
Noticiero Univision:
**Coverage of the Arizona Law as a Case Study about the Construction
of Diasporic Public Spheres**

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Abstract

This article looks at the coverage US broadcaster Univision provided about the Arizona law, a measure criminalizing undocumented immigrants. Content analysis of *Noticiero Univision's* reports on the subject reveals the presence of diasporic public spheres, a notion that is regularly deployed in reference to media from the homeland of transnational communities, but which has rarely been explored at the empirical level in host-land contexts. This contribution suggests that while the paradigm of cultural assimilation could be adequate to describe the role Univision takes on in synthesizing the Latin American-origin community as part of a national ethnic minority, an account of Hispanics as a 'diaspora of diasporas' productively focuses on the diverse nature of the community in question, and on the national and transnational dynamics that shape contemporary experiences of human displacement.

Keywords: diasporas, diasporic public spheres, ethnic minorities, transnational audiences, Spanish-language television, post-national formations.

This article is based on an analysis of the largest US Spanish-language broadcaster's news coverage of the 'Arizona law', a plan authorizing police to stop and ask any Hispanic-looking people for proof that they are legally in the country.¹ Also known as SB1070, the bill targets 375,000 unauthorized immigrants while making another two

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million Latin American-origin people liable to increased police scrutiny on the basis of racial profiling. At the time of writing, enforcement of the law remains blocked by a district judge, but the issue is the object of a national debate that puts migration reform at the top of the nation's political agenda, after two years of being overshadowed by an unprecedented economic crisis. In the context of historically high levels of unemployment most Americans say they support the Arizona law (Cohen and Bahrapour, 2010). A very different story has been running on *Noticiero Univision* nonetheless. The country's most popular newscast in Spanish started to follow the issue when the bill was passed by the Arizona Senate in April 2010. Since then, it has given way to consistent representations of the largest ethnic minority as a political force which only four years ago was characterized as 'a sleeping giant' (*The Economist*, 2006a).

The main argument in this intervention is that Univision's coverage of the Arizona law articulated a 'diasporic public sphere' that fostered the incorporation of members of a transnational community as part of the US national polity. Such a claim is, however, problematic for it competes against the more straightforward yet simplistic paradigm of cultural assimilation which, according to Portes and his colleagues, is concerned with 'the transformation of immigrants into citizens and the various ways in which they can affect the stability and direction of the American political system' (2008, 2). The assimilationist paradigm dominates existing academic accounts about the relationship between media and ethnic minorities in the US, and is indeed an inherent element of the discursive strategies projected by Spanish-language media in the country. The challenge in this context is to conceptualize people of Latin American ancestry in the US not only as an 'ethnic minority' but also as a community of diasporas, which highlights the extent to which national political orders have become penetrated by postcolonial flows. The findings discussed in this article open a window to visualize the formation of post-national 'ethno' and 'mediascapes' (Appadurai, 1996), in a country where 'neither popular nor academic thought ... has come to terms

with the difference between being a land of immigrants and being one node in a post-national network of diasporas' (Appadurai, 1993, 803).

Diasporic Public Spheres

The notion of the public sphere has been national in scope, referring to the role of communication media in providing 'citizens with the information, ideas and debates about current affairs so as to facilitate informed opinion and participation in democratic politics' (Dahlgren, 2009, 34). In a context of globalization this Habermasian notion has given way to a more flexible conceptualization referring to an open space for public participation (Chan, 2010, 230), which from the point of view of immigrants can be understood as the platforms that afford them mobility and connectivity across spaces (Tsagarousianou, 2004). The study of transnational communication has in recent years contributed novel perspectives to our understanding of how immigrants access the polities of the countries relevant in their lives. Satellite and mobile communications, the Internet, affordable travel and telephone calls have transformed the nature of large population movements. For individuals, leaving one's country of birth no longer involves giving up relationships with relatives and friends, while participating in economic, cultural and political activities remains an open possibility. At the aggregate level these deterritorialized engagements have changed 'the process of imagining communities' (Shohat and Stam, 1996, 145) and triggered forms of 'long-distance nationalism' (Appadurai, 1996, 22). Thus transnational communities effect change upon their countries of birth on the basis of how these are imagined through mass mediation. Appadurai notes that 'media increasingly link producers and audiences across national boundaries, and, as these audiences themselves start new conversations between those who move and those who stay, we find a growing number of diasporic public spheres' (ibid.). The nature of such public spheres, as Morley suggests, is 'transnational in form' (2000, 125) as 'contemporary media enable migrants to sustain up-to-the-minute links with events in their homelands' (ibid.).

Research into the ways media can connect immigrants has normally been mobilized around a notion of the diasporic that focuses on their homeward orientations. This normative perspective (see for instance Chaliand and Rageau, 1991; Safran, 1991) has however been superseded by flexible articulations that see diasporas as the 'exemplary communities of the transnational moment' (Tölölyan, 1996, 4), formed by sojourners, guest workers, exiles, political refugees, etc. For these people, experiences of displacement are as much about the homeland as they are about the host-land and the rest of the countries that determine the experiences of their lateral connections (i.e. other ethnic minorities). Brah suggests in this context that diaspora should focus on experiences of location, not of dislocation (1996, 180–1), while Clifford suggests that diaspora discourses close in on the construction of 'homes away from home' (1994, 302). Taking on board this more open understanding, a variety of case studies have explored the role of media in the generation of diasporic public spheres. One such case is Gillespie's account of South Asian families in London (1995), whose consumption of Indian and British film and television is used by parents and children to reaffirm cultural traditions, but also to set a pathway for cultural change. Robins and Aksoy have elsewhere addressed the transnational space constituted by Turkish satellite television and how it allows that country's diaspora 'a way between their sense of their own Turkish origins and their sense of how they might belong in their host countries' (2001, 345). More recently Chan (2010) has documented the daily interactions of Chinese transnational communities, which, despite being globally dispersed, gather online to pursue political goals and maintain their cultural identities. Talk of 'digital diasporas' (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010) provides powerful argument for the existence of deterritorialized public spheres, but is a step too far from this article's objective, which starts from the premise that not enough has been done to prove the potential of mass media to enable transnational communities to participate in the politics of their receiving societies.

