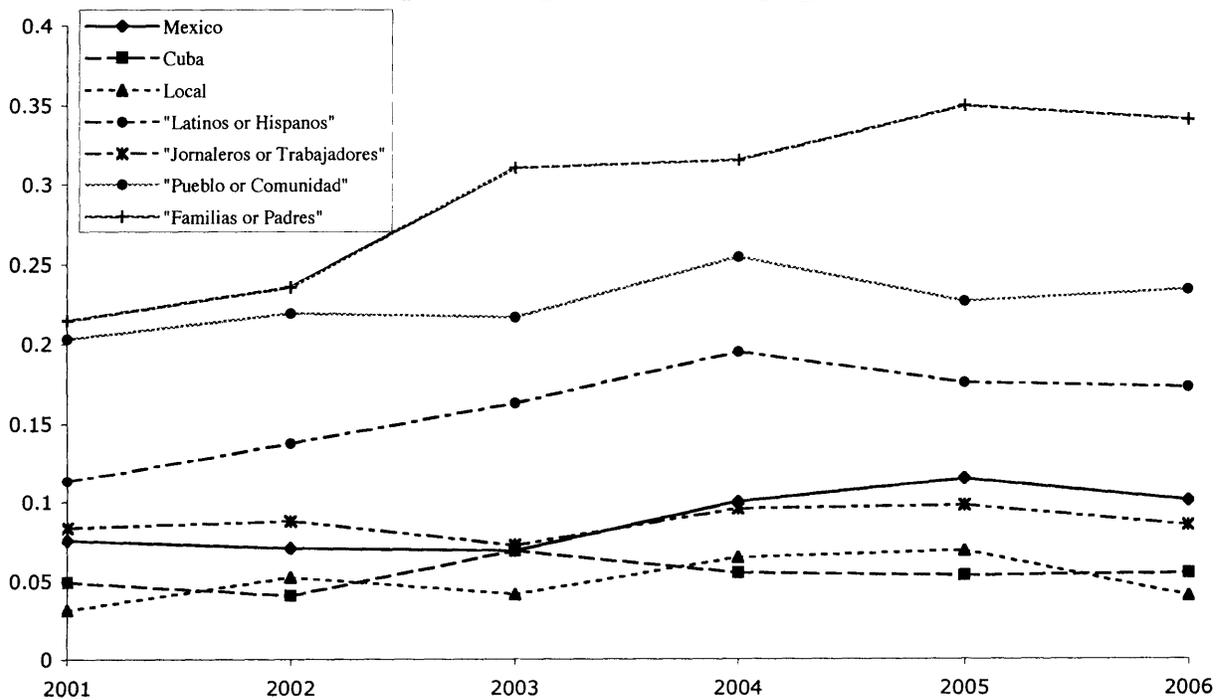
Conclusion

A final step in assessing the impact of competition on the presentation of news at *La Opinión* is to compare its experience to other Spanish-language newspapers during the same time period. Unfortunately, the scarcity of available data prevents broad comparisons with a large sample of other publications. Using the same method of computer-aided content analysis, however, enables a direct comparison with one other newspaper, *El Nuevo Herald* in Miami. From 2001 to 2006, *El Nuevo Herald* was owned by Knight-Ridder, the same parent company as the English-language *Miami Herald*. *El Nuevo Herald* has also been in constant competition with *Diario Las Americas*, an independently-owned daily. Because no exogenous shock occurred in Miami as in Los Angeles, one would expect stability across the measures of balance and the values of these indicators to be near those seen post-competition in *La Opinión*. As Figure 3 shows, these intuitions are partially correct. With the exception of growth in the use of the terms "Latinos or Hispanos," the types of content most dramatically affected by competition remain here relatively stable. In terms of static values, however, the results from the two newspapers do not match up very well. Even when accounting for regional diversity and adding Cuba to the content analysis, these "home country" stories only account for 15 percent of *El Nuevo Herald's* front-page news in 2006, compared to 41 percent for *La Opinión*.

