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1. Introduction

Stereotyping is part of everyday life. When people observe others, they do not discover all the details immediately. People tend to assign other people, animals, objects to various categories. In the categorization process, people stereotype others based on the generalities they discover about them. Using categories for others is a natural process. It is the way how the human brain is functioning. Problems occur when the categorization is used to support negative arguments that may harm groups of people. Minorities are especially affected by this phenomenon. Since minority groups differ from the dominant group, which is mostly White people, they face stereotyping in every aspect of life. Stereotyping is not a harmful process, but it is used to highlight differences so that the dominant group can strengthen its position on the top of the hierarchy.

Based on the 2010 Census, Latinos/as are one of the fastest-growing minorities in the United States. Still, their representation in media, politics, and public life is problematic, and they are consistently stereotyped. In this thesis, I am examining the Latino/a stereotypes represented in 21st century Hollywood dramas. I selected Hollywood cinema as it is a mass media that has the power to influence public opinion. Hollywood movies reach a broad audience; they can approach millions of people worldwide. Moreover, in the 21st-century, people have access to different media channels in almost every corner of the world. A new film is released, and everybody talks about it on the various media platforms. People see the latest trends in the media, and they share it with others with the help of social media. Thus, what people see and hear is spreading across the world swiftly. As part of the mass media, Hollywood is influencing many aspects of life. When Hollywood sets new trends, there are millions of people following it.

Hollywood cinema has an enormous role in implementing stereotypes about Latinos in people's minds. Of course, these films are not the only ones responsible for stereotypes. Society has a significant role in maintaining stereotypes, as well. People use the pre-made categories instead of discovering others on their own. Thus, what is offered by the films is accepted without questioning it. Then the stereotypes presented in films are applied to everyone belonging to that stereotyped group.

Latinos/as are discriminated against by the stereotypes presented in Hollywood films. They are seldom in the leading roles, but if they are, then it is never without a White person supporting them. The stereotypes applied to Latinos/as are degrading, barely ever presenting them in a

positive role. Some stereotypes, like the *bandido*, have a historical background, but it was changed in order to put the White characters into a better light. Stereotypes are changing, but the change does not seem to be a positive one. It is more like adjusting stereotypes to the actual political views.

I selected three Hollywood dramas from the 21st century to see how they are using Latino/a stereotypes. Two of the films were directed by White American directors (*Crash* by Paul Haggis, and *Traffic* by Steven Soderbergh), while the director of the third film is Mexican (*Babel* by Alejandro González Iñárritu). All three films portray Latinos/as in stereotyped roles. The Latino/a characters of the selected films will be analyzed based on the list of Latino/a stereotypes by Charles Ramírez Berg and my observations. I expect to find an improvement in stereotypes, especially in *Babel*. With my thesis, I hope to draw attention to the disadvantageous situation of Latinos/as.

2. Stereotypes and Hollywood Films

2.1 The System and Function of Stereotypes

Before talking about the Latino/a stereotypes that are represented in Hollywood films, it is necessary to learn what the term *stereotype* means, what its function is, and why people are stereotyping. In 1922, Walter Lippmann invented the term *stereotyping* for categorizing (Berg 14). He intended to use it for focusing on details but found it not useful to apply it for looking at types and generalities (Berg 14). Lippmann realized that it is easier to see all things in general than observing the details. In other words, it is a better and faster way to see the overall picture than carrying out a detailed analysis. The overall picture then occurs in the minds of people, just as Lippman called stereotypes “pictures in our head” (Rodriguez 105). However, these pictures need to be connected and put into categories. Lippmann also discovered how people create categories to build a fluent process for understanding others. People put others immediately into groups based on the first thing that is recognizable about them. This way, it is easier to recognize others on the following occasions.

To be affiliated with groups is not a new phenomenon; it is part of the existence within society. Everybody belongs to a specific group by sharing the same origin, culture, language, belief, education, or interests. The members of a specific group are alike in one way or another. If someone outside of a group sees the others, that person recognizes and remarks only the most

evident and visible characteristics about them. It is easier this way than taking the time and effort to get to know every member of a group. According to Charles Ramírez Berg, when everybody is looking at the overall picture, it means that everybody is stereotyping (Berg 14). By doing so, only the generalities are discovered but not the details. People are creating groups and categories based on generalities only. However, it does not mean that everybody is racist, or everybody is stereotyping purely out of hate towards others. It is simply how the human brain is functioning. “Stereotyping is a psychological mechanism, having to do with the creation of categories, which allows people to manage the swirl of data presented them from the environment” (Rodriguez 105). Thus, stereotyping in itself is a simple mechanism that helps people to have a better understanding of their surroundings. In their book, Craig McGarty, Vincent Yzerbyt, and Russell Spears points it out: “groups and individuals have their effects on us through their psychological representation, and in particular, the representation of individuals as members of groups [...]. Such representations or impressions of groups [...] are called stereotypes. These are psychological representations of the characteristics of people that belong to particular groups” (2). The problem begins only when these stereotypes are infused with “value-laden – that is, negative or positive – connotations” (Berg 14). Berg is then entitled to ask the question: “How does stereotyping evolve from being a value-free process to being a value-laden one?” (14). To find the answer to his question, some aspects of stereotyping need to be discussed.

McGarty et al. introduce “three guiding principles” when searching for the answer to the question, “What are stereotypes?” (2). First, stereotypes are aids to explanation; second, stereotypes are energy-saving devices; third, stereotypes are shared group beliefs (McGarty et al. 2). For my research, the third principle is the most adequate. Stereotypes show the way how different groups see each other: “Shared stereotypes are useful for predicting and understanding the behavior of members of one group to another” (McGarty et al. 5). However, it is mostly the group of White people who tend to use stereotypes for securing their position in society. Stereotypes created by Whites are emphasized and highlighted in the media, and in this case, Hollywood. It should be clarified why White people have such an inclination to stereotypes. As an example, Stuart Hall mentions the slavery era, where Whites tried to naturalize racial differences. White people reduced the “cultures of black people to Nature, or naturalizing ‘difference’” (Hall 234). Hall points out that “Black people were reduced to the signifiers of their physical difference – thick lips, fuzzy hair, broad face and nose, and so on” (234). This naturalization of an ethnic group supports the evidence that White people use stereotypes to secure their position and to prove they are superior to other ethnic groups. The characteristics

mentioned above are highlighted in the African American stereotypes but analyzing it would be another thesis topic. However, the same method was applied when creating stereotypes about other races, like Latinos/as. This process of categorizing is a perfect example of ethnocentrism and is one of the reasons for using stereotypes with negative connotations. Members of one group are considering themselves as the “center of everything” and compare all other groups to themselves (Berg 14).

Society is constructed by groups of individuals who can be categorized based on their ethnicity, beliefs, appearance, taste, style, or other characteristics. These groups are created by stereotypes and are an integral part of society. McGarty et al. argue that “without individuals there could be no society, but unless individuals also perceive themselves to belong to groups, that is, to share characteristics, circumstances, values and beliefs with other people, then society would be without structure or order. These perceptions of groups are called stereotypes” (McGarty et al. 1). Therefore, stereotypes are needed; they are part of groups and society. Even if they are not beneficial, stereotypes give structure to society. Hall explained that “stereotyping [...] is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order” (248). Since society is constructed from groups, stereotypes may create an unhealthy and false structure. Stereotypes are never appealing; they are creating and maintaining differences between groups. Moreover, the representation of groups and individuals has its “effects on us through their psychological representation, and in particular, the representation of individuals as members of groups” (McGarty 2). Stereotypical representation of groups is influencing society, hence the public opinion.

