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Felicidad García Sánchez
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Department of Computer Science and Automatics
University of Salamanca

Plaza de los Caídos s/n, 37008 Salamanca, Spain
(+34) 923 294400 ext. 1302
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Juan-José Igartua
Observatorio de los Contenidos Audiovisuales
University of Salamanca
Faculty of Social Sciences (Edificio FES)
37007 Salamanca (Spain)
(+34) 923 294500 ext. 3111
jgartua@usal.es

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Media are powerful agents for socialization in modern societies. Not only are the opportunities for contact with media greater, thanks to the advances of technology, but this entails, as a side effect, that socialization through media communication is more powerful in all environments. One of these settings is the management of the image of ethnic and cultural groups that become cultural minorities, due, in part, to migrant processes. Media not only deal (informatively speaking) with cultural diversity in a biased manner [8], but they also offer images in their fiction shows that may lead to the establishment or reinforcement of stereotypes [7]. Nevertheless, the educative opportunities provided by media are increasingly more relevant, so that the strategic use of communication may help establish a culture favouring cultural diversity, respect, and mutual understanding [13] [15] [17].

Gordon Allport (1954) [1] defined prejudice as “an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization” (p. 9). It is a negative attitude toward or a rejection of an individual for pertaining to a specific group [12]. However, prejudice towards ethnic or cultural minorities is not simply a psycho-social phenomenon but is based on a wider institutional and cultural institutional framework. And in this context the media play a very important role [2] [19]. A large number or research studies has been done on the information processing of immigration in the communication media and its socio-cognitive effects. These kinds of studies have shown that news media tend to link immigration to delinquency, crime and other social problems, whereas information about immigrants’ positive contribution to the host country is much less present in that media [9] [20].

Another relevant line of research is the one related to the analysis of the representation of ethnic minorities (African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans and Native Americans, in the US) and immigrants in television fiction [4] [11]. Studies analysing the content of fictional television programmes, following in the tradition of Gerbner and colleagues, have found that: a) there is a low presence of characters pertaining to ethnic minorities in the fictional contents analysed, as they are usually underrepresented, and b) when characters pertaining to these minorities do appear, it is usually through a distorted and stereotyped lens [10]. For example, studies have found that violence, crime and delinquency are aspects strongly associated with ethnic minorities, especially Latinos and African-American in the United States [3].

Media research into television fiction and ethnic minorities and immigrants has also studied the effects of television viewing on social attitudes and beliefs regarding minorities [4]. In this context it is assumed that the image of ethnic minorities and immigrants in television fiction contributes to the building and/or upholding of stereotypes and prejudice [10]. This is very important because the low presence of foreigner-immigrant characters, that is, the absence of diversity in television fiction, may be conditioning the visibility or social vitality of these groups of people and therefore their perceived social strength or status; it also makes it more difficult for the native population to establish vicarious parasocial contact with characters of other national origins who have an outstanding presence in Spanish society [6] [14].

Although the media have often been part of the problem when it comes to the origin and maintaining of prejudice, they can also be part of the solution by contributing to a change in individual and group attitudes and beliefs, by stimulating reflection and by modelling innovative social norms. In this sense, it has also been found that viewing television series that present a positive image of minorities and identification with minority characters is associated with more positive attitudes towards them, constituting empirical proof of the hypothesis of the vicarious parasocial contact: the more the vicarious contact (through the media) with members of the out-group in a favourable context, the greater the knowledge of the out-group and feelings of trust and respect, and the less prejudice and the perception of threat [13] [14].

Finally, recent studies are taking into account the role of video games. On one hand, some authors have focused on the study of its antisocial effects, the analysis of violence, and have indicated that video games tend to reproduce gender and ethnic stereotypes just as the same way as traditional media [5] [18] [21]. However, it also has been proposed that video games (in particular, the so-called serious games) can be a tool to reduce prejudice toward minorities. Because serious games are digital games designed with a purpose beyond entertainment, they are
emerging as a new medium for social change [17]. The potential for this type of games is that they allow people to take the perspective and foster empathy and identification with minority characters, thanks to which trigger a reduction of prejudice. For instance, “PeaceMaker” is a political game in which players can take the role of either the Israeli Prime Minister or the Palestinian President to deal with a variety of events, including diplomatic negotiations, suicide bombers, and so on, to reach a peaceful agreement for both sides. By facilitating role-taking from both sides, this game provides a unique opportunity to inform people of the issues in the region and influence their attitudes toward the other side [16]. The track “Communication and Cultural Diversity” has presented papers focusing on this general topic in its different dimensions: the educative role of media in order to promote the acceptance of ethnic or cultural minorities; the treatment of cultural diversity in media; the role of the new media and of social networks in the reduction of prejudice towards ethno-cultural minorities; or the study of the competences in cross-cultural communication, among other topics. Four investigations have been presented. The study entitled “Portraying Immigration in Spanish Prime-Time TV Fiction” presents the results of a content analysis study focusing on the image of immigration in Spanish prime-time television fiction with Cultivation theory as a reference. The results of the content analysis study show that there is a stereotypical portrayal of immigrants/foreigners in prime-time television fiction in Spain. The study “Is it a small world after all? Mapping intercultural competence in computer mediated communication users” is an innovative research that is focused on exploring and mapping the developmental stage of intercultural awareness and perception of cultural others or ethnic minorities in social network users among college students in Spain. From a very different perspective, the study entitled “The role of public universities and the primary digital national newspapers in the dissemination of Spanish science through the Internet and Web 2.0” analyses public Spanish universities’ use of the possibilities offered by Web 2.0 for disseminating research. The results obtained reveal the effort universities are making to publicize their scientific projects. Fully 72.90% have specific channels for science dissemination and 35.4% on Facebook. Finally, the study “A Context Based Approach to Adapt Training Strategy for Handicraft Women from Third World Countries” presents a research project that is studying the manner handicraft women of third world or emergent countries use new technologies with the aim to train women to help them developing their business and creativity.

REFERENCES


