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The Thesis Committee for Douglas C. Kirchberg certifies that this is the final approved version of the following electronic thesis: "Newspaper staff diversity: Does it influence content?"

---

Joseph Raymond Hayden, Ph.D.  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend  
its acceptance:

---

Lurene Cachola Kelley, Ph.D.

---

Elinor A. Grusin, Ph.D.

Accepted for the Graduate Council:

---

Karen D. Weddle-West, Ph.D.  
Vice Provost for Graduate Programs

NEWSPAPER STAFF DIVERSITY:  
DOES IT INFLUENCE CONTENT?

by

Douglas C. Kirchberg

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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## **Abstract**

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Small and sometimes significant differences were found in how newspapers with different levels of minority employment reported on the 2009 nomination and confirmation of the nation's first Hispanic U.S. Supreme Court justice, Sonia Sotomayor. This study used an agenda-setting and framing analysis to measure how mid-sized daily newspapers with high and low levels of minority employment reported on the topic. Newspapers with high levels of minority employment published more stories about Sotomayor and allotted a larger news hole to the topic, but neither difference achieved statistical significance. There were statistically significant differences in the frames used to report on Sotomayor, however. Newspapers with high levels of minority employment used more issue frames in their articles, while newspapers with low levels of minority employment incorporated more strategy and conflict frames. These results offer limited support for the assumption that minority employment levels at newspapers have a direct impact on content.

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## **Introduction**

When President Barack Obama made his first nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, he wanted to nominate someone with a specific ability. He wanted someone who could see the world from another person's perspective. "I view that quality of empathy, of understanding and indentifying with people's hopes and struggles, as an essential ingredient for arriving at just decisions and outcomes," the president told the Associated Press as he began his search (Feller, 2009). In his selection of Sonia Sotomayor, he nominated someone he felt would bring a different perspective to the mostly male and mostly white court – that of a Hispanic woman who was raised in the Bronx and went on to graduate from an Ivy League school.

Likewise, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has long been a champion of bringing more diversity to newsrooms throughout the nation. The industry group's belief is that adding more minorities to newspaper staffs will enable the publications to better report on their communities by having employees who represent a wider variety of perspectives and personal experiences. To use the president's term, they would help create a newsroom of reporters who would have more empathy for all the people in their community.

With only nine justices on the Supreme Court, it's clear that a few individuals can make a significant difference. Even if they don't sway the outcome of a case, they still can express their views with dissenting opinions, which are published alongside the majority decision and are sometimes even considered in future cases. At newspapers, the impact of adding more minority voices to the newsroom isn't as clear and hasn't been quantifiably measured. There are factors that could limit their influence on content.

Editors and supervisors are the primary gatekeepers and have final say on what topics are covered, how those topics are covered, and whether a story is even published. The basic standards of American journalism could be a limiting factor as well by defining what constitutes news, emphasizing objectivity over advocacy, and encouraging the use of official sources such as politicians and public figures over other sources. This study would like to continue the quest to measure the influence newsroom diversity have on story content.

Most newsrooms of daily newspapers today do not reflect the rich ethnic diversity of the communities they cover. It's a problem that has been a point of emphasis for industry leaders for decades. In 1978, the ASNE set a goal of "achieving parity between newsroom employment and the national population of racial and ethnic minorities" by the year 2000 (McGill, 2000, p. 3). During those 22 years, minority employment at the nation's daily newspapers grew from almost 4% to nearly 12%. These gains, however, have failed to keep pace with the growth of the minority population, which increased from 17% of the nation's population in 1978 to more than 28% in 2000 (McGill, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Now, the ASNE's new goal is to achieve racial parity by the year 2025, but prospects appear dim. To meet this standard, minority employment at daily newspapers would need to grow to an estimated 38.2% by 2025 (ASNE Benchmarks, 1999, p. 1). Minority employment at daily newspapers stood at 13.5% in 2008 according to an ASNE survey, a small gain from 2000 but well behind the pace that would be needed to achieve parity by 2025 (Newsrooms Shrink, 2008).

The ASNE's diversity mission statement explains that the nation's newsrooms must "reflect the racial diversity of American society" in order "to cover communities

fully, to carry out their role in a democracy, and to succeed in the marketplace” (McGill, 2000, p. 6). Bryan Monroe, the National Association of Black Journalists’ vice president in charge of print in 2003, similarly argues in *Newsroom Diversity: Truth vs. Fiction* (Fall 2003) that a diverse staff is better able to report on the interests and concerns of its community. “Too many newspapers still cannot fully cover the richness and complexity of their communities because their staffs come from a limited perspective. We are unable to regularly listen to those in the shadows and too often incapable of hearing voices different from our own. We, therefore, are telling our readers an incomplete, inaccurate story” (p. 29).

Improving newsroom diversity is therefore viewed as much more than a staffing issue. It is seen as a means to diversify the content of the nation’s newspapers, better serve the overall community, and perhaps even capture readers from previously underserved populations. The assumption is that greater staff diversity will lead to changes in “newspaper content, agenda and perspective” and result in “heightened sensitivity to the cares, hopes, concerns, and interests of members of those societies” (Pease, 1990, p. 30).

Newspapers’ efforts to move to racial parity have been documented over the years by the annual ASNE Newsroom Employment Census. The results show that some daily newspapers have come closer than others to matching the ethnic make-up of their communities. Following the assumption made by the ASNE, the content of newspapers with higher levels of minority employment should differ from that of newspapers with lower levels. This investigation will test that assumption by examining how newspapers

with different numbers of minority employees reported on the nomination and subsequent confirmation of Sotomayor to serve as the first Hispanic on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Several factors make this an appropriate topic for analysis. By all traditional definitions, Sotomayor's nomination and confirmation were highly newsworthy. She was President Obama's first Supreme Court nominee, and like all major political nominees her personal and professional life was publically scrutinized in the media. The confirmation process was politically charged, which helped create several angles for news organizations to pursue. There was some opposition to her nomination from the Republican party, and public attention was directed to her previous court rulings and a controversial statement she made during a speaking engagement. Newspaper coverage can therefore be compared on the basis of how frequently Sotomayor's nomination process was reported, which issues and topics were emphasized, and whether the articles were cast in a neutral, positive, or negative tone.

### **Literature Review**

The Hispanic population is now the largest and fastest-growing minority population in the nation. According to a 2008 U.S. Census report, 15% of the nation's population is Hispanic, 14% Black, 5.1% Asian, and 1.6% American Indian or Alaska Natives. The Hispanic population is expected to grow from 46.7 million people in 2008 to 132.8 million in 2050, constituting 30.3% of the nation's total population. (U.S. Census, August 2008). Comparatively, the non-Hispanic white population is only expected to be slightly larger in 2050 than it is today, growing from 199.8 million to 203.3 million. The proportion of the national population made up by non-Hispanic whites is expected to shrink from 66% in 2008 to 46% in 2050 (U.S. Census, August 2008). By

2020, “the Hispanic population is projected to add more people to the United States every year than would all other race/ethnic groups combined” (Day, 1996, p. 1). The percentage of the national population consisting of other minority populations will grow, but in a less dramatic fashion. By 2050, the black population is expected to be 15% of the nation’s population, the Asian population 9.2%, and the American Indian and Alaska Natives population 2% (U.S. Census, August 2008).

Studies show that media have failed to accurately depict the changes in the nation’s population. Despite being the largest minority population in the nation, Hispanics remain under-represented and often are the subject of stereotypes in mainstream news and entertainment media. Throughout the past three decades, Hispanics have been portrayed in strikingly similar fashion on prime-time network television programming. Gerbner and Signorielli (1979) found that Hispanics constituted about 3% of the characters on prime-time television dramas in the 1970s. Nearly 20 years later, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found the same level of Hispanic representation in a sample of prime-time network television programming from 1996. The numbers were slightly higher between 2002 and 2004, according to a pair of studies of prime-time network programming from that time period. Hoffman and Noriega (2004) found Hispanics represented 4.1% of the characters on prime-time programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, UPN, and WB in a sample of programs during those years. The Children Now: Fall Colors Prime Time Diversity Report found that “the percentage of Latino characters rose from 4% of the total prime-time population in 2001 to 6.5% in 2003” in its review of a sample of network programming (p. 2). In addition, 52% of the prime-time shows surveyed in 2003 featured at least one Hispanic character (Children Now, 2003).

Examinations of how Hispanics have been represented in the broadcast news media produced similar results. From 1995 to 2006, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists issued a regular Network Brownout Report examining the depictions of Hispanics on network television news. Of the estimated 12,600 stories that aired on ABC, CBS, and NBC during two weeks in 2005, only 105 or 0.83% were “exclusively about Latinos or Latino-related issues” (Montalyo & Torres, 2006, p. 4). Of those 105 stories about Hispanics identified in the study, only five featured Hispanic reporters. Furthermore, Hispanics were quoted as sources in just 217 or 1.7% of the non-Hispanic related stories. Montalyo and Torres sharply criticized the lack of network news coverage of such a large segment of the national population. “Where are the stories about Latino small businesses or the positive impact Latinos are having on the U.S. economy? Where are the cultural stories about Latinos in their communities? Where are the stories about healthcare or educational issues important to Latinos? Increasing coverage of issues affecting Latinos is the only way to provide more comprehensive coverage of the community” (p. 9).

Some studies of how Hispanics are depicted in newspapers have not found the same degree of under-representation. Greenberg, Burgoon, Burgoon, and Korzenny (1983) reviewed daily newspapers from six cities in the southwestern United States and determined the amount of space in those newspapers allocated to stories about Hispanics closely matched the percentage of Hispanics in each city. Turk, Richstad, Bryson, and Johnson (1989) examined the daily newspapers in Albuquerque, N.M., and San Antonio, Texas, and concluded that “patterns of newspaper coverage of Hispanics appear to have changed, and the resulting coverage appears to have improved” (p. 113). In newspapers

in those cities, the size of the news hole dedicated to Hispanics was greater than the population. Hispanics represented 33% of the population in Albuquerque and 41% of the population in San Antonio, but were featured in 49.6% of the local news content in Albuquerque and 43.8% in San Antonio (p. 113).