As stated above, stereotypes do have a useful function in our society, but they can also be used in the wrong way. Stereotypes can be rude and offensive if they stigmatize individuals belonging to a group. By group, we can think of ethnic, religious, or any other group collecting people sharing the same beliefs, values, or characteristics. The question arises of how these stereotypes become so popular. Many have different stereotypes in mind describing the same group. Why do some stereotypes become shared by a wide range of society while others not? McGarty answers this question: “...there is a shared cultural pool of knowledge, social representations, ideology or culture from which different people sample and it is this which produces the commonality of views” (6). However, one’s own experiences can also determine how someone is using stereotypes. Daniel Bernardi mentions stereotypes as “dependent upon the relativity of the viewer’s previous knowledge” and also as “collections of recognizable traits” (82). We can conclude that stereotypes are inherited in society. Once used, they never

disappear. Patricia G. Devine explains this phenomenon: “ethnic attitudes and stereotypes are part of the social heritage of a society and no one can escape learning the prevailing attitudes and stereotypes assigned to the major ethnic groups (5). The members of stereotyped groups also fuel the so called shared cultural pool of knowledge:

[...] stereotypes are normative beliefs just like other beliefs. They are shared by members of groups not just through the coincidence of common experience or the existence of shared knowledge within society, but because the members of groups act to coordinate their behavior. [...] Group members engage in processes of differentiation to make their groups distinctive from other groups so that their members become more similar to each other on relevant dimensions. (McGarty et al. 6)

Individuals become members of groups as they share the same characteristics. They are similar to one another; otherwise, they would not be in the same group. Since they are part of the same group, they stick together, and through the time they become more and more similar to each other. The spirit of belonging somewhere affects the mind and motivates individuals. They tend to “become more similar and different, and stereotyping needs to be able to capture this dynamism” (McGarty et al. 6). It is why stereotypes are changing: to follow the changes in the groups. However, the long-used stereotypes do not disappear; they adapt to the changes.

The stereotypical perceptions about groups point out the differences. Stereotypes are not descriptive, rather distinguishing. The in-group defines the features of the out-group, which make the out-group different from the in-group. The in-group is using those differences to degrade the out-group compared to the in-group. There is a tendency that pointing out someone’s weakness or mistake is more acceptable by society than emphasizing a person’s positive attributes. The in-group wants to be better than the out-group. One group may place itself above others by securing its position by the stereotypes. As quoted by McGarty et al., Tajfel pointed out that: “stereotypes can serve to maintain the status quo. The stereotype that Blacks are less intelligent than Whites might serve to justify the maintenance of limited programmes for educational advancement by Blacks” (McGarty 8). The situation of Latinos/as is almost the same. White people use stereotypes when describing people originating from Latin America.

However, one’s own experiences can influence stereotypes just as Joshua Fishman pointed it out (As in Berg 16). Fishman used this ideology to support his statement of why so many people have the same view when it comes to certain stereotypes (Berg 15). He also noted that when there was a change in public opinion about stereotypes, it was always influenced by political, social, or economic changes.

It must not be forgotten, that one specific stereotype is not a cultural thing. There are lazy people among African Americans, but it does not mean laziness is a cultural trait of this ethnic group. It may or may not refer to a small part of the group, but another group exaggerated it. Although many people judge based on the stereotypes even though they may or may not refer to a few traits of some members of an out-group, but not the whole out-group. However, once a stereotype is used, the in-group applies it as a general fact that generalizes every member of the out-group. This behavior suggests that everybody in the out-group is the same and ignores variety and individuality (Berg 16).

Nevertheless, stereotypes are not only describing groups of individuals, but they are also a message to society. Stereotypes transmitted through the media reach the whole world. Some “stereotypes attract little attention when they are not shared by many people” (McGarty 5), but stereotypes of Latinos/as in Hollywood films are shared by a wide range of audiences. People then get familiar with these ideas if they may be called ideas. As James Craig Holte explained: “the images we see on screen do become real [...] the images we elect to view shape our world and our attitudes towards it, and the way in which film and television depict ethnic-cultural America” (Holte 101). The audience begins to apply the movie stereotypes to different groups of individuals. People use stereotypes to support their own ideas about race and ethnicity. Johana P. Lopez explains that society is familiar with various stereotypes about minorities. They are transmitted through “the mass media, public discourse, and personal prejudices” and “shape public perceptions and opinions, but also social attitudes and behaviors toward Latino immigrants” (Lopez 100). The fact that stereotypes are so popular shows that society is more responsive to negative examples than to positive ones. As if it was not significant to reflect the positive characteristics of certain groups but only the negative ones. The more appealing side of Latinos/as is barely highlighted in Hollywood cinema. Sometimes filmmakers refer to it, but usually, it does not get as much attention as negative characteristics.

In his book, *Latino Images in Film*, Charles Ramírez Berg examines stereotypes with a focus on Latinos/as. To get a better overview of their effects on Latinos/as, he starts by establishing the meaning and function of stereotypes. According to Berg, stereotypes can be “pictures in our heads kind of stereotypes or mediated stereotypes on screen” (38). The first ones exist in people’s heads, based on mostly personal experiences. The latter stereotypes are the ones used in the media, showing a public view (Berg 38). The stereotypes that are pictures in our heads “may or may not be the basis for a racist tract”, they are shared in smaller circles, in in-groups (Berg 38). However, the mediated stereotype that occurs in “Hollywood cinema, has a global

reach” (Berg 38). That is why it is so essential to examine the stereotypes that appear in Hollywood cinema. They most probably appear worldwide, reaching a broad audience thus implementing Hollywood’s own ideas on people. Stereotypes presented in films have a significant impact on society.

As stated by Berg, everybody is stereotyping when it means “the creation of categories based on the recognition of gross difference(s)” (14). He adds that, of course, this kind of stereotyping is not wrong; it is not racist. It is part of the way the human brain is functioning (Berg 14). Every mind creates categories to differentiate between objects, and through one’s own experiences, these categories are associated with “positive or negative connotations” (Berg 14). However, as Berg points out, stereotyping is sadly “the act of making judgments and assigning negative qualities to other individuals or groups” (Berg 14). It is a useful process, but people do not use it for an appropriate purpose. Stereotyping itself is not harmful but using it as a tool of judging others turns it into a damaging practice. Stereotyping is an efficient process, but society is using it to emphasize differences between groups of people. The reason for this might be ethnocentrism and prejudice. Ethnocentrism is a “view of things in which one’s own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled or rated with reference to it” (Sumner as in Berg 14). The in-group is the standard to which all others are compared and measured (Berg 14). Only the in-group is perfect, others belonging to the out-group would always be looked at as imperfect.

Prejudice, the second factor in the harmful use of stereotyping, means “judging Others as innately inferior based on ethnocentrically determined difference” (Berg 14-15). In other words, the members of the out-group are naturally not as good as the members of the in-group. The out-group is different in its culture, skin color, language, or origin. It is the prejudicial thinking, which also has a view that the out-group cannot change (Berg 15). Considering Berg’s description of stereotyping, the concept is the following: category making, ethnocentrism, and prejudice are the ingredients of stereotyping. In other words, it is “a negative generalization used by an in-group (Us) about an out-group (Them)” (Berg 15). In this thesis, the in-group is the group of White people, and the out-group is the group of Latinos/as.

Berg says, “being gross generalizations, stereotypes are conveniently ahistorical, selectively omitting the out-group’s social, political, and economical group history” (Berg 17). To support his idea, he mentions the stereotype of the Mexican *bandido*. He says that everybody has a specific picture in their heads about a *bandido*. When asked, people describe the *bandido* as seen on the Hollywood screens: “unkempt appearance”, carrying weapons, wearing a sombrero,

“sneering look” (Berg 17). Furthermore, Berg says that there is a truth behind this image, as some time ago a few Mexicans had a similar look, although they were not bandits, they fought in the Mexican Revolutionary War between 1910-1920. The way Hollywood has introduced these figures is “inaccurate and anachronistic” (Berg 18). “In the Mexican experience, these men were the “good guys” who fought against the despotic dictator Porfirio Díaz under leaders like Pancho Villa” (Berg 18).

The rebel horse soldiers’ mobility was enhanced in no small measure by the fact that they carried their ammunition with them in the form of *bandoleros* across their chests. Even their sombreros have a positive signification, in that they were ingenious adaptations to a harsh environment allowing the wearer to “carry” his shade with him. All of these important historical details are either omitted or completely recast in the stereotype. (Berg 18)

Hollywood cinema interpreted for their own use the image of the *bandido*, leaving out such important background information that could have changed the stereotype now existing. Hollywood created their own characters, ignoring the historical facts. The problem with this is that the “virtual (stereotypical) history can replace the actual (lived) one” and “stereotypical images can become familiar to the point that they eventually seem normal, even ‘natural’” (Berg 18). The image of the dangerous *bandido* appeared in many western movies, where the good guys – the White cowboys representing WASP culture – were fighting against them (Berg 17). However, the first Latino/a stereotypes appeared after the first contact between Americans and Latin Americans in the Southwest in the 1830s. Americans considered Latin Americans “backwardlooking [sic] in their bigotry and corruption, and unfitted for the exercise of political responsibility or essentially childlike and untutored, and thus in clear need of the training and education which Americans could provide” (Campbell 240).

