

HISPANIC REPRESENTATIONS ON MEDIA PLATFORMS: PERSPECTIVES AND  
STEREOTYPES IN THE MEME, TELEVISION, FILM, AND ON YOUTUBE

by

Arielle L. Akines, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
with a Major in Spanish  
August 2015

Committee Members:

Yasmine Beale-Rivaya, Chair

Sharon E. Ugalde

Antonio Gragera

**COPYRIGHT**

by

Arielle L. Akines

2015

## **FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT**

### **Fair Use**

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

### **Duplication Permission**

As the copyright holder of this work I, Arielle L. Akines, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Ruth Akines. While you are not here in the flesh, your legacy continues. Your final words to me, “Go all the way”, have driven me to follow my passion and take on this project. You have helped me to persevere, and provided me strength during my completion of this thesis. I’m happy to say I did go all the way. Thank you Grandma,  
Arielle.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would first like to thank my mother for her unwavering support and encouragement. To my brothers, Anthony and Armani, and my nephew, Zihire, thank you for your phone calls letting me know that you were cheering me along the way. You all made the completion of this project possible.

Thank you to Dr. Fischer, Dr. Porras and the Department of Modern Languages for your continued academic support. A special thank you to my office mates, Gyongi Pisak and Florence Lemoine, for your constant encouragement. You are both awesome!

Thank you to my committee members Dr. Sharon E. Ugalde for your feedback and support; and to Dr. Antonio Gragera, I appreciate the many hours you put into this project. Your input and encouragement meant so much to me.

To Dr. Yasmine Beale-Rivaya, my thesis director, your belief in helped me to believe in myself. Thank you for always going above and beyond for me, for reading and revising my work, for listening to my concerns, for answering emails immediately, for always having your door open. You have been, and continue to be, a light in my life. From my very first day in the graduate program, to my very last day defending my thesis two years later, you have been by my side. Thank you for never letting me give only part of myself to my work. You have taught me to persevere and reminded me to never, not ever, give up.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTERS	
I. MEMES AND THE HISPANIC POPULATION.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Meme.....	6
II. BROADCASTING.....	18
Television.....	18
Film.....	29
YouTube.....	36
III. CONCLUSION.....	41
REFERENCES.....	45

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>Illustration</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. 2008 Spanish Olympic Basketball Team.....	3
2. What is a Meme? .....	6
3. “Jesus”–Meme #1 .....	7
4. “Now we’re here!”-Meme #2 .....	9
5. <i>Cosmopolitan Magazine</i> Meme #1 .....	15
6. <i>Cosmopolitan Magazine</i> Meme #2 .....	16
7. <i>The George Lopez Show</i> -#1 .....	20
8. <i>The George Lopez Show</i> -#2 .....	20
9. Sofia Vegara-#1 .....	26
10. Sofia Vegara-#2 .....	26
11. <i>Jane the Virgin</i> .....	28
12. <i>Casa de Mi Padre</i> .....	35
13. Bethany Mota.....	37
14. “SUPEReeeGO” #1-6.....	38

## **ABSTRACT**

Hispanics are the nation's largest and fastest growing minority comprising 17% of the overall United States population (US Census). Hispanics contribute \$1.5 Trillion to the American economy and are the primary feeders of workforce growth and new consumption. In fact, if the U.S. Hispanic market were a standalone country, its buying power would make it one of the top twenty economies in the world (Neilson 3). While other minority communities such as Asian Americans (especially Japanese Americans and Korean Americans) have been able to overcome negative stereotypes, and despite the clear economic and cultural importance of the Hispanic communities to the US economy, it seems that the Hispanic voice is relegated to secondary status and has not been able to overcome deep-rooted negative sentiments (Negron-Muntaner). This thesis investigates how different media platforms such as memes, television series, films, and YouTube videos continue to add to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes regarding the role and place of people of Hispanic heritage in the United States.

# CHAPTER I

## MEMES AND THE HISPANIC POPULATION

### Introduction

Hispanics are the nation's largest and fastest growing minority comprising 17% of the overall United States population (US Census). Hispanics contribute \$1.5 Trillion to the American economy and are the primary feeders of workforce growth and new consumption. In fact, if the U.S. Hispanic market were a standalone country, its buying power would make it one of the top twenty economies in the world (Neilson 3). While other minority communities such as Asian Americans (especially Japanese Americans and Korean Americans) have been able to overcome negative stereotypes, and despite the clear economic and cultural importance of the Hispanic communities to the US economy, it seems that the Hispanic voice is relegated to secondary status and has not been able to overcome deep-rooted negative sentiments (Negron-Muntaner). This thesis investigates how different media platforms such as memes, television series, films, and YouTube videos continue to add to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes regarding the role and place of people of Hispanic heritage in the United States.

Media has been defined as: "The main means of mass communication, especially newspapers, radio and television, regarded collectively" (Oxford). Within media, there is a subcategory of *social* media that is defined as a collection of "websites and applications which enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking" (Oxford). Through radio, television and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, billions of people can be reached by sharing one photo, a news broadcast, or by a simple "status update."

Access to the Internet is increasing due to the propagation of so-called connected devices such as cellphones, handheld tablets, and even wristwatches. As a result, the number of users of social media has also sky-rocketed. In January of 2014, Facebook reported that it passed 1.23 billion monthly active users and 757 million daily users (Protalinski 1). Facebook has changed the way that we communicate, and more importantly, the way that many users receive daily news and information. Popular networks such as CNN and ABC have created Facebook groups to distribute news updates electronically. The influence of social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram is especially potent because anyone in possession of an internet capable device can project their ideas and disseminate them widely.

In recent years, social media has evolved from a tool for light hearted social interaction to becoming a main source of political and economic news. While social media has traditionally been viewed as a social exercise it has now become a pivotal tool, affecting how each individual or group may be perceived. Thus, repetitive images on newsfeeds that feature minorities as criminals and Mexicans as illegal immigrants solidify those negative notions of these demographics. Moreover, the coupling of a stereotype with an image helps to congeal and give a certain credibility to the ideas being shared.

The content produced on social media sites that trigger a strong positive or negative emotional response such as laughter, disgust, or even rage, are those that most frequently “go viral.” Thus, social media is a double edged sword. What an individual or media platform intends to portray, the receptor may interpret it in a completely different manner. Teresa Pac has argued that media “perpetuates the stigmatization of language and ethnic minorities reinforcing language and ethnic inequalities” (198). For example, a newspaper article that analyzes the benefits of bilingualism based on high test scores can have positive effects (encourage or

motivate an individual to consider learning a second language) but can also suggest that monolinguals are lacking intellectual skills. The presentation of content through media platforms will yield varied responses from their audience because perception plays a dominant role in how media affects commonly held beliefs. If the dominant culture maintains that only one viewpoint of African Americans is allowed, that they have very limited educational achievements, for example, then should an African American become President of the United States, he or she may be perceived as unqualified for the office.

The perception of dominant culture also played a significant role in a case from the 2008 Olympics. During the 2008 Beijing Games, the Spanish Men's Basketball team posed for the photo pictured below:



The team members are each posed with their hands slanting their eyes upward to resemble a physical trait of their Chinese-hosts. North American and International media outlets began decrying the picture as a racist and insensitive act. London's Daily Telegraph said Spain's "poor reputation for insensitivity toward racial issues has been further harmed" by their pose in the photo (ESPN 1). The "affectionate gesture" that the team wanted to display was offset by perceptions of racism from media outlets. As a result, the Spanish team found it necessary to explain the context and intent of the picture. Center player Pau Gasol who, at the time, played for

the Los Angeles Lakers said: “it was something like supposed to be funny or something but never offensive in any way...sorry if anybody thought or took it the wrong way and thought that it was offensive.” Another player, José Calderón, wrote on his blog, “[w]e felt it was something appropriate, and that it would be interpreted as an affectionate gesture....without a doubt, some ... press didn't see it that way” (ESPN 1). While the international press assailed the action as racist and insulting, the Spanish team members argued that the contrary was true. They viewed it as an affectionate and comical gesture. Unlike in the United States, where such actions are cloaked with heavy negative racial connotations, the Spanish team’s same gesture did not allude to anything negative to a Spanish audience because Spain does not share the same racial experiences and history as the U.S.

