

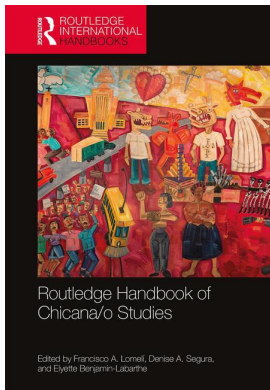
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Spanish-language media

From politics of resistance to politics of pan-ethnicity

Xavier Medina Vidal and Federico Subervi-Vélez

Chicanismo in the early 21st century, the Hispanic/Latino era of politics in the United States, has been isolated and siloed by many scholars and even by many political activists still seeking a place of power within American society. To be sure, for all generations of Mexican-origin people, mass media have been essential to their cultural, social and political survival. Throughout the different stages of *mexicanos'* history in the United States and at varying degrees, Spanish-language (and Latina/o-oriented) mass media have confronted the forces of colonialism, assimilation and acculturation directly, making them among the most important agents of political socialization for Chicanas/os. As agents of socialization, Spanish-language media serve both pluralizing and acculturating functions for all Latinas/os. In their acculturating function, Spanish-language media can provide news, information and socialization content that can contribute to Latinas/os' knowledge about the dominant political system, voting, political mobilization and other activities that foment involvement with the "American way of life." Simultaneously, Spanish-language media act as pluralizing agents that highlight issues, arts and culture that reflect Hispanic and Latin American identity (Subervi-Vélez 2008b, pp. 60–63). Evidence of this acculturation function is seen through the lens of a growing "*latinidad*" slowly chipping away at specific or distinct Chicana/o identities. Compared to English-language general market media, many Spanish-language media promote a sense of group consciousness among all Latina/o groups that reinforces similarities of Latinas/os from different national ancestries (Kerevel 2011, p. 510), and they are among the strongest forces behind the fomentation of pan-Hispanic group identity (Abrajano & Álvarez 2010, p. 33). Simultaneously, Spanish-language media reinforce differences with the dominant United States, English-speaking culture by playing a direct role in mobilizing mass political demonstrations against prejudicial policies and in favor of Latina/o-specific policy goals, and even stimulating naturalization among Latino immigrants (Félix et al. 2008, p. 632). That is, for Chicanas and Chicanos, Spanish-language media are a critical link between the activism of their ancestors and their own contemporary experiences with Latina/o immigrant-oriented activism.

As we explore in depth later, the continued value that Chicanas/os place on Spanish-language and of news and information transmitted in Spanish via mass media in the 21st century is a reminder that they serve a purpose much more meaningful to Chicanas/os than the linguistic, cultural and political assimilation that the United States has to offer. In the following analysis, we explain the role of Spanish-language media in Chicana/o politics from 1848 to the

present, building on the generational/cohort framework established by Rodolfo Álvarez's foundational Chicana/o Studies essay "The Psychohistorical and Socioeconomic Development of the Chicano Community in the United States" (Álvarez 1973, pp. 920–942), describing the roles agents of political socialization and the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the time play in the development of Mexican-origin people in the United States. Along the way we develop our thesis of the importance of Spanish-language media to the maintenance of Chicanas/os' celebration of their distinct political identity and resistance to the forces of colonialism, assimilation and acculturation.

Introduction: Spanish-language media and early Mexicana/o resistance

Chicanas/os' use of media to express their resistance to cultural-assimilationist forces trace back to *mexicano* resistance to the larger nation-building project originating in violent conflict, the War of the North American Invasion (also known as the Mexican-American War 1846–1848). Throughout El Norte's (the North or the present-day U.S. Southwest) transition from Mexican to U.S. rule and *mexicanos'* labeled transition to Mexican American, Spanish-language news media played an important role in documenting Mexican popular cultural, social and political transition. Specifically, Spanish-language newspapers from this period are essential to identifying examples of racist affronts, offensive language and innuendo directed at Mexican-origin people during their early years as Mexican Americans, that marginalized them as a landless, subservient, wage-earner-class, permanently relegated to the lowest social caste in their new country (Álvarez 1973, pp. 925–927). Beginning with the Creation/Conquered Generation, the Spanish-language press's purpose was widely seen as a means of contesting "social and historical erasure" (Meléndez 2005, p. 63; Martínez 2006, p. 110).