Of course, Hollywood can argue that they do not say there are no other options. In fact, Hollywood never claimed that the “characters in its films are meant to be taken literally (and therefore seriously), or ever meant to be representative of entire social groups” (Berg 18). Writers in Hollywood always find excuses and explanations for their actions that may sound idyllic. However, the ethnic characters in Hollywood films always embody a stereotype. It cannot be a coincidence. Berg is arguing with the following statement: “Hollywood is simply telling stories, and the characters within its films serve a narrational function, not a representational one” (18). Yet, the number of Latino/a characters portrayed as criminals, “bad guys”, loud, or hot-headed is vast. Berg mentions that “the Colombian drug runner is an updated version of *el bandido*” (Berg 19). The old *bandido* stereotype is still alive, but it was adjusted to the new circumstances. Daniel Bernardi states that “the stereotype cannot be ‘fixed’ in an

ahistorical zone, for not only will each period define its own stereotypes, but it will also offer tactics for their unveiling” (83). Filmmakers need new versions of the old stereotypes for entertainment.

He points out that narration can quickly turn into representation if it is repeated all the time (Berg 19).

Stereotypes are false to history, but conform to another historical tradition – namely, the history of movies and movie stereotyping. They begin, over time, to become part of the narrative form itself – anticipated, typical, and all well nigh “invisible”. Ironically, then *representation becomes narration*: we expect *el bandido* to appear in a Western set in the Southwest – he’s part of the landscape – and when he does, we expect him to be villainous and to act in predictably despicable, criminal, and inhuman ways. Far from being surprised by this, we are instead more likely to be surprised when it *doesn’t* occur. (Berg 19)

This process helps the spread of stereotypes. The audience of these movies believe that this is the true nature of those particular groups targeted in the films. The stereotyped groups then become condemned with negative features and characteristics. But the main problem is not that Hollywood does not rely on history and changes the true nature of some groups, but that people accept without questioning what they are offered on the screen. In some cases, I might risk saying that Hollywood movies can overwrite personal experiences with the members of the affected groups. As Berg mentioned, people could be surprised when Hollywood stereotypes turned into expectations that are not happening in real life. Let us say there are many stereotypes about the out-group which are not historically proven, but when one member of the out-group somehow proves it, then the in-group is applying that on every member of the out-group.

Another important fact pointed out by Berg is that “stereotypes are not simply frames of mind, but actual beliefs” (Berg 19). As Gordon Allport’s research shows, these beliefs about stereotypes are so powerful, they can have serious psychological effects on members of both in-group and out-group (Berg 20). The beliefs determine future experiences, which will be viewed in terms of the old beliefs. So, the old stereotypes or beliefs will never disappear, but they might change a bit. Once wrong is always wrong, just the appearance changes. Until mass media is the dominant channel, the stereotypes created by the dominant majority will be the main influencers. Although there are stereotypes from the subordinate minority towards the dominant majority, but “stereotypes usually go one way: from the dominant to the disenfranchised in the margins” (Berg 21). Stereotypes also signify power relations, as the dominant group convinces itself that they are better than the others (Berg 21-22). Furthermore, by the repetition of stereotypes, the dominant group can prove why they are in power, and why

others cannot be (Berg 22). Media, and so the Hollywood film industry, is helping the dominant group to identify the Other with the stereotypes.

As an example, Berg mentions the term “illegal aliens” used to refer to Latino/a immigrants as criminals. President Trump also loved to use this term in his campaign to win the dominant majority’s vote in the 2016 United States presidential elections and even during his presidency (Hawkins 2017). Before the use of “illegal aliens” became popular, the word “wetback” was used when referring to Mexicans living in the U.S. (Hawkins 2017). At that time, a group of Latino/a law students introduced the use of “illegal aliens” and “illegal entrants” (Hawkins 2017). During the 1990s, the term “illegal aliens” was not preferable anymore (Hawkins 2017). Today, it is constantly debatable whether it is acceptable to use it, or it is a tool of discrimination and should be deleted from the vocabulary. In 2009, Justice Sonia Sotomayor supported the use of “undocumented immigrant”, by saying that “*illegal alien* creates the perception ‘that immigrants are all criminals and criminals in a negative sense of drug addicts, thieves, and murderers’” (Hawkins 2017). Unfortunately, the term “illegal aliens” is still used when referring to refugees from Latin American countries.

The portrayal of Latinos/as is not the most joyful in the U.S. media. Berg says that “in the cinema, the fact that Hispanics are depicted as variations of bandits and buffoons, whores, Latin lovers, and dark ladies defines them first and foremost as outside the mainstream” (22). The mainstream is the in-group of White people and the Latinos/as are considered not belonging there. Their stereotypical representation only enforces this boundary between the two groups. Citing Richard Dyer: “The most important function of the stereotype is to maintain sharp boundary definitions, to define clearly where the pale ends and thus who is clearly within and who is clearly beyond it” (as in Berg 22). The in-group wants to keep up their image and position. They want to keep the focus on the weakness of the out-group by using the stereotypes repeatedly. That is why the old stereotypes are always drawn over with new characteristics. As the old stereotype of the *bandido* is not a bandit in the desert anymore, but a rich drug lord.

Since stereotyping is a part of the way how the human brain is functioning, this action will never disappear. Stereotyping could be better than how it is used now. People should take time and deepen their knowledge of the out-groups. Knowing the background information, the history, the culture, the language of a given out-group might change the way stereotypes are working. Just like personal experiences might as well change the outcome of stereotyping. People need to see behind the scenes, and they need to realize how stereotyping works, and with the knowledge they can change the process of it. We live in the 21st century when many

have access to the world wide web. Even with just a little effort, we can learn many interesting facts about each other's' history and culture. It would be important to rely on facts, not on mass media.

However, stereotyping is more of a social problem with a psychological background. As this thesis examines stereotypes as a cultural and media phenomenon, it would be incorrect to talk about the psychological effects of stereotyping in detail. It is certain that stereotyping is connected to social and psychological behavior. Socialization determines the in-group's opinion about the out-group which leads to stereotyping. Just like Berg did in his book *Latino images in film*, I am also examining through three selected Hollywood dramas from the 21st century how the dominant group is stereotyping an ethnic group, Latinos/as, using the historically irrelevant distorted images.

Stereotypes are created by the dominant group to oppress other groups that are not assimilated into the dominant. "When the dominant group feels threatened by the subordinate group then stereotyping becomes more aggressive, brutal, corrupt" (Berg 27). It resembles the law of survival, where only the strongest survive. If people were not intelligent species, then this behavior of categorizing the out-group could be traced back to the natural instincts. But since people are intelligent and well developed, they should know better. Being different is not dangerous; it makes the world a unique place. Unfortunately, they still feel the need to oppress others, and the dominant groups do not find other ways to be in power. The main reason behind creating stereotypes is to secure one's position, to show that one is better than the other, even when it is not the truth. Berg mentions Robin Wood, who finds similarities between dreams and film (Berg 30). Dreams are a series of images about our desires, wishes, tensions, fears, just like Freud's observations stated it. In that sense, films are similar to dreams. "The personal dreams of their makers and the collective dreams of their audiences – the fusion made possible by the shared structures of a common ideology" (Berg 30). Berg says that "the classic Latino stereotypes are radical transformations of real-life Latinos, mainly Mexican Americans in the American Southwest, Mexicans along the border, and Latin Americans from South America, with the occasional depiction of the Puerto Rican in New York" (30-31).

Latino/a filmmakers are in a difficult situation. If they confront the stereotypes in their movies and characters, they often face failure. When they follow the stereotypes, they are degrading their own cultures. So sometimes they use the stereotypes, but they create their "characters by using techniques of psychological realism" (List as in Berg 36).

2.2 Latino/a Stereotypes in Hollywood films

It is essential to talk about Latinos/as represented in Hollywood films for various reasons. Partly because American made films are available worldwide and are part of the American culture. They influence how people from other cultures see the United States. Hollywood films illustrate American culture and society.