Whether the results from studies like these can be applied to newspapers in general has been questioned. The primary criticism is that studies like these were done in communities with atypically high Hispanic and minority populations, which likely would have skewed the results. “Studies on newspaper coverage of Hispanic/Latino news have been generally conducted within a local scope and based on locations with high concentrations of Hispanic/Latino populations which, unfortunately, blurs the boundaries between what constitutes general audience media and ethnic media” (Mayorga, 2007, p. 22). Another possible explanation for the difference in findings between these and other studies could be the measurement tools utilized, measuring story length compared to counting individual subjects. In these studies, a story mentioning a single Hispanic subject and five Caucasian subjects would count equally in terms of coverage for Hispanics and Caucasians. Other studies that attempt to count the number of minority and white subjects represented in news coverage would have a 5-to-1 imbalance in favor of Caucasian subjects.

In addition to under-representation, another common theme in the way mainstream media depicts Hispanics has been the use of stereotypes. Many of these stereotypes were present in the movies of the early 1900s and persist in some form in mass media today (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). Some of the traits attributed to people of color in early movies included a preoccupation with simple ideas, low occupational

status, poor speech patterns, a low regard for human life, criminal behavior, promiscuity, dishonesty and drug and alcohol abuse (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995, p. 74). These attributes are present in the six basic Hispanic stereotypes identified by researchers in film and television: El Bandido (bandit), Halfbreed Harlot, Male Buffoon, Female Clown, Latin Lover, and Dark Lady (Berg, 1990). According to Wilson and Gutierrez (1995), these stereotypes

have historical roots in racist attitudes that existed for various social and political reasons against each of the groups prior to their inclusion in media. ... Although wide differences exist among the cultural and racial groups under consideration, their portrayals in American mass media have been remarkably similar and are the result of the attitudinal premise of white intellectual and moral supremacy. (p. 84)

Examples of stereotypes of Hispanics are easy to find in entertainment and news media. Mastro and Greenberg (2000) examined a sample of prime-time television programs on four major broadcast networks during a week in 1996 and found stereotypical depictions of Hispanics in terms of speech and dress. "They were the least articulate, had the heaviest accents, and were the least spontaneous in their conversational interactions; they were less professional in their attire and used accessories excessively. Disproportionately, their conversations were about crime and violence" (p. 700). Hoffman and Noriega (2004) described the Hispanic characters on prime-time television as "sidekicks, supporting characters, and ensemble players on white- and black-themed series" (p. 3). The Fall Colors 2003-04 Prime Time Diversity Report was the last of four studies examining racial diversity in prime time television programming produced by Children Now, a national children's advocacy group based in California. It examined two episodes of each prime-time show airing on the six national broadcast networks in fall 2003 and found occupational stereotypes persist. Hispanics were "four times more likely

to portray domestic workers than were other racial groups” (p. 6). Furthermore, only 11% of the Hispanics depicted were shown in high-status occupations like “physician, attorney, judge, journalist or elected official” compared to 37% of Asian/Pacific Islanders, 32% of whites, and 26% African American characters (p. 6).

In terms of physical characteristics, Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) found that prime-time television shows depicted Hispanics as the “youngest, most inappropriately dressed characters, with the heaviest accents” (p. 125). The male Hispanic characters were generally thinner and more attractive than other characters, reminiscent of the “Latin Lover” stereotype that depicts “an image of Latinos as addictively romantic, sensual, sexual and even exotically dangerous” (p. 125). Such portrayals led Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) to the conclusion that “instead of inviting viewers to question Latino stereotypes, television generally provides hegemonic messages about Latinos in the United States” (p. 124).

The use of stereotypes in the news media in recent years has been more subtle than in the entertainment media. Aside from under-representation, the primary concern is that coverage of Hispanics and other minority groups “often focuses on negative aspects of the community, including crime stories, or stereotypically positive ones that feature entertainers or sports figures” (Adams & Cleary, 2006, p. 49). A study by Kirk Johnson examined how media in the Boston area reported on minorities during one month in 1986. He found that “white-owned news outlets” emphasized crime stories when reporting on the black community and gave little attention to education, culture and achievements of minorities. Black celebrities – athletes, entertainers and public officials – received much more coverage than ordinary black people. He concluded that 85 percent

of the news stories about the black community that appeared in the Boston media reinforced commonly held stereotypes of minorities as troublemakers, drug pushers or otherwise outside the social norm (Study: Media in Boston reinforce racism, 1987).

This was similar to what Pease found in 1989, when he investigated how *The Columbus Dispatch's* coverage of minority populations had changed since the Kerner Commission report of 1968, which was critical of the role the media played in incidents of racial violence that occurred in the mid-1960s. One of his findings was that stories most frequently depicting minorities were those about crime, politics and government, and human interest (p. 33). In an investigation of newspapers in Albuquerque, N.M., and San Antonio, Texas, Turk et al. (1989) found many of the news reports involving Hispanics treated them as “problem people.” More than 25% of the stories about Hispanics fit within one of three “problem-oriented” topics: judicial and crime news, reports of riots and demonstrations, and accident or disaster news. In comparison, only 16.7% of the stories about whites fell within these three areas (p. 113).

The 2006 Brownout Report confirmed that those story topics remain the most common ones about Hispanics, with network news most frequently portraying Hispanics in stories about government (19%), crime (18.1%), and human interest (17.1%). Immigration remains a popular news topic, reinforcing one common stereotype about the nation’s Hispanic population. “One dominant theme ... was the notion that immigrants, mostly undocumented, were changing communities across the United States. These stories were often told from the perspective of longtime community residents, and not from the perspective of the immigrants” (Montalvo & Torres, 2006, pp. 4-5). Furthermore, the study found Hispanics tended to be “nearly absent from general news

coverage” (p. 5). While the authors of the study acknowledged that crime and immigration are important stories to cover, they expressed concerns that “the focus on these issues becomes unfair when it comprises an overabundance of the networks’ coverage of the Latino community” (p. 6). The fact that Hispanics aren’t featured more frequently in stories that have nothing to do with their ethnicity is a concern because this population is “woven throughout society in communities across the United States” and should therefore appear more frequently in all types of stories (Montalvo & Torres, 2006, p. 14).

Vincenty Heres (2003) expressed similar concerns about how the media have reported on the nation’s Hispanic population:

The reality of Hispanic ideas and issues has not been fully integrated into the mainstream media. The stories carried in today’s major media outlets presents a somewhat distorted picture of the lives of Hispanics living in the United States. Instead, the focus of news coverage tends to be on negative issues, like drugs or unemployment, which are not problems exclusive to Hispanics. . . . Positive role models, leaders or examples are rarely presented in the media. The richness of the Latin American and Spanish cultures, as well as the long-standing importance and influence of Hispanic traditions in American societal evolution, are often understated. (p. 4)

This richness of culture is, to some extent, ignored simply by the act of classifying a segment of the nation’s population as Hispanic. This classification, utilized by the U.S. Census Bureau and other governmental and public agencies and the media, fails to recognize that this population is far from a homogenous group. It includes “Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos who immigrated to the United States from Central and South America or Spain” (Taylor & Bang, 1997, p. 291). It includes recent immigrants and people whose families have lived in the United States for generations. As Gracia (2000) pointed out, the people classified as Hispanic do not

have the same cultural values, beliefs, or language. Yet, oftentimes Hispanics are treated as though they have a shared cultural background and experience, in what amounts to another means of stereotyping the population.

There has been some moderation in the stereotypes in recent years. Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found that on prime-time television, Hispanic characters “had the same income, intelligence, physical bulk and cleanliness as their Anglo and African American counterparts; some major, earlier dominant stereotypical characteristics – dirty and dumb – were not evident” (p. 700). Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) concluded that “despite the fact that Latino males were shown to have lower job authority and were depicted less frequently in professional occupations than were other male characters, the longstanding tendency to depict Latinos as subservient and/or subordinate appears to be diminishing” (p. 125). Taylor and Bang’s (1997) study of representations of Hispanics in magazine advertising found a similar moderation of stereotypes. They concluded that bias had not disappeared: “Although this study does not suggest that advertisers blatantly perpetuate stereotypes of Latino Americans, it does provide some evidence that subtle aspects of stereotypes of Latinos may be reflected in magazine advertising” (p. 298). Some of the stereotypes Taylor and Bang found were that Hispanics were under-represented in business settings and over-represented in family settings.

Researchers believe how ethnic minorities are portrayed in the news and entertainment media can have an effect on how they perceive themselves, how others perceive them, and how people of various ethnic backgrounds function in a multicultural society. “Depictions of African Americans as athletes, Hispanics as hard workers, as opposed to Caucasians as professionals, can shape and reinforce certain assumptions

about race” (Bristor, Lee, & Hunt, 1995). The impact of stereotyping and under-representation in the media is believed to be greatest when media consumers have little contact with people of other races (Pallais, 2006, p. 17). Multiple theories have been used to describe the effects that exposure to mass media can have on the perceptions of media consumers. Those theories include expectancy theory, social learning theory, social identity theory, cultivation theory, and agenda-setting theory.

Taylor and Bang (1997) examined how Hispanics are represented in advertising and expressed concerns about how under-representation and stereotypes impact the cultural adaptation process of Hispanic Americans. To explain how this might happen, they utilized the expectancy theory, which predicts that people are likely to behave in ways that align with perceived expectations. To the extent that Hispanics rely on the media “for the transmission of ideas, information, and values, stereotyped media portrayals can serve to build expectations and may, in turn, contribute to social problems such as prejudice or inequities in educational and occupational opportunities” (p. 286). Media stereotypes of Hispanics as uneducated, for example, may contribute to a belief among Hispanic youngsters that it’s socially acceptable for them to drop out of school at an early age. As a result, they may be more likely to leave before completing high school (Taylor & Bang, 1997).