Following 1848, new political circumstances for Mexican-origin people of what Rodolfo Álvarez calls the "Creation Generation" (Álvarez 1973, p. 924), and who Mario García (1991, p. 14) calls the "Conquered Generation," who were conquered by force, meant that new modes of cultural diffusion and development were necessary to maintain Mexican American identity. For as long as what is today called the "American Southwest" has been occupied by the United States, Chicanas/os have actively expressed their resistance to this occupation and the forces of assimilation through mass media. A central feature of the sometimes latent and mostly overt resistance to transition and assimilation has been the Spanish language. Though mass media at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries looked very different from media in the early 21st, their role in the resistance to U.S. imperialism and in shaping Mexican/Chicano acculturation was profound. Recall that, at the time of the conquest, the majority of Mexican-origin people of the new Southwest resided along the Río Grande Valley in New Mexico and Texas. As the major population center of the Southwest, contact and conflict with new Anglo intruders/settlers in New Mexico and Texas were among the most pronounced. With violent conflicts between Anglos and Mexicans going back to the Texas revolution movement of the 1830s, *nuevomexicanos* and *tejanos* were at the frontlines of *mexicano* resistance to the Anglo invasion (Rosenbaum 1981; Chávez 1984). Thus, to fully appreciate the role of mass media in Chicana/o resistance to U.S. imperialism after the conquest, it is important to recognize the role of Mexican printed media leading up to it.

During the Mexican Republic's struggle to resist Texan secessionism and to keep El Norte under Mexican authority, the printing press was a critical tool for the dissemination of political texts urging *mexicanos* to remain loyal to Mexico City. In 1835, Nuevo México's first printing press produced the territory's first newspaper, *El Crepúsculo de la Libertad* (*The Twilight of Freedom*) before becoming the means by which Padre Antonio José Martínez would publish numerous

essays and textbooks documenting *nuevomexicano* resistance (Reséndez 2004, pp. 171–196). New Mexican tradition and culture of print media indeed flourished in the period of political transition for El Norte/the Southwest from Mexican rule to territorial status and to its statehood, which was achieved in 1912.

A popular literary Spanish-language political culture thrived in New Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th century as political poetry and prose filled the pages of a vibrant Spanish-language press that informed a politically engaged and sophisticated Mexican American, Spanish-speaking society. The level of *mexicano*–Chicana/o resistance reached its pinnacle during this time by way of a collective media-based effort to defend *mexicanos* of the new Southwest from eastern Anglo threats to their way of life. The Indigenous, Spanish-speaking *mexicanos* of the new Southwest depended on the Spanish-language newspapers to stay informed of the political processes taking place around them in this new colonized environment. The Spanish-language newspapers of the *periodiqueros* (newsvendors) of the mid-19th to mid-20th century New Mexico were instrumental in prolonging for at least a generation the use of the Spanish language in civic life (Meléndez 2005). Recognizing, nonetheless, the colossal challenge of stopping or even slowing the takeover and all the accouterments of “American” assimilation, *nuevomexicanos* also relied on the prose and poetry printed in their Spanish newspapers like *El Nuevo Mexicano* in order to acculturate to their new political reality. Analysis of Spanish-language editorials, manifestos, platforms and policies between 1821 and 1912, New Mexico’s territorial period, reveals that *nuevomexicanos* made significant, meaningful contributions to the politics and policies culminating in New Mexico’s statehood (Gonzales 2016). This work reveals what many 21st-century Chicanas/os would be pleased to know: the degree to which their ancestors contributed to the formation of the U.S. national identity and Chicana/o political culture during times – the Creation and Migration Generation – of political upheaval, and political and social transition.

For *mexicanos* of the Creation Generation (1848–1900), their resistance to American assimilation through the Spanish-language media left a strong political and literary legacy, especially in New Mexico. Nonetheless, the economic, social and political marginalization of *mexicanos* and their language of resistance was, like *mexicanos*’ physical space, overwhelmed by the United States and its many forces of assimilation and acculturation. The economic subjugation and race and ethnic prejudice first experienced by the Creation Generation (Álvarez 1973, p. 924) was (and is), to be sure, a feature of life that required the use of innovative modes of resistance.

For Mexican-origin people of the Migration Generation (1900 to World War II) and the Mexican American Generation (World War II to the Vietnam War) (Álvarez 1973, pp. 927–936), the Spanish language and Spanish-language media continued to be a weapon of resistance to U.S. assimilation. In addition to the multiple and diverse community and militant newspapers, media at the turn of the 20th century included two sets of options: first, the Mexican radio stations whose waves reached across the border; and second, the slow but steady emergence of Spanish-language radio programs and eventually Latina/o-owned and/or Latina/o-operated radio stations. While the majority of those programs and stations on either side of the border were commercial enterprises, they reached wider audiences all across the Southwest with content that celebrated Mexican and Mexican American culture: music, stories, fiestas, holidays, religious services and eventually also the very popular *radionovelas* from México and other countries (Schement & Flores 1977; Gutiérrez & Schement 1979; Subervi-Vélez et al. 1994; Casillas 2014).