From its inception, the popular cinema, particularly in the United States, has combined critical disdain with public approval. More Americans watched movies than read books at mid-century. [...] It is reasonable to consider that movies reflect certain attitudes and concerns of their viewers. For ninety minutes it is possible to enjoy the reenactment [sic] of one's more acceptable fantasies—relishing triumphs, overlooking faults and failures, and tolerating prejudices. (Pettit 131)

Furthermore, Latinos/as are the fastest-growing ethnic minority in the U.S., besides Asians, according to the 2010 Census. Whites are still the ethnic and racial majority, but minorities need more attention. Minority groups are always in a disadvantageous position. Latinos/as are still stuck in the background in Hollywood. Latino/a characters in films can only succeed if a White character is supporting them. They are depicted with stereotypes, and they are always a source of trouble.

Hollywood could not always portray Mexican Americans with degrading characteristics. The Production Code Administration was controlling the films and how they depict Mexican Americans between 1934 and 1968 (Rodriguez 87). “From the start, the PCA positioned the central issue, or a ‘touchy subject matter’, as a ‘racial question’ or ‘race distinction’ that existed on an international level, between Mexico and the United States” (Rodriguez 88). The countries were working together to eliminate racial differences and to build a friendly relationship between the two nations. However, after the PCA stopped controlling films, “Hollywood has depicted the vast majority [of Latinos/as] stereotypically” (Rodriguez 104).

As mentioned before, Berg collected the most relevant and common stereotypes about Latinos/as. In my thesis, I intend to examine the characters in the selected films according to the stereotypes used by Berg. His list of Latino/a stereotypes gives a comprehensive look at the Latino/a stereotypes in 21st century Hollywood films, thus in dramas. However, I would like to add one more stereotype to Berg’s list: the Latina maid. After watching the selected films for this thesis, the Latina maid was a common stereotype in two out of the three analyzed films. Berg’s list is not only listing the common Latino/a stereotypes, but he is also examining them through their evolution in the cinema. In addition to Berg’s Latino/a stereotypes, Johana P. Lopez also mentioned the most common ones: “Hollywood movies represent Latino females as

maids, housekeepers and nannies, and Latino males as gardeners, farmers, lawbreakers” (Lopez 100-101). Although Lopez observed the portrayal of Latinos/as appropriately, Berg’s categories for Latino/a stereotypes are more extensive and show the evolution of the stereotypes (e.g. a *bandido* is now a drug lord). Berg concludes that “the same basic traits assigned to Latino characters in the form of recognizable stereotypes” are repeated over and over in American films (Berg 36). There is an evolution of the Latino/a stereotypes, but it is only an adjustment to the latest politics and social needs.

2.2.1 The *bandido*, the bandit

The first stereotype mentioned by Berg is the *el bandido*, the bandit. Berg points out that there is a “kernel of truth” behind this stereotype (Berg 17). This figure originates from the time of the Mexican Revolution, when Mexican men were fighting for freedom. Their appearance was mirrored in the Western movies: a sombrero, messy look, weapons (Berg 17). However, these fighters were not bandits, but in Hollywood, their character was changed. Originally, they were fighting in Mexico’s Revolutionary War between 1910-1920 (Berg 17-18). “[...] in the Mexican experience, these men were the ‘good guys’ who fought against the despotic dictator Porfirio Díaz under leaders like Pancho Villa [...] and Emiliano Zapata [...]” (Berg 18). The freedom fighters’ movement was quick and easy on horseback. They “carried their ammunition with them in the form of bandoleras across their chests” (Berg 18). The sombreros were also a helpful tool for these fighters. As the weather was hot, the sombreros provided shade for those wearing it (see fig. 1.).

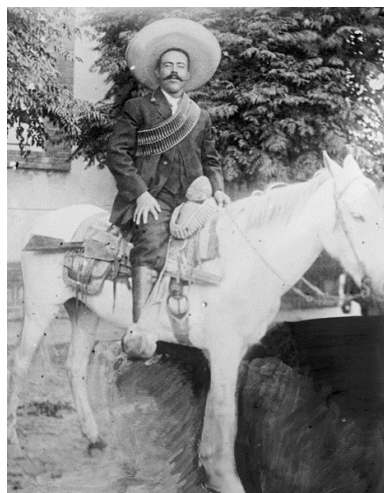


Fig. 1. General Pancho Villa

Unfortunately, Berg is right when he writes: “All of these important historical details are either omitted or completely recast in the stereotype” (Berg 18). The WASP good guys needed an enemy, and the writers in Hollywood took the character of the Mexican freedom fighters and

turned them into the bad guys. They copied their look but changed their reasons for the fight. They became greedy, ugly, and dirty.

El bandido is dirty and unkempt, usually displaying an unshaven face, missing teeth, and disheveled, oily hair. Scars and scowls complete the easily recognizable image. Behaviorally, he is vicious, cruel, treacherous, shift, and dishonest; psychologically, he is irrational, overly emotional, and quick to resort to violence. His inability to speak English or his speaking English with a heavy Spanish accent is Hollywood's way of signaling his feeble intellect, a lack of brainpower that makes it impossible for him to plan or strategize successfully. (Berg 68)

After the era of the western movies, the stereotype of the *el bandido* did not disappear; it just changed its form. The *el bandido* developed two modern variants: The Latin American gangster/drug runner ("such as Andy Garcia's character in *Eight Million Ways to Die* [1986]"), and the inner-city gang member (like "the gang members in *Colors* [1988]") (Berg 68-69). The gangster/drug runner usually has power, he is well-groomed, serious-looking, and "pursues his vulgar cravings – for money, power, and sexual pleasure – and routinely employs vicious and illegal means to obtain them" (Berg 68). The inner-city gang member is from Puerto Rico if the film is set in New York, or an "East Los Angeles homeboy" if it is set in Southern California (Berg 68). However, these two subtypes of the stereotype *el bandido* are carrying the same characteristics of the first *bandidos* that appeared in Hollywood cinema.

2.2.2 The harlot

The harlot is a hot tempered "female stereotype corresponding to *el bandido*" (Berg 70). Again, she is a secondary character, needs a man to succeed. A loud, seductive female who is a nymphomaniac. She is interested in White men only. She cannot control her passionate feelings. Berg says that her true motivation is never revealed, "she is basically a sex machine innately lusting for a white male" (Berg 71). As an example, Berg mentions the characters of Linda Darnell in *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and Jacqueline Obradors in *Six Days, Seven Nights* (1998) (Berg 70-71). Rodriguez noticed that the harlot is practically the embodiment of the dominant's group's fear: "unbridled sexuality" (Rodriguez 108).

2.2.3 The male buffoon

The male buffoon is a simple-minded Latino man who gives a good laugh to the audience. He is sometimes a sidekick to the protagonist. He speaks English with a bad pronunciation and grammar. According to Berg, it is the "comic version of classic screen *bandidos*" created by Hollywood (Berg 73). The character played by Henry Calvin in Walt Disney's *Zorro* series (1957) depicted the stereotype of the male buffoon (Berg 71).

2.2.4 The female clown

The female version of the male buffoon is the stereotype of the female clown (Berg 73). It is used by Hollywood to neutralize the sexuality of Latinas on the screen (Berg 73). She is the reason why the Anglo White male chooses a White female over the Latina. She is sexually appealing, but because she is simple-minded, she can get into silly situations. “Generally, her character is sullied (she is made promiscuous and criminal, as is the case with the harlot stereotype) or ridiculed (portrayed as sexually “easy” or simply silly and comical, as with the female buffoon)” (Berg 73). The female clown is the comic version of the harlot. Among other Latino/a stereotypes, the female clown is also “used to demonstrate the moral rectitude of Hollywood’s WASP film heroes” (Berg 74). Berg mentions again the character played by Jacqueline Obradors in *Six Days, Seven Nights* (1998) (74 – 75).

2.2.5 The Latin lover

The male stereotype of the Latin lover was first embodied by an immigrant Italian actor, Rudolph Valentino (Berg 76). In many of his roles (e.g. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* [1921], *Blood and Sand* [1922]) he portrayed a “dashing and magnetic male Other, he defined a new kind of screen lover” (Berg 76). Since Valentino, many Latino actors portrayed the Latin lover, a sensual seducer, “the possessor of a primal sexuality” (Berg 76). Berg points out that the Latin lover always has the same characteristics as what Valentino’s characters had: “eroticism, exoticism, tenderness tinged with violence and danger, all adding up to the romantic promise that, sexually, things could very well get out of control” (Berg 76).

