

Framing Latin America in the Spanish press: A cooled down friendship between two fraternal lands¹

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Abstract

This study focuses on a news framing analysis of Latin America and Latin Americans in the Spanish press. For this purpose 1,271 news articles with different Latin American countries or their citizens as main actors were examined. These news stories had been published by the main Spanish newspapers in 1999. The results reveal that attribution of responsibility, human interest, and conflict constitute the prevailing frames used by the Spanish press. Furthermore, significant differences in the considered variables in terms of main country actor were observed. Venezuela and Colombia, in particular, are associated with armed conflicts, natural disasters, crimes, and accidents using human interest and conflict news frames. This leads to a necessary consideration of the consequences this type of news coverage on Latin America may generate, and whether it will reinforce stereotypes or prejudices in the Spanish audience against peoples from these countries, especially those with a high migratory influx to Spain.

Keywords: mass media, news frames, content analysis, immigration, Latin America

Introduction

For more than five centuries, strong historical ties have contributed to the creation of the diplomatic and commercial establishment, as well as cultural relations of special relevance between Spain and Latin America. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Latin America, to the Spaniards, was a place for seeking political asylum or economic improvement. Nevertheless, in the last decades Spain has become a host country for a growing number of Latin American citizens, who left their country either aspiring to a higher living standard or due to problems of a different sociopolitical nature. Nowadays, migration movements may be consid-

ered one of the most important aspects that maintain the ties between these two lands.

The growing concern about the media's capability of disseminating, legitimating, or reinforcing racial stereotypes of ethnic minorities and, consequently, shaping social attitudes toward foreign immigrants, makes it increasingly important to look into mass media coverage on immigration. In the case of Spain, it is assumed that the acceptance of immigrants, that is, their full social integration, depends greatly on the population's attitudes toward them. Like any other democratic society in the world, Spanish public attitudes are thought to be influenced by the type of information on Latin America and Latinos covered by the Spanish media, and the manner associative events are focused on. All this may subsequently drive the public to hold stereotype schemata of the reality of Latin American countries that contain only a few biased views (Brewer, Graf, and Willnat, 2003; Lozano et al., 2000; Perry, 1985; 1987). In regard to generalizing characteristics in a group, Seiter (1986) points out that mass media not only participate actively in creating stereotypes or social beliefs, but also minimize individual differences that characterize members between groups.

The aim of analyzing the Spanish media's information coverage on Latin American immigrants in this study suggests the need of scaffolding a theoretical framework anchored on two baselines central to mass communication research. The first one uses discourse analysis from critical perspectives (see example in van Dijk, 1996), as well as content analysis as a methodological option (see examples in Greenberg, Mastro, and Brand, 2002; Dixon and Linz, 2000; Entman, 1992; 1994; Romer, Jamieson, and de Coteau, 1998) to approach stereotype analysis of ethnic minority and immigrants and study symbolic racism and mass media. The second one centers on news frames analysis based on framing theory (Entman, 1991; 1993; de Vreese, 2003; Domke, McCoy, and Torres, 1999; Reese, Gandy, and Grant, 2001; Scheufele, 1999; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000) and uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to value representation of social reality in media discourse.

Latin American immigration in Spain

According to data published in 2004 by the Spanish *Ministerio del Interior* [Ministry of the Interior], the number of foreign residents in Spain on December 31st 2003 was 1,647,011, which makes up 3.5% of the total national population. Most of them are from Latin America (31.26% of the total immigrant population), Africa (26.29%), and countries in the European Economic zone (24.68%). Latin American immigration influx has consolidated in the last few years. At present, the size of this ethnic

group is partly due to increasing immigration from southern countries in Latin America (Díez Nicolás and Ramírez, 2001). Among them, Ecuadorians (174,289) and Colombians (107,459) make up the major communities, and are only outnumbered by Moroccans (333,770). The community of Pan Latin American immigrants is growing the fastest. Data show that in one single year, from the end of 2002 to December 2003, they increased by almost 150,000 people (41.12%) (Ministerio del Interior, 2004).

