

Pre-Television Stereotypes: Mexicans in U.S. Newsreels, 1919-1932

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□—*This study explored images of Mexicans and dominant symbols in early U.S. newsreels, whether they changed throughout the 1920s, and whether they reflected the era's film stereotypes. Dominant images were dignitaries, doers, beauties, bystanders, and clerics. Symbols of modernity and class outweighed traditional images. Negative symbols like dirt or weapons were not prevalent. After 1924, symbols of literacy, diplomacy, and construction were more visible. The study provides an historical context for Latino television news images today. In addition, it reflects mass media's role in reinforcing modernity and spectatorship—allowing power of the gaze comparisons between modern and postmodern eras.*

ONE barrier to global communication is mass communication's perpetuation of ethnic and racial stereotypes. Stereotypes are collective abstractions of persons or groups asserting that members lack individuality and conform to a pattern or type. Integral to the definition of stereotypes is that they are long-lasting. This suggests that television stereotypes we see today have their roots in sets of images

from precursors to television—print media, motion pictures, and newsreels.

There is evidence that media stereotypes affect individuals' knowledge, attitude, and behavior (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Seiter, 1986; Tan, 1982). Stereotypes also influence public policy and reflect policy (Bailey, 1989; Coatsworth & Rico Ferrat, 1989; Contee, 1989; Rhodes, 1995; Taylor, 1994). Most problematic is that individuals may rely on mass media for impressions of others with whom they do not have interpersonal contact (Cortes, 1987, 1992; Greenberg & Baptista-Fernández, 1980; Jameson, 1995; Lamb, 1975; Richard, 1992; Subervi-Vélez, 1994; Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1995).

Stereotypes are schemata—or summary representations—in our cognitive processing that help us process, order, and retrieve information (Anderson & Meyer, 1988; Harris, 1994; Taylor & Crocker, 1981). They “provide ‘default values’ . . . where knowledge is

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incomplete or ambiguous (Fiske & Linville, 1980, p. 552). Visual messages are particularly powerful (Hastie, 1981; Reeves & Nass, 1996) and have a potential for bias. Ethnic stereotypes serve as schemata for viewers processing news and entertainment content about people. In this paper, the terms stereotypes and prototypes will be used interchangeably to refer to typologies of positive and negative images.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore pre-television stereotypes through analysis of newsreels in order to gain a partial explanation of television stereotypes today. Secondly, the analysis revealed some of the values and ideologies articulated in the images. United States media stereotypes of Latin Americans and U.S. Hispanics are of concern to scholars and activist groups on both sides of the border today just as they were among limited groups in the newsreel era. This study investigated newsreel images of the largest, closest group of Latin Americans, Mexicans.¹

Review of the Literature

Images of Hispanics on Television

U.S. media images of Hispanics have been largely absent or negative (Chávez, 1996; Greenberg, 1986; Greenberg & Baptista-Fernández, 1980; Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Subervi-Vélez, 1994), comprising one to two percent of television entertainment characters if present. When included, their occupational roles are usually criminals or law enforcement officers rather than professionals. One study of television Latino's work profiles found 10% of characters who were professionals; the rest were unskilled laborers or others of low socioeconomic status

(Lichter, Lichter, Rothman, Amundson, 1987). Hispanic women have been non-existent or have been the "overweight *mamacita*, spitfire or *señorita*, and the suffering mother or gang member's girlfriend" (Reyes, 1983, p. 12). In summary, the three major television roles have been comic, criminal, and cop, with Latinos otherwise largely absent.

There have been few major content analyses of Hispanics in television news. This is probably because researchers who tried found few Hispanics to analyze. Comprehensive analyses of Hispanics in news have been confined to English-language and Spanish-language print media (Chacón, 1977; Greenberg, Heeter, Burgoon, Burgoon, & Korzenny, 1983; Griswold del Castillo, 1977; Gutiérrez, 1977; Rubin, 1980; Turk, Richard, Bryson, & Johnson, 1989). Providing a framework for studies like these, Wilson and Gutiérrez (1985; 1995) identified five historic stages of news about ethnic minorities: exclusion, threat, confrontation, stereotypical selection, and integrated multiracial coverage. It is assumed that Latinos in television news are in the exclusion phase. The lack of academic studies suggests that they are in the exclusion phase of mass communication research as well.