However, the Migrant Generation era and the Mexican American Generation era were periods during which the forces of assimilation became most deeply entrenched. Migration Generation Mexicans, those who migrated to the United States during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), eventually found themselves living among the lowest social caste during the Great Depression, but relative to Mexicans in Mexico, still better off economically. Thus, Migrant

Generation Mexicans never fully appreciated the fact that they were economically powerless; in fact, this lower socioeconomic position in the United States was never highly salient in their minds. These *mexicanos* simply entered a socioeconomic space predefined by the Creation/Conquered Generation as that of a politically, socially, culturally, and economically conquered people (Álvarez 1973, pp. 927–928).

For Anglo Americans, stereotyped depictions of backward, thieving, binge drinking, lazy and harassing Mexicans were (are) commonplace (Pettit 1980; Keller 1985; Berg 2002). John Steinbeck's novel and film *Tortilla Flat* (Steinbeck 1935) portrays Mexican Americans in California's central coast as *paisanos*, who were meant to be authentic remnants of the glorious Spanish past, existing in a suspended state, neither fully Spanish nor American, who, as "lovable thieves," served as comic relief to Anglo audiences with their perceived innocence, savagery and barbarism (Romero 2015, p. 111).

Even scholarly characterizations of "Spanish-speaking" or "Spanish American" people of the Southwest from East Coast academics were just as harmful and virulent during this time. For instance, Carolyn Zeleny in *Relations Between the Spanish Americans and Anglo-Americans in New Mexico* suggests their "continued use of the Spanish language has isolated the group and retarded other aspects of assimilation" (Zeleny 1944, p. 297). Since these first Migrant Generation-era interpretations in literature and academia, these portrayals of Mexican-origin people and their use of the Spanish language have been continuously reproduced for popular consumption as a means to normalize these views of Chicanas/os (Romero 2015, p. 106). To be sure, it would be decades before Chicana/o scholars challenged these popular and academic portrayals of bilingual Mexican-origin people of the Southwest. In a critique of the damning Anglo imagery of Spanish-speaking Mexican-origin people of the Migrant and Mexican American Generations, Romero (2015, pp. 95–154) counters both Steinbeck's *paisano* caricature of Californian Mexican Americans and Zeleny's portrayal of Mexican American inferiority and laziness. Romero examines photographs taken by the Office of War Information in 1943 that illustrate a marginalized yet proud, hard-working and resilient Mexican American community in the Southwest, countering the stereotypical identity that Anglo outsiders continue to use to justify the marginalization and exploitation of Chicanas/os (Romero 2015, p. 98).

Through the Spanish language and Spanish-language media, the Mexican-origin people of the Creation and Migrant Generations expressed their resistance to U.S. imperialism and the forces of Anglo assimilation. Overwhelmed by the Anglo occupation, *mexicanos* in this period were ultimately eviscerated economically and relegated to the lowest socioeconomic caste. This humiliation from the violent takeover of El Norte was reinforced by linguistic assimilation during this period when Spanish-language use in the home and in the public sphere was lost or devalued as the language of *mexicano* resistance. By the end of the Migrant Generation era, many of the presses that once fueled *mexicano* resistance through the popular literary tradition of Spanish-language print had folded or turned over to Anglo ownership serving a much different audience and purpose. For the Mexican American Generation, Spanish-language media continued as an important source of cultural cohesion, but as we see later, a key feature of this generation's politics, its assimilation to the dominant Anglo American culture meant that Spanish-language media took on a different role in the lives of Mexican-origin people.

Spanish-language and Latina/o-oriented media in the middle of the 20th century

For Latinas/os in the United States, the period between World War II and the Vietnam War was an era in which the project of assimilation was fomented. It follows that the Mexican American

Generation and its approach to assimilation have been described as “painfully patriotic” (Álvarez 1973, p. 932). Members of this group began to link their marginal economic success to their cultural and linguistic assimilation, which had its greatest impetus in the educational systems that chastised, ridiculed and at times also punished the users of Spanish, even during informal non-classroom interactions. In fact, doing marginally better economically and educationally than their Migrant Generation parents was a sign to this generation that their American patriotism, military service (at the lowest ranks) and wholesale assimilation had paid off. As we will see later, this assumption was wildly misguided and motivated Chicanas/os to take another hard look at assimilation. Nonetheless, historians and social scientists alike would agree that the Mexican American Generation, through its breakthrough, however small, into the U.S. middle class produced a significant amount of infrastructure and resources that even the present generation of Chicanas/os benefit from.

