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Immigration in prime time Spanish television. Pathways towards inferring
modern racism from content analysis*

Up to date, research has been developed on the coverage and handling of information on immigration in the Media as one of the causality factors of the increase in xenophobia in Spain (e.g. Igartua & Cheng, 2009). Nevertheless, the invisibility of immigration or the distorted (stereotypical) view in fiction TV programs can also constitute a relevant element that may explain the formation, reinforcement, and internalization of prejudicial attitudes towards immigrants. Even so, up to date, no rigorous, systematic analyses have been undertaken on how immigration is presented in television fiction. In this paper, a study is presented on the image of immigration in television fiction, based on the empirical studies developed around Gerbner's (and his collaborators') Cultivation Theory, and on the studies on the representation of ethnic and immigrant minorities in Mass Media.

Television fiction and perception of social reality

The first attempt to systematize the empirical study on the representation of social reality in television fiction, and to analyze its impact on audiences was the Cultural Indicators Project developed by Gerbner, from which Cultivation Theory would emerge. From this theoretical perspective, television is presented as a cultural instrument that is able to shape basic assumptions on social reality (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan, Shanahan & Signorelli, 2009). Gerbner and his collaborators have been based, in the last decades, on three kinds of data: (1) institutional analysis of the Media, (2) message system analysis (content analysis), and (3) cultivation analysis. Institutional analysis of the Media studies how television messages are produced and distributed. Through the message system analysis, weekly samples of "dramatic" television programs broadcasted in prime time and children programs on weekends are analyzed. Finally, with cultivation analysis the object is to empirically determine the influence of television contents on the perception of the world (Morgan et al., 2009). Research developed to verify this cultivationist hypothesis have proven that television consumption is associated to a high perception of risk and danger, and to maintain an exaggerated sense of mistrust, vulnerability and insecurity (Gerbner, Gross, Signorelly & Shanahan, 2002; Morgan et al., 2009). Similarly, it affects the perception of sexual roles, professions, environmental matters, gender violence, disability, science, attitudes towards couple relations, and the social perception of ethnic minorities (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan et al, 2009; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Because of this reason, the necessity to analyze or monitor the degree of diversity present in television programs and their contents has been especially underlined, given the impact that they may exert on audiences and public opinion (Koeman, Peeters, & D'Haenes, 2007).

Mass Media, immigration, and prejudice

Gordon Allport (1954) defined prejudice as "an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization" (p. 9). It is an attitude of negation or reject of an individual due to his/her belonging to a specific group (Molero, 2007). Prejudice has become an essential factor to explain the processes of acculturation in people from other countries (e.g. Navas, García, Rojas, Pumares & Cuadrado, 2006). Prejudice towards ethnic or cultural minorities is not simply a psycho-social phenomenon, but it is based on an ampler institutional and cultural framework. And, in this context, Mass Media acquire a prominent role (van Dijk, 1997).

Much research has focused on the handling of information on immigration in Mass Media and its socio-cognitive effects. This kind of studies has highlighted that immigration tends to be linked to delinquency, crime and other social problems, while other pieces of information about the positive contribution of immigrants to their host countries are much less present (Igartua, Muñiz, Otero & de la Fuente, 2007; Kim, Carvalho, Davis & Mullins, 2011, Van Gorp, 2005). Another relevant line of research is the one focusing on the analysis of representation of ethnic and immigrant minorities in television fiction (Greenberg, Mastro & Brand, 2002; Koeman et al., 2007; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Research on content analysis of television fiction programs has concluded that: (1) there is little occurrence of characters belonging to ethnic minorities in the analyzed fiction contents, since they are usually under-represented; and (2) when there are characters belonging to such minorities, they are usually portrayed under a distorted and stereotypical view (Mastro, 2009a, 2009b).