Latino Film Images of the 1920s and early 1930s

The most well-documented area of Latino media stereotypes is film (Candelaria, 1981; Cortés, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1992; Delpar, 1984; Hadley-García, 1990; Keller, 1985; Lamb, 1975; López, 1991; Maciel, 1990, 1992; Pettit, 1980; Reyes & Rubie, 1994; Richard, 1992, 1994; Rios-Bustamante, 1992; Williams, 1985; Winokur, 1996; Woll, 1980; Woll & Miller, 1987). Be-

fore the 1920s, the typical stereotype was the greaser who evolved out of the era's pulp fiction. Films provided the "visual and auditory reinforcement" for images of the greaser that previously had been described in print. The greaser mostly disappeared with World War I when the dreaded Hun became the new villain, but Latin American film villains returned after the war. Prevailing typologies in the 1920s were the bandido, clown, and "dark lady" (Keller, 1995; Pettit, 1980). The dark ladies were aristocrats who were wooed by the superior Yankee at the expense of the Mexican male "incapable of independent action" (Woll, 1980, p. 8). In addition, there were "faithless females" (Richard, 1992) who were the lower-class tramps. These early film years were the first step in the "stereotyping of Latinas as blithesome creature preoccupied with the entertainment of handsome men" (Candelaria, 1981, p. 13), along with cementing the comic and bandit male roles. By the 1930s, two new versions of male stereotypes had evolved, the caballero and the gangster. The Latin lover tended to be lighter-skinned and aristocratic; gangsters had darker skin (Hadley-García, 1990; Pettit, 1980).

Because newsreels were shown with films, it was expected that the two media shared stereotypes as well. Just as popular fiction influenced film's portrayals of Hispanics, similar patterns among films, newsreels, and television shows were anticipated in this study. Before discussing the analysis of the newsreel images, however, it is important to understand the context in which they were produced. The following describes the political/economic background and the industry standards that affected the media images.

Mexico, 1919-1932

While U.S. audiences were viewing mass media images of Mexicans and other Latin Americans in 1919-1932, Mexicans were at a critical point in their history. This period was one of relative peace after ten years of revolutionary activity. However, the 1920s in Mexico included four presidents in ten years; U.S. military intervention; plus a three-year strike by the Catholic church and the Catholic guerrilla movement known as the Cristero Rebellion. Leaders attempted to implement reforms associated with the 1917 Constitution and institutionalize the modern Mexico state that has evolved into the system we know today. Furthermore, the protection of U.S. oil interests in Mexico affected U.S. public policy toward the country.

Mexican immigration in the U.S. grew in the first two decades of the century because of "push" factors like the repression of the peons on the *haciendas* (plantations), and the economic and political upheaval during the revolution. "Pull" factors included the expansion of railroads that allowed migration, U.S. irrigated agricultural growth, Mexico-U.S. wage differentials, and U.S. needs for labor during World War I (Andrews, 1991; Corwin & Cardoso, 1978; Gómez-Quíñones, 1994; Gutiérrez, 1995; Hoffman, 1974). However, when U.S. soldiers returned home, there was an early 1920s recession, and anti-immigration sentiment mounted. The Johnson Act of 1921 introduced the system of national quotas, although the immigration restrictions focused on Europe and Asia. The Johnson Reed "Quota" Act of 1924 again restricted European immigration, but not immigration from countries in the Western Hemisphere (Simon & Alexander, 1993). The border patrol also was insti-

tuted in the mid-1920s. By the late 1920s, harangues over Mexican immigration initiated U.S. enforcement of elements of the 1917 Immigration Act (Previously, Mexican contract workers had been exempt from its literacy and tax requirements.). Once the Great Depression hit, it kicked off the repatriation of Mexicans which peaked in 1931–1934 and continued until the U.S. needed workers again in the 1940s.

Censorship and Self-Regulation of the Film Industry

Negative television stereotypes in the last few decades have angered U.S. Hispanics and have been contested by informal groups as well as by organizations like the Mexican-American Anti-Defamation Committee (Friedman, 1978; Greenberg & Baptista-Fernández, 1980; Limón, 1992). In the early years of film, the Mexican government occasionally protested the Hispanic portrayals in U.S. motion pictures, even taking steps to ban U.S. movie companies until the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) issued a resolution (unenforceable among filmmakers) upholding Mexico's request to reduce stereotypes. Although Mexico's protests may have raised awareness and provided an early focus for the MPPDA, they didn't have a big impact on stereotypes.

By 1927, MPPDA's production code included restricting "willful offense to any nation, race, or creed" (Delpar, 1984). Now the production code had power, but merely for practical reasons. To maintain film production market share, MPPDA "helped eliminate some negative stereotypes which might have hurt or inhibited Hollywood's ever increasing Latin Market share" (Richard, 1992, p. xxxi).

By 1930, Mexico was no longer banning films wholesale. How Mexican government protests and the MPPDA production code affected newsreels is not the topic of this study, but understanding the pressures on the film industry is important for viewing newsreel typologies in the context of the time.

Newsreels: Motion Picture Companions and Television Precursors

Despite the occasional bone rattling over Hollywood's moral standards and ethnic portrayals, movies in the 1920s were big and influential because they reached all segments of society cheaply and could convey information, ideas, and experiences (Jowett, 1975; Mould, 1984). Film's outreach to an otherwise media-limited mass audience in the 1920s has been documented (Hampton, 1970; Ramsaye, 1926; Slide, 1994). Newsreels had a similar impact (Cohn, 1976; Fielding, 1972, 1987) especially because they were positioned as true.