In spite of those increasing assimilation efforts, one of the resources that remained and continues to remain crucial today for Chicana/o resistance to colonialism and assimilation was and is Spanish-language and other Hispanic/Latino-oriented media. In whatever language or languages these are produced, they are the steadfast voices that consistently offer news and cultural content about and relevant for Mexican Americans, Chicano/as and the Latina/o communities at large. Thus, even by the end of the Mexican American Generation, as social, economic and racial tensions pervaded life for many in the United States, Spanish-language and Latina/o-oriented print and broadcast media were seen by many as more than simply cultural markers for a small minority population.

With that stated, it cannot be denied that the acculturation and assimilation processes persist and that their education, though relatively better than that of their Migrant Generation parents, came at a significant cost: that “superior” education in American schools was in English. This severely devalued Mexican identity and cultural values and norms, and for many limited their access and/or connections to Spanish-language media or any other media specifically oriented to them. This period was thus one in which linguistic assimilation to the English language took root as Mexican-origin people became less likely to draw any meaningful social capital from speaking Spanish. For the Mexican American Generation, the introduction and growth of broadcast media did little to reinforce or re-invigorate *mexicano* resistance. Instead, the wheels of assimilation of Mexican-origin people in the Southwest were greased by the introduction of new, more broadly and rapidly disseminated media like radio and television. Keeping in mind that the Mexican American Generation’s assimilationist values developed contemporaneously as a function of their socioeconomic development and psycho-historical orientations, broadcast media represented both a tool with which assimilation could be challenged and a means to the end of *mexicano* resistance. Spanish-language broadcast television came about in the 1950s and 1960s in Mexican American communities as a function of significant investment from Mexico’s television monopoly, Televisa.

A turning point was during the early to mid-1950s upon the genesis and development of Spanish-language television broadcasting in the United States. Those efforts were not only about media entrepreneurs seeking to fill a void in social capital. As the Mexican American Generation began to flex embryonic, though marginal, economic and political clout, members of this generation’s nascent middle class sought ways to reconcile new measures of U.S. style success (economic and capitalist) with the language and other cultural traits of their Mexican heritage. It is within that context that the first Spanish-language television programs and subsequent stations emerged (KCOR TV in San Antonio, KWEX Los Angeles, WXTV New York) and eventually networks (Telemundo, and also Spanish International Network, which became Univisión) (Subervi-Vélez et al. 1994; Wilkinson 2015). As commercial stations (in contrast to

public service-oriented stations) and as outlets not remotely focused on civic advocacy, those programs and stations serve a major purpose: the maintenance of the Hispanic cultures across the United States. They also provide what the vast majority of general market English-language stations do not: news about Latinas/os and their contributions to American political life. The news in the Spanish-language stations tend to include stories about Latina/o political participation and efforts by politicians and major political parties to win Latina/o votes.

Here it must be stated that, during the 1950s, Puerto Ricans in the New York City Diaspora, *neoyorquinos*, or *Nuyoricans*, were undergoing a similar socioeconomic and cultural transition. The development of a pan-ethnic Hispanic/Latina/o identity that would ultimately seek to unite (at least for commercial and political purposes) various Latina/o-heritage groups with their origins during the Mexican American Generation, the peak of Mexican assimilation in the United States. Spanish-language media became the vehicles for this pan-ethnic project. It is important to also point out that Spanish-language broadcasters belonging to another (Mexican American) generation focused on issues and perceived needs specific to Mexican-origin people. These efforts were then more explicitly complemented by the need to enhance the broader “Hispanic” markets. Together, community-driven and market-driven motives for unifying Nuyoricans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans under a new Hispanic/Latina/o identity predated the efforts of the U.S. census that forged the Hispanic/Latina/o pan-ethnicity (Mora 2014).

Chicana/o assimilation, identity formation and media in transition

Though Mexican American Generation media entrepreneurs may have been cognizant of, and perhaps even motivated by, a resistance to Anglo American dominant culture and society and the preservation of Mexican culture, market forces became, for them, a primary motivation for fomenting the Spanish-language media environment. Due to these forces and the climate of cultural assimilation ushered in by the Mexican American Generation, between the Mexican American and Chicano Generations (1970–1990), we see a different relationship forming between ideas of resistance and the role of the Spanish language and the Spanish-language media. Very unlike their resistance-motivated Creation and Migration Generation ancestors, for members of the Chicano Generation, their resistance politics were divorced from the importance of the Spanish language to the resistance movement.