As Fraser wrote, the concept of transnational public spheres has theoretical purchase and yet 'it is difficult to associate the notion of legitimate public opinion with communicative arenas in which the interlocutors are not fellow members of a political community, with equal rights to participate in political life' (2007, 46). The author's view that 'a public sphere should correlate with a sovereign power' (ibid.) is important, after all diasporic public spheres are not simply about 'communication flows' but about their ability 'to contribute a critical political theory of democracy' (ibid., p. 45). This premise that transnational public spheres should involve an interaction between entitled subjects and sovereignties is important because 'it matters who participates, and on what terms' (ibid.). Mosco touches a similar vein when he states that in a world of 'technopoles' it is 'important to invoke citizenship today because much of what we see in the media, as well as in academic accounts of media activity addresses people as consumers or as audiences' (1997, 36).

In accounts of media and migration the attributes of digital media as diasporic public spheres are frequently invoked in relation to communication flows from receiving societies to homelands (Cárdenas, 2003; González and Castro, 2007), but they seldom involve an interaction – let alone a productive dialogue – between deterritorialized peoples and the authorities of receiving-countries. A few case studies even suggest that transnational mass media that target displaced communities are normally used for entertainment purposes but can be irrelevant in engaging immigrants in political processes. Such is the case of Mexicans in the US, who largely consume media from the homeland to entertain themselves (perhaps in the process enacting their cultural identities; Uribe, 2009), but who are rather distrustful of mainstream news media from their country (Sinclair, 1999, 103), using instead the Spanish-language television news in the United States to participate in street mobilizations and to familiarize themselves with the political process of their host-land (Moreno, 2009). Such a premise was present in the recent coverage that *Noticiero Univision* offered about the 'Arizona law', creating a diasporic public sphere that for a moment empowered

disenfranchised immigrants who were represented as valid interlocutors in a sovereign national territory.

Constructive representations of Latin American-origin diasporas in the US Spanish-language media are, however, far from straightforward, as they are embedded in a journalistic narrative that synthesizes Latin American immigrants within a purified Hispanic world. Over the last decade, scholars have noted that the main Spanish-language media players, Univision and Telemundo, have followed a commercial strategy based on erasing 'the distinct immigration histories' (Rodríguez, 1999, 49) of Latin Americans in the US to engineer a 'Latino' audience that is attractive for the economic interests that have converged around Spanish-language media (Coffey, 2008). As Rodríguez notes, the process of 'selling Hispanics is ongoing' (1999, 27) and this article suggests that its trajectory also includes a political stage. The reasons may very well be related to a commercial logic (cf. Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2010), but the premise is still compatible with academic discourses about diasporic media.

Latin American-origin People as a Post-national Form: A Diaspora of Diasporas?

In the context of this article a media outlet becomes diasporic when it enables or empowers what Appadurai describes as 'post-national social forms' (1996, 158), which seem to destabilize the monopoly of nation-states upon nationalist discourses.

As he put it:

The nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself diasporic. Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists, guest workers, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and illegal aliens, it is increasingly unrestrained by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty. (1996, 160)

Talk of post-national formations leads us to question how Latin American-origin peoples in the US are post-national or diasporic. The clearest example is provided by the vast Mexican community, which accounts for 66 percent of the nearly 50 million

'Hispanic' US population. This universe includes nearly 12 million Mexican immigrants who represent around 11 percent of Mexico's inland population. Such diaspora is key as moral and economic support for families south of the border, and central to the Mexican economy, considering that the remittances they send account for one of the country's largest sources of foreign currency, alongside oil exports. Literally, Gutiérrez notes, Mexicans in the US are a cultural, economic and cultural extension of their country, and constantly contribute to the transformation of national identity (1998: 558). On the other hand, as an electoral force made up of over 3 million voters, Mexicans in the US can determine the outcome of future presidential elections, after that Mexico's Congress passed an electoral reform in 2005. According to Suro 'the new Mexican absentee voting program marks the largest experiment ever undertaken of expatriates voting in one western democracy while living in another' (Suro and Escobar, 2006, 2).

There are many other post-national formations from Latin America in the US, such as Puerto Ricans and Cubans, who constitute the other two largest sub-national groups, representing 9 percent and 3.5 percent – respectively – of the largest ethnic minority in the US. The rest have roots in many other countries, with a significant component of Salvadorans (3.3 percent), Dominicans (2.8 percent) and Guatemalans (2.1 percent), amongst others (ACS, 2009). Sinclair notes that, despite a shared history of migration, some Hispanics 'can trace back their family histories there [the US] for over a hundred years, while others arrived just this morning' (2004: 8). He adds 'it is not just a matter of when, but the historically specific circumstances under which a certain people arrive which makes a difference' (ibid.). For instance, while Mexicans have been locked 'at the lowest levels of the working class' (Almaguer, 1994, 153), Puerto Ricans are all US-born citizens since 1917 and Cubans established a relatively solid structure of opportunity started by the educated and entrepreneurial 'golden exiles' who left their island after Cuba's revolution in 1959. This obviously translates into significant differences in socio-economic backgrounds, geographic locations, settlement and development patterns, linguistic practices, political orientations, etc.

But Latin American-origin people in the US are not all ‘immigrants’; 63 percent are US-born citizens, many of whom have never been outside the country or who do not necessarily identify with the ethnic community at large (Gutiérrez, 1995; Vila, 2003, 110–11). And yet, immigrants from Latin America have given birth to one-third of Latinos born in the US, with the consequence that the community is always somewhat related. As noted in a recent *The Economist* column about the emergence of Hispanic street mobilizations against growing anti-immigrant sentiments, ‘even if a Latino is a legal resident, or, by virtue of birth, an American citizen, the chances are strong that he or she has some undocumented relatives’ (2006b). In this context, a recent report found that 4 million children of Latin American ancestry were born in the US to an undocumented father or mother (Passel and Taylor, 2010, 1). It is therefore common to find Hispanics of second or subsequent generations living under the same roof with their immigrant parents, grandparents, friends, etc., many of whom may be without legal authorization in the country (García, 1996 [1985]). In these circumstances, difficulties in obtaining jobs and services, racial exclusion, etc., may be a constant in the lives of the diaspora. It is more than a question of unauthorized populations, however, as 52 percent of the country’s 16 million Hispanic US-born children have at least one parent born in a Latin American country (Fry and Passel, 2009, i), which means that many of them are familiar with someone else’s migration experience (García, 1996 [1985], 90).

There are then the assimilated US Hispanics of the third or further generations, who represent another third of the largest ethnic minority (Suro and Passel, 2003, 4), and who frequently have kin or kith relationships with Spanish-speaking peoples. One indication of this is the fact that 76 percent of the entire Hispanic population reports speaking ‘a language other than English’ (ACS, 2009) when at home. In this respect, 90 percent of Latin American-origin people follow television programmes in Spanish (Yen and Morales, 2010). Touching a similar chord, Rodríguez notes that many of

these individuals are bilingual 'but for a variety of reasons (affirmative action, racism, family concerns) have recently renewed their feelings of ethno-racial solidarity, and in the process, discovered Univision' (1999, 67).