In respect to expectations and attitudes toward immigrants, Spanish people have changed since Spain started to be a real immigrants receiving country². At the moment, their attitudes toward immigrants in general are more unfavorable than the majority's opinion on immigration in 1996 (judged as 'necessary and not excessive') (CIS, 1996). Currently, the number of foreign immigrants living in Spain is considered 'too many' (53.3%), whereas this idea was supported by fewer people (29%) in 1996 (CIS, 2004).

On direct reference to Latin American immigrants, the latest data show that, in general, this collective is thought to be 'quite a lot, yet not too many' (44%), and even 'few' (6.4%) (CIS, 2003). Likewise, Latin American immigrants in Spain are better liked than those from other countries, rating an average of 7.14 on a 'received sympathy' scale ranged from 0 to 10 (0 = no sympathy; 10 = much sympathy). This is similar to the average of 7.07 given to other foreigners from Europe (CIS, 2001). In the same survey, 59.6% of the subjects showed their preference for allowing Latin American immigrants to stay rather than those from Africa, Eastern Europe, or Asia.

In spite of the fact that Latin American immigrants form the most numerous collective, very few Spanish subjects admitted to knowing any of them personally. Most of the respondents say they have *never* had any relationships with the Latinos in terms of 'family' (88.8%), 'study' (80%), 'neighborhood' (73.9%), 'profession' (73.8%), or 'friend' (64.5%) (CIS, 2003). According to these data, it can be assumed that Spanish citizens' perception and attitudes toward immigrants in general and Latin American countries or Latinos in particular rely largely on cues provided by media news reports on immigration and immigrants. In this context, the following research questions were established in order to find out whether either each Latin American nation receives a significantly distinct treatment in Spanish newspapers or their national stereotypes are reinforced:

RQ1: What types of issues tend to be associated with different Latin American countries and peoples in news coverage by Spanish newspapers?

- RQ2: Are there any significant differences in news treatment between different Latin American countries and peoples in terms of evaluative character assigned to the events tackled in Spanish newspapers?
- RQ3: What kind of frames prevail in the coverage of information on Latin American countries and their peoples in Spanish newspapers?
- RQ4: Are there any differences in intensity in the use of different frames to tackle the information about events in which different Latin American countries and their peoples are involved?

Method

Unit of analysis

Four major newspapers in Spain, *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, constituted our analysis targets. One week of issues of these four newspapers were picked at random from each month in 1999, from January to December. Then, each selected newspaper issue was reviewed to find stories that mentioned any Latin American nation as the main topic or featured Latinos as the main actors. Every section in each newspaper, such as international, national, society, and culture, was reviewed except editorials and the sport section. The selected news stories referred to events produced in different Latin American countries (e. g., “La violencia en Colombia se cobra decenas de muertos” [Violence in Colombia causes hundreds of deaths], *ABC*, December 2nd, 1999), or referred to Latin American citizens as protagonists. The latter, in general, reported events happened on Spanish territory which would involve some Latin American citizens (e. g., “Muere uno de los heridos en el tiroteo entre ‘narcos’ de Madrid” [One of the injured died in crossfire between drug gangs in Madrid], published in *El País* on July 6th, 1999, with a lead specifying the Colombian received a gunshot in the head). All this made up the identification of a total of 1,271 news stories after undergoing the coding process. Out of the 1,271 news stories, 400 had been published in *El País*, 322 in *El Mundo*, 298 in *ABC*, and 251 in *La Vanguardia*.

Codebook

The codebook consisted of three general parts that recorded information about the following variables:

Basic data identification. Each analysis unit was identified by the name of the newspaper, month, week day, and section where the news article

had appeared (National, Society, Economy or Employment, Communication or Culture, International, others). The name of each Latin American country was also encoded in order to identify the main actor nation in the unit. After performing an exploratory analysis, we obtained data that enabled us to create a new variable with the following nation categories: Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, other *Central American* countries, and other *South American* countries.