One of the oldest newsreel companies was Pathé, which merged with RKO Pictures in 1931. Fox News (later Fox-Movietone News and then Twentieth Century Fox Movietone News) ran from 1919 to 1963 and was the first to add sound to newsreels in 1927. The 1919 audience was estimated at 30 million, with overseas camerapersons and stringers in 31 locations. By the mid-1920s, 85% to 90% of approximately 18,000 theaters were showing newsreels (by Fox and competitors) to a U.S. audience of more than 40 million (Fielding, 1972, p. 132–133), and by 1930, the U.S. audience was 90 million (Jowett, 1975). Fox was the most popular newsreel of the period. "Fox News came on like thunder, the product of great energy, considerable imagina-

tion, and an initial investment estimated at five million dollars." (Fielding, 1972, p. 106).

Newsreels were distributed to movie theaters twice each week. Fox Movietone News also distributed 26 short subject features per year for which newsreel photographers shot footage.

Newsreels, along with print news and radio, are partial antecedents of television news format and content (Cohn, 1976; Fielding, 1972, 1987; Karnick, 1988). Audiences "were able to see world figures, celebrities, and the various and varied events of the day, and this was, of course, not the case with newspapers or fledgling radio" (Cohn, 1976, p. 6). Without doubt, "the television approach to news reporting is primarily based upon the techniques, systems, and approaches developed by the newsreel" (Cohn, 1976, p. 7). The core of television news is its moving pictures.

"The producers of newsreels often possessed a kinship to the traditional newsprint media. Nevertheless, most evidence indicates that their values belonged to show business rather than to journalism and that they viewed their "readership" or "circulation" as being an entertainment-hungry audience rather than a well-informed public" (Fielding, 1972, p. 225). In addition to satisfying entertainment-hungry audiences, Fielding listed the other goals of newsreels as encapsulating events by "freezing" their superficiality, presenting a fact via a picture that didn't need explanation, avoiding controversial subjects, and interpreting intellectual issues along lines of strong pictorial action to reduce intellectual participation of the audience. This study focuses on how those objectives were manifest in images of Mexico and Mexicans,

and leads to the following research questions:

Research Questions

- RQ1. What were the dominant images of Mexicans in newsreels? What were they doing, what did they look like, how diverse were the images, and in what settings were they portrayed?
- RQ2. What other symbols of Mexico or Mexicans were visible?
- RQ3. What were the patterns and connections among the visuals, and did they change from 1919 to 1932?
- RQ4. How were the images similar to or different from what we know about other early Mexican or Latino media stereotypes (especially those in film)?

Method

Newsreels as Sources

Studying newsreels is difficult because of five factors. Much of the silver nitrate film has disintegrated entirely, shrunk so much that it no longer fits on film sprockets to be viewed or transferred to video, has been incorrectly indexed and misplaced, disappeared, or burned. (It is extremely flammable.) For instance, out of 78 Pathé newsreels on Mexico of interest to this research, only 24 survive today in the Grinberg Film Libraries. Although the Twentieth Century Fox Movietone archive at the University of South Carolina is large and comprehensive in terms of supporting documentation, it contains more outtakes from 1919–1932 than it does cut newsreels, and

not all Mexico newsreel footage at the archives is in condition to be viewed. Although this study originally was to include newsreels from the end of the Mexican Revolution up through the start of the Cárdenas administration, a fire at Twentieth Century Fox some years ago destroyed all of their Mexican newsreels from September 1932 through March 1934. So, the newsreels studied are from 1919–1932. Even though Paramount newsreels came on the scene in 1927, and Hearst produced both Universal's International Newsreel in the 1920s and Metro Goldwyn Meyer's newsreel initiated in 1927, the Pathé and Fox newsreels were the best critical mass available for this study.

Sample

The content of 112 newsreels and outtakes from Pathé and Twentieth Century Fox collections was analyzed, with approximately one-third of them cut newsreels with confirmed dates of use, 17 of them appearing to be cut newsreels without confirmed dates of use, and the remainder outtakes. Observations then were made on what news photographers felt was newsworthy, although in this small sample no significant differences in images were found between what photographers shot and what editors at the main office decided to distribute to movie theaters.

Code sheets included the following categories: (1) identifiable role(s), if any; (2) style of dress; (3) level of personal cleanliness; (4) type of activities engaged in, including static images (if people present); (5) symbols and settings included; and (6) level of setting cleanliness. Included in these categories were measures of violence, occupational roles, social roles, activity, and cleanliness—concepts embedded in characteristics of film stereotypes. Code

sheet content was determined by preliminary analysis of a small sample of twenty newsreels and guided by other content analyses of print news photos. The coder supplemented the coding sheets with brief descriptions of the images in the footage, commenting on types of shots, positioning of individuals or crowds in the shots, descriptions of dress, descriptions of objects and settings, and other observations.

In addition to newsreels, this research reviewed Fox cameramen's "dope sheets" in which the camera person described what was in the film and in many cases, why it was important. Also used were the Fox index cards prepared by New York staffers when the film arrived in the U.S., and computerized index citations prepared by USC and Grinberg archivists. The original index cards and dope sheets provided some fascinating insights into the news judgments of Fox employees in the 1919–1932 period. Results are based on the coded visuals in newsreels viewed along with supporting archive documentation.