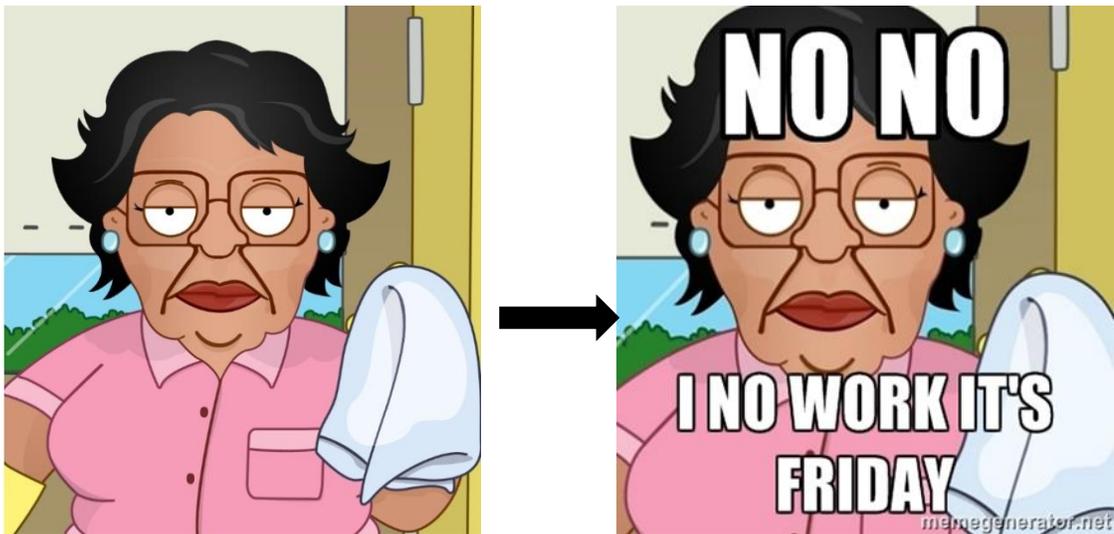
What may be surprising to North Americans is the fact that the Chinese people were not offended. Frank Zhang, the Chinese director of government and public affairs, at the time, stated: “We don't think this is an insulting gesture to the Chinese...in fact, the gesture shows that the Spanish team is so humorous, relaxing and cute. They sat around a dragon pattern, which we think showed respect to the Chinese” (ESPN 2). The ‘discriminated demographic’ did not internalize the racism that was allegedly directed towards them but instead viewed it as a sign of respect and affection, just as the actors had intended. However, the varied international reaction to this exemplifies how an image is interpreted by the cultural filters of the receptor, and it may serve to unwittingly reinforce prejudices such as those regarding the Hispanic population in the United States.

## The Meme

In 1976, Richard Dawkins wrote of the necessity for a new vehicle of cultural transmission. Derived from the Greek word *mimeme* the term was shortened to mirror the word 'gene' due to Dawkins' background in biology and to reflect the meaning of the French word for memory, *même* (Dawkins 192). Dawkins' described the need for effective cultural replication, much like human genes, which would form a "way for people to transmit social memories and cultural ideas to each other" (Gil1). The meme is defined as an image with words superimposed and is quickly becoming a popular form of social media. It is an infusion of art and culture used to project ideas about its target and to elicit critical thought. Because a meme is interpreted, it develops and changes "just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (Dawkins 194).

The traditional meme, which was limited to scientific themes has changed over time to include content pertaining to current political, social, and economic situations. Today, through continued media replication, ideas contained within memes can become stereotyped and may affect groups either positively or negative. The creators and receptors of the modern meme are social media users, with accounts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, as opposed to the meme's original audience of biology and science enthusiasts. Paul Gil defines the new modernized meme as a "virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea" (1). With applications such as Instagram and Facebook,

the meme can be transmitted and reproduced quicker than ever. Instagram is an application where only pictures, and more recently, short videos, are available for viewing. Instagram account holders are able to view memes consistently and uninterrupted by status updates and notifications, which are common features on Facebook. Picture posts can go viral within seconds from immediate sharing and reposting among “Instagram friends”. In the following example of a meme, we have, on the left a simple image, and on the right the same image, changed and reconfigured with the addition of text:



The resulting meme plays on the stereotype that people of Hispanic heritage are lazy, or do not like to work, and most importantly, do not speak English, and when they do, formal English evades them. However, the symbolic significance is constructed by each individual who views the meme. With the technology boom and the speed at which the items posted online can go viral, the meme has acquired a new identity as a product of social media but is still true to its origin and purpose, to transmit thought provoking ideas.

The memes included in this study were selected based on relevance and popularity. They were chosen because of their content and close connection to the Hispanic population in the United States. These memes are representations of the many memes, related to Hispanic content, on social media platforms. The following meme was originally posted on Facebook:



The meme is divided into two parts. The top part, a Caucasian North American family is depicted seated at the dinner table holding hands saying prayers. On the table there are easily recognizable food items that are popular during Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The bottom half of the photo shows a male of Hispanic heritage gathering crops. Separate, each picture tells its own story. Placed together, presumably they model a cause and effect sequence. While the family prays to Jesus, the religious figure, the irony is that Jesus is the crop worker that provides the food. The disposition of the images of one of top of the other, instead of side by side, suggests a social hierarchy where

obviously the dominant white family are above the Hispanic male. Further, the English language is presented before the Spanish response. The text of the meme only serves to reinforce what the visual representation has already manifested.

With the inclusion of the text and image, the meme prompts critical thought about its subjects' religious, linguistic, and social identities. The combined elements of both the photos and the text play on social stereotypes. The response of the farmer could have been displayed as *Thank you* but instead a reply in Spanish suggests that he is monolingual in Spanish. The implication is, therefore, that poor farm workers speak Spanish, while middle-class families are religious and speak English. There is a hierarchy of language not so subtly suggested. Linguistic prestige of English over Spanish is not limited to the Hispanic male depicted, but is broadened to represent an entire group, i.e. the Spanish language is naturally inferior to English which enlarges the social hierarchy. This meme is therefore reductive in its overall stereotypical message. Similarly, the meme acknowledges the fact that a lot of food is imported from Mexico, Latin and Central America or harvested by migrant Hispanic workers.

There is a second underlying discourse. While the family sits down in comfort at a stocked table of food to share dinner, the Hispanic farmer is depicted as working under uncomfortable circumstances. The coupling of religion with social class and race is Dawkins's *mimeme* of this image. Privilege and the economic gap underlie the stereotypes that the meme depicts. The message of prestige elevates one social class over another, one group is able to sit down and pray while the other works to provide food. All of this imagery together serves to reinforce the idea that in order to achieve economic

advancement, the language of choice is English, and that Spanish is the language of a community that is not upwardly mobile.

The following meme displays a Mexican man wearing a traditional hat called a ‘*sombrero*’ with the colors of the Mexican flag: red, white, and green, and appears smiling widely which implies that he is proud of his Mexican heritage:



This meme alludes to a popular song “Started from the Bottom” released in 2013 by the artist Drake. The song expresses Drake’s triumph over economic adversity. The meme alters the lyrics of this song to comment negatively on immigration and attack a specified ethnic group by switching the lyrics ‘started from the bottom, now we’re here’ to ‘started from the border, now we’re here.’ Following the message of the song, the meme suggests that the Hispanic male in the photo arrived at the Mexican border, the “bottom”, and is now entrenched inside the United States. He represents all Mexican immigrants. This

plays to the fear shared by anti-immigration fanatics about their perceived systematic conquest of the territory by illegal immigrants. The pairing of popular media, such as Drake's song, with stereotypes is a mix that could yield more attention to the meme and make it go viral faster.

This meme is ideologically charged when North American receptors link it to the ongoing debate on immigration and the influx of Hispanics into the United States. Many believe that the government should close down the borders and stop all immigration of Hispanics into the country. In January 2013, President Obama issued the following statement:

We strengthened security at the borders so that we could finally stem the tide of illegal immigrants. We put more boots on the ground on the Southern border than at any time in our history. And today, illegal crossings are down nearly 80 percent from their peak in 2000 (1).

The president said this at a time when immigration growth is at zero and when more United States citizens are moving to South America countries than ever before. Thus he is playing to populist ideas and not propagating a message based on facts. Not surprisingly, the Northern border (United States and Canada) has not received the same attention from the President or from immigration officials.