One could therefore argue that, alongside immigration, the Spanish language is a central axis of cultural commonality for Latin American-ancestry groups in the US; it contributes to the breeding of what Brah defines as 'diaspora space' or an entanglement of various transnational dispersions that intersect in their country of destiny (1996, 181). One can redirect Brah's premise to Sinclair's suggestion that Latin American-origin peoples in the US can be characterized as a 'diaspora of diasporas', given the unparalleled presence of 'large numbers of people with a common language from diverse origins in the same country' (2004, 9). He thus compares the US Spanish-speaking population to 'the huge diasporic overseas populations of Chinese, Indians, and Arabs, who like the Hispanics, have been cultivated as international markets for television in their own languages and cultures' (ibid.). It is important to note that the emergence of the 'diaspora of diasporas' that Sinclair refers to is part of a development in which the formation of collective identities has run in parallel with the cultivation of Latin American-origin peoples as a sector of the national audience (see Sinclair, 2004, 9–10).

Commercial Ethnicity: Does It Have a Progressive Side?

The category 'Latin American-origin people' has, throughout this article, been used more systematically than 'Latino' or 'Hispanic' because it is more exact term for defining the US ethnic minority. The preferred option reflects more accurately the trajectory of displacements from the Latin American peripheries to the American centre (Portes and Walton, 1981, 30). After all, the growth of this ethnic minority has moved from around 4 million in 1950 (Rumbaut, 2006, 16) to the current 50 million against the backdrop of mass scale postcolonial population movements to highly

developed countries triggered by global economic restructuring in the second part of the twentieth century (Castles and Miller, 2003, ch. 4). Having said this, contemporary definitions such as 'Hispanics' and 'Latinos' are essential to visualize the dynamics that shape their representations in the United States. As Rumbaut explains, 'Hispanic' is 'an instance of a pan-ethnic category that was created by official edict' (2006, 18) in 1977. Before that date, they were somewhat invisible and undercounted, segregated in such ethnic enclaves as Mexican Los Angeles, Cuban Miami and Puerto Rican New York. At present, they live in every one of the nation's 50 states, even though 70 percent are concentrated in the states of California, Texas, Florida, New York and New Jersey (Durand et al., 2006, 87). Despite the category neglecting the differences between US-born Latinos and immigrants, it gives them 'a minority group status in the United States', while internalizing them 'as a prominent part of the American mosaic' (Rumbaut, 2006, 19). Most relevant to our subject is that 'Hispanics', as a category that was coined to obtain more accurate demographic information about the group (p. 20), developed as an official discourse which, in practices like the US Census, yielded reliable information that the Spanish-language media industry used to validate its arguments about the existence of 'the Hispanic market' (Sinclair, 2004, 12).

Lack of such information had been precisely why, in the past, it was difficult for the Spanish-language media industry to truly take off (*ibid.*). The successful turnaround involved repackaging an ethnic minority formed by peoples of different national origins as a uniform market of consumers, gathered around the commonality of the Spanish language. This has resulted in what several scholars refer to as the construction of 'pan-ethnicity', 'commercial ethnicity' or Latinization (Dávila, 2000, 2001; Rodríguez, 1999), meaning 'the 'out-of-many, one people' process through which 'Latinos' or 'Hispanics' are conceived and represented as sharing one common identity' (Dávila, 2001, 16). Rodríguez explains that the pan-ethnic turn lies in the networks' 'desire to produce a different audience for its advertisers' (1999, 67). One key strategy in this plan is visible in what Univision has labelled as 'born-again Hispanic' programming, characterized by shows that cater to the better-off, more

educated bilingual 'Latinos' or 'Hispanics', those who make more attractive consumers than the more numerous yet poorer people made up of recently arrived migrants and their second-generation children. In fact, 40 percent of the shows that Univision broadcasts today are produced in the United States (Univision, 2009, 8), demonstrating how far along things have moved considering its national production was only 6 percent of its programming schedule in 1988.

The drive for a shift to more programming that is nationally produced can be seen as a trend toward replacing Latin America and the homeland of immigrants with the United States as the source of *Latinidad*. *Latinidad* can be defined as the condition of being Hispanic or Latino in the US, where a pan-ethnic media system can allegedly contribute to a redefinition of ideas about *Latinidad* by shifting the cultural centre of gravity from Latin America to the United States (Dávila, 2000; Valdivia, 2010, 32). At this point the model of 'cultural assimilation' and its counterpart, 'cultural pluralism', enter into the equation. According to this, media help immigrants and their children to adopt the knowledge and values of migrant-receiving societies, or to maintain, on the other hand, the specificity of their cultures of origin (Subervi-Velez, 1986; Viswanath and Arora, 2000). In this respect, Constantakis writes, the newscasts of Univision and its competitor Telemundo perform a 'dual' function. They are 'ethnic' for 'they provide coverage that focuses primarily or exclusively on the lives of the ethnic group within the context of the country in which they reside' (1993 16). Simultaneously, their news shows belong within the category of 'immigrant media', for 'they cater to newly arrived immigrants whose focus is still the native country' (ibid.). In summary, ethnic media provide a lot of information about the receiving society while migrant or minority media focus on their audience's homelands.

The dominant theoretical paradigm in the US has however evolved in recent years, in synchrony with the aforementioned changes in the nature of *Latinidad* discourses, translating into novel and nuanced versions of the assimilationist-pluralist

perspective. Thus terms like 'Latino', 'Hispanic' and 'Latino-oriented media' appear to be displacing references to specific sub-national groups. This trend seems to also apply to particular case studies, where uses of the media are referred to as oscillating degrees of 'situational' Latinidad (Subervi and Ríos, 2005). The pattern is also reflected in accounts of Univision and Telemundo's coverage of elections, where the focus has moved from the role ethnic and immigrant media play in the assimilation or cultural pluralism of viewers (Constantakis, 1993, 37), towards the notion that news reports swing between mainstream and Latino frames (Constantakis, 2008). Throughout these accounts the notion of ethnic media is losing ground to that of 'Latino-oriented media', which is found to share a lot in common with the news coverage of mainstream newscasts while having the potential to trigger Latinos' participation in the political life of the United States (Hale et al., 2008).