Violence, crime and offense are aspects strongly associated to ethnic minorities, especially to Latinos and African-Americans in the USA (Entman & Rojeck, 2000). In this context, it has been noted that Latinos, in the United States of America television, tend to direct their conversations toward topics such as crime and violence in a greater proportion than characters with a Caucasian origin, who, on their turn, employ more time in talking on professional and business subjects (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Also, it has been confirmed that the use of excessive or extreme force by the police in television fiction is inflicted more probably against young characters belonging to ethnic minorities, which suggest a bigger victimization of this kind of characters as opposed to those with a Caucasian origin (Mastro & Robinson, 2000). Another stereotype associated to ethnic minorities, especially Latinos, relates to their occupational and training status. Latinos are represented in television fiction in a negative manner, as lazy persons who carry out low-skilled jobs, they are not very intelligent and they show difficulties to express themselves or to communicate efficiently (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

In Spain, empirical research about the treatment of immigration in television fiction is practically inexistent (e.g. Ruiz-Collantes, Ferrés, Obradors, Pujadas & Pérez, 2006; Galán, 2006; Lacalle, 2008), even though fiction itself is the main

ingredient in prime time television. Because of this, the research here presented was designed focusing on the analysis of the representation or image of immigrants in prime time television fiction broadcasted on national channels. Taking both the previous studies on image or representation of ethnic minorities in television fiction, and the research on news framing analysis on immigration as a reference, the following five hypotheses were posed:

H1.- There will be under-representation of immigrant characters in fiction programs broadcasted on prime time television.

H2.- Immigrant or foreign characters, as opposed to those national-native, will appear in a greater amount in secondary or background roles, and less as main characters.

H3.- There will be a greater occurrence of antagonistic or villain characters, secondary-protagonist and secondary-non-protagonist among immigrant or foreign characters than among national-native ones.

H4.- Immigrant or foreign characters, as opposed to those national-native, will have a lower level of studies, lower socio-economic status and will perform lower-skill professions.

H5.- Regarding the manifestation of violent behavior, victimization, personality traits, health risk and conversational richness, meaningful differences between immigrant or foreign characters will be observed, as compared to those national-native.

Method

Sample of contents

Two complete weeks of prime time television of the Spanish national channels were recorded: TVE1, La 2, Antena 3, Cuatro, Tele5 and La Sexta. These six channels comprise a 67.9% share of television consumption in Spain (AIMC, 2010). The first week was recorded in July 2010 (Monday 19th till Sunday 25th), while the second took place on October 2010 (Monday 18th till Sunday 24th). In order to proceed with the selection of the programs, a "filling card of program selection" was created, and specific indications were given to indications to the analysts charged with filling them on what kind of programs should be selected: Fiction programs (series, serials, soap operas, sit-coms, feature films or TV-movies) that started between 20:00 and 24:00. With these parameters, 88 programs (30 feature films and 58 series) were identified, which comprised a total amount of 5.473 minutes. Once the programs were identified in each of the channels, the next step was the selection of characters within each program: In order for a character to take part on the analysis, it should appear more than once along the program, and have at least one sentence of dialog with other characters (i.e., it had to be a *talking individual* [Koeman et al., 2007]). 1.345 characters were identified, the number of them per program ranging from 4 to 42.

Codebook

For the analysis of fiction programs and their characters, a codebook was used, developed from the studies by Harwood & Anderson (2002), Igartua, Del Río, Álvarez, et al. (1998), Koeman et al. (2007), Mastro & Mehm-Morawitz (2005), Mastro & Greenberg (2000), and Potter & Warren (1998). Such codebook integrated variables grouped into nine great sections:

Basic identification data: Number of the character, number of the program, number of the coder, and date, day of the week, and channel of the broadcasting.

Data pertaining the program: This section included the following variables: a) Origin of the production (0 = not identified; 1 = National origin, Spain; 2 = United States of America; 3 = Other European country; 4 = Latin America; 5 = Other country); b) Type of program (1 = feature film; 2 = series, serial, sit-com, mini-series, procedural series such as *CSI* or *House, MD*); c) duration of the program (in minutes, minus commercials); and d) place in which the main action takes place in the program (1 = Spain; 2 = Other European country; 3 = United States of America; 4 = Latin America; 5 = Other).