2.2.6 The dark lady

The Latin lover’s female counterpart is the stereotype of the dark lady. As Berg describes her, she is “virginal, inscrutable, aristocratic – and erotically appealing precisely because of these characteristics” (Berg 76). The dark lady is much more complex than the White female. She is not easy to approach, keeps a cool distance, “combines sex appeal with reserve” (Berg 76-77). She is desired by White males, but it is not easy to seduce her. Actress Dolores Del Río portrayed the dark lady in several Hollywood films like *Flying Down to Río* (1933) and *In Caliente* (1935) (Berg 76).

2.2.7 The Latina maid

Besides the stereotypes by Berg, the stereotype of the Latina maid is also prominent in the selected films. This stereotypical figure was inherited from African Americans, who were cast in this role (Valdivia 92). “As with their African American predecessors, it places Latinas in a position of labor, usually in relation to White femininity’s leisure” (Valdivia 93). Unlike other

Latina stereotypes, she is not hot-tempered. She is polite and calm, a mother-like figure. A Latina maid is doing the housework, the “dirty job”. She is not only taking care of the household but of the children as well. The Latina maid is mostly an older Latina woman who has a family in her home country. She made a choice to go to the U.S. so that she could support her family financially. Family is a priority for her, and she is a devoted mother. She sacrifices herself so that she could provide for her family.

3. Research Methods

As movies can set trends, so can they manipulate the opinion of their audience on different topics. Therefore, it is dangerous for Hollywood movies to stereotype certain groups, but they still do. With stereotypical Latino/a movie characters, Hollywood is setting the trend. The audience sees those characters and believes what appears on the screen, is also appearing in real life. If the audience sees an ethnic character with negative characteristics, they will conclude that it is part of that ethnic culture. For many, Hollywood became the standard, and it forms people’s opinions.

I opted for the genre drama because the plot in dramas is often based on real-life events, giving a better view of actual problems in society. Dramas have a serious tone; the characters go through different emotional stages. The characters are mostly copied from simple everyday people who are revealing their struggles in life. For carrying out my research, I selected three films, which fall into the category mentioned above. Not only the genre of the film was an essential factor in selecting the basis for my research. The films must have a few Latinos/as among their characters, and I tried to find at least one film that was made by a Latino or a Latina filmmaker. Since my focus was only on films made in Hollywood, I could only find one Latino producer with a film that falls into my research category. It does not mean there are no other Latino/a filmmakers in Hollywood; there are more indeed, although their number is much lower than White filmmakers’ and they do not get as much attention as their White peers.

So, to look for potential differences in the representation of Latinos/as, I have selected a film by a Latino director (*Babel* by Alejandro González Iñárritu), and two other films from White directors (*Crash* by Paul Haggis, and *Traffic* by Steven Soderbergh). I assumed that a Latino filmmaker, coming from the same culture, would use different characteristics for the Latino/a characters in his film. I also assumed that a Latino director would not use Hollywood

stereotypes for describing its own culture. However, the research results will show a different tendency.

After watching the three movies, I carefully selected the scenes when a Latino/a role is portrayed. Then, I examined the cinematographic elements of the scenes and analyzed the characters. I wanted to see how the actors managed to present their characters with the stereotypes. Finally, I summarized the research results and compared the films to one another.

4. Analysis

4.1 Latino/a Stereotypes in *Crash*

The film *Crash*, directed by Paul Haggis, tells the story of one day in the city of Los Angeles. Many different characters are introduced whose lives get connected within twenty-four hours in the city. Among the characters are detectives, police officers, a politician and his wife, a housekeeper, young men from the streets, shopkeepers, a locksmith. Almost every class of society is portrayed in the film. The characters belong to different ethnic groups present in the United States.

The story begins in an evening, where two detectives, Ria and Graham, get involved in a car crash. Close by a crime scene is discovered, a dead body is found. Then the story jumps back in time, and the viewers get to know what happened in the last 24 hours. A Persian shopkeeper bought a gun with his daughter, to be able to protect themselves in their shop. Two African American men steal the car of a White politician. His wife gets scared, and they change all the lock in their house. The locksmith working for them is a Latino man, who also must repair the door in the shop of the Persian man. Later it is broken into the Persian man's shop, and he wants to shoot the Latino man. Meanwhile, the two detectives have their struggles with personal matters. The politician's wife is mistreating their Latina housekeeper. An Asian man, involved in human trafficking, is hit by a stolen car. White police officers are fighting with their own demons. African Americans are facing problems in their family life. In the end, all the different lives get connected, and everybody gets to see others in a new perspective.

The filmmakers set the film's focus on the problem of racism. It is a very thought-provoking production as the audience is confronted with everyday racism. Racism affects the lives of many people. In the film, every problem originates from racism. Society needs to be confronted with problems occurring out of racism and making a film about it is an effective way to do so. It is essential to call attention to racism and to find a way to fight against it. Racism and stereotypes

are connected, it is a cause-effect relationship. Not only is racism generating stereotypes, but stereotypes reinforce racism as well. In *Crash*, there are a lot of stereotypical images, although the filmmakers made an attempt to break down the stereotypical characters. The looks or actions of the characters are always stereotypical. As the story unfolds, the characters go through changes. At the end of the film, some characters learn to see through the stereotype, and they see the real person. The audience can see both the characters' negative and positive sides of their personalities. However, people tend to remember mainly stereotypes. Beside Latino/a characters, there are White Americans, African Americans, Asians, and Persians among the characters of *Crash*. One critique of the film, Victor Villanueva, wrote: "This movie becomes interesting if you see it as a study on the complexity of stereotypes, a study on stereotypes as a maze you can't walk out of." (Villanueva 349) *Crash* can be used as a comprehensive study on stereotypes since every ethnicity represented in the film carries the stereotypical traits. To examine all of them would bring striking results; however, I will focus only on the Latino and Latina characters and what stereotypes they embody. To carry out an analysis of all the characters in *Crash* would be another research topic. However, Villanueva criticized the movie that it never breaks out of stereotypes. I cannot agree with him on this. Every character is indeed stereotyped, but they do break out of it. Especially the Latino/a characters prove the contrary to the stereotypes assigned to them.

4.1.1 Ria, the detective

One Latina character in *Crash* is Ria, a passionate detective, played by Jennifer Esposito. Ria works together with her partner, Graham. The two of them are not only colleagues, have an



Fig. 2. Ria in 'Crash'

intimate relationship as well. Ria portrays two Latina stereotypes: the harlot and the dark lady. Her character is more of a mixture of these two stereotypes. She is the harlot because she is hot-tempered and has a sexual appetite. Although the latter is shown only in one scene, namely, she is engaged in a sexual relationship with her colleague, Graham (00:38:29 – 00:40:06). She also has traits of the dark lady as she is inscrutable and keeps a distance, even from her lover, Graham. Ria is very charismatic and has a strong character.

Another stereotypical trait of the harlot is that Ria is very proud of her origin. Latinos and Latinas are portrayed quite often as accentuating their roots, their culture. They tend to emphasize their nationalities. She is pointing out that she is not Mexican, although many call

her Mexican in the film. She tells her partner that her father is from Puerto Rico and her mother comes from El Salvador (00:39:40 – 00:39:51). Ria is always reacting in a sensitive way when she is referred to as a Mexican. She is proud of her Latina heritage but gets angry when she is mistaken for a Mexican woman. At the beginning of the film, she is called Mexican by an Asian woman. The Asian lady is also criticizing her driving style. Ria fights back with sarcasm (00:03:48 – 00:04:38). The respect for family is a significant matter for Ria. She has a deep respect for her roots, never forgetting where she comes from. She tries to teach her partner about respecting one's family, especially one's parents. She gets angry at Graham for the way he is talking to his mother on the phone (00:38:29 – 00:40:06). However, Ria is not only a hot-tempered Latina. Her sensitive side is also introduced when she takes Graham to his mother after probably talking him into apologizing from his mother. At the end of the film, Ria supports Graham and his mother during the difficult moments of grief (01:36:35 – 01:39:02).

Based on her reactions in different situations, it can be confirmed that Ria has a hot temperament, she is very feminine and sensual. Nevertheless, Ria is never dressed as a seductive Latina woman in the film. She is a professional who does not let her work to be influenced by her appearance. However, she seduced or was seduced by her colleague, Graham. Ria's name does not sound like a Latina name. However, a second look reveals that it could be derived from Maria. No proof for that is revealed in the film. If it comes from Maria, then it is a modern and fresh version of it.