All of the above leads us to make the point that there is a compatibility between the assimilationist and diasporic perspective, as they both can potentially represent and advance the interests of ethnic minorities. Studies that link media and minorities in the US have so far documented how media provided these groups with access to locally based resources and to elements of cultural value and entertainment that socialize them in their areas of settlement (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Deuze, 2006; Lin and Song, 2006). This is a fruitful approach that nonetheless mobilizes a form of 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) that does not fully take on board the transnational connections of diasporas. It is this author's contention that the assimilationist angle can be complemented with the diasporic one, as a way to bridge the epistemological gaps between normative and alternative academic traditions and to acquire a more complete picture of the part media play in contemporary experiences of displacement. These include the use of media to reduce feelings of cultural separation provoked by abandoning one's home country, to enact individual and collective identities and to participate in transnational public spheres. But these spaces do not solely belong to sending countries, as they also involve the receiving societies, where immigrants and their children evolve as new members of

the nations where they settle; their churches, their businesses, their media, etc. progressively transform the social space they inhabit (Gutiérrez, 1998). Making this argument, Georgiou and Silverstone have written that the national is the location of diasporic life (2007, 39) and as such it provides the opportunities for development that are part of the motivations behind large population movements. The mass media of receiving societies have here a part to play by forming 'micro public spheres' (Dayan, 1998, 109) or 'public sphericles' (Cunningham, 2001; Gitlin, 1998) which can both connect transnational communities with their homelands and insert them in the politics of their host lands. Thus 'diasporic audiences are capable of shifting their attention and their commitments from their own media (local and transnational) to the national mainstream media, and in so doing finding opportunities for comparison but also possibilities for choice' (Georgiou and Silverstone, 2007, 41). It should be added that the 'public sphericles' open to diasporic audiences are frequently operated within commercial structures that are not always relevant in their textual forms (Cunningham, 2001, 136). And yet, their commercial nature might sometimes converge with purposes that could be seen as politically progressive, as actual public spheres that empower the members of diasporas.

Univision: Diasporic Assimilation?

Univision is the largest Spanish-language broadcaster in the United States and the fifth largest from a list that includes ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX. It reaches 95 percent of the 12.6 million Hispanic households in the country. According to the Nielsen Television Index-Hispanic, between 95 percent and 100 percent of the most widely watched television shows in Spanish from 2003 to 2008 were broadcast by Univision (Univision, 2009, 6).² *Noticiero Univision*, which alongside *Noticias Univision* is the

² Telemundo's ratings rank far behind in second place, and TeleFutura Network, also a unit of Univision, runs close behind Telemundo in third place (Univision, 2009) Mexican Television Azteca-controlled US broadcaster, Azteca America, lags far behind in 11th position, with major US networks capturing a larger share of the Spanish-

broadcaster's most popular newscast, runs nationwide every evening immediately before a block of Mexican *telenovelas* followed everyday by several million households. Paraphrasing Subervi and Eusebio (2005, 287), Univision's large-scale operation reveals a mainstream outlet 'that is also minority-focused'. This mainstream side of Univision is present in the fact that, in recent times, it has acquired a highly prominent role in electoral processes, 'nabbing debates with major candidates and increasingly seeing their political coverage spin out into mainstream English-language media' (Wides-Muñoz, 2010a).³

While Univision depends on programming imports from Mexico for its financial stability (Univision, 2007, 19), 'the demand for US content is increasingly being met in terms of talk, variety, and news shows produced in Miami' (Sinclair, 2003, 222). If one focuses on its main newscasts, a distinctive product comes into view, one that addresses an audience on the basis of commonalities (i.e. Spanish and ethnicity), while overlooking or playing down the distinctions between groups of different national origins. This has involved adopting traditional US mainstream news values and formats, and avoiding traces of vernacular *Spanglish* or of the Mexican-accented Spanish Univision's predecessor, reproduced during its first 20 years of existence – and which Cuban-Americans happen to dislike (Sinclair, 2004, 11). Most importantly, the news agendas of *Noticiero Univision* recreate Latin American-origin peoples as legitimate actors in the US daily social, cultural, economic and political life (Rodríguez,

speaking public (ibid.). While viewership numbers are problematic (Ang, 1996), they are a reliable indicator of Univision's place in the US televisual landscape.

³ Univision, of course, has not always been a US broadcaster, since it was born as a transnational one in 1961, founded by Mexican entrepreneur Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta. In 1986 Azcárraga was ordered to sell Univision's predecessor (SIN/SICC) given restrictions on foreign ownership of a US broadcaster. To date Televisa owns a 5 percent equity stake in Univision and is the most important source of Univision's programming.

1999, 81). One more characteristic of Univision's newscasts is the discourse of ethnic advocacy that contests developments in the public sphere deemed as negative for Hispanics. Thus while English-language newscasts, for instance, have been a platform US politicians used to advance populist anti-immigrant agendas (Gutiérrez, 1998, 317-8), Univision frequently depicts these as racist (Rodríguez, 1999, 46).

Univision's agenda as an advocate of Hispanic causes has been in place since the early 1980s, but in recent years Spanish-language media has gone from reporting favourably on issues affecting the community to directly getting involved in Latino mobilizations. Such involvement gained salience after the March 2006 countrywide pro-immigrant rallies, in which several hundreds of thousands marched in cities from New York, Chicago and Florida to San Antonio and Los Angeles, against the criminalization of undocumented people which formed part of a legislative debate on migration reform. This was the first time in history that Hispanics had gone out into the streets in large numbers. One previous large-scale protest had taken place in Los Angeles in 1994, when thousands of Mexican-origin peoples marched in the streets to repudiate California's Proposition 187, which denied schooling, medical care and other social services to undocumented immigrants. The 70,000 demonstrators of the 16 October 1994 protests (*Los Angeles Times*, 1994) were dwarfed by the 500,000 who marched on 25 March 2006. The difference was that the latter 'were organized, promoted or publicized for weeks by Spanish-language radio hosts and TV anchors as a demonstration of Hispanic pride and power' (Flaccus, 2006). This was not only a matter of media proving its power to publicize an event on a massive scale, but also an episode in which broadcasters started to actively engage in organizing the activities of protesters, advising radio listeners and television viewers to wear white clothes and to wave US flags (as opposed to Mexican ones), and making public requests for Latino staff managers not to fire protesters for skipping work (Moreno, 2009, 212-13).