In May 2014 the United States Department of Human Services Office of Immigration Statistics released that 990,553 persons became Lawful Permanent Residents in 2013. The report defines a lawful permanent resident (LPR) or 'green card' holder as a:

A person who has been granted lawful permanent residence in the United States. Permanent resident status confers certain rights and responsibilities. For example, LPRs may live and work permanently anywhere in the United States, own property, and attend public schools, colleges, and universities. They may also join certain branches of the Armed Forces and apply to become U.S. citizens if they meet certain eligibility requirements (Monger and Yankay 1).

Mexico was the country with the leading number of new permanent residence permits with 135,028 new cards issued. However, during the same year (2013) over 662,000 aliens were apprehended. Of these, 64 percent were citizens of Mexico (Simanski). The data shows that Mexicans are applying for residency in the United States even though there is a large percentage of Mexican nationals living in the United States that are undocumented. The media focuses on undocumented immigration reports and has a tendency of ignoring the minute details of the complex US-Mexican relations such as the difficulty in securing work visas, the changing day worker visas that have ‘trapped’ and separated families on both sides of the border, the increase in GDP and economic activity produced by these immigrants. Newspapers, television shows, and even live-talk radio broadcastings play a role in the increasing anxiety regarding Hispanic immigration. Francis Negrón-Muntaner suggests that newscasts, in their portrayal of Hispanics, reflect a “reality” worse than fiction. His 2014 study showed that there were no Latino news anchors in 19 primetime shows, 2.7% of guests were Latino, and from 2008 to 2012 only 491 out of 80,000 news stories focused on Latinos. Further, from 1995-2004 there was less than 1% coverage of Hispanics and 66% focused on crime, terrorism, and illegal

immigration (13-14). These numbers show of the few stories about Latinos, an overwhelming amount focuses on negative topics.

According to a Washington Post article entitled, “The Data on White Anxiety over Hispanic Immigration: What Drives American Views on Immigration Is Often Not Pretty,” repetitive negative reports regarding Hispanic immigrants caused anxiety among white Americans (Clement). In May 2003, there were 700 immigration news stories and only 3% of White Americans believed immigration was the nation’s largest problem. In July 2003, over 3,500 immigration news stories were produced and 17% of white Americans began to express that the ‘issue’ on immigration needed immediate attention. The overwhelming negative reports not only affected undocumented immigrants but also documented immigrants and even citizens of Hispanics heritage. The issue of the perceived immigration problem has pushed some groups to request and fight for English-Only laws even though there is no official language in the United States. Dr. Teresa Pac explains that The English-Only movement “culminates in the Republicans’ persistent attempt to declare English as the official language of the US constitutionally” (197). The movement also extends its English-only demands to immigrants in the United States. The officiating of a national language would require that all immigrants have the knowledge and ability to speak the English language. The issue here, goes far deeper. The reality is that the restricting of language rights would also limit access to educational opportunity and impede social and economic mobility making the immigration process more difficult for specific populations (Pac 197).

The Hispanic population is stereotyped by their language and their, economic and social status. The media proposes to present the news free from the burdens of particular

ideologies. However, the information released in (mostly white protestant) media about ethnic minorities is an expansion of a particular ideology that does not welcome the ‘Hispanic-Latin Catholics.’ To sustain this argument, media outlets “focus on Hispanics’ perceived resistance to learning English and showcase their overcriminalization” (Pac 198).

Meme #2 alludes to the illegal “Mexican Invasion” and the subsequent corrupting of the economy stereotype. The male in the picture appears to be celebrating having gained entrance into the United States by whatever means. Memes such as this contribute to the already negative notions about Hispanics. This meme completely ignores the population of Hispanics who have resided in this country for centuries and are citizens of the United States. They are in no way part of the immigration movement but become subsumed within it.

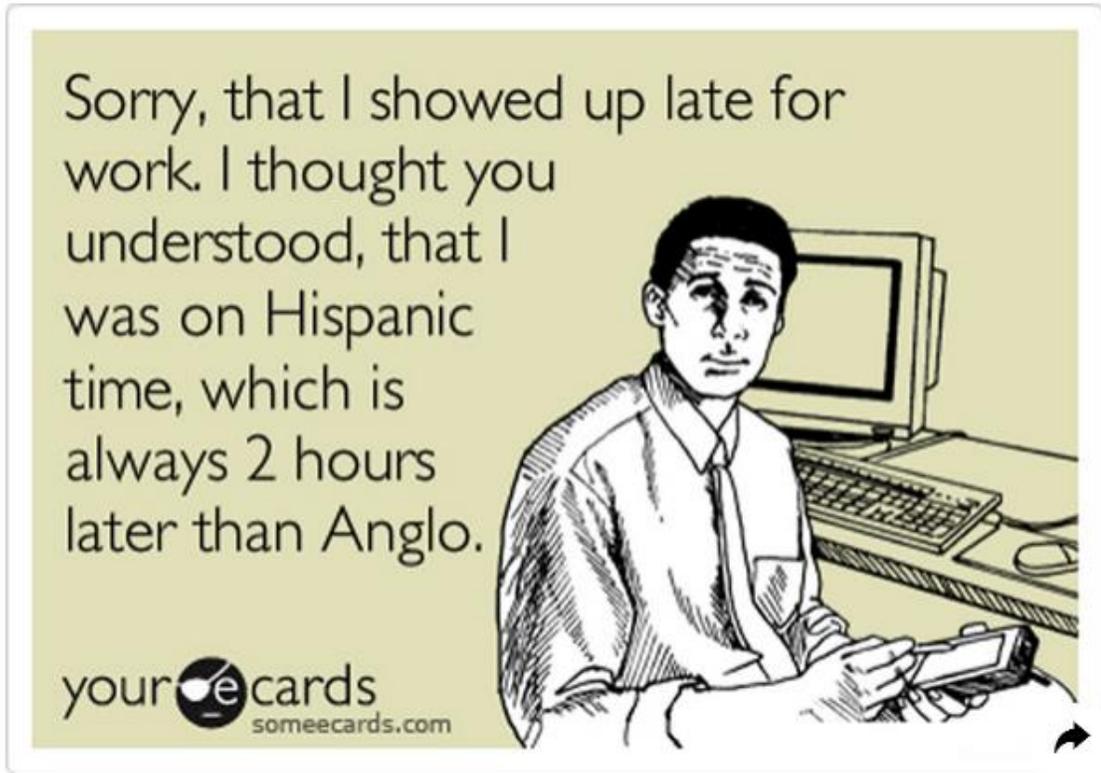
Mainstream Americans seem to attack Hispanics in retaliation for their ‘invasion’ into the country. Of the three acceptations of the verb “invade” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one is particularly apt to this discussion. To invade is “to enter or be in a place where you are not wanted” (“Invade”). This is certainly the attitude towards the Hispanic immigrants in the United States. Whether a person of Hispanic heritage is entering illegally or through legal means, s/he is perceived as corrupting the economy due to welfare, or working for lower wages than acceptable. In either case, the sentiment is that they are not welcomed.

Undoubtedly, memes contribute to stereotypes about Hispanics in the United States. The context from which these memes are understood is the most important aspect of this discourse. America has a history of segregationism that has divided the country in

a majority vs. a minority or “them” vs. “us.” From an outsider, the aim of some memes may be seen as positive, but their intention cannot escape the average American, aware of our history of discrimination. In the United States, the perception of the meme may differ but the spirit of the message remains to be one of bias and negative attitudes towards Hispanics.

On the other hand, while the memes discussed until now certainly are laden with racial, social, and linguistics overtones, they can also be perceived as neither racist nor stereotypical. The occasion that they are joined for could be a regular family dinner or Thanksgiving. Jesus, the worker, would then be part of the spirit of the holiday. Just as the Spanish basketball team’s gesture was meant to be humorous, a Hungarian views the meme #2 as “A Mexican celebration, he is happy” (Gyongi Pisak). While in the United States these images are problematic, they may lose some of their reductive stereotypically-charged meaning when viewed by those who do not share the same social context in which they are produced.