Two of the very few Mexican American-focused broadcast outlets with progressive, grassroots programming are: the Radio Bilingüe network, which started airing in 1980 while building on the advocacy of Hugo Morales, who continues at the helm of this organization (Anonymous-a N.d., N.p.); and Radio Campesina, a César Chávez foundation organization that had its first transmission in 1983 (Anonymous-c n.d., n.p.). Though these grassroots, community-based radio networks have been grounded in the rights of *campesinos* (farmworkers), this limited scope (and often limited bandwidth) has stifled the growth of a more comprehensive progressive agenda. Few would dispute that the resistance politics of the Chicano Generation were complex at best and at worst highly problematic in terms of their gendered dynamics. Compared to the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, for instance, the Chicano movement was decidedly more machista and resolute in its exclusion of Chicanas from leadership roles. Building on a broadcast media infrastructure largely built in the 1970s and 1980s (Mora 2014), the sexism that was part of the Chicano movement carries on into the 2010s on Spanish-language radio.

As a significant part of the growth in broadcast media, Spanish-language radio became and continues to a considerable degree to be a source of day-time, working-hours entertainment and news for Mexican-origin and other Latinas/os. Chicana/o and *mexicano* cultural diffusion has remained especially relevant to working-class audiences. Even in the 2010s, drive-time and

working-hours entertainment programming in Spanish broadcast misogyny and homophobia at levels highly disproportionate, and largely contrary to the gender and sexuality attitudes of the average U.S. Hispanic listener. Inés Casillas in *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish-language Radio and Public Advocacy* explains this phenomenon as part of the “feminization of labor” (Casillas 2014, p. 112) for many male Mexican (and most Latin American) immigrants in the United States. The Spanish-language media’s response to this phenomenon tied to immigrant labor via radio broadcasts has been the subjugation of women and the fashioning of Latino listeners as “anti-girly men” (Casillas 2014, p. 19). To be sure, some 50 years after some of the most tumultuous and productive events constituting the fulcrum of the Chicano movement, Chicanas/os within the systematic exclusion of Chicanas from positions of authority have been perpetuated by the Spanish-language radio (Casillas 2014, p. 19). Paradoxically, or perhaps consistent with the gender-nationalist tension of the Chicano Generation, when not transmitting sexism and homophobia, Spanish-language media have been serving an important advocacy role for the millions of Latina/o immigrants who are also the source of their still-growing audiences. In fact, Chicano political scientists describe Spanish-language radio as essential to the immigrant rights movement well into the 2000s (Félix, González & Ramírez 2008; Ramírez 2013).

Two Mexican American-focused broadcast outlets that merit attention, but have not yet been subject to scrutiny to assess their particular roles on Chicana/o politics, are the Radio Bilingüe network, which started airing in 1980 while building on the advocacy of Hugo Morales, who continues at the helm of this organization (Anonymous-a n.d., n.p.), and the Radio Campesina network, a César Chávez foundation organization that had its first transmission in 1983 (Anonymous-c n.d., n.p.). Both networks have progressive, grassroots programming that include news and information geared specifically for the Mexican American populations they serve. How much of that content is specifically regarding electoral politics or political mobilization in general has not been scrutinized. However, given the historical and current mission of these stations, for sure they are part of the media that specifically advocate for Chicanas/os’ sociopolitical development and political involvement.

In whatever fashion that has taken place, invariably modern Chicana/o and Latina/o mass media have informed Chicanas/os’ and Latinas/os’ attitudes and orientations, as well as their potential to shape how they see themselves as a part of society and politics. Álvarez’s “psycho-historical and socioeconomic development” framework (1973) for Mexican-origin people has notably shifted for Mexican-origin people who have come of political age from 1990 to the present, or what we assert is a Pan-ethnic Generation. Though we are far from the time when Spanish-language media were used almost exclusively as tools of cultural survival and resistance to U.S. assimilation among *mexicanos*, news and information disseminated to Chicanas/os in Spanish in the 21st century carries, when available, significant currency for communities that are quite often as marginalized as they were over a century and a half ago, and the direct role that Spanish-language television in particular played in developing a Hispanic/Latina/o pan-ethnic identity in the United States (Mora 2014, pp. 119–154) is undeniable. Today, Latino-oriented media, commercial enterprises as they may be, continue to shape knowledge of politics for Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in ways that reflect the experiences of a much more heterogeneous Latina/o community that is simultaneously more assimilated to the dominant Anglo American society. When considering the latent potential for Latinas/os to wield a significant degree of influence on U.S. politics, several scholars note the importance of linking the growth of a pan-ethnic Hispanic/Latina/o identity – from which Latinas/os of different national origins derive political strength – to the unifying effect of the Spanish language. For all Latinas/os from the Chicano Generation to the present day, the Spanish language endures as a symbol of pan-ethnic Hispanic/Latina/o identity with strong, culturally based, unifying effects (Padilla 1985, p. 151). We note here

that Félix Padilla's *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* is one of the few studies examining this pan-ethnic phenomenon with a particular focus on Chicanas/os and *puertorriqueños* in the Midwest. Spanish-language television, in particular the Telemundo and Univisión network news programs, have even been considered a “glue” that ties Latinos across the country (Constantakis-Valdés 1993, pp. 8–10).