Subsequent Latino protests diminished in size and visibility but the Arizona law has reanimated them. The coverage provided by Univision reveals a role in the construction of Latinos as political actors that connects with the paradigm of diasporic media deployed in this intervention. Demonstrating the feasibility of such a hypothesis requires visualizing Univision as an orchestrator which, by putting together different angles of the same event, yielded a coherent narrative of a political conflict that is both pro-Hispanic and that seems compatible with the US democratic process. This requires a kind of news coverage that, in representing ‘a wide range of informed positions on key issues’ (McChesney, 2004, 57), validates journalistic practice but, more importantly, the legitimacy of the represented. In the case of the Arizona law, those represented were politicians, activists, entrepreneurs, priests and regular people, all Hispanics, who were shown on camera asserting themselves as members of the population, invoking US laws and addressing powerful others – political allies (i.e. the White House) and enemies (i.e. Senators of the Republican Party). As a result, Hispanics were represented not solely in a constructive way but as participants of a national debate, a claim that will be substantiated after a methodological note.

A Note on Methodology

The main data for this study was derived from *Noticiero Univision* newscasts broadcast between 19 April and 1 May 2010. The 12 shows (excluding, for technical reasons, that from 27 April) were recorded using a VCR and were reproduced for content and textual analyses. A coding sheet was designed following the model presented by Hansen et al. (1998, 91–129). The coding was conducted by two individuals (the article’s author and an assistant). Two training sessions were held in which both coders viewed two full newscasts per meeting, making pauses to discuss coding criteria. Subsequently, each individual processed all of the reports separately. Once processed, coding sheets corresponding to two newscasts (randomly selected) were compared for consistency, yielding a 91 percent rate of inter-coder reliability.

With the coding sheets completed, two separate sets of data were produced, one pertaining to the specific coverage of the Arizona law, and another that considered each of the 132 stories recorded. The sheet was designed to capture information identifying the structure of individual stories, such as their headlines, dates, their duration, names of newsreaders, reporters involved, etc. The locations of both reporters and the stories themselves were also registered, along with elements of classification including the type of news item (e.g. report, opinion), priority given (e.g. main headline, secondary), item setting (e.g. live broadcast, phone interview), unit type (e.g. anchor only, anchor/reporter two-way) and novelty (e.g. breaking news, follow-up, etc.). Other categories recorded in the sheets included key story actors (e.g. the president, protesters), news sources (e.g. legislative, activists) and news topics (e.g. immigration, the economy). Altogether, these categories were useful in assessing the nature of the content that *Noticiero Univision* makes available for its viewers.

The second body of data upon which this article is based derived from textual analysis of all stories covering the Arizona law. For this section a total of 41 reports were fully transcribed using a word processor. The text was subsequently analysed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package. In sum, this part of the study aimed to explore the representation of Hispanics that resulted from *Noticiero Univision's* coverage of the events, from the moment the Arizona law was approved as a bill by the local senate, to Labor Day, when several thousands marched in over 70 cities to demand that it be blocked by the federal government. The outline of the findings has been shortened to meet space limitations; accordingly, only those categories and frames that are essential to the article's argument will be presented.

An American Reality *en Español*

Contrary to Rodríguez's findings that Univision presents more stories about Latin America and US Latinos than it does about news in the United States (1999, 94), the

findings here suggest the newscasts' focus was on a broad range of themes grounded in a national US reality. In fact, 58 percent of all the reports were based in the US, even though the blanket extended significantly to Latin America (see Figures 1 and 2). Despite this Latin American orientation, one finds that the predominantly US-based coverage is addressing a national audience more than a transnational one. This leaves us asking what kind of national and local stories *Noticiero Univision* provides. The answer makes it clear that immigration is a dominant subject (see Figure 3). We are left pondering, however, over a news agenda which reflects on Univision's presumption of what its imagined audience is interested in. Take, for instance, those items under the category of 'Economy', where one receives an assortment of news one might well expect to find in a mainstream newscast. This category was composed of a 20-second anchor package (a newsreader and video footage) about General Motor's debt settlements with the US and Canadian governments. On the same day another 25-second report about security improvements to the \$100 note was shown. One day later a reporter package covered White House plans for an economic reform and two other reports surveyed a trial of Wall Street executives involved in a financial fraud. Another prominent heading was that of 'Accidents'. The first related story, on 21 April, was about the explosion of an oil platform in the state of Louisiana. The newscast devoted a 14-second package to the sinking of an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico on 22 April, and two days later the attendance of president Barack Obama at the funeral of 29 miners in West Virginia received 31 seconds of attention. The heading 'Law and Order' included a White House statement on how it was still the government's priority to capture Al Qaeda's Osama bin Laden. A US Supreme Court ruling against violent videogames in California was also in the same category. It is apparent, then, that overall most of the stories that were part of the newscasts did not have a Latino but a mainstream frame. Considering this (and paraphrasing the conclusion of Constantakis [2008, 152] about Spanish-language television coverage of presidential elections in the US), one might say that Univision provides both a mainstream and a minority orientation.

Arizona Law under Examination: Focus on News Actors and Sources

A brief overview of *Noticiero Univision's* coverage has been provided so far that reflects on a strong US focus. Immigration as a news topic has dominated the broadcaster's news agenda during the period under analysis, reflecting editorial criteria that considered the Arizona law as a newsworthy event and of interest to its audience. The story constituted 41 of 77 US-based items with an average length of 123 seconds, versus the 97-second average duration of the entire universe. Further to this, 20 percent of the time it was the newscast's main headline and 27 percent it was a report connected to the main headline. The story was deemed to be of 'secondary' importance only 27 percent of the time, compared to 41 percent for the whole of the news items. The story also received significant technical and human resources, manifest in that 27 percent of the reports were deployed using a live/on-site transmission, a resource that was only deployed 8 percent of the time if one takes the total of the news analysed. Two key categories were central to our analysis: 'news sources' and 'story actors'. The former are those entities that provide the factual information and inputs leading to the manufacture of news (Franklin et al., 2010), and the latter are the audiovisual representations of those sources. As news sources and story actors, ordinary Hispanic people and activists dominated the reports about SB1070, while legislators, government spokespersons and experts were other important participants in the coverage (see Figures 4 and 5). Keeping these news sources and actors in mind will be central in the outline of our textual analysis because they represent the social system that lay beneath the Arizona law controversy. Regarding the analysis of factual discourses Schrøder explains:

The media clearly operate within a set of economic and political frameworks, representing the prevailing social order, but its diversity as well as its internal representational struggles, as articulated by the media, serve also to poise the media uneasily between convention and innovation, reproduction and change. (2002, 107)

This author guided the analysis of news about the Arizona law based on Schrøder's premise because the story gave way to representations of Hispanics as protagonists in a struggle against other societal actors. The resulting portrayals were characterized

by reflections on Latinos as a uniform national community fighting against the threat of discrimination. Here, a heterogeneous community that has been historically marginalized by the press (Wilson II, and Gutiérrez, 2003) is shown to be part of the US political body. For this display of unity to be consistent *Noticiero Univision* had to engage, for example, in representing undocumented peoples not as part of a problem that the Arizona law is supposed to address, but as members of a national ethnic minority intent on resisting exclusion and discrimination. This makes better sense by focusing on the frames (Entman, 1993) mobilized to describe the actions and positions of ordinary Hispanics and activists vis-à-vis other news sources and actors.