The meme has become a source of entertainment not only on platforms such as Facebook, but also in magazines and their associated media sites as well. In January 2014, the website of the popular magazine “Cosmopolitan”, which identifies itself as the women’s magazine for fashion, sex advice, dating tips and celebrity news, published “14 of the Worst Latino E-cards” under the ‘Celebrities and Entertainment’ section. This post, written by Tanisha Ramirez, shows offensive memes with an accompanying description of her reactions. For example, the meme pictured below was accompanied by this quote: “OK, so maybe we do joke about being on Latino time, but that means showing up late for parties, etc. We are as professional as other people .....” (17):



As said, this meme and the contributor’s comment appears in the section labeled as entertainment. On one hand, the location on the magazine’s website suggests that it is not “news”. On the other hand, the reactions to the e-cards are written as if a Latina is responding to the creators of the e-cards. The Latina voice of Tanisha Ramirez seems to want to engage the magazine’s Hispanic following. What counteracts their aim for diversity, however, is the method used: fostering Hispanics stereotypes to attract the desired demographic. Ramirez’s responses appear to lack in defense of Hispanics due to her sarcastic tone.

In addition to the ‘Celebrities and Entertainment’ section, *Cosmopolitan.com* offers a section named *Cosmo for Latinas* that focuses on Hispanic issues. Two recent posts are about movies that star Jennifer Lopez and the first Netflix series in Spanish called “Club de Cuervos” respectively. About the first Netflix series in Spanish, the

accompanying description reads “think Arrested Development but with more soccer” (1). The article’s sarcastic nature and overly offensive meme choices seem to have been produced for entertainment for a misguided audience, rather than as sincere and serious content. Instead of reacting to the negative stereotypes, the magazine leaves open ended interpretations to the unfavorable content. Another example is the writer’s response the meme below:

**7. I think this one speaks for itself.**



Instead of reacting to how offensive the meme is, Ramírez responds to the meme with: “I think this one speaks for itself.” There is a tacit acceptance that what this meme depicts is true. There is no combat against the negative stereotype meaning that Ramírez is passive in her attempt of debunking stereotypes.

While handheld devices offer easy accessibility to the meme, online posts such as “14 of the Worst Latino E-cards” may play a larger role in the maintenance of negative stereotypes. Simple because they represent a compilation of the most offensive and stereotypical memes in one location. On Instagram, memes may be filtered in with other personal pictures of account holders, which can reduce the amount of memes viewed. This article can make a more significant impact on the overall perception of the Hispanic population because it presents memes that otherwise may not have been viewed by the reader.

Through Cosmopolitan’s website and media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram accounts, the meme negatively feeds pre-existing stereotypes about Hispanics. The meme uses superimposed text to reduce Hispanics to manual labor, such as the maid saying she does not work on Fridays, along with Jesus farming, or to “invaders”, as meme #2, which suggests that Hispanics enter illegally into the United States. Chapter 2 discusses how all these negative stereotypes are presented on broadcasting platforms. The meme contributes to and perpetuates the stereotypes that have been traditionally depicted in film and television.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BROADCASTING**

#### Television

For more than five decades network television programs have been America's most important source for understanding the nation and the world. Americans consider network news reports to be an authoritative daily accounting of the unfolding economic and political reality of the United States (Santa Ana xvii). Television is unique because it provides informative content coupled with images and video clips. Radio broadcasting, on the other hand, may not have the same effect as a video presentation on CNN depicting large numbers of police guarding the border against illegal immigrants. News broadcasting platforms have the ability to solidify their communication visually and aurally for maximum internalization by its receptor.

Hispanics constitute the nation's fastest growing minority and as a result, issues related to the Hispanic community are a recurring topic on news networks such as ABC, CNN, and NBC. This is problematic because "when viewing television, few distinguishing features/ categories are present or accessible, except race, and judgments will likely be made based upon that dimension as a result of its presence" (Abrams). Television portrays its subjects in a one-dimensional manner. This chapter explores how people of Hispanic heritages are represented on television and in film to determine how these platforms portray that demographic.

The increase of minority consumers should trigger an equally large increase in roles, advertisements, and programming directed towards that demographic but only 4 to

8 percent does targets this demographic. (Albert and Jacobs 1). There is a disconnect between on-screen representation and real world circumstances, such as the growing Hispanic population in the United States.

When Hispanics constituted 3% of the United States in the 1940's and 1950's they were represented in films and television shows such as *I Love Lucy* and *Zorro* (Negron-Muntaner 6). The discourse about Hispanics on television has begun to shift from whether a person of Hispanic heritage is represented at all to how this person is represented in the roles s/he plays. In recent years, opportunities for Hispanics on television have gradually increased in shows such as *The George Lopez Show* and *Modern Family*. These types of shows are evidence of a progressive shift toward a growing diversity on television.

*The George Lopez Show* aired its first episode in 2002, won a Primetime Emmy in 2005 and has been nominated 32 times for that same award. The success of the show is based on the fact that it has a large following. It provided evidence that diversity on television was welcomed if given an opportunity. The show followed the life of George Lopez, a Mexican American, who lived in Los Angeles and worked as a manufacturing plant manager. Different from normal sitcom television shows, the *George Lopez Show* featured an all Hispanic cast (pictured below) and is considered one of the first representations of routine life for Hispanics in the United States.



The on-screen family's disputes, occupational choices, and economic status can be transfer the scripted episodes into real-life. The success of the show is at the same time a huge achievement and simultaneously continues to portray popular stereotypes regarding Hispanics, such as they have dysfunctional families. The children on the show are constantly frustrated with their parents because of their absence. As a result, they have many conversations with their grandmother regarding their discontent. These scenes perpetuate the idea that Mexicans are not really involved in their children's lives. This parental absence produces internal conflicts and miscommunication. This stereotype is prominently featured on the show "because George always brings up how Benny was not a great mother because she was never really involved because work always got in the way" (George Lopez 1). George makes this comment about his mother and his children have the same complaints. The show depicts a generational cycle of parental absence due to the economic gap of Hispanics.

Nadra Nittle argues that roles for and about Hispanic are reductive. She specifies five common stereotypes of Hispanics on television and film: 'Maids all the time,' 'Latin lovers,' 'Sexpots,' 'Thug Life,' and 'Immigrants.' Each essentialist stereotype reduces the people or group being portrayed to one quality or feature. Roles such as housekeepers and servants underline the idea that Hispanics are at an economic

disadvantage to their American counterparts. This creates an ethnocentric dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ The repetitive identification of Hispanics as inferior, in all areas, promotes hierarchal ranking among racial groups. Charles Ramírez Berg argues that category making, ethnocentrism, and prejudices are the three components of stereotypes:

category making + ethnocentrism + prejudices = stereotypes

Each component of the sequence contributes and they collectively form stereotypes which are negative overgeneralizations.

The 2004 movie *Spanglish* depicts two extremes of the ‘maid all the time’ stereotype. The film is the story of Flor, a woman who emigrates from Mexico to Los Angeles for a better life. Finding a job with a rich, white, American family, Flor works as a housekeeper to provide her daughter, Cristina, with a college education. At the end of the movie, Cristina applies to Princeton University. The maid is triumphant because she is able to provide her daughter the opportunity to attend college. This movie depicts the maid but is not limited to that one dimension. It also shows that Flor’s beginnings are not what define her and neither will they limit her future. While her on screen role depicts the ethnocentric ideology of ‘us’ and ‘them’, Flor’s triumph is representative of a perspective that many Hispanics experience because where they work does not determine who they are.

The second stereotype, ‘Latin Lovers,’ depicts Hispanics men in the role of the love interest or romantic pursuer. Men in these roles such as Antonio Banderas, Fernando Lamas, and Mario Lopez are portrayed as being incredibly suave, sexy, and skilled between the sheets. The character, and by extension, the actor, is objectified. This identity

placed upon Hispanic men may increase ratings and popularity of television shows, but it imprisons them within their roles.

Mario Lopez is commonly identified as one of Hollywood's 'Latin Lovers.' He is most known for his role as A.C. Slater, the high school jock, on "Saved by the Bell" from 1989-1993. In 2008, Mario Lopez was named one of People Magazine's hottest bachelors. The summer issue highlighted him in pictures that displayed a happy individual. However, in the interview that accompanied the photo shoot, Mario expressed his discontent with being objectified. He said: "they'll touch and they'll squeeze, and I kind of felt violated at the end of the day" (Extra 1). Ironically, he becomes a victim of what makes him famous. Mario's sentiments of victimization are results from repetitive roles that reduce the Hispanic male to being one-dimensional.