These results do not refute the effect observed in *La Opinión*, but rather emphasize the importance of political factors in the determination of media content. Firstly, news from Cuba is more difficult to obtain than Mexico, and the political tenor of many immigrants' reason for emigrating may also be depressing the demand for this type of news. On a more speculative point, the disparities in the volume of immigration from Cuba and Mexico may also be leading the state to more greatly politicize the issue of immigration with respect to the latter country. In

short, ethnic balance may be more skewed in Los Angeles because the audience there occupies a much more precarious position; news from outside the immediate area is an unneeded luxury, and staying current with Mexican news is a pragmatic necessity should one be deported. Finally, there exists one possible explanation for these results that, while undermining the importance of competition, does have a basis in the interviews. Because *El Nuevo Herald* is the sole Spanish-language holding of its owner (first Knight-Ridder, now McClatchy), there is not the potential for the sharing of content across publications as exists at Impremedia. The alternative explanation that conglomeration and the desire for universally-appealing stories drives shifts in content therefore cannot be entirely ruled out.

Figure 3: Geographic keywords and community-focused terms in *El Nuevo Herald* as percentage of all front page articles



Turning back to the theoretical model first offered in this thesis, greater nuance is clearly needed to understand both the development of the ethnic media and the implications for these changes. As was predicted, the onset of competition in Los Angeles caused an identifiable shift in the ethnic balance of the incumbent newspaper, as it became more sensitive to protecting and growing its audience and directly serving the interests of this community. Also verified were the impact of the state on shaping these interests and the importance of ownership structure in dictating the extent and manner of the changes being enacted. The brief comparison to *El Nuevo Herald* hints at the knowledge that could be added through a more detailed accounting of these forces at the top. To be more specific, although both *La Opinión* and *Hoy* behaved as expected and distanced themselves from the English-language mainstream by being more ethnic and more local with their content, the fact that the first buttresses a growing Latino-specific media empire raises a curious question. As Impremedia and the overall market for Spanish-language news continues to grow, there may come a point where the tension between broadly appealing content and local news shifts again, reversing the observed trends as it once again become more profitable to mimic the national aspirations of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Speculation aside, one can be reasonably confident that competition has had a profound impact on *La Opinión*, and in a manner suggestive of changes that may be underway across the ethnic media as a whole. As for the other null hypothesis, which stated that the ethnic and mainstream media behave in essentially the same manner despite catering to different audiences, the certainty with which this statement can be rejected is more tenuous. As the editor of *La Opinión* said himself, the ability of the state to force his newspaper onto different topics than those presented in the mainstream is diminishing. As the Latino population in the United States continues to grow, the news domains of the two linguistic subsets of the media will naturally

overlap more and the need for protective norms of group solidarity or representation (whose existence the journalists at *La Opinión* denied in the first place) will dissipate. At the present time, however, there should be no question that the ethnic media diverges from the mainstream, both in terms of content and the newsmaking process. The inexperience on the part of both minority journalists and state officials in dealing with each other, coupled with the advantage the former group possesses in speaking with Latino members of the community, means that certain stories are easier to produce and more likely to be presented. To take another example, the need for *La Opinión* to act as an instructional guide for its audience of immigrants, providing practical knowledge and other public services has no equivalent in the mainstream media.

Assuming these drivers of difference do indeed disappear over time, the greatest implication will likely be on the quality of journalism in the ethnic media. As the findings show, the tradecraft exhibited in *La Opinión* is not measurably inferior to that in the *Los Angeles Times*, and though part of this is attributable to the need for better measures, the interviewees also spoke about the same ideals of objectivity and accuracy that presumably hold sway in the mainstream. In terms of immediate consequences, the general noisiness of the changes to tradecraft mean that there is still the potential for the press to act as a governmental watchdog, with the use of fact-based reporting and verified information fluctuating to a minor extent. As editorial staffs continue to grow and minority journalists accumulate more experience, their previous role as an outsider will serve as a boon, preventing the cries of co-optation and laziness that currently plague the mainstream media. Of course, this scenario would depend on a number of factors, but the essential point is that quality investigative journalism exists for the Spanish-speaking minority, and the continuing proliferation of competition and increases in the legitimacy of the ethnic media will only improve this democratically-beneficial function of the media.