Political knowledge and Chicana/o and Latina/o representation

Latina/o Americans integrate into the American political system at different rates, depending on their levels of engagement with their peers and other political actors, and with the institutions informing their knowledge of the political world. News media – as agents of political information and socialization – have had a relatively long time to crystalize their effects on political knowledge among Chicanas/os, given their long historical presence in what is now the Southwest. Political knowledge is likewise linked to the information individuals read, listen to and see in the news media. Statistical and experimental analyses of media effects generally reveal that print media use is so linked to higher information comprehension that it acts as a proxy for education in some predictions of individual-level political knowledge (Robinson & Levy 1986, p. 129). For Latinas/os, Spanish-language and Latina/o-oriented media are critical to how they navigate their acculturation into the dominant culture while preserving elements of their own Latina/o culture (Subervi-Vélez & Menayang 2008, pp. 333–346). Navigating Chicana/o identity in conjunction with “*latinidad*” is yet another important function of Spanish-language media for Chicanas/os. Learning about politics and policymaking is a critical part of this process and one in which Latina/o-oriented media have the potential to play a central role. Public opinion data from the Latino National Survey published in 2006 unveils several revelations about how Chicanas/os and other Hispanic Americans interact with the news media. Such survey studies are aimed at understanding the attitudes and orientations of Latinas/os and how they are shaped by their interactions with their Latina/o media environments. In a study that incorporates Hispanics’ self-reported media use with measures of Spanish media presence to estimate the effects of the availability of Spanish media on levels of political knowledge and sophistication, Medina Vidal finds positive, meaningful relationships between Spanish-language print media availability and political knowledge among Latinas/os of many different national ancestries, observing that, when controlling for national origin and nativity, there is very little difference between Chicanas/os and other Latina/o groups in terms of the relationship between Spanish media access and political knowledge (Medina Vidal 2012, p. 116). He also supplements self-reported use of Spanish-language media by Latinas/os with a representation of respondents’ actual Spanish-language media environment in an investigation that refines our understanding of the existing and potential role of Spanish-language media in shaping their political knowledge and sophistication (Medina Vidal 2012, p. 121). Prior research examining this relationship between Latina/o-oriented media and political knowledge among Latinas/os using data from the Latino National Political Survey of 1989 also finds similar relationships between self-reported Latina/o media use and political knowledge and participation (Subervi-Vélez & Menayang 2008, pp. 333–346). Unfortunately, our survey of the research exploring the relationship between mass media and the politics of the Pan-ethnic Generation of Chicanas/os reveals that it is increasingly difficult to disaggregate Chicana/o attitudes and orientations from those of other Latinas/os.

Latinas/os’ learning about politics through new media is an important area that scholars have yet to tackle with the same rigor as studies of traditional media. An important point of departure here is to recognize that, relative to other ethno-racial groups, Latinas/os continue to be among the least plugged into new media, as a function of low socioeconomic conditions and low rates of

computer ownership and Internet connectivity (López, González-Barrera & Patten 2013). Yet, as Guskin and Mitchell (2011, p. 19) note, bilingual Latinos lead Spanish-dominant Latinos in terms of time spent gathering news and information online.

Along with their rapid linguistic acculturation among Chicanas/os (Rumbaut 2008, pp. 217–219), they and other Latinas/os have had some success in reaching levels of descriptive representation at the local and state levels throughout the United States, particularly in New Mexico, California and Texas. Their growing presence in state and local government has facilitated all Latinas/os' influence on policymaking. A growing class of Latina/o political elites has indeed been important to public officials becoming more interested in using media to transmit political messages in Spanish to Latina/o constituencies (Wilson 2009, p. 427). In California, where the vast majority of Latina/o lawmakers are Chicanas/os, the state legislature actively tailors their Spanish-language political communications, prioritizing culturally relevant, particularized Latina/o interests (Medina Vidal et al. 2009, pp. 10–13)

Recall that Spanish-language print media were critical for Creation Generation Chicanas/os to have their policy concerns voiced publicly and widely. For Chicana/o political elites of the current Pan-ethnic Generation, Spanish-language media are once again critical to the policy-making process. Today, however, the rhetorical resistance to the American takeover of *mexicanos'* territory and way of life is replaced with a tone of policy demands being made of the American political system. As an important representational link between Chicanas/os, Latinas/os and state-level policymakers, Spanish-language media continue to play a critical role in setting policy issue agendas for Latina/o publics (Ramírez 2013, pp. 30–53), and increasingly for state lawmakers (Medina Vidal 2014, p. 25). Building on a representational link thesis – the idea that the Spanish-language media environment is a link between Hispanic constituencies and their political representatives – for Spanish-language media, there is strong evidence that the level of media sophistication or “media entrepreneurship” state legislators bring to their roles as political representatives is largely a function of legislators' Spanish media environments (Medina Vidal 2014, p. 25). Through their continued dependence on Spanish-language media for understanding and transmitting the community-specific needs and demands of the Chicana/o community, the latter's lawmakers at the local and state levels are thus increasingly important to their continued maintenance and development.