In their investigation of how ethnic minorities are presented in children’s television commercials, Bang and Reece (2003) used Albert Bandura’s social learning theory to discuss the potential impact of stereotypes. Social learning theory acknowledges that much learning can occur through the observation of others. These observations can occur in person or through media consumption (Severin & Tankard, 2001). According to

social learning theory, the finding of Bang and Reece that commercials rarely show ethnic minorities without a Caucasian model but frequently feature only Caucasians has implications for all children. “If children learn to behave in a certain way by watching other people behave, as social learning theory suggests, children of color in particular may not have as many opportunities to learn about interaction within their groups” (p. 62). Caucasian children who only see people of color interacting in groups that include Caucasians may be led to “believe that other ethnic groups are just like them, and thus fail to respect differences that exist among other ethnic groups” (p. 62).

Some researchers have found evidence that the media contribute to a person’s sense of self by helping to identify and define group membership and norms (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008; Mayorga, 2007). Social identity theory suggests that individuals achieve a positive “sense of social identity from groups that are admired and identified with” (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 192). People who feel they are a part of a group attempt to adhere to social group behavioral norms. Group membership provides positive reinforcement to individuals through comparisons of in-groups and out-groups. In other words, people look for ways that their groups compare favorably to other groups, which serves to boost self-esteem (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Media portrayals of various ethnic and social groups play a role in this process when media content becomes “part of the ongoing negotiation of identity and social standing in relation to others by creating and supporting group-based characteristics which might be used in real-world social comparisons” (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p. 112).

A 2008 study by Mastro et al. provided support for the idea that individuals use media content to define groups and make group comparisons. In their study of the impact of exposure to television portrayals of Hispanics, they found that “discriminatory responses to media content are more likely to occur when the content allows this reaction to be rationalized as unrelated to race” (p. 17).

Cultivation theory has also been used to explain how media’s repeated use of stereotypes and under-representation of ethnic groups can influence media consumers’ viewpoints. The basic premise of the theory is that “massive exposure to television’s reconstructed realities can produce perceptions of reality that are very different from those held by people who watch less television” (Cohen & Weimann, 2000, p. 111). Some researchers have found cultivation effects differ according to program type. For example, researchers have shown that an emphasis on crime in local news can contribute to an increase in fear of crime by regular viewers of local news programming (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Likewise, a study of the viewing habits of Israeli youth suggested that regular viewers of sitcoms “tend to see the world in less gloomy eyes” than other television viewers (Cohen & Weimann, 2000, p. 108). Such findings led the researchers to suggest a revision of the concept of cultivation that recognizes variations according to program type and viewer characteristics: “The viewing of some genres by some viewers has some effects on some beliefs” (p. 109).

In their 2005 study, “Latino Representation on Primetime Television,” Mastro and Behm-Morawitz expressed concern about a possible cultivation effect from television stereotypes of Hispanics. They concluded that an “adherence to numerous unrealistic and demeaning depictions of Latinos on primetime appears to persist. As such, the potential

for cultivating harmful racial perceptions, which may be used in subsequent interracial interactions, is considerable” (p. 126). A follow-up study in 2007 by Mastro et al. examined the possible cultivation effects of television programming with regard to perceptions of Hispanic criminality, intelligence and work ethic. They made two discoveries. First, the results demonstrated that “the relationship between perceptions of television portrayals of Latinos and real world evaluations of Latinos is stronger” for people who watch more television (p. 357). In other words, the more television programming consumed by white subjects, the more their perceptions reflected characterizations provided on television. Additionally, they found these effects could be moderated when subjects had high levels of interracial contact with Hispanics.

Two related media-effects concepts – agenda setting and framing – specifically address how the decisions journalists make in their news reporting influence media consumers. The main premise of agenda-setting theory is that by choosing to report on some issues and not others, the media influence public perception of the importance of these issues. Severin and Tankard (2001) described the agenda-setting effect as the ability of the media to “direct our attention to certain problems or issues” through repeated news coverage of those issues (p. 219). Framing looks beyond the media’s influence on what people think about and postulates that media can influence how people think about issues in the news by “selecting [and ignoring] some information about an event or issue and making some of that more [or less] salient in a story” (Aday, 2006, p. 770). According to Entman (1993), frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies – functions that go well beyond simply setting the public’s agenda (p. 52). In both agenda setting and framing, “communicators make conscious or

unconscious” judgments that strongly influence what they communicate to their audiences (Entman, 1993, p. 52). These judgments are shaped by a variety of factors including accepted journalistic practices, influence from interest groups or sources, and the belief system of individual journalists (Scheufele, 1999, p. 115). When these factors are taken into consideration, it is easy to see how the race of the sources and the journalist could influence what is reported [agenda setting] and how it is reported [framing].

Miller and Wanta (1996) examined whether race could play a mitigating factor in the agenda-setting process and asked if minority audiences would experience the same agenda-setting effects as a white audience. Considering the fact that mainstream media tend to “present the news from a white male perspective” and “minority populations tend to use newspapers less than whites,” they expected to find different issue priorities for minority populations than whites (p. 914). Despite this expectation, their study found no difference in agenda-setting effects on whites and minorities. “Issue agendas, as well as susceptibility to agenda-setting effects, were very similar across racial groups. Minorities and whites appear to have processed issue salience cues transmitted through the news media at extremely similar degrees” (p. 920).

Still, Miller and Wanta (1996) found some differences between minority populations and whites in perceived salience of issues that received little attention from the mainstream media. They found that minorities in Tampa saw the issues of AIDS, homelessness, and government responsiveness as being more important issues than did whites in the community. Similarly, minorities in Eugene, Oregon, rated drug abuse as a much more important issue than whites did. These differences suggest both omissions in media coverage and possible areas for future research. Miller and Wanta suggested one

possible area for investigation – story framing – to explain why minorities in Eugene considered drug abuse to be an important issue in the community despite low crime rates. “While the drug issue receives relatively little coverage in Eugene because of the low crime rate there, when drug stories do appear, the stories may be often framed as a problem facing only the minority population” (p. 923).

Vincenty Heres (2003) used the agenda setting theory as the theoretical framework to examine how the media have reported on Hispanics in American society and the possible effects of that coverage. The study found that over a two-week period in November 2002, ABC’s *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings* and NBC’s *Nightly News with Tom Brokaw* featured a total of eight Hispanic-related stories (p. 30). *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were similar in the number of articles focusing on Hispanics, with 13 in *The New York Times* and 15 in *The Washington Post* (p. 48). Vincenty Heres was concerned about the impact of the omission of Hispanic viewpoints and concerns from popular media outlets. According to the agenda setting theory, such omissions would make it less likely that Hispanic issues and concerns would rank very highly on the public agenda. Vincenty Heres concluded that “this is hurting Hispanics in their development as productive citizens because the mainstream media are not helping in their integration to society” (p. 58).

While agenda-setting research concerns itself with a quantitative accounting of what is reported in the media, framing research focuses on the qualitative aspects of how something is reported (Aday, 2006, p. 767). In agenda setting, issues and topics that are reported about become more salient or “noticeable, meaningful, or relevant” to media consumers. Frames, on the other hand, “highlight some bits of information about an item

that is the subject of communication, thereby elevating them in salience” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Entman defined frames as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (p. 53). Within news stories, frames serve as “maps” created by reporters and editors that “serve to structure the public debate” and influence media consumers’ opinions about the topic (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 881).

For example, an article about drilling for oil in the Arctic could be framed as an environmental issue in which concerns about the impact on wildlife and the wilderness dominate the news report. An alternative frame for an article on the topic could be to emphasize the potential economic benefits of drilling the Arctic (Shen, 2004). Similarly, a story about a Klu Klux Klan rally could be framed as a free speech issue or as a potential disruption of public order (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). Such frames can “influence opinion by suggesting which of many, possibly conflicting, considerations should predominate” (Nelson & Oxley, 1999, p. 1059).

Studies have shown that frames do not have uniform effects on all media consumers. Shen (2004) and Entman (1989) maintain that framing effects can be moderated by individuals’ existing viewpoints. According to Shen (2004), “individuals were more likely to activate frame-relevant thoughts and change attitudes when news frames resonated with their issue schemas” (p. 400). Entman (1989) also suggested that “ideological leanings affect responses to specific media reports” to such a degree that people with different ideological perspectives “may read the same message differently” (p. 351).

Shen demonstrated this experimentally with regard to two specific news topics, stem cell research and Arctic drilling. The news frames utilized in Shen's experiment did not have the same effect on every subject. In relation to stem cell research, the ethical news frame generated more ethical thoughts among subjects whose previously held viewpoints aligned with the ethical frame than those who had previous viewpoints that aligned with the benefit frame. Similarly, when the Arctic drilling article was cast according to the environmental news frame it elicited more environmental thoughts among subjects whose previous viewpoints aligned with the environmental frame than those whose viewpoints aligned with the economic frame (Shen, 2004). These results led Shen to conclude that, "instead of relying on the media for whatever considerations are available, individuals may be selective in receiving and interpreting incoming news messages." In other words, individual characteristics can moderate framing effects.

Some studies that have examined race and ethnicity in media have used framing or framing-related concepts as a component of their research. Kraeplin (2008) examined "how two newspapers covered a series of racially motivated bombings that took place in Dallas, Texas, in 1950 to determine how race and culture affected news framing" (p. 74). The qualitative study compared coverage related to the bombings that appeared in *The Dallas Morning News*, the largest daily newspaper in the city, with coverage in *The Dallas Express*, a weekly newspaper established to serve African American members of the community. Differences in how the two newspapers framed coverage of the events were clear. Reports from *The Dallas Morning News* utilized what the researchers called a "police blotter frame" and a "value frame." The articles in the publication emphasized conflict and reported on the incidents "as discrete crimes, without references to the city's

black housing shortage that would provide readers with the underlying context to make sense of the violent acts” (p. 93). In addition, the articles in *The Dallas Morning News* featured “quotations from public officials that suggested these officials supported and valued the concept of segregated housing” (p. 93), rather than questioning the practice of segregation. *The Dallas Express* took a vastly different approach. “The weekly’s editors immediately established a connection between the violent acts and the city’s housing shortage, a frame that suggests the value editors and readers alike placed on preserving the safety and property of the city’s black residents” (p. 94). While the mainstream newspaper closely followed the journalistic norms of objectivity and relied heavily on official sources for its information, *The Dallas Express* “embraced advocacy in the interests of promoting community causes” and included criticisms of the city’s public officials and the policies of segregation (p. 93).