In 1958, Fernando Lamas, a famous Argentine actor and director, wanted to redefine the 'Latin Lover' to simply a male lover that does not have to be Latin and can be valued for more than just his appearance. Today, Lamas' redefinition of the 'Latin Lover' could help Mario to surpass the limits of both his physical and heritage identities.

Hispanic women are also cast in objectifying roles. 'Sexpots' is considered the counterpart of the 'Latin Lover' in which the woman is objectified as sexy, sultry, loud, and spicy. Hit television show *Desperate Housewives* cast actress Eva Longoria as the sexy homemaker. As the sole female Hispanic representation on the show, Eva's character personifies the 'Sexpot' in her constant pursuit of her young 'Latin Lover.' These stereotypes reduce the individual's cultural identification to pure physicality. This traps Hispanics within their own bodies and reduces their heterogeneous value into a homogenous identification. For example, Eva Longoria's roles as herself and *Desperate*

Housewives character Gabrielle Solis, perpetuate the idea of the promiscuous Latina. During the airing of the show from 2004 and forward, Longoria posed for magazines in over sexualized spreads as promotion for her role as Gabrielle and also as herself. The heterogeneous Longoria and her on screen role, become a homogeneous representation of the 'Sexpot'.

In a promotional ad for *Unleashed* magazine, readers were told: "When she's not seducing the gardener on *Desperate Housewives*, fiery Eva Longoria is seducing newsstand readers" (Merskin 134). A case in point is her production of the 2013 show *Devious Maids* which was the first show in history to feature an all Latina lead cast Two million people watched the first episode, and the show was later picked up for a second season in 2014 (Negrón-Muntaner 28). Longoria broke barriers as the first Latina television producer with an all Latina cast and through her leading role as Gabrielle Solis by promoting stereotypes.

Her media presences between 'self' and 'character' are not mutually exclusive but instead are consistent with one another. As a result instead of combating stereotypes in her personal life she uses them to advance her personal interests. Merskin concludes that: "if Anglos, by way of media-supplied information, come not to expect much of Latinas and, because of the function of internalized oppression, Latinas do not expect much for themselves, the cycle of oppression continues uninterrupted" (148). The 'Sexpot' stereotype maintains that Latina women are directly and only connected to their sexual characteristics.

Depictions of Hispanics as criminals, drug dealers and delinquents on television and in film persuade intergroup conflict and discrimination. Consistent with promiscuous

Latinas, 'Thug Life' is a stereotype that is particularly dangerous because it depicts all Hispanics uniformly as rebels to the law and further perpetuates the idea that they should be feared, avoided and ultimately are not deserving of equal treatment under the law. As the media repetitively presents Latinos as dangerous members of law enforcement and criminal offenders on television shows such as *Scandal*, the character Huck played by Diego Muñoz, and in films such as *West Side Story*, this stereotype begins to manifest itself in real life. In 2005, an analysis of this issue by Dana Mastro and Elizabeth Behm concluded that "Hispanics are more likely to be the object of excessive force at the hands of white police officers" which demonstrates the influence of the media over human psyche (Mastro and Behm 100).

This stereotype of the Hispanic as a criminal or thug can be traced back to one of the most popular American musicals *West Side Story*. In the 1961 production in New York City, Hispanics are presented as part of a Puerto Rican gang in rivalry with a Caucasian one. Today, *West Side Story* continues to enjoy much popularity. The 1961 film depicts Hispanics as gangbangers and unsafe but, in reality, Hispanics earn their living and work the same jobs as white Americans. The problem is that Hispanics are still combatting the same historically ingrained stereotypes from over 50 years ago, such as those represented in 'Thug Life.'

Hispanics as immigrants is one of the most widespread stereotypes in the United States. They are portrayed as recent immigrants to America on popular television shows such as *The George Lopez Show*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Ugly Betty*, and *Modern Family*. The reality is that there are many different Hispanic heritages in the United States, and many communities have lived within the lands now since well before their

annexation. The first European language spoken in the territory now called the United States was not English but Spanish and “some speakers of U.S. Spanish are the direct descendants of those early arrivals” (Balestra, Martínez, Moyna 5). The association of a marked English accent, as being an indicator of citizenship in America is invalid. Further, the United States does not have an official language meaning all peoples have the ability to choose their linguistic preferences.

Actress Lupe Ontiveros gained popularity as actress by playing on the linguistic preferences of casting directors. She reported that she built her career by asking: “You want an accent?” during her castings and the directors would respond with “Yes, we prefer for you to have an accent” and “the thicker and more waddy it is, the more they like it” (Bryce 1). Ontiveros’ used accents to play the role of the Hispanic maid in over 150 movies. She was able to gain success in her career by perpetuating the stereotypes that Hispanics endeavor to overcome today. Today in interviews, Sofia Vergara speaks with an accent but it is not as pronounced as on the show *Modern Family*. She exaggerates her pronunciation of words to emphasize her Columbian heritage. The constant portrayal of Hispanics as immigrants on mainstream television, with thick accents as an indicator of their nationality has embedded this stereotype into the American conscious.

Sofia Vergara is the top-earning actress in Hollywood and is not afraid to play up Hispanic stereotypes to achieve success. What sets Vergara apart from other actresses is that she “is the only Hispanic actress who started her career in a U.S. Hispanic Network and successfully crossed over to the general market” (ABC 1). Her media presence is not limited to her acting roles but extends to some of America’s largest brands, empowering

her with the possibility to be the shift in between stereotypes. Nonetheless, one cannot help but wonder if she would have achieved the same amount of success without playing up stereotypes through her character.

Her leading role as Gloria Pritchett on the popular show *Modern Family* is a departure from previous portrayals of Hispanic women because she is more multi-dimensional and relatable. At the same time, she manifests stereotypes such as the ‘Sexpot’ and prides herself on the knowledge that she is not a maid. This portrayal of a Latino woman transmits the ideas that being overly sexy, loud, and beautiful are all a combination of who they are.

Consider the following two pictures:



Gloria is the only female character wearing racy attire and she also is the center of the cast picture. From the first photo to the second, Sofia is the only cast member that maintain the same attire. Other members of the cast have had slight wardrobe changed but she remains in the same type of low-cut dress. Sofia has said that: “if you’re sexy, if you like dressing sexy, you’re not doing anything more than feeling beautiful.” She has also explained: “I don’t see anything bad about being stereotyped as a Latin woman” (LatinoVoices 2). Sofia is aware that her role as Gloria portrays negative stereotypes but she views them as natural part of who she is and an essential element of the Latina woman. The immigrant stereotype can also be attributed to Vergara’s character. She “hails from a lovely little village in Colombia, which also happens to be the murder capital of that fine country” (ABC 1) and has come to America to make a better life for herself. Latina stereotypes such as boisterous, loud and charming persona is what makes many viewers tune in weekly. Latinas play 67% of all supporting Latino characters (Negrón-Muntaner 11). Vergara’s main role could be the shift in negative stereotypes but, her role undermines her own race.

The representation of Hispanics on television and film has improved greatly over time. Today they are cast for leading roles. This shift from supporting to leading roles is a tacit acknowledgement of the importance of the Hispanic community in the United States. Shows such as *Modern Family* and *The George Lopez Show*, portray many negative stereotypes while shows such as *Jane the Virgin*, pictured below, are beginning to break those traditional molds:

## 2. It reminds us Latinos have all sorts of jobs — not just maids.



In January 2015 lead actress Gina Rodriguez won a Golden Globe for her performance on the show. Julie Zeilinger expresses that “Rodriguez's multidimensional Latina protagonist is part of a stellar cast that offers an arguably unprecedented portrayal of Latinos on network television. *Jane the Virgin* is a necessary breath of fresh air in a media landscape that has historically been unfriendly to women — especially women of color” (8). *Jane the Virgin* complicates stereotypes placed upon Hispanics such as economic disadvantage. The television show depicts Hispanics from all economic classes and promotes that Hispanics are equal to their white American counterparts.

## Film

People of Hispanic heritage have been typecast in film as early as 1933 in *Flying Down to Rio*. This motion picture features the Brazilian woman as the leading actress, wealthy, and in pursuit of her own path in life. The 2010 Census defined Hispanic or Latino as: “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (2). In 1930, “Mexican” was listed as a race for the first time. In terms of racial designation, according to the US Census at that time, a person of Brazilian heritage was considered Hispanic (1).