Issues, evaluative character, and journalistic tone. A scale was constructed with 18 issue items: 'politics'; 'event' (crimes, drug, or robberies); 'human interest'; 'economy'; 'employment'; 'international relations'; 'arm conflicts'; 'justice' (trials, judges); 'defense'; 'education'; 'accident'; 'natural disaster'; 'culture'; 'science'; 'religion'; 'immigration' (policies or legislation on immigration); 'coexistence', and 'health'. Each item was evaluated with a three-score scale of intensity: '1 = not intense', '2 = moderate', and '3 = quite or very intense'. This scale was made after we had sampled a previous qualitative analytical study of one month news coverage on Latin America and citizens from different Latin American countries published in the target newspapers. To elaborate this scale, we used an eminent inductive strategy which followed a qualitative plunge process to identify critical variables related to the emphasized issues (Neuendorf, 2002). Additionally, the evaluative character describing the main event in each news story was coded as 'negative' (if the depicted event or its likely consequence was regarded as undesirable by the general public); 'positive' (if the depicted event or its likely consequence might be desirable to the general public); and 'neutral' or ambiguous (if the evaluation of the main event appeared unclear or ambiguous). Finally, the journalistic tone was also evaluated through the analysis of adjectives used to feature the news stories. A news story was considered 'relaxed' if there were more favorable than unfavorable adjectives, in contrast with 'tense' stories, where unfavorable adjectives outnumbered favorable ones; a story was coded as 'neutral' if there was a balance between favorable and unfavorable adjectives.

News frames. An enlarged version of the original scale by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) was developed to measure five types of frames: 'attribution of responsibility' (consisted of 6 items; one more than the original 5 items); 'human interest' (6 items; the original one had 5 items); 'conflict' (4 items); 'morality' (3 items); and 'economic consequence' (3 items). We chose to use an ordinal scale to code the news stories instead of the dichotomous one used in Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Thus, each item was evaluated with a three-point scale of intensity (1 = none, 2 = moderate, and 3 = quite, or much). A factor analysis of principal

components of these 22 items was processed, resulting in 6 factors that resembled the original structure of factors with an exception of the 6th factor, but was withdrawn from analyses (see Table 1). In order to calculate the score of each factor dimension, we summed up its components and obtained five framing indicators: ‘attribution of responsibility’ (composed of 4 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0.62$), ‘human interest’ (composed of 6 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0.72$), ‘conflict’ (composed of 4 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0.71$), ‘morality’ (composed of 3 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0.63$), and ‘economic consequences’ (composed by 3 items. Cronbach $\alpha = 0.84$).

Coding

The coding process was developed by 6 coders, students of a doctorate program at Salamanca University, who had been previously trained in content analysis and were given an equal part of random news units to code independently. In the following procedure, 15% of total units were picked at random to be double-coded in order to test the intercoder reliability. The results showed that in 43 variables considered, the average of reliability was 0.86 (and the lowest value was 0.73).

Results

General profile

Basically, news stories about Latin America or Latinos mostly appeared in international sections (61.4%) and, to a lesser extent, in sections such as economy and employment (12%), society (7.6%), or culture (7.6%). 38.6% of the news stories consisted of brief information which took less than 1/4 page; 26.1% occupied between 1/4 and 1/2 page; and only 4.2% occupied a full page.

Countries or citizens from Chile ($n = 266$, 20.9%), Cuba ($n = 171$, 13.5%), Colombia ($n = 161$, 12.7%), Mexico ($n = 147$, 11.6%), Venezuela ($n = 132$, 10.4%), Brazil ($n = 127$, 10%), and Argentina ($n = 109$, 8.6%) were described as main actors in the analyzed news stories. Also, but to a lesser extent, we found other Central American countries (6.3%) as main actors, such as Guatemala (2.2%), El Salvador (0.6%), Honduras (0.6%), Nicaragua (0.5%), Costa Rica (0.3%), Puerto Rico (0.6%), Dominican Republic (0.6%), Panama (0.7%), and Haiti (0.2%). Another 5.1% actor-nations were found in South American countries, namely Peru (1.3%), Bolivia (0.3%), Uruguay (1.2%), Paraguay (1.6%), and Ecuador (0.7%).