Results of the Analysis

What were the Dominant Images?

The dominant images were *dignitaries*, *doers*, *beauties*, *bystanders*, and *clerics*.

Dignitaries were government and military officials, and more than one third of newsreels contained at least one dignitary. Presidents de la Huerta, Obregon, Calles, Gil, and Rubio were filmed participating in inaugurations, parades, and ceremonies; meeting delegations; and/or viewing battle sites. Calles's daughter's wedding was covered by Pathé and Fox, significant because the church-state dispute at the time meant Alicia Calles could not be

married in a Catholic church. In addition, Calles's trips to the U.S. and Europe, and Rubio's visits in New York and Washington D.C. were filmed. Presidents were usually shown with an obliging spouse, and often their children, all in U.S.-style dress.² At least one newsreel photographer took the comings and goings of Mexican presidents during these years in stride. In a card accompanying the December 1928 footage of Emilio Portes Gil and his cabinet, the photographer noted, "Judging from past experience, this will probably be the only occasion to shoot the president and his cabinet, that is why this picture was covered even if the light conditions were not so good." The photographer's cryptic note was on target—Gil served as interim president for two years (after President-elect Obregon was assassinated) until President Rubio was inaugurated in 1930.

Doers included unskilled laborers, artisans, vendors, and a handful of professionals like teachers and magistrates. Specific non-professional occupations included agricultural work; gardening; flower picking and selling; cattle driving; silver smelting; tortilla making and other cooking. Doers also were the more glamorous men in rodeos and bullfights, replicating some of the earliest images of Mexico that had been seen in Nickelodeons before 1900. Decidedly unglamorous were the civilians and soldiers armed with shovels and pickaxes who cleaned up after earthquakes, train wrecks, and fires. Working soldiers involved in military exercises, rather than disaster clean-up, were also doers. Throughout these worker images, men did most of the work, with the exception of tortilla making, flower growing and selling, and childcare and teaching. This category also included the busy citizenry—Mexi-

cans who, in streetscenes, were not leaning aimlessly against walls, but moving purposefully through the streets. Twenty percent of the newsreels included uniformed men and 22% featured craftspersons, vendors, or unskilled laborers. Active male and female citizens were in 20% of the newsreels.

Beautiful women from all over the world were featured in U.S. newsreels, and Mexican women were no exception. The photographers' labels reinforced how the lens portrayed them: "Mexican beauties reveal charms," "beauties on floats," "Indian maid," "Mexican girl in native costume," and "Indian beauties." *Beauties* were women dancing, women in beauty contests, and women in parades. Of course, beauty contests and parades in the United States were a popular feature of newsreels, as well. Beauties normally wore traditional Mexican garb, sometimes apparently donned just for the ceremony. For instance, in footage of a bridge dedication, U.S. beauties were in flapper dresses and high heels, and Mexican dancers wore traditional Mexican costumes—along with their bobbed hairstyles and 1920s modern hair ornaments. In another, Ambassador Manuel Telles's young son and daughter are dressed in what Fox record-keepers called "national costume" suggesting that their streetclothes were something different entirely. In one 1921 Mexico City parade, male parade personnel wore straw hats and U.S.-style suits while women on floats wore traditional Mexican attire. Sometimes these photographers' beauties were everyday residents strolling through streetscapes, their exquisite faces captured in a single medium shot. Although only eight percent of the newsreels featured women in official

roles as pageant contestants, dancers, or models, many of the street scenes featured beauties as well.

Although their visages were on parade, presidents' wives were not portrayed as lovely objects in their own right, but as supporting characters. Presidents' wives were filmed in drab versions of current fashions.

Clerics were visible in four percent of the newsreels—and only during the Cristero Rebellion. For instance, U.S. nuns working in Mexico were filmed at a border crossing fleeing the country during the rebellion. Religious figures (along with citizens) also crossed the border to attend mass at San Augustine Cathedral in San Laredo, Texas. In addition, Mexican church leaders were present in “photo opportunities” before key meetings. Outside of the Cristero Rebellion period, clerics were not popular subjects. Religion was more apt to be featured in folk images, through shots of festivals, the Guadalupe pilgrimages, traditional Passion Week Judas effigy burnings, and All Soul's Day cemetery visits. These ceremonies featured Mexican citizens rather than clerics.

Mexicans in the latter four categories tended to be in motion—no surprise given the industry's need for moving images. Although a ceremonial shot outside a building where a meeting was to be held might look flat, intro and outro shots featured dignitaries coming down stairs, entering doorways, or exiting cars. The context was that the persons featured were on their way to or from something interesting.

However, about 20% of newsreels featured inactive participants or *bystanders*. They were mostly indigenous people in traditional dress, and included Mexicans looking at damage from floods, earthquakes, train wrecks,

and a fire. In addition, there were static shots of Mexicans watching the arrivals of dignitaries, distinguishing between society's players and this group that formed the background for news events. Generally, when indigenous people were motionless, they were present in disaster scenes like the Oaxaca earthquake. The prevailing image of these figures was that of victims needing aid or of victims providing the set for the disaster news.