Rather than examining how issues are framed in the news, Poindexter, Smith, and Heider (2003) studied how people of color are framed in local television news. The study reviewed a sample of newscasts aired in 1987 and 1989 through 1998 from 26 local television stations in 12 cities. It found that “black-focused stories (69%) were almost two and a half times more likely than White-focused stories (28%) to be about crime” (p. 531). On the other hand, discrimination and race-based stories made up less than 3% of the news coverage in the sample reviewed. Not only were whites over-represented in news coverage, “Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans were virtually non-existent as anchors, reporters, subjects, and sources” (p. 533). The authors of the study suggested their findings supported other research that suggests a “split system” exists in which “whites were framed one way and other racial-ethnic groups, if covered at all,

were framed another way” (p. 534). Such practices are a concern because frames of this nature influence public perceptions of people of color and help to define public debate on a variety of issues, thereby contributing to “how non-Blacks feel about equality, fair pay, or affirmative action” (p. 527).

Gilens (1996) investigated how mainstream newsmagazines have portrayed poverty as it relates to race. Although the study did not cite framing research, Gilens examined a number of different ways to frame poverty and addressed the possible effects of utilizing those frames. The study found that newsmagazines depict poor people as being African American 62 percent of the time, more than double the actual rate of 29%. In addition, the study looked at portrayals of the poor according to story topic. The topics were grouped into “sympathetic topics such as poor children and education for the poor and unsympathetic topics such as public welfare” (p. 526). Once again, Gilens found the same inaccurate depictions of African Americans within these frames. “African Americans are seldom found in the pictures of the most sympathetic subgroups of the poor. ... In contrast, we find far too many African Americans in stories on the least favorable subgroup of the poor” (p. 536). The impact of framing poverty and race in this matter was of great concern to Gilens. “The poverty population shown in newsmagazines – primarily Black, overwhelmingly unemployed, and almost completely nonelderly – is not likely to generate a great deal of support for government antipoverty programs among white Americans” (p. 537).

### **Method**

This study used agenda setting and framing as its theoretical framework for an investigation of how minority staffing levels at a newspaper influence news coverage of a

minority-related issue, specifically the nomination and confirmation of the nation's first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice. The first comparison was at the agenda-setting level, measuring how often the issue was reported and how prominently stories on the topic were displayed.

RQ1: Did newspapers with high levels of minority staffing provide more frequent and more prominent coverage of the nomination and confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor than did those with low levels of minority staffing?

Additional comparisons were made according to the frames utilized by the publications, examining both the story lines reported in the publication and whether those stories were cast in a positive or negative manner.

RQ2: Were staff-written stories about the nomination and confirmation of Sotomayor framed differently in newspapers with higher levels of minority staffing than in newspapers with low levels of minority staffing?

RQ3: Was there a difference in how the staff-written stories about the nomination and confirmation of Sotomayor were cast with regard to tone (positive, negative, or neutral) in newspapers with high levels of minority staffing and in newspapers with low levels of minority staffing?

Finally, this study investigated whether there were other differences in the stories published in the two types of newspapers, examining both story type (news, feature, editorial and analysis) and how race was addressed, whether it was mentioned and whether it was a point of emphasis.

Previous studies suggest that minority hiring could have an impact on news reporting. For example, Kraeplin (2008) found that the mainstream media and ethnic media used substantially different frames to report on the same race-related issue: “While, with a few exceptions, each newspaper’s facts may have been accurate, because of the different frames they chose, the two media supplied very different narrative accounts of the events and what they meant to the community” (p. 94). Kraeplin attributed some of the difference to the fact that the mainstream publication relied heavily on traditional, objective news reporting practices, while the ethnic publication took on an advocacy role on behalf of the minority community. Still, such differences might not emerge in this study when comparing coverage from mainstream media outlets that adhere to the same objective news reporting practices.

A content analysis of newspaper articles about the nomination and confirmation of Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court was selected as the primary method of this study, in part, because of concerns about the potential for error in replicating other methods of analyzing how newspapers report on minority populations. As demonstrated in the literature review, the vast majority of previous studies have focused on source or subject diversity by counting how often people from various minority populations are included in news reports, advertisements or entertainment programming.

Some methods used by previous researchers to identify minority subjects depicted in the media include analyzing skin tone from photographs and searching for ethnic-identifying terms in news stories such as references to nationality. Mayorga (2007) acknowledged the difficulty in identifying race as part of the coding process when he wrote: “There are no established procedures for the identification of Hispanic/Latino

characters and models. Thus, coding processes sometimes rely on the assumption that Hispanics/Latinos can be identified by their accent or simply at face value” (p. 25). Skin-tone analysis could easily result in under-representation of ethnic groups whose members could be perceived to be members of other groups, including Caucasian. Bang and Reece (2003) recognized this issue in their efforts to study how minorities are represented in television advertising. They wrote: “It should be noted that the low representation of Hispanics might be partly due to coding difficulties. . . . Although many Hispanics can be easily identified based on appearance or other information provided in an ad, some Hispanics can be perceived to be Caucasians, or some other ethnic group, especially by non-Hispanic members of society” (p. 61).

The problem of accurate coding is further complicated when analyzing newspaper content, which is primarily textual. It is no longer common practice for newspaper reporters to state the race of the people they identify in their news articles, as Pease (1989) noted in his study comparing how the *Columbus Dispatch* reported on race in 1965 and 1987. “As society changed, there became less tendency to identify people in news items by their race, which might result in fewer items in the 1987 sample that were identifiably about minorities. . . . Standards of newspaper journalism in the 1980s preclude any mention of race or ethnicity in most breaking news stories except in extraordinary circumstances” (pp. 33-34). Most newspapers now have policies that restrict reporters from mentioning race in a story unless race is somehow relevant to the article. As a result, searches for race identifiers in newspaper articles tend to provide results that include stories generally associated with race, such as immigration and government policy articles, or stories where race may be relevant for identification

purposes, such as crime reporting or feature articles on cultural activities. Such industry-wide practices, though positive, could contribute to a perception that minority populations are omitted from every-day stories and skew the results of any study that makes comparison on the basis of a simple head count.

Another concern about studies that focus solely on source diversity is that this approach fails to measure content diversity. Voakes, Kapfer, Kurpius, and Chen (1996) wrote: “This method captures diversity at a superficial level; it is entirely likely that a medium with tremendously diverse formats can present the news from the same, narrow frame of reference” (p. 583). In other words, studies that measure how frequently minority populations are represented fail to recognize that these representations might all be from the same, predominantly white perspective. One way to measure content diversity is through a framing analysis. Some studies have used framing as a way to compare media coverage of various groups. Devitt (2002) used framing to compare how newspapers reported on male and female gubernatorial candidates. He found female candidates received less issue coverage and more personal coverage than did male candidates. Kraeplin (2008) examined the different frames a mainstream daily newspaper and an ethnic newspaper used in their coverage of a series of racially motivated bombings that took place in Dallas in 1950. The different frames the two publications used to report on the events “represented the distinct cultural values and political and economic interests” of both publications’ readers and were influenced “by each medium’s unique professional and institutional influences” (p. 93). In both studies, the analysis of frames proved to be an effective method of comparison. On the basis of those findings, it is

expected that a similar frame analysis will provide a useful comparison of media coverage in this investigation.

The 2009 nomination and subsequent confirmation of Sotomayor to the Supreme Court is an appropriate topic of investigation for a variety of reasons. One reason is the historical context of Sotomayor's selection. A daughter of Puerto Rican immigrants, she became the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice and only the third woman to serve on the Court. Another reason is that in recent years the Senate's judicial confirmation process has become highly political and confrontational. Her nomination was President Obama's first Supreme Court nomination, which resulted in additional scrutiny from the media. The entire nomination and confirmation process lasted from May 2009 through early August 2009, when she was sworn in. Throughout the process, multiple story lines played out, providing news outlets with several opportunities to make editorial judgments that could result in emphasizing one story line over another. Although Sotomayor's credentials were comparable to previous Supreme Court nominees, her nomination was not without controversy. She was graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University, was graduated from Yale Law School where she edited the *Yale Law Journal*, worked for the Manhattan district attorney's office, joined a private law firm, became a Federal District Court judge in 1992, and was elevated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1998 (Thomas, Taylor, & No, 2009). Prior to her confirmation hearings, Sotomayor's Republican critics brought attention to comments she made during a public speaking engagement in 2001 in which she suggested that "a wise Latina woman would usually reach better conclusions than a white man" (Davis, 2009). This statement became the primary focus for critics of her nomination and provided another opportunity for

varied media coverage. In addition, her views on abortion and gun ownership rights became topics of public debate.

The independent variable in this study was minority employment. Eight newspapers with a circulation between 100,000 and 250,000 were selected for this study, four with high levels of minority employment and four with low levels of minority employment. Publications of this circulation size were selected because they likely have a large enough staff to report on topics of national interest without relying completely on articles provided by the Associated Press or other news services. In addition, a greater range of minority employment exists at newspapers of this size than newspapers with higher circulation.

Levels of minority employment were determined using the ASNE Newsroom Employment Census for 2009. The annual ASNE Newsroom Employment Census reports a total for minority employment from each responding newspaper as well as the breakdown according to whether the employees are Asian American, Black, Hispanic, or Native American. These minority categories are the same ones used by the U.S. Census Bureau and allow the ASNE to make direct comparisons to other Census Bureau data. Newsroom employees include newspaper employees in four broad categories: supervisors; copy editors, layout editors, and online producers; reporters; and photographers, artists, and videographers. The ASNE has tracked the overall minority employment at newspapers since 1978 and began listing the percentage for each minority group in 2006.