4.1.2 Maria, the maid

Another Latina character is Maria, played by Yomi Perry. Maria is a maid, a popular Latina stereotype. The Latina maid serves a wealthy White family, takes care of their children, does the housework, and helps their employees through everyday life. Maria does all these tasks mentioned in the house of Jean and her husband. Not so many scenes are shot with Maria in the film, but her character's main features are still well portrayed. She is a mother figure; she comforts Jean like a friend or mother. The character's name – Maria – is also a stereotypical trait. Maria is a popular Latin American female name. The use of this name creates the feeling as if the filmmakers did not even try to show the richness of the various Latin American cultures. The writers did not feel the need to use a not so common name for the character. It is not mentioned



Fig. 3. Maria in 'Crash'

where Maria comes from, but she is a Latina woman. She is probably around her 50s and is plus size like most Mexican or Latina maids portrayed in Hollywood movies.

Maria is working for a White politician's family. The wife, Jean, looks down on her and mistreats her as if she was not worthy of her trust and respect. Maria treats Jean with respect and humility. Maria has good manners; she is humble and obeys to her bosses' wishes. She always addresses her employer as 'Miss Jean.' Maria is very polite and loyal as she never says anything wrong about her employer. She is even asking for permission to go home (00:12:50 – 00:13:00). Maria has a charisma of a wise and warm-hearted woman. She stays calm even when Jean is unreasonably arrogant with her (00:43:38 – 00:44:11). After Jean realizes how helpful Maria was, she starts to like her and see how human Maria is.

4.1.3 Daniel Ruiz, the locksmith



Fig. 4. Daniel in 'Crash'

The only Latino male character in the movie is Daniel Ruiz, played by Michael Peña. Daniel is depicted as a working-class Latino. His bald head and mustache are a stereotypical Latino look. It is his looks, why Jean, the White housewife, refers to him as a gang member (00:13:09 – 00:13:16). Daniel works as a locksmith, but he gets many negative comments based on his looks. Some of the characters in *Crash* show mistrust in him because of his appearance. Farhad, a Persian shop owner, accuses him of cheating to get more money (00:36:22 – 00:36:31).

Although he is working hard to earn a living, he offers the Persian shopkeeper not to pay for his work to end the conflict. Unlike Ria, he does not go into loud debates when he is stereotyped negatively. He manages to remain calm even when he is the target of verbal abuse.

Daniel is married and has a daughter called Lara. He is a loving and caring father, as it is shown in a scene with his daughter (00:25:09 – 00:30:34). He reveals his sensitive side when he is with his daughter. As a father, Daniel is very supportive and protective. Daniel moved to a new neighborhood with his family because their previous one was dangerous for a family. Based on his reaction, it is evident that he puts his family in the first place. He was trying to protect his daughter by moving to a different neighborhood, but it is his daughter who protects him in the end. In a tense scene, Lara jumps in front of her father to save him from the bullet (01:21:15 – 01:24:10). Daniel is screaming in pain by the thought of losing his daughter, but thankfully, she does not get hurt.

With Daniel's character, the filmmakers partly destroy the stereotype: only his looks remind the viewers of the *bandido* stereotype. Nevertheless, his actions and his personality are in contrast with the *bandido* look. He is a hard-working father and husband. He speaks perfect English. Surprisingly, Daniel speaks only English with his daughter, although one would expect that they use Spanish at home. Despite all his positive attributes, his environment is still seeing him as a Latino gang member. His looks determine the way others see him. He is prejudged based on how he looks like.

4.1.4 Analysis of the Selected Scenes

00:02:50 – 00:05:52



Fig. 5. Still from 'Crash' (00:02:50 – 00:05:52)

Ria and Graham are talking after they suffered a car crash. Graham sounds a bit disturbed, and Ria thinks it is the effect of the crash. She tells a fireman that Graham might have hit his head. She gets out of the car and goes to see with whom a police officer is

speaking. Ria hears the accusations of an Asian woman who was also involved in the collision. When the woman sees Ria, she immediately points at her and accuses her of being a bad driver: "Mexicans don't know how to drive!" Ria gets angry, and they start to argue. "I'm sorry you no see my 'blake' light" – answers Ria imitating the incorrect English of the Asian woman. The police officer tries to calm the women, calling them ma'am. Ria tells him that her title is a detective, not ma'am. The Asian woman is threatening that she will call the immigration on Ria. Meanwhile, Graham gets out of the car to meet another detective. He tells Graham they have found the body of a young man.

This scene is the first scene of the movie, but not the first scene in the timeline of the events. After this opening scene, the movie jumps back to yesterday. This scene starts with an extreme close-up shot of the car's window; raindrops are to be seen exposed by police cars' red-blue lights. Then the camera is zooming out a bit and is focusing on Graham's face, still a close-up shot. The camera is on the same level as the character. The lights are night lights of a city, red, blue, purple, and yellow. The picture is dark, it is already night. In the close-up, the focus is shallow, and the background is blurred. Using racking focus, the camera moves from Graham's face to Ria's, getting her in focus. When a firefighter investigates their car, the focus shifts on him. Then, the focus gets back on Ria's face while she is looking at Graham. She does not look at the fireman, she is focusing only on Graham. She looks at him in disbelief. Her face is not

well lit, just like Graham's. She stays in focus until she gets out of the car. When Ria is walking toward the Asian woman and the policeman, she is shown from behind, but only from her torso up. She is lit in three ways: a strong backlight, a fill light, and a key light. The strong backlight emphasizes her wavy hair, which is a bit tousled. Ria and the other woman are filmed with a medium close-up. The angle of framing is a bit lower, supporting how she is ruling the situation.

Meanwhile, the Asian woman is filmed at the same level as her head, not lower. Then there is a shot of the three of them from a distance. The background music is a soft melody, a non-diegetic sound. The screen is sometimes fading in and out as the opening credits of the film are shown. Ria is speaking with an attitude and sarcasm, but she does not shout. Ria is not loud, although she imitates the Asian woman's grammar mistakes. She says 'blake' instead of 'brake,' mocking the Asian woman who is just looking at her with an uncomprehending face.

Ria's clothes are quite masculine. She is wearing wide trousers and a jacket. The sleeves are too long for her arms. Her clothes are bigger than her actual size. She could be doing this on purpose to be taken more seriously as a Latina woman in the police department. She is hiding her body, covering her sexuality. She does not want to appeal seducing.

This scene of the film is a bit melancholic. It is nighttime, and the darkness is just strengthening the melancholic feeling in the audience. The film immediately starts with an accident without introducing the characters first. Racism is also introduced as the Asian woman is insulting Ria's ethnicity as it was relevant to the collision. Moreover, Graham is using the word 'crash' as a reference to the title of the film. It is a dramatic start as a dead body is found at the end of the scene. It sets the mood of the film, a serious and anxious tone.

Ria is confident, wants to rule the situation. She corrects the officer by emphasizing her title. She is not madam; she is a detective. She gets into the fight with the Asian lady, proving her hot temper. She is arguing alone, she leaves Graham in the car, although Graham could help her, as he is an eyewitness of the accident.

00:11:56 – 00:14:22



Fig. 6. Still from 'Crash' (00:11:56 – 00:14:22)

Daniel is at Jean's house, changing a door lock. Jean asks him when he will finish. Then Jean goes to talk to her husband. Jean demands to have the locks changed again in the morning as she is sure Daniel is a gang member and so a threat to them. Her only

proof is Daniel's appearance. She assumes that he is a gang member. She goes back to the kitchen, where Daniel is working. Daniel looks at Jean between the stairs, their eyes meet. After finishing his job, Daniel leaves all the keys on the counter in front of Jean. She looks worried, she realized he could overhear everything.

Previously Jean and her husband were attacked by two African Americans on the street. The attackers stole their car. Probably the keys to their house were inside the car, and now they need to have the locks changed. Jean got frightened by the two African Americans who robbed them, and she is in shock after the attack. Her fears are only stronger when she sees that a Latino man, Daniel, is changing the door locks. Daniel is prejudged based on his race. The scene starts with Daniel kneeling on the floor, changing the door lock, and Jean is asking him when he will finish. Jean's face is not shown, only her legs are to be seen while speaking to Daniel. He looks up at her as he is answering her question. He does not stand up; he is still kneeling. The position of the two characters in this scene carries a meaning. The camera angle shows who stands higher in society. Jean is shown as superior to Daniel, she is the wealthy White woman who pays for his work. Daniel is a Latino blue-collar worker, from the lower level of society. Daniel is kneeling, and he is closer to the ground. However, Jane is standing, and she is on another level. The camera shows only Jean's legs while she is talking to Daniel. Jean stands so much higher on the social ladder that she does not even fit into the screen. The camera is at a low level, showing Daniel kneeling while he is working. He must look up to Jean while talking. When Jean leaves Daniel alone, the camera focuses on Daniel's shaved head and shoulders, showing his tattoos on his neck. Jean is stereotyping Daniel. She recognized the stereotype of the *bandido* in him.