Narrative features of the character. Two aspects were evaluated. The *type of character* (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000) was evaluated under the following code: 1 = Main (its presence is essential to the evolution of the story line), 2 = secondary (it is involved in the story line of the program, but is not essential to it), 3 = background (it has a non-essential, peripheral presence, or seldom appears in the narrative). The *narrative role of the character* was evaluated under the following code: 1 = Protagonist (it undertakes the most relevant actions of the story in the given narrative); 2 = antagonist or villain (main character who opposed the protagonist's actions); 3 = secondary-protagonist (its participation in the story line is important and its actions are in the same direction as the protagonist's); 4 = secondary-non-protagonist (its contribution in the story is not that relevant).

Socio-demographic aspects of the character: The following variables were considered on each selected character: a) Sex (1 = Male, 2 = Female); b) Age group (1 = Child, between 0 and 12 years old; 2 = youth, between 13 and 17 years old; 3 = Young adult, between 18 and 30 years old; 4 = Adult, between 31 and 64 years old; 5 = Elderly, more than 65 years old); c) Level of studies (0 = Unable to identify; 1 = Illiterate, cannot read or write; 2 = No official studies; 3 = Primary School; 4 = Secondary School [E.S.O., Bachillerato or Vocational School]; 5 = University); d) Socio-economic status (0 = Unable to identify; 1 = Low, it belongs to the working or low class; 2 = Medium, it works in order to earn his living, has its basic necessities covered and can afford some small luxuries; 3 = High, it does not depend on its work to keep his standard of living, or has a job that allows many luxuries non accessible for the majority); e) the type of profession was coded based on a set list by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) from Spain.

Another relevant aspect of this study was the evaluation of the *nationality* of the character. Since in many occasions it is difficult to discern its birth place, the identification of this criterion was developed from a collection of features: a) Birth place of the character (if there is specific mention of it in the program); b) Birth place of one of the character's parents, since the possibility that it was a "second-generation immigrant" was contemplated; c) Biological features or phenotypic characteristics (such as eye shape, color of skin or kind of hairstyle); d) cultural characteristics (such as style of dress, name of the character, its accent); and e) motivation to be in a host country (working, studying, on holidays). The estimation of nationality was always determined considering the country in which the story took place for the longest part of the narration. Taking all the previous criteria into account, the following code was used to classify the nationality of each selected character: 0 = Unable to identify clearly; 1 = National from the country in which most of the main action takes place (natives, if it resides in its country of birth); 2 = Foreigner, the character who comes from a different country from the one in which it resides but is in the foreign country temporarily or transitorily; 3 = Immigrant, it is the one that abandons its country of origin and comes to a different country in order to establish in it, with a specific labor project; "immigrant" was also coded when at least one of the character's parents had not been born in the country where the main story line takes place, but had established there with intention to work.

Violent behavior of the character: With a three-point scale (0 = No, never; 1 = Yes, once or twice along the program; 2 = Yes, three or more times along the program), the degree of presence of different kinds of violent behavior executed by the character was coded based on Potter & Warren's classification (1998): a) Execution of great physical harm; b) Execution of minor or mild physical harm; c) Execution of acts that cause property damage; d) Execution of intimidating acts; and e) Execution of hostile comments. An index of violent behavior (α = .82) was created by adding all these five variables.

Violent behavior against the character:
With a three-point scale (0 = No, never; 1 = Yes, once or twice along the program; 2 = Yes, three or more times along the program), and based on Potter & Warren's classification (1998), the coding also included whether the selected character suffered or was a victim of the following types of violence: a) Great physical harm; b) Minor or mild physical harm; c) Acts that cause property damage; d) Intimidating acts; and e) Hostile comments. An index of victimization of the character (α = .77) was created by adding all these five variables.

Risky health behavior shown by the character: Coding (0 = No; 1 = Yes), the analysis included whether the selected character: a) Drinks alcohol; b) Smokes tobacco; c) Takes prescription drugs; d) Takes illegal drugs; and e) Presents a risky eating habit. An index of health problems was created by adding all these five variables.

Conversation topics uttered by the character: Dichotomously (0 = No; 1 = Yes), there was a coding on whether the character talks with other characters along the narrative about the following topics: love, violence, friendship, sex, money, social differences, work, environment, health, education, family, politics, sports, racism, and immigration. A conversational richness index was created for each character by adding all these fifteen variables.