This study examined the impact of overall minority employment on news coverage rather than the employment level of a specific ethnic group, primarily because

overall minority employment at newspapers has been the main emphasis of the ASNE. “The survey is a tool ASNE uses to measure the success of its goal of having the percentage of minorities working in newsrooms nationwide equal to the percentage of minorities in the nation’s population by 2025” (American Society of News Editors, 2009). Ethnic minorities constituted 33% of the population of the United States in 2009, but only 13.4% of the employees at daily newspapers throughout the nation, according to the 2009 ASNE census. Approximately 65% of all daily newspapers in the nation respond to the ASNE census each year. The ASNE reported that 941 of the 1,405 nation’s daily newspapers responded to the census in 2009, a response rate of 66.3%.

Daily newspapers examined in this study were selected from those with a Sunday circulation between 100,000 and 250,000, as reported in the 2009 edition of the *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook*. Of those newspapers, the 56 whose editors responded to the 2009 ASNE census were ranked according to level of minority employment. Four selections were made from the 15 newspapers with the highest level of minority employment within the group, and four selections were made from the 15 newspapers reporting the lowest level of minority employment. Newsroom employment of ethnic minorities ranged from 17.1% to 24.4% among newspapers selected to represent high minority employment and from 4.3% to 6.8% among those representing low minority employment.

In order to control for extraneous variables, this study incorporated a matched sample. Newspapers were matched according to geographic region represented and political perspective of the publication. The geographic regions used in the study were four of the five regions recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau: West, South, Midwest,

TABLE 1

*Characteristics of newspapers included in this study*

| Newspaper                          | Circulation | Region    | Endorsement | Minority% |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| <i>The Fresno Bee</i>              | 166,380     | West      | Obama       | 24.4%     |
| <i>The Journal News</i>            | 121,754     | Northeast | Obama       | 22.5%     |
| <i>The Palm Beach Post</i>         | 149,594     | South     | Obama       | 20.4%     |
| <i>The Grand Rapids Press</i>      | 178,033     | Midwest   | McCain      | 17.1%     |
| <i>The Spokesman-Review</i>        | 110,201     | West      | McCain      | 6.8%      |
| <i>The Sarasota Herald-Tribune</i> | 111,734     | South     | Obama       | 5.7%      |
| <i>The Blade</i>                   | 144,204     | Midwest   | Obama       | 5.7%      |
| <i>The Times Union</i>             | 143,261     | Northeast | Obama       | 4.3%      |

and Northeast. Political perspective of the newspapers was determined according to which candidate the publications endorsed in the 2008 presidential campaign, then Sen. Barack Obama or Sen. John McCain, obtained through a search of online archives for each newspaper under consideration. Six of the selected publications endorsed Obama, while two of the publications endorsed McCain. Newspapers selected for this study were: *The Palm Beach Post*, West Palm Beach, Fla.; *The Sarasota Herald Tribune*, Sarasota, Fla.; *The Fresno Bee*, Fresno, Calif.; *The Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, Wash.; *The Grand Rapids Press*, Grand Rapids, Mich.; *The Blade*, Toledo, Ohio; *The Times Union*, Albany, N.Y.; and *The Journal News*, White Plains, N.Y. Table 1 lists the publications according to circulation, region, endorsement, and minority employment.

Staff-produced articles reviewed in this study were obtained by conducting a search of each newspaper's collection posted on the electronic database Lexis/Nexis, using the key words "Sonia Sotomayor." When content from a specific newspaper was not available on the database, a search was conducted using the newspaper's website archive. The time period for the search was from May 1, 2009, through August 8, 2009. All staff-produced articles referring to Sotomayor published in the selected newspapers during this time period were analyzed, paragraph-by-paragraph, according to frame and tone, with the exception of letters to the editor. An analysis of staff-produced articles was determined to be the best test of how minority staffing levels influence framing of articles at these newspapers because of the direct control the newspaper staff has on all aspects of the articles. Articles provided by news services such as the Associated Press, on the other hand, were not coded according to frame or tone because of the limited control individual staff members have on the content. Instead, these articles were combined with the staff-produced content in an effort to make comparisons at the agenda-setting level. The news service content that was published by the selected newspapers was not available on either Lexis/Nexis or the newspaper websites. Instead, it was obtained through a search of microfilm available at the Library of Congress. Only full-length articles were included in the agenda-setting comparisons because of the difficulty of identifying mentions of Sotomayor in brief items on microfilm. In addition, the Library of Congress collection was not complete. No microfilm or paper copies of *The Journal News* were available after May 31, 2009. In addition, the microfilm collection of *The Blade* was missing the dates July 20, 2009, through July 31, 2009. To balance for these omissions, news service produced content in the June 1, 2009, through Aug. 8, 2009, issues of *The Times Union*

and the July 20, 2009, through July 31, 2009, issues of *The Grand Rapids Press* was not included in the agenda-setting portion of the study.

The coding processes utilized by Devitt (2002) and Druckman and Parkin (2005) offered appropriate guidance for this investigation. Both studies used the paragraph as the primary unit of analysis. Devitt coded each paragraph according to what frame was incorporated, while Druckman and Parkin coded each paragraph according to both frame and tone. The main reason for using the paragraph as the unit of analysis, according to Devitt, is that “researchers have found that news stories often contain more than one frame, so the use of paragraphs allows one to detect multiple frames in a single story as well as their frequency” (p. 451). Coding individual paragraphs may also help detect what potentially may be very subtle differences in the articles reviewed.

Devitt (2002) defined frames as “journalistic descriptions embedded in news stories to create different depictions of news subjects” (p. 447). In this sense, “...frames are not devices that influence the construction of entire news stories, but, rather, elements that appear within news stories” (p. 447). This study adopted Devitt’s definition of frames and used the three frame types through which Devitt analyzed media coverage of gubernatorial candidates (issue frames, personal frames, and strategy frames).

An issue frame in this study was one that describes Sotomayor according to her “positions or actions on public policy issues” (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). A personal frame was a paragraph that describes Sotomayor’s “personal or professional background” (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). A strategy frame was a paragraph that addresses the “horse-race descriptions” of Sotomayor’s confirmation process, whether or not she is likely to be confirmed, tactics that could be employed during the hearings, and steps she could take to

win over the Senate (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). Two other frames were identified in this study, a “controversy” frame and a “cultural” frame. The controversy frame included paragraphs that specifically address the “wise Latina” comments made by Sotomayor during the 2001 speech that became the primary controversy during her confirmation process. This frame could be considered a subset of Devitt’s issue frame, but assigning it a separate category allowed for a more complete analysis in this investigation. The cultural frame was identified during the coder training and included comments from the public and politicians explaining what Sotomayor’s nomination and confirmation meant to Hispanic people. Many of these comments were celebratory, expressing enthusiasm that a cultural barrier was overcome.

Finally, paragraphs that did not fit within any of these primary frames or featured mixed frames were labeled “other frame” and not included in the analysis. These paragraphs accounted for 35.8% of the 623 total staff-produced paragraphs about the nomination and confirmation of Sotomayor published in the eight newspapers reviewed.

Examples of the five frame types include the following:

*Issue Frame*

Fortunately, Tom Goldstein, a lawyer who runs Scotusblog (a blog about the Supreme Court), has reviewed all of Sotomayor’s race-related decisions as an appellate court panelist. There were 97 cases, but you’ve probably only heard of one of them – the white firefighters in Connecticut who charged the city with discrimination. In the rest of the rulings, Sotomayor routinely joined her white colleagues in rejecting discrimination claims. Not much evidence of that dreaded empathy there (Crooks, 2009, p. 10A).

*Personal Frame*

Not only would she be the first Hispanic and just the third woman on the court, but Judge Sotomayor also brings the perspective gleaned from having been raised by a single mother in a Bronx housing project (The judgment of Judge Sotomayor, 2009, p. 10A).

### *Strategy Frame*

On the local political stage, Sotomayor's heritage is significant. About 7 percent of Palm Beach County's 848,481 registered voters are Hispanic and 24 percent of those are Hispanic Republicans. If Republican senators attack Sotomayor, they risk angering Hispanic voters. If they pander to her, they could look opportunistic. (Stapleton, 2009, p. 8A).

### *Controversy Frame*

*The Washington Post* recently reviewed 84 of her trips to the lectern. The most controversial speech was delivered eight years ago in Berkeley, Calif., in which she said: "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life" (Crooks, 2009, p. 10A).

### *Cultural Frame*

"This is a really positive thing for the Latino community," said Mike Asencio, president of the Albany Latin Festival Association, which organizes the city's annual Latin Fest. "We'll probably see a lot more of this with the growing Latino population in the U.S." (Grondahl, 2009, p. 9A).

Each paragraph was also coded according to the tone of the paragraph and whether it provided a positive, negative, or neutral portrayal of Sotomayor. Paragraphs that did not directly or indirectly address Sotomayor or her qualifications and those that had a mix of tones were not included in the coding totals. Paragraphs were coded according to their face value and not whether or not the coder believed the statements made were true. Druckman and Parkin used this process in their investigation of how editorial slant influences the way readers evaluate candidates and eventually vote. The amount of space dedicated to each candidate and the tone of that coverage were Druckman and Parkin's measures for editorial slant. Using this method, Druckman and Parkin were able to show evidence of a relative editorial slant in the publications they investigated (2002, p. 1040). Examples of the three tone frame types include the following:

*Positive Tone*

“Along the way, she’s faced down barriers, overcome the odds and lived out the American dream that brought her parents here so long ago” (The judgment of Judge Sotomayor, 2009, p. 10A).

*Negative Tone*

“Judge’s Sotomayor’s remarks only serve to reinforce a stereotype that has exacerbated a dangerous racial/ethnic divide in this country which needs to be bridged rather than widened. If a white male nominee had the temerity to utter the converse of her statement – that as such he would be better qualified to render a decision than a Latino woman – his nomination would be doomed” (Murray, 2009, p. 1B).

*Neutral Tone*

“If they are going to question her on issues, she may be on the Republican side, she may be conservative on an issue like abortion,” Gonzalez said. “The Republicans have a right to ask questions, but they are walking a tightrope” (Stapleton, 2009, p. 8A).

Other characteristics of the coverage of Sotomayor were recorded and analyzed.