When Jean is going to her husband, the camera is following her with a tracking shot. In this way, viewers can have a glimpse at the house. Many lights are switched on, the whole house is well lit and bright. The house seems to be quite spacious, suggesting the wealth of their owners. Jean is complaining to her husband about Daniel, calling him an "amigo." She describes Daniel a gang member as he is wearing his pants lower. He has tattoos – prison tattoos, according to Jean – and his head is shaved but has a mustache. Latinos are often portrayed like Daniel in Hollywood films, especially when filmmakers want to illustrate criminal Latinos. Her husband tries to calm her, but she is overwhelmed. She is demanding that in the morning, they must change the door locks again. She is also accusing Daniel that he will sell the keys to his gang member friends. Then she goes back to the kitchen, but this time without a tracking shot. Jean and Daniel exchange a meaningful look. The camera angle is higher when it shows Daniel, but

it is a bit lower when it shows Jean. Only in a close-up of Jean is the angle on the same level as her head. Daniel overheard the whole conversation, as he is looking at Jean intentionally through the stairs. This is an interesting camera angle; it directs the viewers' focus on Daniel. He is framed with the stairs, just as he is framed in the Latino gang member's look. This time Jean is pictured in a close-up, showing her struggling with her fears. Daniel puts the keys on the counter in front of Jean and looks deep in her eyes. They are now shown from the waist up, almost equal, but Jean still looks in a way more prominent. The camera angle is not in the middle, but more on the side of Jean. As Daniel leaves, the camera moves back in the middle. This movement could be symbolizing the feelings of Jean. When Daniel comes near, the camera moves further away from him, as imitating Jean's fear.

Nevertheless, right after Daniel leaves, the camera dares to come forward, as if Jean feels relieved. Daniel never responds to the accusations coming from Jean. However, without saying anything, Daniel's thoughts can be guessed by the audience. Jean is overreacting the situation and tries to rule over everybody in the house. She is the loudest, she is shouting with her husband.

00:25:09 – 00:30:34



Fig. 7. Still from 'Crash' (00:25:09 – 00:30:34)

Daniel arrives home in the dark. Some light is coming out under a door, he sees it and enters the room. There are pictures on the wall; it is a charming children's room. His daughter is hiding under her bed. Lara tells him that she heard a bang like a gun, and she

is afraid of a street fight and shooting. Daniel calms her by saying that there are not "too many guns around." Lara asks her father how far can bullets go. He tells her when he was five years old, a fairy visited him and gave him a cloak that can protect him from bullets. He says that he should give it to his daughter when she turns five. So now she can have it. He imitates untying the cloak and puts it on his daughter, tying it on her neck. His daughter is now happy, and she is willing to go to bed. Daniel covers her with a blanket and kisses her on the forehead. When he leaves her room, his beeper is ringing, and he acknowledges he should go to work again.

It is already night when Daniel arrives home with an old white van. He takes off his shoes immediately, right after entering through the front door. He is still wearing his uniform from work: beige trousers, a white t-shirt, and a blue jacket with the locksmith company's logo. No lights are on; everybody is sleeping except for his daughter. When Daniel enters his daughter's

room, a point of view shot is introducing the room. He is looking for his daughter, and this shot shows that she is nowhere to be seen. A reverse angle shot follows so that viewers can see Daniel standing in the door, looking for his daughter. However, this has happened before since Daniel goes straight to the bed and lifts the bed cloth finding his daughter under the bed. He knows exactly where to look for her. Daniel lays down next to the bed to see her daughter, and the camera is on the same level as him. Shot from behind Daniel, her daughter is to be seen in a medium close-up, laying on the ground. As the two of them are talking, several medium close-ups are used. A light melody is played as a non-diegetic sound during the scene. The contrast is low throughout the whole scene because of the weak light in the room. Nevertheless, the weak light creates a pleasant atmosphere in the room. When Daniel puts his daughter in the bed, the two of them are shown in a medium long shot. Then it is an over-the-shoulder shot as Daniel gives her the invisible cloak.

Lara's room is a lovely children's room. Different pictures and drawings are hanging on the walls. The furniture is all white. She has her own private space thanks to her hard-working father. Daniel is a loving and caring father who wants to protect his daughter. He asks her without thinking if she wants to move again after she heard a bang and got scared. He wants her to have a real careless childhood, to believe in fairies, and have dreams. The audience learns that they moved there from a bad neighborhood where street fights and shootings were frequent. Sadly, such a small child is asking questions like how far bullets can go. Probably she has seen shootings in their previous neighborhood. Children in some more impoverished neighborhoods really must worry about guns and street fights. Lara's concerns awaken emotions in the audience.

Daniel just got home from work and he must go again. When his beeper is buzzing, he is not happy at all, but he still goes to work. Maybe he is doing the emergency night shift. One remarkable contrast between the house of Jean and the house of Daniel is the lights. In Daniel's house, the lights are switched off, only in his daughter's room are on. Meanwhile, the house of Jean is as bright in the evening as if it was daytime. Daniel is not wealthy like Jean, he must work even at night, and he lived in a problematic neighborhood. Daniel's family is not financially comfortable, unlike Jean's.

00:35:32 – 00:37:04



Fig. 8. Still from 'Crash' (00:35:32 – 00:37:04)

Daniel is repairing a lock of an old door in the shop of Farhad, a Persian man. The door looks barely secure for a shop. Daniel suggests Farhad he should buy a new door. Farhad does not understand him, suspects cheating, so he starts arguing. The two men start shouting, but in the end, Daniel leaves him even without payment. Farhad is angry at Daniel.

After having problems with the lock of the backdoor, Farhad calls the locksmith service to repair the lock. Daniel is sent there, and the scene starts with him, testing the new lock. Daniel tells Farhad that he replaced the lock, but he needs a new door. The new lock does not help to keep the shop safe. The shopkeeper asks if he fixed the lock or not. Daniel answers that he replaced the old lock with a new one, but Farhad needs a new door. The Persian asks how much a new door would be. Daniel politely answers that he does not know since he is not selling doors; he needs to call someone who does. However, Farhad is suspicious, and he thinks Daniel wants to cheat on him, and he knows someone who is selling doors so he can make more money.

Nevertheless, Daniel tells him that this is not true, but the Persian loses his temper and starts to shout, calling Daniel a cheater. Then Daniel offers him not to pay for the work, just for the lock, and he tears the bill apart. However, the situation escalates, Farhad accuses Daniel of not fixing the lock, but he must do it. They argue about it, and Daniel leaves without paying.

The scene starts with a close-up on the new lock. Then a medium close-up on Daniel as he examines the door, and a close-up again on the lock. It is a bit darker scene as the lighting is weak, but everything is visible. The light has a bit of a blue color, suggesting it is nighttime. With a medium close-up shot, Farhad is introduced in the scene, while he is half asleep waiting for the repair works to end. When they are talking, many over-the-shoulder shots are used, framing the actors in medium close-ups. The camera is constantly moving, it is not steady. This camera hold is just increasing the tense situation. The actors are lit with the three-point lighting method. The key light is weak and low, but the fill light is intense. Only one side of their face is well-lit, but the other side is in shadows. Both characters are hard-working men. Their costumes are simple and functional, they are dressed for their job and social status.

Daniel did his job according to his knowledge, but Farhad did not understand the word 'replace,' and this caused the debate between them. On the one hand, Daniel could have tried to explain what the word 'replace' means, but he was only repeating this word. On the other

hand, Farhad should have understood, even with basic English, what Daniel was saying. Daniel could also show him directly the door and the problem with it. From the two men, it was Daniel who remained calm. He did not lose his temper, unlike the Persian man. Because of his poor English, Farhad must have felt insecure and was afraid of getting tricked. Daniel wanted to help; he did his part but realized that it was not enough. He did not say that the owner should buy from him a new door; he was only giving advice.