What Other Symbols were Visible?

The second research question dealt with other symbols of Mexico and Mexicans. Mexico in newsreels was a lush, historic country with hardworking people. In addition to people, Mexico newsreels contained many objects consistently repeated that formed the setting in which a Mexican was portrayed. The accouterments of modernity and nationstate outweighed any “old Mexico” images especially after 1924. For instance, although only one newsreel in the sample before 1924 featured a flag, after 1924, the Mexican flag—often with the U.S. flag—was featured in about 10% of the newsfilms analyzed. Old Mexico was visible in colonial architecture and in shots of archeological finds. A viewer could interpret these as archaic, but they also could be decoded as symbols of a long-standing nation. Other traditional symbols included pottery, baskets, Mexican textiles, domestic animals, and working animals. Large buildings were featured twice as often as one-story buildings, and shacks were rare. Urban settings were four times more likely than rural settings to be shot. Although horse and carriages, and streetcars pulled by horses were visible, they were outnumbered ten to one by machine-

driven vehicles like trains, airplanes, cars, street cars, trucks, tractors, and motorcycles. After 1924, machinery, building tools, and construction were more visible. In addition, symbols of literacy and diplomacy (such as books, documents, desks, pens, conference tables) were more plentiful after 1924.

Although newsreels in the 1920s covered news events that included military officials and soldiers, guns, bullets, and swords were featured in only about one-tenth of the newsreels. However, civilian or military uniforms—symbols of order—were in a fifth of the newsreels. Symbols, like the images of people and occupations portrayed, didn't reinforce images of a violent nation. Snapshots of modernity and orderly movement were far more dominant.

Religious symbols like churches and statuary were present but not dominant. Of course, it was rather difficult to film any plaza in Mexico without shooting a church, so glimpses of churches were in news from parades to politics.

Artifacts of class were readily apparent. Lavishly appointed offices were exhibited as symbols of respectable nationstate leadership, perhaps symbolizing Mexico's worthiness as a world player. Today these might be interpreted as negative symbols of power and evidence of Developing World caudillos stealing from the hapless lower class. Newsreels portrayed the "modern" upper class and the busy but clean poorer class. This was similar to the film genre of the period as well. "Whereas the pre-1914 film was clearly aimed at the working class, by 1922 the movie industry's product almost exclusively reflected the lives of this somewhat imaginary leisure class" (Jowett, 1975, p. 72). Newsreels in this Mexico

sample lagged the film trend, with more coverage of Mexico's leisure class in the later 20s, especially after sound film came of age.

How Images Changed

The third research question considered patterns among visuals and changes from 1919 to 1924. Before 1924, most Mexicans in newsreels were primarily people who moved in and out of shots focused on elegant colonial architecture and gracious boulevards, or whitewashed stucco villages. The cumulation of images suggests a beautiful, busy, clean place. Men in uniform—whether military or civilian guards of some type, were consistent but not dominant. This was a surprise given the violent decade preceding it. More citizens than officials, military men, or church leaders were included in early Mexican newsreels (This is due in part to non-recognition of Obregon's administration and possible lack of government sources available to media.). Traditional clothing was seen equally as often as modern clothing. However, location diversity was limited because news photographers mostly covered Mexico from Los Angeles, Texas, and Mexico City.

The pre-1924 images reflected the travelogue and educational traditions of early information film. Without context, one could view these images as people treated like objects—merely elements in an exotic country. The portrayals also fit with the late Victorian fascination with all things new. Supporting this "people as objects" conclusion is that occasionally index cards prepared in New York reflected stereotypical language, such as "the Indian" or "the peasant." Evidence that the camerapersons were not attempting to treat Mexicans as objects are the respectful

images shot, and the dope sheets that tried to educate U.S. newsreel editors about the importance of various events and shots. Rather than exhibiting news photographers' prejudices, the pre-1924 images seem to tell us more about the evolution of the medium.

Modern stereotypes of underdeveloped nations usually include unclean people in dirty settings, but dirt wasn't prevalent in Mexico newsreels. When present, dirt and dust were more obvious in early Mexico footage. This can be attributed to the vehicles, subjects, and types of people featured. For example, military vehicles and horses kicked up more dust in front of a lens than cars did. People were more apt to be dusty in the early 1920s, when workers were featured most often, than in later years when diplomats and officials dominated. Cleanliness is difficult to evaluate in newsreel footage because medium and long shots were more typical than close-ups, and because film deterioration often impaired detection. Overall, however, the prevailing images are clean, litterless streets (although unpaved), and pristine white shirts.

The patterns of visuals shifted after 1924. This correlates with the dominance of President Calles and his influence on the puppet presidents that succeeded him; the U.S.-Mexican relations, events, and policies of the period; and changes in the newsreel industry, particularly after sound was introduced in 1927.