Measures for quantity and prominence of reporting included number of articles, length of article by word count, and location of article by page and section. Coders recorded the type of article, whether it was a news report, a feature story, an editorial, or an analysis or commentary. News reports included stories that directly reported on events or announcements and stories that showcased reaction to such items. Feature stories were those that examined Sotomayor’s personal history or life outside the public eye. Editorials were defined as position statements by the individual newspapers. Items included in the analysis or commentary category included contextual reporting, speculative reporting, critiques, and columns. Whether the article was written by a member of the newspaper staff or provided by a news service such as The Associated Press was also recorded. The use of stories provided by news services can be a measure of editorial judgment, but excessive use of wire service stories may indicate that the subject of this investigation was not salient enough to reflect reporting differences in

newspapers in this circulation category. Finally, coders recorded whether race was mentioned in the article and if it was emphasized in the article, defined as being mentioned three or more times in an article.

Two coders, one a University of Wisconsin journalism student and the other a recent graduate of the university, analyzed each of the staff-produced newspaper articles according to frames utilized, tone of the article, length of article, type of article, originator of the article, and whether race was mentioned and if it played a primary role in the article. The news service articles were coded only for length of the article, location of the article, type of article, originator of the article, and whether race was mentioned and if it played a primary role in the article. Both coders were provided coding instructions (see Appendix) and then were given a practice set of five articles from *The New York Times* to code for frame and tone. Upon completion, the coders met and reviewed the results with the researcher and discussed any discrepancies. During their review of the results of the first pretest, the coders and researcher identified and defined the cultural frame that was included in the study. They were then given a second set of five articles from *The New York Times* to code, after which their results were tested for inter-coder reliability for both frame (Cohen's Kappa = .884) and tone (Cohen's Kappa = .803). Following the training, both coders were asked to code the entire set of staff-written articles reviewed in this study. Once they finished coding all of the staff-written articles, they met to review their results and reconcile any differences in how they coded each paragraph according to frame and tone.

## Findings

### Quantity of Coverage

Although a detailed analysis comparing the quantity of coverage provided by newspapers with a high level of minority staffing to the quantity provided by newspapers with a low level of minority staffing yielded some statistically significant results, it would be difficult to argue that these results indicate a sizable difference. Newspapers high in minority employment published 130 items, excluding briefs, addressing the nomination or confirmation of Sotomayor, 30 of which were staff produced and 100 of which were selected from various news services. Newspapers low in minority employment published 104 items, excluding briefs, addressing the nomination or confirmation of Sotomayor, 30 of which were staff produced and 74 of which were selected from various news services. An examination based only on story count seems to indicate that the two types of publications provided a similar amount of staff-produced coverage, while newspapers high in minority employment provided more stories from news services (100 to 74) to account for the only difference.

Analyzing the quantity of coverage based on word count, though, provides a slightly different outcome. In this analysis, coders counted the number of words in each paragraph that directly or indirectly referred to Sotomayor. By this measure of quantity, stories written by staff members at newspapers high in minority employment exceeded the length of the stories written by staff members at newspapers low in minority employment, with a total of 15,024 words and average of 501 words compared to 11,630 words and an average of 388 words (see Table 2). This difference in the average word

TABLE 2

*Quantity of coverage*

| Story type     | High employment |        |      | Low employment |        |      |
|----------------|-----------------|--------|------|----------------|--------|------|
|                | Stories         | Words  | Mean | Stories        | Words  | Mean |
| Staff produced | 30              | 15,024 | 501  | 30             | 11,630 | 387  |
| News service   | 100             | 43,639 | 436* | 74             | 44,866 | 606* |
| Total stories  | 130             | 58,663 | 451* | 104            | 56,496 | 543* |

(*t test*), \* $p < 0.05$

count of staff-written stories was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.108$ ), primarily because of the small sample size of just 30 articles per category.

Based on story count, it appears as though newspapers high in minority employment provided more news service coverage of Sotomayor than did newspapers low in minority employment. When examined on the basis of word count, the opposite appears to be true. Newspapers high in minority employment published 98 stories about Sotomayor from news services, with a total of 43,639 words in the paragraphs referring directly or indirectly to Sotomayor for an average of 436 words per article. Newspapers low in minority employment published fewer stories about Sotomayor from news services (74), but those stories tended to be longer with a total of 44,866 words in the paragraphs referring directly or indirectly to Sotomayor for an average of 606 words per article. According to a t-test for independent means, this difference in average word count was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The overall word-count totals reflect these mixed results. Newspapers high in minority employment had a slightly higher total word count from paragraphs referring directly or indirectly to Sotomayor than did newspapers low in minority employment, 58,663 words compared to 56,496 words. But the average number of words per story from paragraphs referring directly or indirectly to Sotomayor was higher in newspapers with low minority employment (541 words) than in newspapers with high minority employment (454 words). The difference in average word count of all stories referring to Sotomayor published in the two groups was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

#### Prominence of Coverage

In this study, prominence of coverage was measured by the number of stories related to Sotomayor's nomination and confirmation appearing on the front page of the newspapers in relation to the overall number of stories about her published. While there was no statistically significant difference found in overall prominence of coverage, a statistically significant difference was found in the number of staff-written stories published on the front page. Of the 30 staff-written stories about Sotomayor published in newspapers high in minority employment, 11 were placed on the front page (36.7%). Of the 30 staff-written stories about Sotomayor published in newspapers low in minority employment, two were placed on the front page (6.7%). Using a chi-square test of independence (see Table 3), the difference was shown to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This difference in story treatment disappeared when stories provided by news services were included in the totals. Of the 130 total articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers high in minority employment, 26 were placed on the front page (20.0%).

TABLE 3

*Prominence of coverage*

| Story type             | High employment |             | Low employment |            |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
|                        | Page 1          | Other       | Page 1         | Other      |
| Staff produced (7.95)* | 11 (36.7%)      | 19 (63.3%)  | 2 (6.7%)       | 28 (93.3%) |
| News service (1.27)    | 15 (15.3%)      | 85 (85.0%)  | 16 (21.6%)     | 58 (78.4%) |
| Total stories (0.27)   | 26 (20.0%)      | 104 (80.0%) | 18 (17.3%)     | 86 (82.7%) |

(*chi-square*), \* $p < .05$

Of the 104 total articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers low in minority employment, 18 were placed on the front page (17.3%).

These findings seem to indicate a slight difference in how the two newspaper types used their staff reporters to cover Sotomayor's nomination and confirmation. Newspaper high in minority employment seem to be more likely to have their staff do news reports on Sotomayor's nomination and confirmation, obtaining reaction from their local communities. Newspapers low in minority employment seem more likely to limit their staff-produced coverage to the opinion section, generating mostly columns and editorials and relying more heavily upon news services for news content related to the topic. This finding seems to be supported by the analysis of story type conducted in this study. Yet this finding does not indicate a difference in the overall news value the two types of publications place on the topic. Both newspaper types put a similar percentage of

their published stories on the topic on the front page, 20.0% in newspapers with high minority employment and 17.3% in newspapers with low minority employment.

Overall, findings based on an agenda-setting perspective are mixed, with perhaps newspapers high in minority employment providing a slightly greater quantity of coverage according to both story count and total word count. Newspapers high in minority employment published longer staff-written stories about Sotomayor and more news service stories about her than did newspapers low in minority employment. Newspapers low in minority employment dedicated a greater amount of space to stories about Sotomayor provided by news services, which somewhat offset the greater overall number of articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers high in minority employment. The slightly higher number of articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers with high minority employment was also reflected in a slightly higher number of articles on the front page, despite the fact that virtually the same percentage of articles about Sotomayor were given such prominent treatment in the two newspaper types.

#### Comparison of Frames

This study revealed some differences in frames used by newspapers high in minority employment and low in minority employment in staff-written articles about the nomination and confirmation of Sotomayor. Statistically significant differences were found in three frame types – issue frame, strategy frame and controversy frame – using a chi-square test of independence (see Table 4). A greater percentage of paragraphs about Sotomayor were categorized as issue frames in newspapers high in minority employment. Newspapers low in minority employment had a greater percentage of paragraphs about

TABLE 4

*Frames by minority employment level*

| Frames                    | High employment | n   | Low employment | n  |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----|----------------|----|
| Issue Frame (5.53)*       | 36.6%           | 106 | 26.1%          | 45 |
| Personal Frame (0.40)     | 19.4%           | 56  | 17.0%          | 30 |
| Strategy Frame (7.22)*    | 23.2%           | 67  | 34.7%          | 61 |
| Controversy Frame (5.79)* | 6.6%            | 19  | 12.5%          | 22 |
| Cultural Frame (2.05)     | 14.2%           | 41  | 9.7%           | 17 |

(*chi-square*), \* $p < 0.05$

Sotomayor categorized as strategy frames and controversy frames. No statistically significant differences were found in the use of personal frame and cultural frames.

Ranked in order of frequency within newspaper type, the similarities and differences in frame use become clear. Of the paragraphs addressing Sotomayor in newspapers with high levels of minority employment, 36.6% were issue frame, 23.2% strategy frame, 19.4% personal frame, 14.2% cultural frame, and 6.6% controversy frame. Of the paragraphs addressing Sotomayor in newspapers with low levels of minority employment, 34.7% were strategy frame, 26.1% issue frame, 17.0% personal frame, 12.5% controversy frame, and 9.7% cultural frame. These results show that staff-written articles at newspapers high in minority employment placed more importance on assessing Sotomayor's qualifications as a judge and, although not at statistically significant levels, examining the cultural meaning and historical aspects of her

nomination. Staff writers at the newspapers low in minority employment put more emphasis on the political strategy involved in the confirmation process and controversial statements from Sotomayor's past speeches. This last difference was statistically significant.

#### Comparison of Tone

No statistically significant difference in tone was found in the staff-written stories about Sotomayor appearing in the two groups of newspapers. The tone of the vast majority of paragraphs reviewed in this study was neutral: 79.8% or 248 paragraphs in the high minority employment newspapers and 73.3% or 129 paragraphs in the low minority employment newspapers. Paragraphs about Sotomayor were positive in tone 15.4% of the time (48 paragraphs) in newspapers with a high level of minority employment and 18.2% of the time (32 paragraphs) in newspapers with a low level of minority employment. A negative tone was found in 8.5% or 15 of the paragraphs about Sotomayor in newspapers with a low level of minority employment, almost double the percentage of negative paragraphs in newspapers with a high level of minority employment (4.8% or 15 total). Still, these figures were not found to be statistically significant by using the chi-square test for independent means.