Delores del Rio, a Mexican actress, plays the beautiful Brazilian *Belinha de Rezende* who visits her aunt in America and catches the eye of the American band composer *Richard Bond*. While Bond becomes mesmerized by her distinct and exotic beauty, voluptuous shape and flirty behavior, her aunt adopts the role of her ‘keeper’ from trouble, men, and American culture. Upon her aunt’s departure from the table in an early scene, she tells her friends not to teach Belinha any American customs. We later learn that Belinha is arranged to be married to Julio who lives in Brazil. Her aunt’s overprotective gestures allude to the idea that her niece cannot control herself sexually, or around men. To ensure that Belinha’s chastity remains intact, her aunt pays Richard Bond to stay away from her.

While this movie may have broken ground featuring Hispanics in leading roles it also, even then, epitomized or perhaps birthed stereotypes that latter Nittle would study. Belinha is objectified because of her beauty. It is what initially catches the eye of the “gigolo”, American band composer Richard Bond. When Belinha sends him over a note, the deliverer says that: “it’s from the dark one” to describe Rezende. Later while Rezende

and Bond share a dance, the American women gossip at the table saying: “what is it that these South Americans got below the equator that we haven’t?” She implies that Hispanic women are infamous for seducing American men.

By 1987, economic status is what drives the characters. In the movie *La Bamba* the characters are aiming to overcome poverty. The film opens on an apricot farm in Northern California where Hispanics work to survive on minimal living allowances. The poverty is what motivates one of the main characters, Bob, to sell drugs and move his family to Southern California, Los Angeles. He turns to drug dealing, an illegal activity, to change his economic situation. The determination for a better life for his family is what leads to Bob’s actions. He does whatever it takes for financial security, including spending time incarcerated. Sacrifice seems to be imbedded in the process. We can compare Bob to Mr. White on AMC’s critically acclaimed *Breaking Bad* which is almost the same premise; sell drugs to ensure a better life. A difference is that Mr. White, ironically the lead white male role character, is lauded and hailed by viewers. Instead of being incarcerated like Bob, Mr. White’s end is ambiguous because we never find out if he dies or is arrested.

Bob’s brother Richie Valenzuela shares the same goal to help his family overcome poverty. However, unlike his brother, he pursues a career that his mother can be proud of. His goal is to become a music star and he gets his big break when a music producer from Delfy Records discovers him. The song “La Bamba” is his most popular and remains to be until present day even though his manager reveals that it “sounds too Mexican and the people won’t like it” and that it “sounds too traditional” and later that “La Bamba is a folk song and I don’t want to offend anyone.” The questions that remain

are: Who is the offended? How does a Spanish Folk song serve as an offense to them? In relation to language, a point of interest is that upon their first meeting, the music producer believes that Richie speaks Spanish and in reality he does not. The assumption that because Richie is Mexican that he must speak Spanish is a stereotype that is still present today in America. In fact Richie, has “never been to Mexico” and perhaps not all Mexicans in America are automatically speakers of the language. It suggests that heritage determines linguistic choice, or that because he is Mexican, he speaks Spanish.

*La Bamba* has generational linguistic and cultural trends that may have altered the overall point of view on Hispanics until present day. Linguistically, the film represents a generational disappearance of spoken Spanish. The elderly are depicted as monolinguals in Spanish, the second generation, such as the Bob and Richie’s mother, is bilingual, and the third most recent generation, Richie and Bob are monolinguals in English and only use certain Spanish lexical items such as ‘abuelo’ and ‘amigo.’ They become passive bilinguals; they can understand but not speak the language.

Another tendency of Hispanic stereotypes in film is that of the appropriation of a new non-Mexican identity so that the character can be more “American.” In the film *La Bamba*, Richie’s manager informs him that they are changing his name from Richie (or Ricardo) Valenzuela to Ritchie Valens. His manager states that “no one will know you’re Mexican” as if to indicate that to be American means not being of Hispanic Heritage. He further argues that the name “Ritchie Valens” is more professional, which may also be interpreted as “more American.” Not only does “Valens” suggest an American-non Hispanic artist but also virtually liberates him of any ties to his Hispanic heritage and his father. A real life representation of creating the American stage name are Martin Sheen

and Charlie Sheen. Born as Ramón Antonio Gerardo Estévez, and Carlos Estévez, the father-son duo are mainstream actors and have no identifying connection to their Spanish heritage. During a 2003 interview, Martin Sheen discussed how his ethnic name limited him, “Whenever I would call for an appointment, whether it was a job or an apartment, and I would give my name, there was always that hesitation and when I'd get there, it was always gone” (Ramirez 3). An American name completely removed them from ethnic associations and has contributed to their success as Hollywood actors.

Sheen’s national origin is Spanish, from Galicia, Spain. There is a current trend in Spanish actors playing Latino roles in films which further limits Hispanics in the United States. According to the Latino Media Gap Report, this trend gained popularity between the 2010-2013 period when Spaniards comprised 0.2% of the U.S. population but played 50% of all Latino lead roles and 27% of Latino supporting roles (12). Not only are U.S. Hispanics underrepresented, but they are also replaced by foreign-born Spaniards. There are hierarchical categories within the stereotyped demographic.

The final stereotype is the Hispanic as a felonious member of society. *La Bamba* as well as the movies *American Me* (1992) and later *My Family* (1995) depict the Hispanic as a criminal. Their implication is that there is an omnipresent tendency of violence amongst Hispanic men. They are shown to be gang members, murderers, drug dealers, and delinquent fathers. In the movie *My Family*, the character Jimmy witnesses at the tender age of 6, his big brother Chucho’s death at the hands of the Los Angeles police. As Jimmy grows up he carries the same anger with him that possessed Chucho as well as a growing fury against the government. He marries Isabel to save her from deportation by “La migra” as an act of rebellion towards the government. When Isabel

dies giving birth to his son Carlitos, he becomes enraged because from his perspective, she dies because she is Mexican, she is poor, and no one cares about his people. During his time in prison due to a robbery he commits to “get back at the government” and he also decides not to be a father because he sees himself as unfit. This perpetuates the stereotype that the Hispanic man is a criminal and generally unfit and his place in society should be behind bars. At the end of the movie Jimmy becomes a ‘good’ father but it is only after the movie has shown the depths of his delinquency.

The themes and character traits found in *My Family* persist in film from 1933 until the present. Some of the most reoccurring are: Hispanics and the continuous search for a sense of belonging and for an understanding of where they fit in American Society, the demand for respect even if they have to create it through the formation of gangs, the Hispanic as the immigrant, and violence. In *American Me* much of the setting takes place inside a Los Angeles prison and among a Chicano gang. It depicts the life of these inmates: Santana, a Mexican American (Chicano), and J.D. a white American who pretends to be Mexican. They are gang leaders who demand to be respected by other inmates through the use of their gang status to create a sense of family and belonging in prison. When Santana is released from prison he never fully leaves his past life behind and as a result struggles to lead a life that adheres to legal parameters. One of the ways this movie can be interpreted is that once a person of Hispanic heritage has been to prison, even if he is released, he may never contribute positively to society.

In 2012, the movie *Casa de Mi Padre* was released. It is an over-dramatic parody of the Hispanic telenovela. The movie is based on the character of Armando, played by Will Ferrell who learned Spanish for his role, and his quest to save a family ranch from a

drug lord. The movie is classified as a comedy but actually presents itself as satire: “a way of using humor to show that someone or something is foolish, weak, bad, etc: humor that show the weakness of bad qualities of a person, government, society, etc”(Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The film employs overdramatized Spanish accents, violence, and especially the criminal Hispanic. It depicts the Mexican cowboy as overly masculine and clumsy, ranch-hands as lazy, and Hispanic women as whores. These motifs are used as a comedic tool however many audiences did not find the movie funny at all but rather found it to be amongst the most offensive they had seen. Movie critic Mel Valentin, writes that “As a feature-length film, even a short one (CASA DE MI PADRE runs 84-minutes, including credits), it’s a dismal, wretched, abject failure, an anti-comedy, a self-indulgent personal project crammed with offensive stereotypes about Latino culture and Latino women.” The movie poster, depicted below, mirrors Valentin’s criticisms. In it we see Will Ferrell’s overly dramatized expression and body posture, a woman plastered to him searching for his attention and the phrase “From the gringos who brought you ‘anchorman’.” All of the content of the film plays on and perpetuates negative stereotypes.