Frame 1: Peaceful Readiness for War

Noticiero Univision reported on the Arizona law as a conflict that would turn Arizona into 'the core of the anti-immigrant movement in the US'. Labelled as 'racist' and 'certain to cause discrimination', the bill was said to be 'shameful' and the cause for 'big divisions among the US population'. The newscast made its position clear early after the story broke on 19 April, when reporter Erik Iglesias announced that he himself was joining community leaders and activists 'to protest and reject the legislation'. In the face of a 'threat' that would trigger 'heated reactions', the newscasts consistently proclaimed Hispanics were 'ready for war'. As reporter Jaime García put it, when telling of a mass protest near Arizona's State Capitol: 'thousands of people told Arizona's governor they are on a war footing as they marched on the streets of Phoenix'. Another report said a group of students 'adopted the battle cry of "farmers' leader César Chávez", as they marched down the streets of Phoenix to join thousands who had reunited outside the State Capitol'. The 'at war' theme was of course a metaphor for street protests which were allegedly 'growing by the day' and provoking 'indignation that has made way for a national movement that is mobilizing thousands of people' throughout the country'. As stated by reporter Blanca Rosa Vilches, a protest in Missouri's Kansas City was an example of 'how events can have big consequences at the national level'. In this context several pro-immigrant

demonstrations were said to be proof of the 'growing rejection to the anti-immigrant law in many sectors and cities all over the country'. A nationwide protest that would be held on 1 May was widely advertised and portrayed as a demonstration of political strength. Expressions of resistance received a great deal of attention, especially an 'act of civil disobedience' by Hispanic politicians and activists who got themselves arrested by the police outside the White House. Similar actions included a human blockade at a detention facility for undocumented people in Chicago, a so-called Hispanic boycott of a baseball match that featured Arizona Diamondbacks, and an airplane that flew across displaying a banner against SB1070.

Signs in support for the bill received a little attention but no headlines whatsoever. One reporter made room to say that 'while some demanded that the Arizona law be stopped on its tracks others asked, waving US flags, that undocumented migrants leave the country'. Two stories included (in both) an individual on camera expressing 'anti-undocumented' feelings, and in one of these newsreader María Elena Salinas acknowledged that 'most people support it'. Minimization of the existing support for the Arizona law is telling with regard to Univision's assumption that anti-immigrant sentiment needs little exposure given that it is widely ventilated in English-language news media (cf. Rodríguez, 1999, 88). It is, however, relevant that such a stance was acknowledged at all, as this made implicit the risk of clashes. Against this background the newscast widely insisted on calls from 'pro-immigrant leaders to stay calm', 'to avoid confrontation' and 'to stay peaceful'. In this context, the newscast informed viewers of a few heated exchanges between protesters and the police, and about 'one episode of racist abuse by a man who humiliated dozens of young Hispanics after Arizona's Governor signed the law'. Any suggestion of Hispanic unruly behaviour was, however, toned down, including the case of a swastika spray-painted on a public building after a demonstration, i.e. in which the Nazi symbol was said to have been authored by 'gang bangers'.

Frame 2: The Power of Roots and Citizenship

The narrative of vigorous, yet peaceful, political resistance was presented as an effort of news actors and sources characterized as members of the US political body. Central in this context were ordinary Hispanics as providers of soundbites but, most importantly, as subjects who belong within American territory. This argument was deployed in a story about a group of Hispanic ‘natives from Phoenix, Arizona’, who celebrated a ceremony to emphasize their ‘direct link with nature, which they said, will prevail over any injustice or attack on their right for equality’. Further invoking the notion of *jus solis* (right to the soil), there were systematic claims that young Hispanics, ‘the voters of the future’, were at the forefront of the Latino struggle, even though every available opportunity was taken to include footage of Latin American naturalized US citizens who had joined the fight. This combination of ‘natives’ and naturalized Hispanic Americans was showcased as a sign of ‘national unity’ that reached its climax at the pro-migration reform protests that took place on ‘Labor Day’. The idea of cohesiveness was particularly linked to the voting rights of some 19 million Hispanics nationwide, a theme through which the strength of the demonstrators was emphasized. One report, for example, focused on ‘Mrs Mondragón, a US citizen who marched with her mother and daughter to repudiate the bill which will criminalize undocumented migration in Arizona’. In the same news item, a correspondent warned that ‘students in this community will become 18 in two or three years and once they’re entitled to vote they will not forget what is happening today’. There was here the implication of a political backlash for the Republican Party, which was consistently identified as the sponsor of the SB1070. Another report noted that Latino soldiers who ‘became citizens after joining the Army were increasingly worried about the situation of immigrants’. *Noticiero Univision* also reported from a call centre where volunteers of the organization *Mi familia vota* (My family votes) called Latino households, urging registered voters to phone the office of Arizona’s Governor to say that they rejected the anti-immigrant measure. The Hispanic electorate made it into a story focused mainly on a migration reform plan presented by senators of the Democratic Party in Washington who, according to opponents of

the Republican Party, were playing politics to court Hispanic votes in the November 2010 midterm elections.

Coverage also reflected on Latinos' power through representations of 'activists' of different kinds. These 'activists' were fundamental news actors who staged a variety of symbolic actions, such as tying themselves up with chains, getting themselves arrested by police, blocking access to public buildings and carrying large boxes with signatures against Arizona's SB1070 to the Governor's office. A Hispanic priest, for instance, said he experienced deliberate arrest to protest against the separation of families due to deportations. He said he would 'spend a year in prison if they want me to, but we want no more kids suffering because of this'. Also labelled as 'community leaders', such people's activities included distributing t-shirts with political demands printed on them, counselling ordinary Hispanics in the streets to remain calm, to participate in protests only after school or work attendance, and to avoid confrontations with police or Arizona law supporters in public places. As news sources, members of civil rights organizations provided interpretations as to how the Arizona law would translate into racial discrimination, and articulated demands for the White House to block the measure and speed up the policy-making process leading to migration reform.