#### Type of Article

When compared on the basis of article type – news, feature, editorial, and analysis/commentary – some slight differences with limited statistical significance emerge (see Table 5). Newspapers with a high level of minority employment were more likely to assign a staff member to write a news item about Sotomayor than were newspapers with a low level of minority employment. Of the 30 staff-written articles

TABLE 5

*Story type by minority employment level*

| Story type                    | High employment | n  | Low employment | n  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----|----------------|----|
| <i>Staff-written articles</i> |                 |    |                |    |
| News (5.079)*                 | 43.3%           | 13 | 16.7%          | 5  |
| Feature                       | 10.0%           | 3  | 3.3%           | 1  |
| Editorial (3.068)             | 16.7%           | 5  | 36.7%          | 11 |
| Analysis/Commentary (1.148)   | 30.0%           | 9  | 43.3%          | 13 |
| <i>All articles</i>           |                 |    |                |    |
| News (2.795)                  | 50.0%           | 65 | 39.4%          | 41 |
| Feature                       | 7.7%            | 10 | 2.9%           | 3  |
| Editorial (3.893)*            | 3.8%            | 5  | 10.6%          | 11 |
| Analysis/Commentary (2.058)   | 38.5%           | 50 | 47.1%          | 49 |

(*chi-square*), \* $p < 0.05$

about Sotomayor in newspapers with high minority employment, 13 or 43.3% were news stories. Conversely, of the 30 staff-written articles about Sotomayor in newspapers with low minority employment, five or 16.7% were news stories. Although not achieving statistical significance, proportionally more of the staff-written articles in newspapers with low levels of minority employment fell into the editorial and analysis/commentary categories. However, this difference does achieve statistical significance when comparing all articles in the editorial category, staff written and those obtained from news services, published in the newspapers. Of all the articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers low in minority employment, 10.6% were editorials and 47.1% were analysis/commentary. Of all the articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers high in minority employment, 3.8% were editorials and 38.5% were analysis/commentary. This is consistent with other findings from this study regarding prominence of stories about Sotomayor in the two groups of publications.

#### Emphasis on Race

Another difference in articles in the two groups of newspapers was that newspapers low in minority employment tended to mention and emphasize race at a higher rate than did newspapers high in minority employment. Articles were coded according to whether they mentioned Sotomayor's race as Hispanic, Latino, or Puerto Rican, and according to whether her race was a point of emphasis in the article (defined as being mentioned in three or more paragraphs). In newspapers low in minority employment, 70% (21 of 30) of the staff-written articles mentioned race and 63.3% (19 of 30) emphasized race. In newspapers high in minority employment, 60% (18 of 30) of the staff-written articles mentioned race and 50% (15 of 30) emphasized race. Because of

the small sample size neither difference was significant. However, when stories provided by news services were included in the same analysis, both differences achieved statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) using the chi-square test of independence. Race was mentioned in 83.7 percent (87 of 104) of all articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers low in minority employment compared to 69.2% (90 of 130) of all articles about Sotomayor published in newspapers high in minority employment. The difference was even greater when comparing how often the two groups of newspapers emphasized race. Race was a point of emphasis in 66.3% (69 of 104) of all articles about Sotomayor in newspapers with low minority employment, while it was a point of emphasis in 47.7% (62 of 130) of all articles about Sotomayor in newspapers with high minority employment.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the level of minority staffing at newspapers influences the content of those newspapers. A central assumption of the industry-wide diversity effort endorsed by the ASNE is that increasing the percentage of ethnic minorities in the newsroom will enable newspapers to provide better coverage of their communities. According to this assumption, by having newsroom employment that more accurately reflects the rich diversity of the communities they cover, newspapers would do a better job telling the stories of all the people in their communities and do a better job interpreting the news from a variety of cultural perspectives. In testing that assumption, this study found small differences in newspaper coverage of the nomination and confirmation of the nation's first Hispanic Supreme Court justice based on minority employment levels. Those differences were observed to a greater degree in the content of the articles written by staff members of the newspapers, as reflected in the framing

comparisons in this study, than in the news judgments made by these newspapers, as reflected in the agenda-setting comparisons in this study.

Taken as a whole, the agenda-setting components of this study suggest that newspapers with higher levels of minority employment gave a slightly higher priority to articles about Sotomayor than did newspapers with lower levels of minority employment. Although the bulk of the individual comparisons were not significant, mostly because of a smaller than anticipated sample size, newspapers with higher levels of minority employment published more stories about Sotomayor, allotted a greater total amount of space to these articles, and displayed them more prominently in the newspaper. Because of the lack of consistent statistical significance, the agenda-setting portion of this study provides a somewhat inconclusive answer to the first research question of whether newspapers with high levels of minority staffing provide more frequent and more prominent coverage of Sotomayor's nomination and confirmation. The newspapers with higher levels of minority employment were more likely to put staff-written articles about Sotomayor on the front page and published more articles about her from news services. However, newspapers low in minority employment had a tendency to allocate more space to news service stories about Sotomayor, which somewhat offset the fact that newspapers high in minority employment published more articles on the topic.

The answer to the second research question – whether staff-written stories about the nomination and confirmation of Sotomayor were framed differently in newspapers with higher levels of minority staffing – is a little clearer. Statistically significant results were found in three of the five frames studied: issue frame, strategy frame, and controversy frame. Overall, staff writers at newspapers with higher levels of minority

employment incorporated a greater percentage of paragraphs emphasizing the issue, personal, and cultural frames. Staff writers at newspapers with lower levels of minority employment used a greater percentage of paragraphs emphasizing the strategy and controversy frames. While this result seems to indicate that reporters at the two types of newspapers took different approaches to stories about Sotomayor, an alternative explanation could be that this result simply reflects a difference in story type that newspapers in this study chose to use. More staff-written stories about Sotomayor were news articles in newspapers with high minority employment than in newspapers with low minority employment, at a statistically significant rate of 43.3% to 16.7% ( $p < 0.05$ ). It is possible that news stories about Sotomayor would be more likely to emphasize issues than strategy and controversy.

A quick review of the data collected in the study, though, suggests this alternative explanation should be rejected. Newspapers with high levels of minority employment used issue frames at a rate of almost twice that of newspapers with low levels of minority employment in the news and feature story types (22.3% to 10.3%) and in the editorial and analysis/commentary story types (50.7% to 30.9%). Similarly, newspapers with low levels of minority employment used strategy frames at a higher rate than did newspapers with high levels of minority employment in the news and feature story types (41% to 28.7%) and in the editorial and analysis/commentary story types (32.4% to 18.7%). Neither type of newspaper addressed the controversy frame much in their staff-written news and feature stories (only two frames in this category for both newspaper types), but the newspapers low in minority employment emphasized these frames more in their editorial and analysis/commentary reporting (16.2% to 11.3%).

No statistically significant results were found with regard to the third research question: Was there a difference in how the staff-written stories about the nomination of Sotomayor were cast with regard to tone in newspapers with high levels of minority staffing and newspapers with low levels of minority staffing? More than three out of four paragraphs referring to Sotomayor in both newspaper categories (high minority employment and low minority employment) were neutral in tone. Slightly more than 15% of the paragraphs referring to Sotomayor in both newspaper categories were positive in tone, while a negative tone was found in fewer than 10% of the paragraphs. This result is consistent with the basic journalistic ethos of objectivity in reporting. Kraeplin (2009) observed differences in tone in how *The Dallas Morning News* and *The Dallas Express* reported on a series of racially motivated bombings in the 1950s, but he attributed those differences to the fact that *The Dallas Express* was part of the black press, which adopted more of an advocacy tone. In fact, he noted that mainstream newspapers like *The Dallas Morning News* “follow a number of routines to ensure objectivity” (p. 88). Devitt (2002) did not include tone as an area of analysis in his study of how gender influenced the framing of gubernatorial candidates, but suggested it as a potential topic for future research. The results of this study suggest the objective news reporting practices of newspapers contribute to an overall neutral tone of individual paragraphs.

The final difference in how the two groups of newspapers reported on Sotomayor’s confirmation was the way in which they addressed her ethnicity. Race seemed to be a greater factor in the newspapers with lower levels of minority employment. These newspapers both mentioned race more frequently in the articles they published and more frequently made race a point of emphasis. This result could simply

be a reflection of the fact that staff-written articles in newspapers with lower levels of minority employment tended to address Sotomayor's controversial "wise Latina" statement at a proportionally higher rate. But this difference should have been offset by the fact that staff-written articles in newspapers with high levels of minority employment featured more personal and cultural frames, which likely would have emphasized Sotomayor's ethnicity as much as the controversy frame. Either way, such a result indicates that newspapers with low levels of minority employment see race as a bigger component of the overall story than do newspapers with higher levels of minority employment. Without expanding the study to include a framing analysis of all articles (those written by staff members and those provided by news services), it is not possible to determine whether this result is a reflection of frames selected or some other factor.

This finding also calls into question methods of analyzing coverage of minority groups in newspapers in which the sample is obtained through a search of terms that identify race. If that method had been used in this study, nearly a quarter of the sample (24.4%) would have been omitted. Furthermore, the sample would have been skewed toward newspapers with lower levels of minority employment. These newspapers were more likely to mention Sotomayor's race than were newspapers with high levels of minority employment, 83.7% to 69.2%.