Personality traits of the character: Based on the study by Igartua, del Río, Álvarez et al. (1998), a three-point scale (0 = It is not typical of the character; 1 = It defines partially or moderately its personality; 2 = It defines perfectly its personality) was set in order to determine to what extent the following features described each character: friendly, open (extrovert), good (good-hearted), disloyal, unjust, treacherous, aggressive, intelligent, hard-worker, distrusting, grateful, conflictive, racist, and tolerant. A Principal Components Factor Analysis (with varimax rotation) extracted three dimensions that explained 57.38% of the variance: a) Negative personality traits (α = .81), which grouped seven of the aforementioned attributes; b) social temper, which grouped the traits "friendly," "open," "grateful," and "good" (α = .80); and c) cognitive efficacy, which grouped the traits "hard-worker," "intelligent" and "tolerant" (α = .65).

Coding
The coding of the 1.345 characters was undertaken by four analysts with Audio-Visual Communication education and wide research training, including instruction and supervised practice in coding. In order to calculate the reliability in the coding process, after the coding process there was a new analysis on 15% of the total number programs in the sample (*n* = 210 characters). Intercoder reliability was calculated by using both the observed agreement (OA) and Scott's Pi (π) coefficients. The mean of the observed agreement was .86, the lower value being .60 (in the personality trait "tolerant"). The mean in Scott's Pi was .65. The variable "nationality" presented a very acceptable value (OA = .93, π = .77).

Results

Hypothesis 1
According to the data provided by INE (2010), the population of foreigners registered in Spain on January 1, 2010, reached 5.708.940 people, which represented 12.2% of the total (46.951.532 inhabitants). The results of this study indicated that 85.4% of the characters were national-natives, 3.2% were foreigners, 10.9% were immigrants; 0.5% were unable to be determined (7 characters). Since the INE does not distinguish between foreigners and immigrants, a new variable was created in which the characters with no nationality were eliminated, and a sole group of "immigrants-foreigners" was created (14.1%). According to these data, a slight over-representation of immigrants-foreigners could be observed in the

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sample with the analyzed characters. Nevertheless, if the origin of the production of the program is taken into account, statistically significant differences materialize (χ^2 [3, N = 1338] = 21.71, p < .001). Thus, in programs produced in Spain, the percentage of immigrant-foreigners is substantially reduced (7.8%), their presence being greater in programs from another European country (21.6%) and the United States of America (16%). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is partially confirmed.

Hypothesis 2
According to hypothesis 2, a significant relation between the type and the nationality of the character should be expected. However, the relation between both variables was not statistically significant (χ^2 [2, N = 1338] = 0.25, p = .878). Both national-natives and immigrant-foreign characters were similarly distributed in main roles (22.4% versus 21.6%), secondary (38.1% versus 40%), and background (39.5% versus 38.4%). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 3
Hypothesis 3 posed the relation between the narrative role and the nationality of the character. Once again, no significant differences were observed among national-natives and immigrant-foreigners and their narrative roles in the programs (χ^2 [3, N = 1338] = 2.41, p = .492). National-natives and immigrant-foreigners were similarly distributed in the roles of protagonist (21% versus 20%), antagonist (6.5% versus 5.8%), secondary-protagonist (39.5% versus 45.3%), and secondary-non-protagonist (33% versus 28.9%). Hence, hypothesis 3 was not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 4
Hypothesis 4 proposed the existence of significant differences between national-natives and immigrant-foreign characters in the variables level of studies, socio-economic status and type of profession. Regarding the level of studies, statistically significant differences were observed (χ^2 [5, N = 1338] = 25.26, p < .001): a very high percentage of the level of studies of immigrant-foreign characters was unable to identify (51.6%), something that did not occur with the same intensity among the national-natives (41.8%). Furthermore, the percentage of national-natives characters with university studies (34%) almost doubled that of immigrant-foreigners (18.9%).
Even though significant differences were observed in the level of studies, a positive relation between nationality and economic status was not detected (χ^2 [3, N = 1338] = 3.02, p = .387); however, a statistically significant association regarding the type of profession was noticed (χ^2 [17, N = 1338] = 56.86, p < .001). Thus, immigrant-foreign characters had greater probability of not having a stable job (7.4% versus 2.4% of the national-natives), of performing criminal activities (7.4% versus 3.9% of the national-natives), or of being employed in professions not specified in the provided list (17.4% versus 6.7% of the national-natives). Furthermore, national-natives characters had more probability of performing technical or middle-skill jobs such as executives of big companies (7.1%, versus 3.2% of the immigrant-foreigners). Based on these results, it can be assumed that hypothesis 4 was partially confirmed.