Porfirio Díaz—the pre-revolution president who initiated 20th century modernization—would be proud. The dominant image of Mexico after 1924 is a modern nationstate. In the early years, officials shown were limited to presidents and military leaders. After 1924, the newsmakers were mostly gov-

ernment and military officials, but the breadth of officials was extended beyond the president to include ministers of agriculture, foreign relations, industry and commerce, and labor. Photo opportunities tied to some of Calles' educational and agricultural reforms allowed opportunity for a few middle-class professionals (such as teachers) to be viewed. The oil crisis presented opportunities for inclusion of Mexican legal officials in newsreels. Regional governors and ambassadors were also popular. As previously mentioned, more clergy were visible in the late 1920s because of the Cristero Rebellion, but religious figures or symbols were not dominant.

Citizens attending ceremonies, plus busily moving through the streets, were still visible in the late 20s. Although the images reflected the clear class distinctions between a modern upper class and more traditional working class, they also conveyed dominant "we're like you" images to U.S. audiences. Mexicans participating in meetings, ceremonies, shopping, and leisure wore New York-style business suits, or flapper dresses with hats, gloves, and beads of the day. In post-1924 newsreels, fashionable clothing was twice as visible as traditional Mexican clothing. Mexicans not dressed in this style were working. Ranch workers wore Western hats or charro pants; agricultural peons wore wide-brimmed straw hats or *sombreros*; and urban working women wore *rebozos* (shawls). When elites or elites' children were wearing traditional Mexican garb, it was clear that the "costumes" were for ceremonies or for photo opportunities. In short, symbols and settings in the last half of the decade revealed an emerging capitalist system.

Newsreels everywhere during the

late 1920s covered sports events, beauty contests, and aviators. The celebrity culture it bred didn't bypass newsreel coverage of Mexico. The late 1920s mania for flight was clear in numerous shots of Lindbergh in Mexico, along with Mexican celebrity aviators. The beginnings of stereotypes of Mexican women can probably be attributed to the beauties that were featured in late 1920s coverage of pageants and contests (like female stereotypes in other countries), and shots of the Mexican leisure class glamorized physical attributes and abilities rather than focusing on tasks involving intelligence or hard work.

Much of history in Mexico, like history elsewhere in newsreels, was covered under severe technological limitations. Filmed were the comings and goings of diplomats rather than the meetings themselves because of the lighting limitations of shooting indoors. The convenience of prescheduled ceremonies and the action-orientation of such ceremonies was appropriate for heavy news photography equipment. Equipment in the silent era weighed half-a-ton; later sound film equipment was a "mere" 300 pounds. The images selected reveal a technical orientation towards medium shots and long shots; bulky camera equipment that did not allow running ahead of someone to catch a candid close-up; and natural light needs that disallowed peering behind Mexico's elegant facades. Transportation limitations and the prospect of lugging a half-ton of equipment anywhere precluded many forays outside of urban or border centers.

Variance from Film Stereotypes

Film scholars have identified the bandido/greaser, gangster, caballero, Latin lover, dark lady, harlot, male buffoon,

and female clown in almost a century of Latin Americans on film, and the study's fourth research question explored similarities and differences between these images and those in newsreels. We can see some elements of these stereotypes in newsreels; for instance, beauties who might be developed into harlots or dark ladies in a plot, and rodeo/bullfight males who might be developed into caballeros. However, the most compelling 1920s film stereotypes were not found. The reasons will be explored in the discussion section.

Study Limitations

Studying stereotypes of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in any era is a challenge because there aren't many media images to study, particularly in news. Given the small sample, plus the fragility of the archival data, the findings can't be widely generalized. However, the patterns of these images are indicators of possible stereotypes that may have been diffused or reinvented in later moving news images. In addition, the data supports newsreels' spectatorship function and their role in reinforcing images of modernity, at least in coverage of Mexico.

Discussion

Newsreels were supposed to record history, but "even these straight records went beyond simple documentation and began to reveal attitudes, preoccupations, and even obsessions of the time" (Bohn & Stromgren, 1975, p. 168). Ironically, when featured as "objects" in a beautiful place, Latino images were more flattering and inclusive of all classes. The shift to Mexicans as "newsmakers" or participants in pseu-

doevents meant that participants were more apt to be monied or of the leisure class. These later images were more assimilating than differentiating. Whether the assimilation tendencies of the Mexican image in U.S. newsreels enabled our business relationships at the time or whether the indigenous bystander images helped the public rationalize U.S. occupation of Mexico during part of the 1919–1932 period is speculation. Mexicans were so absent, relatively, from newsreels that it is just as possible that the dearth of impressions contributed to lack of awareness and understanding about Mexico/U.S. relations.

Although the limitations in the images are rationally explained, the omissions and biases in Mexico coverage during 1919–1932 could have created a predisposition that impacted foreign policy toward Mexico. Some Mexico historians credit images of Mexico in the United States and U.S. images in Mexico with shaping foreign policy (Bailey, 1989; Meyer, 1986). Just as possible, foreign policy and the latter-mentioned norms could have created “ways of doing” for gatekeepers that unconsciously created additional bias in subsequent Mexico coverage. Mexican political (and possible public relations) activities, newsreel industry business activities, and regulatory activities also contributed to inclusion or exclusion of images in newsreels.