Thinking about the future, not of the ethnic media, but of research on the ethnic media, the most exciting prospect is the exploration of audience preferences. An evolving desire for information and news is hard-wired into the immigrant experience, as individuals graduate from immediate concerns about survival and socialization into more sophisticated personal interests and perhaps an expanded worldview. Measuring not only when this process occurs, but how news outlets contend with these changing preferences based on their particular location, could be endlessly illuminating into how the ethnic media balances economic growth with the political and social restrictions underpinning that expansion. As was hinted at by the introduction of Miami, preferences based around not only countries of origin but by reasons for immigration could also be a potent factor in shaping the ethnic media. For example, neither Cuba nor Mexico has a long tradition of a free and responsible press. Journalists may therefore have to tailor their coverage as particularly investigative or salacious in order to signal quality. In short, social norms may yet be an important influence on the future of Spanish-language news, albeit in the form of differing styles of journalism, and not in feelings of advocacy or solidarity.

Ultimately, the lesson of this thesis is that the dynamic growth of the Spanish-language media in the United States manifests itself in ways that redefine what information is presented to the audience and how that information compares to the news offered by the mainstream press. Exactly how these changes have impacted the consumers of media remains to be seen, as do the implications for a society where the channels of mass communication fracture along linguistic divisions. At least in the case of the United States, there is great potential for the state to function as a compensatory institution, providing the moderating effect that becomes more difficult when no single public sphere exists. The broad finding that market forces exacerbate differences across subsets of the media may seem troubling, but one must remember that the movement observed in

La Opinión was undeniably toward its audience's interests. Should the state grow more inclusive toward Latino immigrants in the future, as simple demographic projections would seem to necessitate, there will already be a mature and professional media in place to cater to both the interests and needs of the Spanish-speaking population.

Appendix:
Data for Figures

Data for Figure 1: Stories with geographic keywords in *La Opinión* as percentage of all front-page articles

	Mexico	Mexico without election	Mexico without immigration	Local	Local without gangs
2001	26.61%	26.32%	24.83%	2.22%	2.22%
2002	18.23%	17.22%	16.41%	4.33%	4.03%
2003	24.66%	22.56%	22.81%	7.83%	7.74%
2004	32.07%	29.18%	28.70%	6.83%	6.83%
2005	31.86%	27.04%	26.88%	7.59%	7.19%
2006	41.68%	31.19%	28.79%	13.91%	12.37%

Data for Figure 2: Stories using community-focused terms in *La Opinión* as percentage of all front page articles

	"Latinos or Hispanos"	"Jornaleros or Trabajadores"	"Pueblo or Comunidad"	"Familias or Padres"
2001	30.99%	22.46%	37.88%	39.21%
2002	36.86%	21.05%	38.57%	41.59%
2003	32.24%	22.73%	41.41%	41.58%
2004	33.44%	22.99%	41.56%	44.69%
2005	33.20%	26.25%	41.82%	46.96%
2006	37.00%	28.16%	40.42%	46.75%

Data for Figure 3: Geographic keywords and community-focused terms in *El Nuevo Herald* as percentage of all front page articles

	Mexico	Cuba	Local	"Latinos or Hispanos"	"Jornalero or Trabajador"	"Pueblo or Comunidad"
2001	7.55%	4.95%	3.15%	11.33%	8.36%	20.32%
2002	7.09%	4.09%	5.24%	13.80%	8.79%	21.97%
2003	6.93%	6.93%	4.18%	16.29%	7.27%	21.72%
2004	10.03%	5.54%	6.51%	19.53%	9.59%	25.51%
2005	11.49%	5.38%	6.95%	17.61%	9.82%	22.71%
2006	10.12%	5.53%	4.08%	17.35%	8.59%	23.47%

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