Table 1. *Principal components factor analysis (with varimax rotation) of news framing scale.*

The scale items	Factors					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
– Showing the human side of an issue or problem (e. g., the emotional aspect)	.78					
– Using personal adjectives or personal vignettes to produce feelings of outrage, empathy, sympathy, or compassion.	.70					
– Getting into the private or personal lives of the actors or the main role players.	.65					
– Containing visual information that might produce feelings of outrage, empathy, sympathy, or compassion.	.62					
– Emphasizing how individuals or groups are affected by the tackled issue or problem.	.58					
– Including testimonies of the persons involved.	.41					
– Referring two or more than two sides about the issue or problem.		.73				
– A political party, individual, group, institution or country reproaches other political party, individual, group, institution or country		.71				
– Alluding to certain disagreement between political parties, individuals, groups, institutions or countries.		.70				.30
– Mention of the winners and the losers.		.61				
– Making reference to the economic consequences of either following a certain action or not.			.87			
– Mentioning financial gains or losses that may be produce at present or in the future.			.86			
– Alluding to the costs associated with the tackled issue or problem.			.86			
– Suggesting that the problem needs urgent action.				.73		
– Suggesting solutions for the issue or problem.				.69		
– Some institution has the ability to solve or ease the problem.				.66		
– Some institution is responsible for the issue or problem.				.61		
– Making reference to morality, God, or other religion principles.					.81	
– The news story contains some kind of moral message.					.77	
– Offering specific social prescriptions indicating how to behave.		.31			.62	
– An individual (or social group) is responsible for the tackled issue or problem.						.74
– The social context or situation (abstract factors) is the cause for the tackled issue or problem.				.38		.62
Eigenvalue	3.74	3.00	2.14	1.41	1.29	1.13
Percentage of explained variance	12.19	10.67	10.59	10.32	8.03	6.11

Note. Only the weights $\geq .30$ are included.

Issues in news coverage on Latin America

On covering information on Latin America and Latinos, the prevailing issues to Spanish newspapers were: politics (64.9%), international relations (50.1%), human interest (36.9%), justice (33.3%), crime and delinquency (30.8%), economy (26.7%), and armed conflicts (22.5%). Generally, they were focused on the negative side (43.6%) of the events, and treated them in a tense (45.5%) rather than neutral (29.6%) or relaxed (24.9%) manner.

The results show there were clear relations between issues covered and certain Latin American countries (or its citizens) in the news, which helped to identify each Latin American country's portrayal in the Spanish press (see Table 2). Similarly, it was observed that the evaluative character and journalistic tone used to depict the main event correlated significantly with a Latin American country or its citizens (see Table 3). From the data we can draw significant distinctive profiles of the nations and their people: *Chile* (or Chileans) was associated more intensely with issues such as international relations, justice, and defense. It was depicted as protagonist in events characterized as neutral and ambiguous. Similarly, the tone used was more neutral or ambiguous than the average. *Cuba* (or Cubans) was associated with politics, international relations, culture, immigration, and social harmony. The tone in the

Table 2. *Issues covered in the news stories on Latin America (or their citizens) in the Spanish press. Differences by main actor-nation.*