One interpretation of the results of this study could be that they suggest that the level of minority employment at newspapers has a limited impact on the content, with the greatest impact occurring in areas most influenced by reporters and the smallest impact occurring in areas most influenced by editors and managers. Components of this study could be divided into two categories, those more directly influenced by editors and

supervisors and those more directly influenced by writers. Editors and other managers on the staff have greater control over the agenda-setting components of this study: number of articles, length of articles, placement of articles, and type of articles. They decide what stories belong in the newspaper and where these stories are located in the newspaper. Individual reporters could have some influence in this regard, but it would be greatly restricted by the newsroom hierarchy. The framing and tone components of this study most directly reflect the contributions of the individual journalists. Although they work with editors and copy editors, who could exert their influence on the articles through the editing process, writers have initial control over what content to include in their articles and the tone of their articles.

Researchers and journalists, alike, have expressed concern that efforts to bring more diversity into the newsroom won't have much of an impact until there is greater diversity at the management level. In an essay for the *Newspaper Research Journal*, Pease (1990) wrote "... adding new entry-level employees to the newsroom is a lot like adding new rowers to the oars aboard the galley ship; they power the boat, but make few decisions about speed, direction or mission" (p. 25). A similar viewpoint was shared by Shaw (1991) in an article for *Quill* magazine: "The press will not change its fundamental approach to covering minorities and routinely include them in the mainstream of the daily news flow until there are many minority editors participating significantly in the decision-making process" (p. 20). According to the 2009 ASNE census, 11.2% of the newsroom supervisors at that time were minorities, a slightly smaller number than the 13.4% who were newsroom employees. This study did not collect information on the number of minority supervisors at the newspapers examined, so all comparison were

made only on the basis of total newsroom employment. An appropriate approach for future research would be to conduct a similar analysis comparing results of newspapers with a higher number of minority supervisors to those with a lower number of minority supervisors.

There are a number of factors that must be considered when reviewing the results of this study. The first is that the newspapers identified as having high levels of minority employment were only high in minority employment in relation to the other newspapers in the study. Although some of them may have minority employment levels reflective of their communities, none of them met or exceeded the minority population level of 33% in the nation. The range in minority employment of those in the “high levels of minority employment” condition was from 17.1% to 24.4%. Only three of the newspapers that responded to the ASNE newsroom employment survey in 2009 have minority employment levels above 33%; two of them had circulations above 250,000 and were excluded from this study for that reason. The other is in the Pacific region of the nation and could not be paired with a newspaper of similar circulation size with low minority employment levels from that region. So in a sense, this investigation is comparing newspapers that have slightly low minority employment levels to those that have even lower minority levels.

In choosing newspapers to review from the circulation range of 100,000 to 250,000, this study attempted to ensure the greatest variation in minority employment level as possible among newspapers that would still have some staff-produced content about Sotomayor’s nomination and confirmation. While the sample selected provided a high level of variability in minority employment, there were fewer staff-produced articles

about Sotomayor than anticipated. A total of 60 articles about Sotomayor were produced by staff members of the newspapers, a large enough set for analysis but small enough to potentially reduce the number of statistically significant results produced by this study.

It was also hoped that selecting newspapers within this circulation range would help control for other factors as well, including available news hole in the publications and total size of the staff at each newspaper. Despite these efforts, it is possible unexpected variation exists within these two areas at the newspapers selected for this study. Overall, though, the average circulation of the two newspaper groups included in this study were much closer than the established range could have allowed. Newspapers in the high minority employment category only had a slightly higher average circulation (153,940) than did newspapers in the low minority employment category (127,350).

This study could be considered a pilot effort to see if conducting a content analysis using agenda-setting and framing concepts would provide useful comparisons of content in newspapers that have high and low levels of minority employment. Devitt's use of a framing analysis to compare newspaper coverage of male and female candidates in gubernatorial races provided a useful model for this investigation and future investigations. The vast majority of research examining differences in how the media report on race either counts the number of minorities represented or examines the degree to which stereotypes persist. By taking a different approach, this study hoped to measure content diversity rather than subject diversity. Significant content differences were found in the frames utilized in the stories about Sotomayor. Still, interpreting what those differences mean poses a challenge. For example, newspapers high in minority employment emphasized the issue frame to a greater degree than did newspapers low in

minority employment, while newspapers low in minority employment emphasized the strategy and controversy frames more than newspapers high in minority employment. Does the emphasis on issue reporting reflect a journalistic effort to delve deeper into a story? The fact that the staff-written stories had a higher word count in newspapers with higher levels of minority employment than the staff-written stories in the newspapers with lower levels of minority employment could be seen as support for this interpretation. Longer stories could reflect more in-depth reporting or a willingness to commit staff resources needed to find a local connection to a topic of national interest. They could also simply be longer stories. Such questions are difficult to answer without including a qualitative component.

This study does not provide a clear and definitive answer to the primary question: Does the level of minority staffing at newspapers influence the content of those newspapers? Evidence from the framing portion of this study suggests there might be some statistically significant differences. But the differences found in this study are only applicable to the topic at hand, the nomination and confirmation of the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice, and might not apply to newspapers outside this sample. This study does, however, begin to build a case supporting the assumption that minority employment levels can have a direct impact on newspaper content. More research is needed in order to draw stronger conclusions. Researchers could use a similar technique to examine additional topics, such as the nation-wide immigration rallies held in 2006 or the new immigration laws passed by the state of Arizona in 2010. Future research about the way in which minority employment levels influence newspaper reporting, though, should continue to focus more on content diversity rather than subject diversity.

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## Appendix A

### ***Coder Instructions***

#### **Definition of framing**

Entman defined frames as mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide how people process information (1993). Within news stories, frames serve as “maps” created by reporters and editors that “structure the public debate” and influence media consumers’ opinions (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 881). Frames “highlight some bits of information ... thereby elevating them” in importance within the story (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Devitt (2002) defined frames as “journalistic descriptions embedded in news stories to create different depictions of news subjects” (p. 447). In this sense, “frames are not devices that influence the construction of entire news stories, but, rather, elements that appear within news stories” (p. 447). Such an approach acknowledges that multiple frames can be present within a single article. This study will adopt Devitt’s definition of frames.

#### **Unit of measure**

The unit of measure in this investigation will be individual paragraphs in each article, a process that was incorporated by Devitt (2002) and Druckman & Parkin (2005). Both studies used the paragraph as the primary unit of analysis. Devitt coded each paragraph according to what frame was utilized, while Druckman & Parkin coded each paragraph according to both frame and tone. The reason for this, according to Devitt, is that “researchers have found that news stories often contain more than one frame, so the

use of paragraphs allows one to detect multiple frames in a single story as well as their frequency” (p. 451).

### **Frames in this study**

This study will employ the three frame types used in Devitt’s study – issue frame, personal frame and strategy frame. In addition, this study will include a controversy frame. How those frames will be defined for the purposes of this study are listed below:

- **Issue frame** – An issue frame is one that describes Sotomayor according to her “positions or actions on public policy issues” (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). Paragraphs that would fit within this category include those that examine her past rulings or where she might stand on particular political issues.

- **Personal frame** – A personal frame is a paragraph that describes Sotomayor’s “personal or professional background” (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). This would include descriptions of her personality, family history, and friendships or relationships.

- **Strategy frame** – A strategy frame is a paragraph that addresses the “horse-race descriptions” of Sotomayor’s confirmation process such as whether or not she is likely to be confirmed, tactics that should be employed during the hearings, and steps she could take to win support (Devitt, 2002, p. 452). It also includes paragraphs that focus on the nomination and confirmation process.

- **Controversy frame** – This frame will refer specifically to paragraphs that address the “wise Latina” comments made by Sotomayor during the 2001 speech that became the primary controversy during her confirmation process. This frame could be

considered a subset of Devitt’s issue frame, but assigning it a separate category will allow for a more complete analysis in this investigation.

- **Cultural frames** – Paragraphs that focus on the overall cultural impact or meaning of Sotomayor’s nomination will be labeled as cultural frame. This frame was identified during initial coder training. Included in the cultural frame are comments from the public and politicians explaining what Sotomayor’s nomination and confirmation meant to Hispanic people. Many of these comments were celebratory, expressing enthusiasm that a cultural barrier was overcome. Not included are paragraphs that address Sotomayor’s personal background or experiences as a Hispanic woman.

- **Other frames** – Finally, paragraphs that don’t fit within any of these four frames or paragraphs that consist of multiple frames will be labeled “other.”

Please note, frame assignment should be fairly obvious. If you feel undecided or feel you could place the paragraph in multiple categories, label it as “other frames.”

## **Tone**

Each paragraph will also be coded according to the tone of the paragraph and whether it provides a positive, negative, or neutral portrayal of Sotomayor.

- **Positive** – Does the paragraph, taken as a whole and at face value, reflect positively on Sotomayor.

- **Negative** – Does the paragraph, taken as a whole and at face value, reflect negatively on Sotomayor.

- **Neutral** – Does not portray positively or negatively on Sotomayor.

- **Not able to code** – Paragraph does not directly or indirectly address Sotomayor or her qualifications or has a mix of tones will be labeled as not able to code (NC).

Paragraphs will be coded according to their face value and not whether or not the coder believes the statements made to be true. Again, placement in the “positive” or “negative” category should be fairly obvious. If you feel undecided or feel you could place the paragraph in multiple categories, label it as not able to code (NC).

## Appendix B

### Sample Coding Sheet

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Newspaper:</b> A B C D E F G H | <b>Date published:</b>  |
| <b>Coder's name:</b>              | <b>Title:</b>   |
| <b>Word count:</b>                | <b>Type of article:</b> news, feature, editorial, analysis/commentary |
| <b>Page story appeared on:</b>    | <b>Staff or wire produced:</b> Staff                                  |
| <b>Section story was in:</b>      | <b>Race mentioned:</b> Yes / No <b>Point of emphasis:</b> Yes / No    |

|              |             |  |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|--|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Frame</b> | <b>Tone</b> | <p style="font-size: small;">Text of article is flowed into into this document in two legs so that coders can record the frame and tone of each paragraph of the article to the outside of the page.</p> | <b>Frame</b> | <b>Tone</b> |
|              |             |  |              |             |

**Frames:** IF = issue frame; PF = personal frame; SF = strategy frame; CF = controversey frame; CU = cultural frame; OF = other frame.  
**Tone:** PT = positive tone; NT = negative tone; NU = neutral tone; NC = not codable.