Hypothesis 5
Hypothesis 5 predicted the existence of statistically significant differences among national-natives and immigrant-foreign characters in the variables: violent behavior, victimization, personality traits, health risk and conversational richness. In order to contrast this hypothesis, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), the independent variable being the nationality of the character (national-natives versus immigrant-foreigner), and using the indices created for execution of violent behavior, victimization, health risk, conversational richness and the three personality factors (negative personality traits, social temper, and cognitive efficacy) as dependent variables.
Statistically significant differences were observed at a multivariate level (Wilks's Lambda = .97, $F_{\text{multivariate}}$ [7, 1330] = 4.26, p < .001, η_p^2 = .022). When analyzing the differences between national-natives and immigrant-foreign characters at a univariate level, statistical differences were identified in the index of violent behavior (F [1, 1336] = 7.65, p < .005, η_p^2 = .006), the index of victimization (F [1, 1336] = 15.49, p < .001, η_p^2 = .011), and in the personality factor of "cognitive efficacy" (F [1, 1336] = 4.25, p < .039, η_p^2 = .003). Therefore, immigrant-foreigners scored higher in both the violent behavior and the victimization indices, while the national-natives characters showed a higher score in cognitive efficacy. No statistical differences were observed in health risk, conversational richness, negative personality traits, or social temper. As a whole, the results imply a confirmation of hypothesis 5.

Conclusions and discussion

The results of this study on content analysis, pioneer in Spain, shed light on the biased or stereotyped construction of the immigrant-foreigner in television fiction broadcasted in prime time by the main national channels in Spain. Furthermore, great support has been found to the posed hypotheses, since three out of five were confirmed. Thus, an under-representation of the immigrant-foreign characters in programs produced in Spain (of which 76.5% were series, sit-coms or miniseries), since in them only 7.8% of the total depicted are immigrant-foreigners, as opposed to the 12.2% present among the Spanish society or demographic reality (INE, 2010). On the one hand, clear differences were observed in the representation of immigrant-foreign and national-natives characters pertaining demographic variables (such as level of studies and type of profession), and also in their psycho-social configuration (violent behavior, victimization, and cognitive efficacy). Thus,

immigrant-foreign characters, as opposed to the national-natives ones, are represented with a lower level of studies, more unstable professions, performing criminal activities, showing more violent behavior, and suffering more violent acts (which means that they are involved in more conflictive environments), and, furthermore, they are shown as less effective from a cognitive point of view (less hard-worker, intelligent, or tolerant). These results converge with the previous studies developed in the United States of America focusing on the representation of ethnic minorities in television fiction (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

These results are relevant because this low representation of immigrant-foreign characters (i.e. the absence of diversity in television fiction) can determine their *visibility* or *social vitality* and, therefore, their status or perceived social strength; also, this makes it even more difficult to establish a *parasocial vicarious contact* of the natives population with characters from other national origins who have a notable presence in Spanish society (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Furthermore, the stereotypical and negative image offered of the immigrant-foreign characters in the analyzed programs can lead to reinforcement or assimilation of prejudicial attitudes towards immigrants, a topic that should be contrasted in future studies. In fact, even though the Media have frequently been part of the problem in creating and maintaining prejudice, they can become part of the solution by contributing to the change in individual and collective attitudes and beliefs, by encouraging reflection and by shaping innovative social norms (e.g., Igartua, 2010; Müller, 2009; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007; Paluck, 2009).

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