News photographers were guided by schemata in their own belief systems (Entman, 1993) manifest in their selection of images. Schemata associated with modernization was dominant. What newsreels portrayed was either a reflection of how sources wanted to be seen (especially President Calles), how the United States saw itself, or—most

likely—an interaction between these two forces.

Mexico historians (Beezley, 1986, 1987; Meyer & Sherman, 1987) describe the political and business leaders’ roles in twentieth-century Mexico modernization. Beezley (1986) attributes the rise of mass culture for giving Mexico the *appearance* of modernity and credits Western science and technology for expediting it. Political centralization shunted traditional Mexico, so mass media’s reinforcement of mass culture could have shored up centralization goals. Certainly Mexico’s surface evidence of modernity and Calles’s constructive phase aligned well with the modernization schemata of newsreel photographers. Newsreels gave form and presence to a modern Mexico and modern Mexicans.

The 1920s was an era of heady optimism and a fearless belief in progress. U.S. society was enamored with the dream of global industrialization without yet encountering postmodern angst about its dysfunctional consequences, and mass consumption was the framework for this modernity. Other institutions (e.g. religious, educational) could inculcate some values, but mass media was the institution that enabled one to see what could be consumed. The growth of immigration and travel accelerated cross-border diffusion of styles and fads, and gazing upon them in Mexico paralleled gazing upon them at home.

A central feature of modernity is the gaze (Lacan, 1995; Orr, 1993). Orr refers to the film gaze as surveillance, but it can be characterized as spectatorship in the late-20s newsreels especially after sound is introduced. Spectator sports were promoted by Mexican government officials (and by U.S. ambassadors like Sheffield) in Mexico

modernization, just as global newsreel audiences became passive viewers of sports and other manufactured spectacles of the era. In addition to its spectator function, the gaze connotes power relations. For instance, there is power in a gaze originating from a developed nation onto its less-developed neighbor. Expectations derived from the literature were that Mexican newsreel images would be representative of this category—an imperialist gaze onto non-Anglo-Americans. But the gaze is also reflective. In this case, the images responded to a newsreel photographer's orientation toward the global and the modern.

What Newsreels Contributed to TV News Stereotypes

Although far less cruel than stereotypes in film or in entertainment television, there was little diversity in images. For instance, there were few to no families, artists, intellectuals, or professionals shown in newsreels. These news snapshots of Mexicans may have set up patterns that we see in television today. In addition, the analysis provides evidence that types of shots originally constrained by equipment set a standard for later coverage (Fielding, 1972) when equipment limitations had been eliminated. For instance, although reliance on pseudo-events originated from a technological limitation, foreign correspondents (like other journalists) have been socialized to continue to cover foreign news this way despite communication and transportation innovations (Economics of news is another factor in pseudo-event reliance.).

Limits in portraying Mexicans could have been "excused" in the 1920s because of technology. Now technology is no excuse. Similar limits today are more often attributed to the lack of

Latino decisionmakers in U.S. news organizations, but technology continues to play a role.

What Newsreels Did Not Contribute to TV News Stereotypes

Because of less rapid transportation and less immediate communication, the newsreel journalists may not have been as easily influenced by New York about what images to shoot, although they understood the ground rules about what made news. Indeed, their dope sheets reflect how they tried to educate their editors about a story's importance. Fox Movietone photographers knew they were not only filming for that week's newsreels, but for a large archive, where other footage would be stored for possible future use. Perhaps this responsibility of recording for history allowed them to shoot more than mere novelties and spectacles. Beating the competition also affected content as it still does.

The findings reinforce how news aesthetics and story selection are tied to structural forces and technology. Instead of improving the news, technological innovations may have worsened coverage of Mexico and Mexicans. The newsreel journalist assigned to Mexico couldn't fly in and out on day's notice, and so learned something about the country, its culture, and its people. Today's foreign correspondent is flown in for a crisis, and flies out again (Geyer, 1996). Real-time satellite news restricts developing sources and explaining issues. Media stereotypes are snapshots, and snapshots are a function of what is going on in the newsrecorder's head along with technology's ability and restraints on capturing them. The diffusion of lightweight, less light-sensitive news video

equipment has meant technical intrusion rather than allowing for more flexibility and diversity. Modern spectatorship of the external has been replaced with post-modern intrusion into the private and internal, and advances in transportation have reduced the need for expatriate reporters to be immersed in the culture of another place.

It's ironic that although air travel is easier and camera equipment is lighter, the advent of the satellite and the value put on real-time news has negated some of the transportation advances and weighted down the foreign television reporter again. One of the many factors responsible for "stealing" foreign news is the emphasis on live television broadcasting which requires heavy equipment—characterized by Rosenblum as "needless theatrics," and "unfiltered, misleading and often wrong" (1993, p. 168).