According to the 2013 Motion Picture Association annual theater report, Hispanics attend movies screenings more than any other demographic and every week they buy 25% of all movie tickets (Negrón-Muntaner 7). Despite these numbers, Hispanic representation in movies remains significantly low. Movies such as *Casa de Mi Padre* contribute to the gap in Hispanic diversity while also maintaining negative stereotypes. Will Ferrell, an Anglo-American actor, is cast as the leading role in the film, a role which could have featured a Hispanic actor. This film mocks Hispanics, features them as uneducated and portrays Latino women as hyper-sexualized beings. When Latinos buy movie tickets, they may well be paying to be mocked, stereotyped, and further decreased in the social hierarchy through subliminal on-screen images.

## YouTube

YouTube is another form of broadcasting which has taken part in the social media boom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. YouTube reaches more adults in the United States than any cable network and has earned more than one billion viewers per month with millions of new subscriptions (YouTube). Content creators are making over six figures each year and as a result, many have designated YouTube as the main output for their creative works. It is an indication of how media platforms are transforming media consumption. With thousands of channels grossing over six figures and over one million creators making profit from their videos, YouTube is a powerhouse.

Accessibility contributed to its success since its creation in 2007. Today it is available on every device with internet capability. According to their statistics page, “Over 6 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube—that's almost an hour for every person on Earth” (YouTube). Mobile phones and devices account for up to 40% of the locations where all videos are viewed.

YouTube is the biggest media site for broadcasting and Hispanics make up the largest minority demographic in the United States thus Hispanics and YouTube are inevitably connected. Hispanics are more visible online because they are able to create their own content and decide what types of contributions they will make. Among the top 200 channels, 25 are dedicated to music channels. The Latino media Gap reported that four or 16% of the most popular artists are Hispanic: Pitbull, Selena Gomez, Demi Lovato, and Shakira (35). Another example of Latina online positive representation is Bethany Mota pictured here:



The Mexican-Portuguese YouTube sensation has almost 9 million subscribers, 700 million video views, has a clothing line with top U.S. brand Aeropostale, was a contestant on primetime ABC show *Dancing with the Stars* and has been featured on almost every top teen magazine cover.

In addition to Mota, Hispanic presence on YouTube is represented by the demand for videos in Spanish. It is evident that YouTube content creators have become aware of the Hispanic demographic because some front-runners in the community now offer their content in Spanish. For example, “ItsJudyTime” with 1.2 million subscribers has created a separate channel, “BellezaconJudy,” with videos in Spanish. While they are voice-over videos, meaning she herself isn’t speaking Spanish, the videos are enjoyable and easy to understand. “BellezaconJudy” was created in 2012 and today has over 1.4 million views and 25,000 subscribers. While her Spanish channel has fewer subscribers and views, the channel is active in uploading on a regular basis and is growing in subscribers. It is

evident that content providers are actively making advances to connect with their Hispanic audiences.

On the other hand, these positive advances are negated through other destructive content on YouTube and some go as far to consider it a main breeding ground for stereotypes. For example, “SUPERreeGO” and “ItsJudyTime” are comparable in numbers of subscribers but they are opposite in how they treat the Hispanic demographic. “SUPERreeGO” has almost 2 million subscribers and over 350 million views on his channel. His channel description states: “The home of Comedic shorts and Cholo Adventures! Come along for the Adventure of Mexican gangsters who GET DOWN CRAZY!” (YouTube). Consider these video thumbnails and number of views:



**You know you're Mexican if... (Part 7)**  
1,403,620 views • 2 months ago



**How Cholos Pack a Suitcase**  
1,041,185 views • 1 year ago



**Types of Mexicans - The Try Hard (Part 2)**  
885,716 views • 1 year ago



**Driving with a MEXICAN MOM [PART 1]**  
2,616,006 views • 10 months ago



**Don't Pull out a Knife**

1,243,493 views • 1 year ago



**Mexicans Be like ...**

4,329,173 views • 1 year ago

In addition to these videos, all of his content negatively portrays Hispanics as criminals. We see that the video with over 4 million views features a thumbnail of two Hispanic women in compromising positions. This video alone portrays the ‘Sexpot’ stereotype and objectified Hispanic women to 4 million people and Lei Guo and Summer Harlow believe that channels like “SUPEReeeGO” maintain Hispanic stereotypes. In their article, “User-Generated Racism: An Analysis of Stereotypes of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians in YouTube Videos,” Guo and Summer Harlow describe YouTube as a form of alternative media that groups like African Americans, women, and immigrants turn to because they are “excluded from the mainstream media, political, social and cultural fringe” (283). In essence mainstream media is a source for the majority while YouTube and alternative media has become a source for ‘the other’ groups- whether self-defined by their race, gender, heritage, or culture. Alternative media platforms give these groups the opportunity to create their own media, meaning the ability to emerge from the restraints of society. Guo and Harlow analyzed the role of YouTube in the production or maintenance of racial stereotypes by using keywords in the YouTube search engine such as “Black, Latino, African-American, Blacks, Asians, etc.” They found that among the videos containing Latinos, almost 100% of them not only reinforced negative stereotypes but also failed to challenge them. They also concluded that the same racial stereotypes

emphasized in mainstream media were also popular in YouTube videos. Not only did YouTube serve to reinforce stereotypes but it also contributed to furthering the second most common Hispanic stereotype, the woman as an object. While YouTuber's such as "ItsJudyTime" make efforts to connect with the Hispanic community, through her monolingual Spanish channel, there are thousands of other channels like "SUPEReeeGO" that counteract these efforts. It can be concluded that YouTube reinforces negative stereotypes about Hispanics in the United States.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **CONCLUSION**

The goal of this thesis is to investigate, layout, and analyze how Hispanics are viewed in the United States through varied Media platforms. Hispanics are represented in memes, film, and other media content. In all of these sources, it seems that stereotypes are maintained, reinforced, and recirculated by dominant culture. Hispanics are continually portrayed as ‘the other’ through demeaning representations which further encourages ethnocentric ideologies.

What this work adds to the general discussion on Hispanics and stereotypes is the importance of meme. Hispanic presence on movies and in television shows has a limited audience for a definitive period of time. For example in 1933, “Flying Down To Rio” had a specific audience of dominant white persons and over time its popularity has decreased. Additionally, not many Hispanics directors produced movies in the early 1900’s, which enabled dominant culture to control what roles Hispanics held and how they were portrayed in those roles.

While television availed Hispanics more opportunities for roles, it is also restricted by the same parameters as film. A notable change is that television show producers were able to limit Hispanics to marginalized type-cast roles on a weekly basis instead of in a specified two hour film. Stereotypes are ingrained by repetitive presentations of the same ideologies to their receptors and a weekly sit-com has greater lasting impact than a film.

Of the top 10 television shows from 2010 to 2013, Hispanics constituted 0% of producers which shows how the ‘inside’ dominant culture is able to control, and further

widen the gap, between themselves and the ‘outside’(Negrón-Muntaner 12). In the 1990’s Hispanics were most often cast as criminals, law enforcement, or security and in 2013, almost 2 decades later, Hispanics are typecast in the same roles. Gloria Pritchett from Modern Family is one of two leading Hispanic roles that were not members of law enforcement (16-17). Sofia Vergara’s role is the exception to criminal/law enforcement stereotype but the irony is that she reinforces almost other Hispanic stereotype.

The meme has depleted all barriers of the previous media platforms. It has materialized the negative stereotypes that have been recycled throughout American history and are now presenting them to young adult populations. The meme is not limited by those who have resources to create content such as well-to-do movie producers because it is not a platform that requires money and thus all individuals can create one. Most importantly, memes can be disseminated both instantly and widely. They are available to all users of social media as opposed to a select movie audience. In March 2015 Facebook statistics found that 1.44 billion people are active users of the site (1). It is very rare that almost 1.5 billion people will go to see the same movie. Thus, memes are easy to access and repost, making their impact the greatest all media platforms.

The instant sharing of memes with just one click is a source of Hispanic stereotypes because it reflects how powerful the Media has become. In connection with the fact that Hispanics are the largest minority population in the United States, these stereotypes are not created overnight but instead are matured over time. The same stereotypes presented in memes are those that have been recycled through film, television.