Lawmakers were news actors and sources who had an important role in projecting a notion of Latinos' political strength. An important political figure in this context was Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, presented as 'one of the key promoters of a migration reform in the House of Representatives'. This legislator from the state of Illinois was present in several news reports, blaming both the US president and even Senators of his own party for failing to act on migration reform, i.e. every Hispanic was affected by the controversy started by the Arizona law. A senator from New Jersey, Robert Menendez, also of Hispanic origin, was said to be part of a team of legislators who were drafting a project of migration reform; he was put on camera saying that

Republicans were slowing the possibility of a legislative agreement. The newscaster made reference to local and federal legislators who opposed both the SB1070 and 'militarizing' the border. Pro-Hispanic legislators were also said to have asked Arizona's Governor to veto a law that would have a 'devastating' impact. Other news items consistently suggested that lawmakers, especially from the Democratic Party, had been put under intense pressure to move forward with a migration reform, something they would not necessarily manage to accomplish in the present year. And yet, reporter Blanca Rosa Vilchez said congressmen from the state of New York had 'raised hopes' about the possibility that migration reform would be passed in 2010.

Frame 3: Undocumented Students and Hope

Undocumented subjects were one visible part of the media coverage. They were of course mentioned as the target of the Arizona law, since, as one reporter put forward, 'Arizona has become the most severe state against undocumented people'. In a few cases they were shown in footage enduring arrest or being processed for deportation. More frequently, however, they were portrayed contributing active voices to a broader script that denounced the SB1070 as discriminating Latinos in general. This appeared to be the role of 'undocumented students' (*estudiantes indocumentados*), who are students before they are undocumented. One such person was shown on frame declaring the 'Arizona law is racist and against the US constitution'. In another story, reporter Fernando Pizarro stated that unauthorized students who had marched from Miami to the US capital in order to be deliberately arrested alongside activists and politicians, were 'talked down from doing it as that would have put them in more serious trouble' than they were already in. In a different report, Viviana Ávila spoke of some students who had joined a protest in Arizona, where 'they have chosen to make their reality public by sharing their stories about how difficult it is for them to continue their studies, despite their being excellent at school'. Another report highlighted that the police chiefs of Phoenix and Tucson had said that the Arizona law

was logistically difficult, and that community policing needed the cooperation of the entire Hispanic community, 'including the support of the undocumented'.

Noticiero Univision alleged that the hardship faced by Hispanics, both documented and not, was met by people with faith and prayer. This theme was present in several news items that spread the notion of Hispanics as the embodiment of deeply entrenched religiosity. This is why, 'as one would expect, the churches have become the spiritual shelter for hundreds of immigrants who are afraid of the recent measure which criminalizes undocumented people in Arizona', as noted by newsreader Enrique Teutelo. In a variety of reports, families and individuals were shown piously praying in front of religious symbols, elevating their chants to the heavens for legalization, and for President Obama's spiritual enlightenment leading to an amnesty.

Conclusion

By focusing on Univision's coverage of the Arizona law, this article has sought to establish that mass media in migrant-receiving societies act as transnational public spheres that connect immigrants with the politics of the countries where they live. This perspective complements traditional approaches about the media of diaspora as homeward oriented; it also provides a theoretical platform that keeps in mind the post-national nature of migrant communities, putting into perspective the strategies of a broadcaster to synthesize a complex 'diaspora of diasporas' into an unproblematic ethnic minority. Such an effort avoids the methodological nationalism of perspectives based on the model of cultural assimilation, which tend to overlook the transnational involvements of the post-national ethnoscaapes. Furthermore, this article has argued that post-national formations, developed as a result of contemporary migration, have attracted significant efforts from scholars to document the link between media communication and contemporary experiences of displacement. The common response has been to explore this relationship in the context of the orientations that

transnational communities develop towards their countries of origin, resulting in the notion that media from the homeland can act as transnational public spheres through which diasporas interact with the polities of their countries of origin. When it comes to media in migrant-receiving countries, however, the notion of symbolic mediated spaces that politically enable ethnic minorities falls into the realm of assimilationist discourses that overlook the transnational connections of such groups. A diasporic perspective, on the other hand, keeps track of the links minorities maintain with their national cultures while taking stock of the dynamics that shape their lives in their contexts of reception, hence the relevance of exploring whether or not media from the host-land can make meaningful contributions to the empowerment of transnational communities. This seems to be the case, judging from the positive and constructive representations of Latin American-origin people provided by *Noticiero Univision* in its coverage of the Arizona law. It is likely that future political debates regarding the largest ethnic minority will continue to be a priority of Spanish-language media coverage. In this context, observers note that obstacles placed by Republican lawmakers in the way of the 'Dream Act', an initiative that will eventually open a pathway to citizenship for undocumented peoples who migrated to the US as children, will be met by Spanish-language media 'ads slamming lawmakers who voted against' it (Wides-Muñoz, 2010b). The prospect of such a backlash towards Republicans is not to be dismissed considering that the Hispanic vote has in recent electoral processes kept them from winning elections in such important states as California (Martin, 2010). The assumption that anti-Republican news coverage might lead Hispanic voters to favour Democratic candidates, resulting in pro-immigrant political landscapes, thus reinforces the notion that host land-based public spheres are a positive development for transnational communities. This leads us, however, to the need for audience research that helps us to visualize how transnational audiences relate to the content that seemingly strengthens their groundings as political actors. Some studies based on ethnographic research methods have recently suggested that there is a correlation between moments of media use and of political action (e.g. Moreno, 2009), thereby providing motivation i.e. for further empirical research within a paradigm that fruitfully links the findings of content analysis with those of audience

research. Certainly broadcasters such as Univision cannot alone turn undocumented people into citizens, but its representations insert them as participants within a broader national community. Georgiou and Silverstone suggest in this context that 'media representation involves both participation and recognition', which 'ultimately involves the equal sharing of a common cultural space' (2007, 36).