Main Issues ²	% Total	Main actor-nations in the news information ^{1,3}										χ^2	p
		Chile	Cuba	Colombia	Mexico	Venezuela	Brazil	Argentina	Other CA	Other SA			
- Politics	64.9	68.2	78.9	66.9	45.2	72.7	60.6	67.0	46.3	65.6	58.18	.001	
- Crimes	30.8	24.8	25.1	59.0	29.5	28.5	24.4	15.6	33.8	43.1	86.71	.001	
- Human interest	36.9	27.8	42.1	49.7	37.7	42.4	29.9	36.7	33.8	33.8	27.74	.001	
- Economy	26.7	20.5	24.0	17.5	16.4	26.0	66.9	31.2	28.8	16.9	130.34	.001	
- Employment	13.6	7.9	14.0	10.0	13.7	17.6	21.3	16.5	13.8	16.9	18.50	.018	
- International relations	50.1	69.2	74.3	50.6	30.8	25.2	50.4	36.7	36.3	40.0	149.52	.001	
- Armed conflicts	22.5	19.5	8.8	78.8	15.1	13.0	6.3	8.3	23.8	23.1	352.89	.001	
- Justice	33.3	69.2	34.5	16.3	13.0	33.3	16.5	23.9	21.3	33.8	227.97	.001	
- Defense	10.5	15.0	4.7	18.8	4.8	13.0	6.3	5.5	8.8	13.8	35.75	.001	
- Education	4.3	2.3	4.1	3.1	8.2	0.8	5.5	4.6	6.3	9.2	17.73	.023	
- Accidents	2.6	0.4	2.3	5.6	2.7	1.5	1.6	3.7	6.3	3.1	16.72	.033	
- Natural disasters	5.1	0.8	0.6	1.3	6.2	20.6	1.6	2.8	18.8	4.6	123.15	.001	
- Culture	11.6	4.5	17.0	5.0	24.0	3.1	12.6	14.7	15.0	20.0	62.46	.001	
- Science	2.1	1.9	1.2	1.9	3.4	0.8	0.8	0.0	5.0	7.7	20.02	.010	
- Religion	3.7	2.6	1.8	3.8	11.6	0.8	2.4	5.5	1.3	3.1	35.12	.001	
- Immigration	5.6	6.0	15.8	5.0	2.7	2.3	0.0	3.7	7.5	3.1	48.61	.001	
- Coexistence Harmony	8.8	3.0	15.8	10.6	10.3	6.9	7.1	7.3	12.5	12.3	26.18	.001	
- Health	5.6	7.1	3.5	5.6	4.8	3.1	3.9	9.2	5.0	9.2	9.40	.309	
N	1,27	266	171	161	147	132	127	109	80	65			

1. Percentages in column.

2. The percentages of the 18 issue variables do not make 100%, because it was possible to identify more than one issue in each news report. Options as *moderately* and *quite* or *very intensely* were used to count the presence of each issue in the news story.

3. Percentages in bold type refer to standardized adjusted residuals of each country that performed differences from the total percentages significantly.

Table 3. *Evaluative character and journalistic tone in the news stories on Latin America (or their citizens) in the Spanish press. Differences by main actor-nation.*

	% Total	Main actor-nations in the news information ^{1,2}									χ^2	p
		Chile	Cuba	Colombia	Mexico	Venezuela	Brazil	Argentina	Other CA	Other SA		
Evaluative character												
- Negative	43.6	39.1	35.7	56.5	36.6	56.1	43.3	36.7	42.5	53.8		
- Neutral o ambiguous	30.1	43.6	31.0	14.9	29.7	25.0	19.7	38.5	32.5	24.6	80.39	.001
- Positive	26.4	17.3	33.3	28.6	33.8	18.9	37.0	24.8	25.0	21.5		
Journalistic tone												
- Relaxed	24.9	13.9	32.2	24.2	34.7	16.7	32.3	22.9	32.5	26.2		
- Tense	45.5	48.1	44.4	51.6	35.4	57.6	43.3	34.9	37.5	53.8	64.74	.001
- Neutral	29.6	38.0	23.4	24.2	29.9	25.8	24.4	42.2	30.0	20.0		
N	1,271	266	171	161	147	132	127	109	80	65		

1. Percentages in column.
2. Percentages in bold type refer to standardized adjusted residuals of each country that performed differences from the total percentages significantly.