Future investigation to expand the analysis of this topic can include how Hispanics view themselves on social media and how they represent who they are as an individual. Specifically an analysis of their contribution, or lack thereof, to stereotypes placed upon them through media platforms. If the memes in chapter two are reposted by a Hispanic, what does this demonstrate about how he views himself? And in addition, how will persons of other ethnicities react to his actions? Surely variants such as motive, context, meme content, and age are factor in the determination of these possible reactions.

A case in point is the use of term ‘nigger’ by African Americans has yielded and for some changed in meaning. Today some African Americans refer to one another and aim to get their attention by using the term. Not only can it be used to in daily conversation but also as an almost endearing gesture depending on the context of the conversation. With a historic background of slavery and racism in America and the origin of the word, one cannot fathom why blacks would use it not only amongst themselves but also on social media networks as they become more and more popular. When the demographic uses the term publically and socially then others may believe it to be acceptable.

The ongoing debate on the use of ‘nigger’ has evolved gradually through occurrences of the term on Facebook and Instagram. Returning to people who identify with the Hispanic heritage and stereotypes, if they find the memes above to be humorous and repost them to their followers, it can be interpreted as normalizing and suggesting it is appropriate for others also to joke about sensitive issues. Some may view the memes as contributing to perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Further, it can be argued that film, television, and the meme use the same stereotypical and essentialist patterns. In film, Hispanics were marginalized into type-cast roles which continued on television and most presently in the meme. Over time the stereotypes about Hispanics have not changed. They have only been expressed through varied media platforms. For example, *American Me* (1992) and meme #2 hold the same stereotype of Hispanics as criminals.

The platforms addressed in this paper only scratch the surface of this topic. I suggest that as social media continues to expand, Hispanic representation will follow. A potential area of study is the Hispanic perspective on these stereotypes. Interview conducted about their background, social media presence and opinion on memes, Spanish and bilingual radio, and Hispanic actors can change the dynamic of this work for the better. Not only would this give revelation to what Hispanics think about Hispanics but also begin the conversation on how their opinions will vary. This will also eliminate overgeneralizations or that Hispanics will be offended by something that is seen as offensive towards them. For example, the Chinese basketball team made no official comment stating that they were offended by the Chinese eye imitation photo and in addition the act was seen as endearing to a member of the 'offended demographic'.

Lastly, I wish to remove the idea that all Hispanics will see memes as offensive and identify with stereotypes on television. Only the individual can determine their perspective and what offends them. In the future, as the media grows along with the population of Hispanics in the United States, I hope to return to this topic.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, Jessica. "Television Activity Among African Americans: Is It Related To Perceptions Of Outgroup Vitality?." International Communication Association. (2005): 1. Supplemental Index. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.
- Albert, Terri C., and Randy D. Jacobs. "Television attitudes and TV types of African-Americans, Latinos, and Caucasians." *Journal of Advertising Research* 48.2 (2008): 235-246.
- Balestra, Alejandra, Glenn Martinez, and María Irene Moyna, eds. *Recovering the US Hispanic linguistic heritage: Sociohistorical approaches to Spanish in the United States*. Arte Público Press, 2008.
- Bryce, Alison. "Latina Actress Aims To Break Maid Stereotype." *NPR.com* . 12 April 2009. Web. 11 Nov 2014.
- Clement, Scott. "The Data on White Anxiety over Hispanic Immigration: What drives American views on immigration is often not pretty." *The Washington Post*. TheWashingtonPost.com, 14 Aug. 2014. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.
- "Facts for Features: Hispanic Heritage Month 2014: Sept. 15–Oct. 15." United States Census Bureau. N.p., 8 Sept. 2014. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.
- "George Lopez: The Reinforcement of Stereotypes." *Race and Ethnicity*, 14 Nov. 2013. Web. 12 Jan 2015.

“George Lopez.” *The Internet Movie Database*. IMDB.com, Inc, n.d. Web. 12 Jan 2015.

Gil, Paul. “What Is a 'Meme'? What Are Examples of Modern Internet Memes?.” *About Tech*. About.com, 2015. Web. 2 Oct. 2014.

“Gloria Pritchett.” *ABC.com*. ABC Television Network, n.d. Web. 12 Nov 2014.

Guo, Lei, and Summer Harlow. "User-generated racism: An Analysis of Stereotypes of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians in YouTube Videos." *Howard Journal of Communications* 25.3 (2014): 281-302.

"Invade" Def 2. Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

Def 3. Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

*La Bamba*. Dir. Luis Valdez. Prod. Taylor Hackford. Columbia Pictures, 1987.

Mastro, Dana E., and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. "Latino Representation on Primetime Television." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82.1 (2005): 110-130. *Social Sciences Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*. Web. 11 Oct 2015.

"Media." Oxford English Dictionary. OED, n.d. Web. 10 Aug. 2014.

“Members of Spanish Team Say Photo Not Meant as Offensive.” *ESPN*. ESPN.com, 15 Aug. 2008. Web. 17 Feb. 2015.

Merskin, Debra. "Three faces of Eva: Perpetuation of the hot-Latina stereotype in *Desperate Housewives*." *The Howard Journal of Communications* 18.2 (2007): 133-151.

- Monger, Randall and James Yankay. "U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents: 2013." *DHS Office of Immigration Statistics*. DHS.gov, May 2014. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.
- Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. 2014. "The Latino Media Gap: A report on the State of Latinos in U.S. Media." *Columbia.edu.*, 15 Jun 2014. Web. 23 April 2015.
- Nittle, Nadra Kareem. "Five Common Black Stereotypes in TV and Film." *About.com Race Relations*, 2014. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
- Nunez, Alanna. "Netflix Filming Its First-Ever Spanish-Language Series." *Cosmopolitan.com*. Cosmopolitan Magazine., 15 Jan. 2015. Web. 23 April 2015.
- Pac, Teresa. "The English-only movement in the US and the world in the twenty-first century." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 11.1 (2012): 192-210.
- Pisak, Gyongi. Personal iInterview. 11 Nov 2014.
- Protalinski, Emil. "Facebook passes 1.23 billion monthly active users, 945 million mobile users, and 757 million daily users." *The Next Web.*, 29 Jan. 2014. Web. 12 Jan 2015.
- Ramírez, Berg C. "Latino Images in Film. Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance." (2002).
- Ramirez, Erika. "The True Identity of Charlie Sheen: Tracing the Roots of The Estevez Family." *Latina Magazine.*, 25 Feb. 2011. Web. 28 April 2015.
- Ramirez, Tanisha. "14 of the Worst Latino E-cards." *Cosmopolitan.com*. Cosmopolitan Magazine., 24 Jan 2014. Web. 28 Sept. 2014.

“Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.” *The White House*.

WhiteHouse.gov, 29 Jan. 2015. Web. 27 Jan 2015.

Santa Ana, Otto. *Juan in a hundred: The representation of Latinos on network news*.

University of Texas Press, 2012.

"Satire." Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2014.

Simanski, John. "Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2013." *DHS Office of Immigration*

*Statistics*. DHS.gov, May 2014. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.

"Social Media." Oxford English Dictionary. OED, n.d. Web. 10 Aug. 2014.

“Sofia Vergara: Is She Taking The Latino Stereotype Too Far?.”

TheHuffingtonPost.com. TheHuffintonPost, 19 Mar 2012. Web. 10 Oct 2014.

“State of the Hispanic Consumer: The Hispanic Market Imperative.” *Neilson*. The

Nielsen Company, 2012. Web. 20 April 2015.

“Stats.” *Facebook.com*. Facebook, n.d. Web. 1 April 2015.

“Statistics.” *YouTube.com.*, n.d. Web. 2 Feb 2015.

United States Census Bureau. “1930.” *United State Census 1930*. Washington: US

Census Bureau, 31 Mar. 2014. Web. 12 April 2014.

“2010” *United State Census 2010*. Washington: US Census Bureau, n.d. Web. 12

April 2014.

Valentin, Mel. "Review-Casa de Mi Padre." *Veryaware.com*, 15 Mar. 2012. Web. 13 Nov 2014.

Zeilinger, Julie. "6 Ways 'Jane the Virgin' Is Destroying Latino Stereotypes." *Mic.com*, 18 Feb 2015. Web. 10 April 2015.