The contributions of Mexican-origin people from the Mexican American, Chicana/o, and Latino Pan-ethnic Generations to social, political and economic life are rarely exclusive of one another. Nearly 170 years since El Norte became formally the Southwest, the Spanish language persevering as a significant role in political life in regions of the United States far from the Southwest border is evidence of its resilience and of today's Chicana/o media entrepreneurs' resistance to conformity and assimilation. Though the development of Spanish-language broadcast television is critical to the pan-ethnic identity project that finally began to crystallize in the post-Chicana/o era of resistance politics, this identity is one informed by members of multiple generations of Mexican-origin people.

The decades of decline and scarcity of Spanish-language news and information about politics

Having acknowledged the actual and potential value of Spanish-language media in Chicano/a and Latina/o political life in general, we must also recognize the decades of decline and continued scarcity of Spanish-language news and information about politics, particularly in broadcast media. One of the major causes of such decline can be attributed to the deregulation of the broadcast industry that started during the Ronald Reagan presidential years and culminated

during Bill Clinton's administrations. Of particular negative impact was the elimination of fairness doctrine, which required stations to provide equal time to divergent political views if one side was offered time for airing its perspectives. Lacking any requirement to air political programs of any type, stations – including Spanish-language stations owned by non-Latinas/os and even those owned by Latinas/os – opted to reduce, in fact practically eliminate, such programming even as public service offerings. Another detrimental change was the ownership rules, which led to the corporatization of radio and TV stations across the country. What used to be locally owned “mom and pop” stations were bought or merged to become part of large networks and mega corporations run by businessmen more interested in return on investments that service to the communities where the stations operate and make them money. The direct consequence of this, coupled with the reductions of FCC oversight and requirements for public service assessments, was the decline of regular news and information programming, which the business oriented owners were quick to dismiss as too costly and not providing high enough rates of returns. Entertainment, not news, information and public service programming, became the norm for the vast majority of Spanish-language (and also general market English-language) radio stations. A couple of case studies of Spanish-language radio stations in Central Texas (Austin to San Antonio) in 2008–2010 revealed that, at that time, not a single station offered regular (daily) locally produced news programs (Subervi-Vélez & Correa 2008; Subervi-Vélez 2010).

Spanish-language television stations and networks continued to provide their evening news, but with more commercial time and less expanded content dedicated to political news and information – except during some election periods. Moreover, while the number of Spanish-language stations and networks has grown, few, if any, enhanced their daily news and information offerings, much less about politics. The exceptions have been the one-hour Sunday morning “meet the press” type programs: Telemundo's “Enfoque” with José Díaz Balart and Univisión's “Al Punto” with Jorge Ramos. The English-language, primarily Latina/o-oriented cable and satellite Fusión channel, launched by Univisión Communications in October 2013, does offer two programs that regularly but not always cover politics: “Nightline on Fusión” and “America with Jorge Ramos.” On Spanish-language television, Jorge Ramos, a veteran reporter and anchor on Univisión and now also Fusión, has been one of the few nationally resonant voices for Mexican American civil rights and justice.

On the print side, daily newspapers in Spanish in the United States have also declined to the point that currently such papers only circulate, and with drastically fewer readers, in Los Angeles (*La Opinión*), Miami (*El Nuevo Herald*, *Diario Las Américas*) and New York (*El Diario-La Prensa*). Twice-weekly, weekly, and monthly Latino-oriented newspapers (in Spanish, English, and in both languages) circulate in dozens of cities across the country. But most are commercial enterprises with limited staff; few have well-paid reporters assigned to gather, analyze, and disseminate original local, national or international political news that would not only be considered centrally relevant to particular Latina/o populations, but also serve to incentivize and thus mobilize Latinas/os to engage effectively in politics – registering to vote, then getting well-informed on the issues, and voting on a regular basis.

Given this scenario, the findings of the August 2016 survey of Latina/o leaders conducted by the National Institute for Latino Policy are not surprising (Anonymous-b 2016, n.p.). For example, the survey found that, among the 389 respondents, only 22% listed broadcast television or online newspapers in Spanish as the media they rely on most for information about the presidential elections. Of that group, barely 15% indicated cable TV in that language, while Spanish-language print newspapers and news or talk radio were selected as prime sources by only 14 and 9% of the respondents, respectively. The numbers for blogs or print magazines in Spanish were 7% and 5%. In contrast, 50% or more of those leaders indicated they rely on broadcast TV, cable

TV or online newspapers in English. News or talk radio, print newspapers, email notifications and even Facebook, all in English, were relied on more than any of the Spanish-language outlets.