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Chart 1. News coverage by country

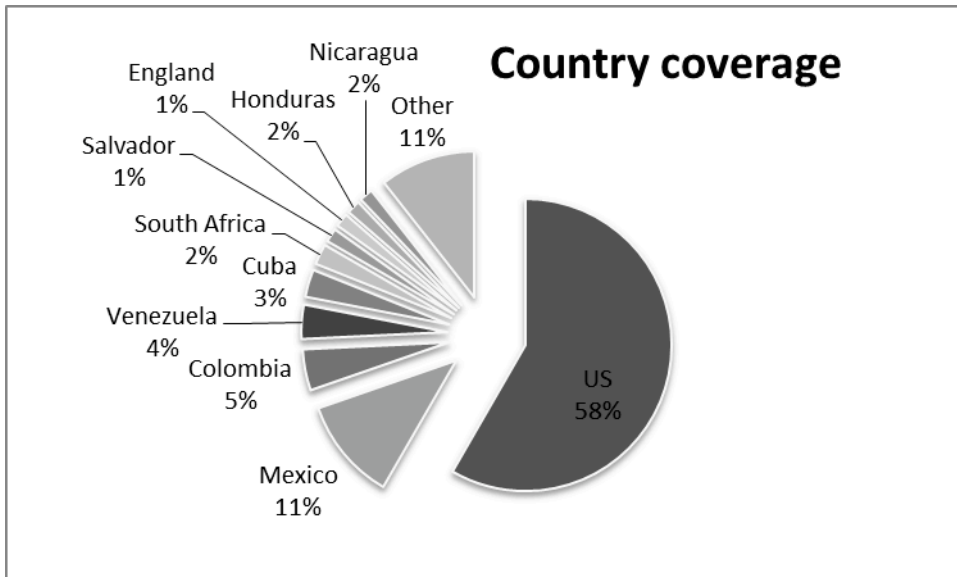


Chart 2. News coverage by topic

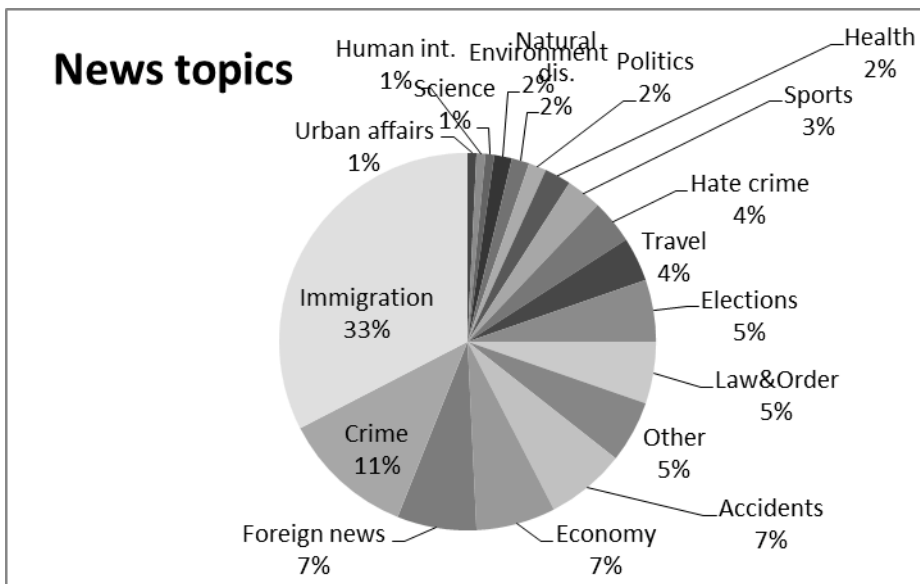


Chart 3. News coverage by topic for US-based reports

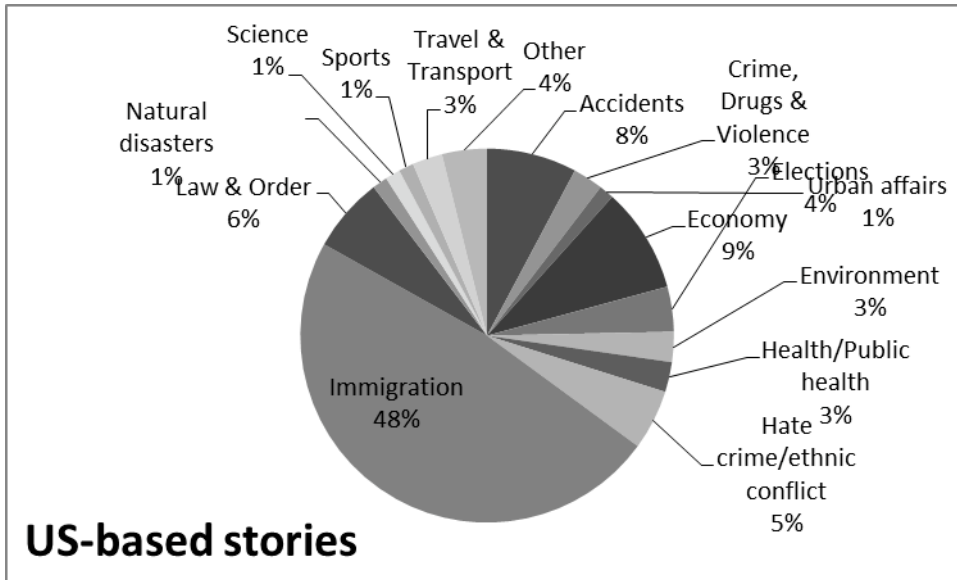


Chart 4. Distribution of news sources quoted for Arizona law stories

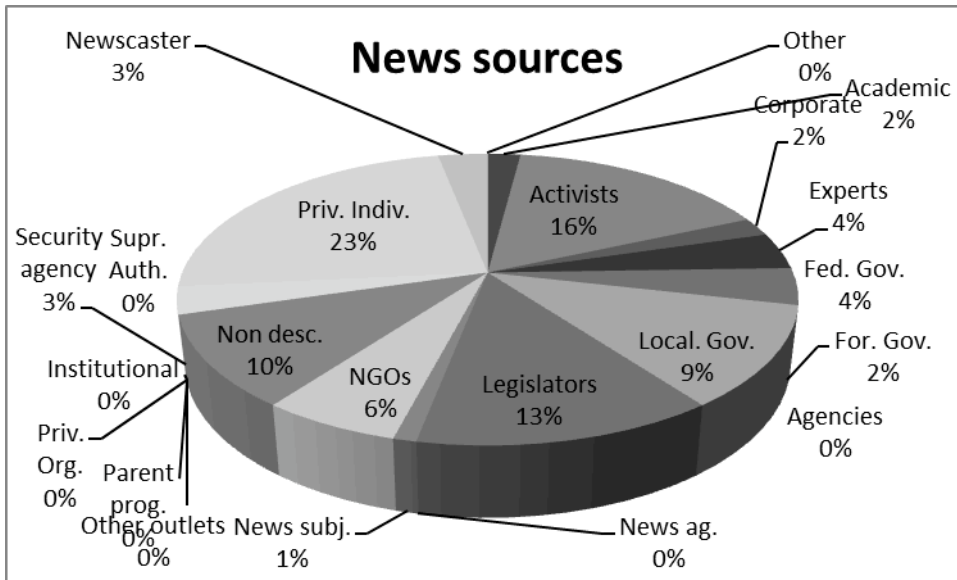


Chart 5. Distribution of “news actors” in stories about the Arizona law