Why Newsreel and Film Stereotypes in the 1920s Differed

One explanation of differences is the news format versus the long feature film. Newsreels had to "capture" the images in brief. Some negative characteristics associated with film stereotypes needed more time to be developed, more than a one-minute silent news story with a caption or two allowed. After the innovation of sound, and particularly after the innovation of celebrity news announcers who could put a slant on a story without having covered it, negative narratives were more possible. The onscreen captions accompanying silent newsreels were mute, anonymous, and short, and the early news photographers only had time to shoot what they saw. Those who covered Mexico either lacked ac-

cess to cover negative conditions or events, responded to the visual aesthetics of what they covered, were in tune with theater managers' desires to spare their audiences from the negative, and/or were in compliance with MPPDA or other industry mandates.

Newsreel prototypes of Mexicans may have mediated the negative Mexican stereotypes moviegoers saw in films of the period. What we can never know is how audiences reconciled the decoding of such different stereotypes and whether ultimately the entertainment stereotypes or the news prototypes had the most effect.

Recognizable prototypes and symbols made newsreels easy to digest, just as the film genre of the 1920s made moviegoing effortless (Keller, 1985). Co-viewing this new medium with many strangers in a dark, public theater intensified the need for easy viewing. As media shorthand, stereotypes helped make media consumption effortless.

Contributions of the Findings to Latino Media Stereotypes Literature

When the footage had to carry the news, the Mexican images were more aesthetically pleasing and diverse by aesthetic criteria than television's images today (based on what we know from limited studies). Without sound and without celebrities, the focus was on the images more than on the narrative of the story. Photographers wanted spectacular shots and footage of interesting celebrities. Although there isn't enough evidence to generalize from this small study, it indicates that this period could have been the turning point where "news shots" evolved into "news stories"—what Rosenblum calls

"sociodramas known as packages" (1993, p. 163). For instance, later footage of dignitaries talking would have to be set up by the narrator, whereas these pre-sound shots were explained in brief (although not objective) captions for silent film viewers.

Celebrity newscasters' parasocial relationships with the viewers bind the audience to the news rather than to the stories themselves, just as studio manufacturing of the star bound audiences to the cinema (Orr, 1993). Unlike newsreels' modern shots, postmodern news narratives also reflect more postproduction-made possible by technological advances in editing equipment. The power of newsreels was all in the wide-angle gaze of the modern, not the penetrating gaze of the postmodern. Newsreels were edited, but equipment limitations meant New York's involvement did not supersede the reporter's. Editing possibilities today can further distance the foreign reporter from his or her story while at the same time attempting to bring the viewer closer in time and microscopic intimacy. Neither helps the viewer understand Mexico or Mexicans.

An interesting question that this study raises is how much Latino stereotypes are affected by class schemata. The people who were engaged in ceremonies, work, and military action were not decidedly different from Anglo images except for a few more sombreros and *rebozos*. The "Indians" were in exotic locations, were shown without symbolic resources, and were in crises they didn't cause (e.g., an earthquake, floods, or fire).

The genre of fiction, the industry's needs, marketing goals, and industry desires to limit U.S. government legislation and regulation influenced the ebb and flow of Latino movie stereo-

types. However, technology, transportation, the industry's desire to avoid offending viewers, and competition influenced Latino newsreel stereotypes in 1919-1932. Source availability probably affected coverage although the dope sheets and index cards analyzed in this study provide no direct evidence of this. Based on these conclusions, we could hypothesize that sound commentators may have begun to frame the images of Hispanic "others" in new ways which were more likely to add negative connotations to stereotypes because narrations could provide the "story" missing in the silent newsreels. Narratives accompanying news could have more readily merged the existing narratives of film, and after the Great Depression barricaded the United States' absorption of immigrants, the socioeconomic context in which the news was produced might have more readily opened the gate to portrayals of otherness.

Although periodic protests and technological changes may affect Latino representations from period to period, it's likely that mass media business reasons might have the most impact on long-term, positive portrayals in U.S. media. "When it becomes profitable for the industry to project a more positive Hispanic image, it will" (Richard, 1992, xlii).

Seiter (1986) urged that scholars consider stereotypes in their social and political contexts and that we analyze their history as well as frequency. This study attempted to do that by documenting some of the origins of Latino stereotypes in moving image news. Future research by mass media scholars should investigate post-20s newsreel images and the Hispanic images in television news to learn more.

Notes

¹The terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably in this study. An Hispanic is an individual living in the United States whose ancestry, language, and/or cultural orientation is related to a Spanish-speaking country. This definition can be applied to the terms Latino and Latin American, as well, with Latina being the feminine form. However, the terms Latin Americans and Latino embrace Portuguese-speaking Brazilians too. Mexican Americans are individuals living in the United States whose ancestry, language, and/or cultural orientation is related to Mexico. Mexicans are residents of Mexico. Anglo-American, or Anglo, describes white Americans of European descent.

²U.S.-style dress is used to describe current or modern fashion of the 1920s, worn in Europe, Latin America, the U.S., and elsewhere. It is differentiated from traditional or indigenous dress. Western is used to describe ranch attire.

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