news story narration referring to this country was more relaxed or neutral, and the main events were also featured more positively. In contrast, *Colombia* (or its citizens) was stressed by its association with arm conflict, crimes, human interest, defense, and accident. The tone in reporting Colombia tended to be tense, and the main events were usually featured negatively. *Mexico* (or Mexicans) was mentioned mainly in news stories about culture, religion, social harmony, education, and science. The tone was generally relaxed, and the events were tackled more positively. *Venezuela* (or Venezuelans) was associated significantly with news articles on political problems and natural disasters. In sum, the Spanish press covered this type of information using mostly a negative evaluation and a tense tone. *Brazil* (Brazilians) was associated with economy and employment issues, which were written in a relaxed tone and evaluated positively. As for *Argentina* (or Argentines), issues such as politics and international relations were the main topics, and they were tackled in a neutral way; no significant associations were found between any mentioned issues and this country.

Frames of Latin America in news coverage

In this section we will present the results related to news framing analyses and differences in treatment of Latin American countries or their citizens. First, it was observed that, in general, the Spanish press mostly used the ‘attribution of responsibility’ frame (M = 1.78) to cover information on Latin America, followed by the ‘conflict’ frame (M = 1.55) and the ‘human interest’ frame (M = 1.49). Frames of economic consequences (M = 1.33) and morality (M = 1.20) were used with less intensity³.

Table 4. Differences in news frame dimensions between main role playing country in the information.

Type of news frames ¹	Total average	Main role-playing country in the information									F _{UNIVARIATE}	P
		Chile	Cuba	Colombia	Mexico	Venezuela	Brazil	Argentina	Other CA	Other SA		
- Attribution of responsibility	1.78	1.96	1.71	1.77	1.54	2.00	1.89	1.58	1.58	1.68	11.50	.001
- Human interest	1.49	1.45	1.47	1.59	1.51	1.63	1.27	1.53	1.56	1.50	6.43	.001
- Conflict	1.55	1.66	1.53	1.60	1.42	1.73	1.34	1.58	1.40	1.46	6.63	.001
- Morality	1.20	1.19	1.21	1.23	1.28	1.22	1.12	1.18	1.19	1.19	1.67	.100
- Economic consequences	1.33	1.26	1.24	1.19	1.28	1.33	1.81	1.44	1.31	1.19	14.17	.001
N	1,271	266	171	161	147	132	127	109	80	65		

1. A theoretical variation range from 1.00 (none) to 3.00 (very) is established to measure each news frame indicator.

Through multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with the indexes of five news frames as dependent variables and the main country as independent variable, we obtained results that showed there was a multivariate significant effect (Wilk's Lambda = .79, $F_{\text{multivariate}} [40, 5320, 651] = 7.21, p < .001$). When comparing the univariate differences between nations, clear significant differences were found in frames of 'economic consequences' ($F [8, 1224] = 14.17, p < .001$), 'attribution of responsibility' ($F [8, 1224] = 11.50, p < .001$), 'conflict' ($F [8, 1224] = 6.63, p < .001$), and 'human interest' ($F [8, 1224] = 6.43, p < .001$).

Results from the Duncan post hoc test showed the following significant differences in news frames between nations: The 'attribution of responsibility' frame was largely used to cover news on Venezuela, Chile, and Brazil. The 'human interest' frame was used more intensely for Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, *other Central American countries*, and *other South American countries*. The 'conflict' frame tended to be used more intensely to cover Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. The frame 'economic consequences' was mostly used to report on Brazil.

Discussion

The study outcomes show that news stories on Latin America or Latinos are related mostly to news published in the section of international affairs. Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina are described clearly as leading role players (87.7% of the analyzed news stories mentioned at least one of these nations as protagonist). The news agenda related to Latin America and its citizens generally circumscribes to politics, international relations, human interest, justice, crimes, economy, and arm conflicts. These prevailing issues are dealt with in a negative (43.6%) and tense (45.5%) manner. On the other hand, news frames such as 'attribution of responsibility', 'conflict' and 'human interest' are emphasized significantly.