In that 2016 National Institute for Latino Policy survey of Latina/o leaders, even to the more specific question regarding the news and information source used most frequently to stay well informed of political issues that “are important to you as a *Hispanic/Latino*, the outlets most frequently used by respondents were all in English, with Spanish-language media lagging far behind” (Anonymous-b 2016, n.p.)

The irony and challenge for the future of Chicana/o and Latina/o politics is that the survey also found high numbers of negative evaluations of the political coverage provided about Hispanics by general market English-language media and not so favorable evaluations about Spanish-language media. For example, to a question of how English-language media in general provide adequate news and information “to engage in our democracy,” more than 76% indicated that those media do “a poor job.” Similar or larger percentages of the respondents gave negative evaluations of how English-language TV stations and media in general help them understand issues that are important for Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in the upcoming elections, or with respect to the coverage and treatment of Latina/o candidates running for political office. The answers to the latter question, but pertaining to Spanish-language media, showed that close to one-third of the respondents considered those media are also *not* doing a good job; less than half had a positive verdict.

There are at least two major takeaways from the current analysis. First, Chicana/o, Mexican American, Latina/o/Hispanic populations continue to grow all across the country, and the potential of their political clout is considered ever-more important and influential in the outcomes of national, state and local elections. Second, there is an imperative need to reconsider the role of traditional media and bring into the equation alternative media directed via the Internet and social media to this population.

Projecting towards the future

Although most Chicanas/os and Latinas/os may continue to rely on general market English-language television for political news, data show that the major networks continue to under-report and cover Chicanas/os and Latinas/os and their issues (Subervi-Vélez & Sinta 2015). Historically, the same has been the case for general market English-language print media. And, as stated previously, the political content in Spanish-language media in general is also lacking (Subervi-Vélez, Brindel, Taylor & Espinoza 2008; Constantakis-Valdés 2008; Alexandre & Reh binder 2008; Hale, Olsen & Fowler 2008).

Given the language acculturation of the current generation of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, an alternative for relevant and mobilizing political content has turned out to be the outlets, primarily in English, established on the Internet. Most of the traditional commercial Latina/o-oriented outlets (television networks and major daily or weekly newspapers in Spanish or in English) offer in their respective websites political content that often does not get disseminated in their print or broadcast venues. But in recent years, the sources with the most political news and information are those specifically created to inform and/or mobilize Latinas/os.

For example, the daily (Monday through Friday) NewsTaco email newsletter and companion website NewsTaco.com (produced by Víctor Landa in San Antonio, Texas) provide English coverage of the most important news and developments related to Chicana/o politics. The National Institute for Latino Policy (headed by Ángel Falcón in New York City), also disseminates regular newsletters covering Latina/o political issues, including the findings of its occasional surveys of Latina/o leaders and Hispanic population at large.

The websites of the organizations set up to mobilize Latinas/os – such as Voto Latino, the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP), Mi Familia Vota Education Fund (MFVEF), and the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) – are stacked with news and information for their goals: enhancing Latina/o involvement in political affairs, especially voting in American elections. Dedicated to similar goals are significant sections of the websites of national advocacy organizations such as UnidosUS, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). Also of notice is Univisión's Univisión Contigo, and collaborative efforts such as Vota por tu Futuro, an outreach of Telemundo, the USHLI (see above), and LULAC; and Ya Es Hora, which brings together MFVEF (see above), NALEO, NCLR, LULAC, Univisión, Entravision (a multiplatform American- and Mexican-oriented media company), ImpreMedia (the company encompassing the major Spanish-language newspapers in the United States such as *La Opinión* and *El Diario-La Prensa*), and Latism (Latinas/os in Social Media), an organization that brings together Latinas/os in technology innovation and social media.

It is via the Internet as well as the corresponding social media that these and many other organizations have significantly set out to reach out to inform and mobilize Latinas/os in ways that traditional Spanish-language and English-language media do not. Likewise, political parties and candidates of all ideologies also use the Internet and their own social media to spread their propaganda to woo Latina/o voters.

Summarizing this closing section, we can project that the continued development and growth of Chicana/o political information and mobilization – especially for the Millennial generation, which has turned away from traditional print and broadcast media – will be generated and achieved via outlets and content available via the Internet and social media. What future this bears on the actual enhanced knowledge, involvements and voting of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in general is yet to be assessed and studied systematically, but merits close attention by scholars, civic organizations and political parties alike.

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