In reference to intensity and frequency of the news frames used in the Spanish press to cover Latin America or Latinos, the results are similar to those of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Nevertheless, the 'economic consequences' frame in these authors' study was more prevailing, probably because they centered their investigation on European political news coverage at a moment when information on the monetary unification of the euro currency weighed more significantly. Similarly, another study on news coverage on the introduction of the euro developed in 1999 in four European countries (Great Britain, Denmark, Germany, and The Netherlands) showed that the frame of economic consequences tended to be used more frequently than the one of conflict (de Vreese, Peter, and Semetko, 2001). However, the results of these two studies and the present one might differ, probably not because they dealt with different topics (euro versus Latin America), but due to the comparison between different countries (Spain versus northern European countries). Therefore, the results of this study might also explain the existing differences in the style of news production between north and south European countries (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Significant differences observed between countries in the analyzed variables (issues, character evaluation, journalistic tone, and news frames) show that we might be talking about 'media-praised' and 'media-discredited' countries. Among the 'media-praised' countries, Mexico is found to be associated positively with achievements in culture, religion, social coexistence, education, and science. Brazil is associated with issues on economy and employment in a relaxed and positive tone. Coverage on Cuba is also associated with international relations, culture, immigration, and social coexistence in positive terms. As for the second group, we find that, for different reasons, Venezuela and Colombia are associated with armed conflicts, crimes, human interest, accidents, and natural disasters, with special stress on conflict and human interest frames.

At this point we might assume that such negative coverage of Latin America, especially those countries with important immigrant influx to Spain (such as Colombia), can probably lead to promoting stereotypes, prejudicial attitudes, and feelings of threat in the long run (Dijker, 1987; van Dijk, 1996). In other words, we are concerned about whether the prevailing use of conflict and human interest frames to treat a set of issues (armed conflicts, crimes, or human interest) when reporting on Colombia and the Colombians can make the audience believe that attributes stressed by Spanish newspapers to shape negative or distorted images are the *real* distinctive characteristics of this country and its people. Although this study was not intended for the analysis of framing

effects on public opinion, empirical evidences suggest that this assumption may certainly be relevant.

Finally, it is necessary to recognize some limitations found in the present research in order to assess the results properly. This study, in spite of being part of a research program examining immigration and immigrants news coverage and treatment in the Spanish press, has exclusively focused on Latin America and the Latinos' news coverage. In future studies, news information on immigrants of other ethnic origins and countries should also be taken as reference. On the other hand, only news on immigrants living in Spain should be taken as a reference excluding all information provided by their native news agents. Although the number of Latin American immigrants remains the largest in Spain, the presence of the immigrants from Africa, especially Moroccans (21.35%) are also very important (Ministerio del Interior, 2004). It is convenient to examine whether the treatment of news information on immigrants in the Spanish press varies significantly in terms of their native countries or ethnic origins. This analysis is especially relevant after the terrorist attack on March 11, 2004 in Madrid, in which some Moroccan citizens were involved and a large number of Latin American immigrants were affected or died. It would also be beneficial to develop comparative studies on information treatments between TV news programs and the press, first, because television is the medium that reaches the widest general audience and, second, TV news coverage has been proven to be characterized by sensationalism and the prevailing use of the 'human-interest' frame (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000).

Notes

1. This study is part of a more extensive research project, titled "Framing analysis of news coverage on immigration in Spanish press", headed by Dr. Juan José Igartua and financed by the *Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia* [Ministry of Education and Science] (National Program for General Promotion of Knowledge) with ref. no. BSO2001-1236-C07-03. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 23rd Conference and General Assembly of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), held in Barcelona, on 21st–26th of July, 2002.
2. The Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas [Center of Sociological Research, CIS], which is an autonomous organization attached to the Ministry of Presidency in Spanish Government, carries out an average of forty studies per year, most of them of quantitative nature by polling. Data on the Spaniards' attitudes toward immigration and immigrants used in the present study, mainly belong to information from 'monthly barometers' which analyze the social perception of the most serious problems that affect Spain.
3. *Paired-samples t-tests* were performed to examine the prevailing frame in general. The results showed statistical significance in all contrasts at $p < .001$.

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