However, Farhad got suspicious based on Daniel's looks. He stereotyped him as he probably knows that criminals often look like Daniel. Farhad concluded that Daniel must be one of them if he looks like them. Farhad is non-white, he is Persian. He must know how difficult it is to be non-white and face racism every day; still, he is stereotyping Daniel. Another reason for his behavior could be his insecurity. He does not speak English fluently, and he does not understand everything. He is afraid that someone will use his lack of English and will trick him. Daniel already had a racist customer that day, so this was enough for him. He did not want to get into more arguments, so he offered Farhad not to pay for his work. He just wanted to finish the fight and go home.

00:38:29 – 00:40:06



Fig. 9. Still from 'Crash' (00:38:29 – 00:40:06)

Graham and Ria, the two detectives are in the middle of sexual intercourse. Graham's phone is ringing, but Ria asks him not to answer it. Despite her wish, Graham answers the phone; his mother is calling. She is looking for his brother, but he says that he

is not going to look for him now as he is busy having sexual intercourse with a White woman. He hangs up on his mother and wants to continue with Ria. Unfortunately, Ria gets angry that she is not White and how he was speaking with his mother. Graham admits he was raised badly and corrects that he could not say Mexican woman because his mother would not be that annoyed by it. Ria goes on by explaining her ancestry, where she comes from, and neither of her parents comes from Mexico. Graham is not sorry, and Ria leaves the room angry.

The scene starts with a close-up on the night table, showing the time on a clock. It is dark in the room until Graham switches on the light to pick up the phone. Then the camera shows a police badge on the night table, as to indicate who is present in the scene. Ria tells Graham not to answer the phone, but Graham does not listen to her. He picks up the phone but is still laying on Ria in the bed. Lights are warm in the room. There is no background music, and only the

characters are talking. As Graham is talking on the phone, Ria tries to move away, but he does not let her. She gets out of the bed after Graham finished the phone talk. Ria immediately starts to dress up and is arguing with Graham. She says that if she were Graham's father, she would punish him for such behavior. Ria is angry not just because Graham disrespectfully spoke to his mother, but also for calling her first a White then a Mexican woman. Maybe she is also angry with herself, for having an affair with such a man, who is not respecting her origin. Ria is ruling the situation; she is portrayed from a low camera angle. Although Graham is not taking her seriously, he even laughs at her after she explained her heritage to him. Graham stays in bed, while Ria is preparing to leave. He looks a bit annoyed by Ria, takes a cigarette in his mouth, and he speaks with it, without manners, as proving his bad education.

Ria is emphasizing that she is not from Mexico. Maybe she has heard it too many times before, and that is why she reacts in such a sensitive way. She explains to Graham that her father is from Puerto Rico, her mother is from El Salvador, and none of that is Mexico. Emphasizing her parents' origin can be considered as a stereotypical feature of the Latina stereotype, the harlot. She is proud of her heritage, and she is pointing it out. She gets easily offended when people confuse her with Mexicans. It is an essential matter in Ria's life, and it is also highlighted in the film.

In this scene, Ria acts more like her Latina stereotypes, the harlot, and the dark lady. She is seductive; she has a romantic relationship with her colleague. She is shown naked, but that is the only seductive thing of her. As soon as they are disturbed by the ringing telephone, she gets back to her dark lady character. Ria is also loud and hot-tempered like the harlot. These two stereotypes are intertwined in her character.

00:43:38 – 00:44:11



Fig. 10. Still from 'Crash' (00:43:38 – 00:44:11)

Jean is in her kitchen, and she opens the dishwasher, which is full of dishes. She looks annoyed at them. Then Maria, their housekeeper, enters the kitchen. She is happy, wants to talk about the kids that she brought to school. However, Jean does not care; she asks her if those mugs are clean or dirty in the dishwasher. "All clean, signora!" answers Maria kindly. Jean is not pleased: "You know Maria, just once I would like to wake up and find these dishes in the cabinet!". She shuts the door of the dishwasher. "Si, signora. No problem.", answers Maria looking worried.

The room is bright; the sun is shining and creates a beautiful light in the kitchen. The camera shows the mugs in the dishwasher with a medium close-up shot, then the same shot on Jean. She is staring at the dishwasher. Her hair has fallen in her face on one side. When Maria enters the kitchen, she is in a medium shot. She is smiling, she looks happy. Jean does not look at her, nor does she lift her hair from her face. It is blocking out Maria. Only in the end, after she indoctrinated Maria, she dares to look at her. Jean is probably insecure, and she uses her wealth and position in society to show her power to those who stand, in her view, below her. She is focused only on the dishes as if it was the biggest problem in her life. She destroys Maria's good mood immediately. This scene implies that Jean is not interested in her children; Maria does care more about them.

Maria is the Latina maid who is taking care of everything around the house. She is mixing Spanish with English while speaking. She is taking the children to school, while at the same time, their mother is at home, and she is worried about the clean dishes. Maria evokes empathy in the audience. When Jean is scolding her, she looks concerned and does not know what caused this scene. Maria is not fighting back; she is not losing her temper. She remains calm and respectful towards Jean, although in this scene, Jean does not deserve respect.

00:53:10 – 00:53:32



Fig. 11. Still from 'Crash' (00:53:10 – 00:53:32)

Graham just visited his mother. Ria is waiting outside in their car. When Graham gets back, she asks him if he apologized to his mother. Graham says she was not at home, but it is a lie. Ria drops the topic and talks about work as they drive away.

In a medium close-up of Graham's feelings are revealed. He is sad because of the condition of his mother. Then in a medium close-up, Graham and Ria are shown sitting in the car. Ria is interested in Graham's mother, but as she sees that Graham is not willing to talk about it, she drops the topic. Ria is not just a loud Latina who gets angry quickly. She is also a kind-hearted woman. It must have been her idea to bring Graham to his mother and force him to apologize to his mother. She was serious when she got angry at Graham because of the way he was talking to his mother. Family is significant for Ria, and everybody must respect their family. There is no excuse for rude behavior with one's parents. Ria is controlling the situation. She is driving the car, and she is the leading figure in this professional and personal relationship. She is a

strong and confident Latina woman. The seductive Latina is nowhere now; Ria is acting like a good friend during the scene.

01:21:15 – 01:24:10



Fig. 12. Still from 'Crash' (01:21:15 – 01:24:10)

Farhad's shop was robbed at night as the door was not secure. Farhad is planning revenge on Daniel, blaming him for the robbery. After finding Daniel's name on the bill, Farhad finds out where Daniel lives.

Farhad takes his pistol and is waiting for Daniel to arrive home. When Daniel gets out of his van, Farhad confronts him and shoots him. Right at that moment, Daniel's daughter jumps on her father. Farhad is shocked by his actions. Daniel's daughter is not hurt; the gun was loaded with blank bullets.

His daughter hears him arriving, and she is observing her father through the window. She is delighted to see her father. Meanwhile, Farhad gets out of his car with his pistol in his hand. He holds the gun to Daniel's head, demanding his money. Daniel does not understand what money he wants. He keeps repeating that he wants his money. Daniel looks scared and Farhad looks disturbed. Daniel's daughter is witnessing it from inside the house. Then Farhad wants Daniel's van, but he says it does not belong to him. Elizabeth is shouting, 'Daddy, daddy.' Daniel has 50 dollars with him; he wants to give it to Farhad. He says Daniel took everything; 50 dollars is nothing. Inside the house, Elisabeth is calling her mother who is washing the dishes. Elisabeth knows that her father does not have the impenetrable cloak, so she runs out and jumps on his father at the moment when Farhad pulls the trigger. A sound of a gunshot, Daniel is screaming, holding his daughter. His wife arrives at that moment, also screaming. Farhad stands there looking at his shaking hands in disbelief, still holding the gun. Elisabeth whispers in her father's ear: "It's OK daddy, I'll protect you." She is not harmed; the gun had blank bullets. Daniel looks at his daughter crying but looks at Farhad with anger as they enter their house.

The camera is showing in the mirror of a car how Daniel's van turns into a street. A woman on the sidewalk is waving at him. He is probably a friendly neighbor. Then a cut, a close-up on Farhad as he is observing Daniel from the car. When Farhad gets out of his car and is walking towards Daniel, the camera is portraying him from a low angle. This shows his power, how he feels he has power because of the gun. He has a gun, he can decide the lives of people, and this strengthens the feeling of power in Farhad. The camera is focusing on his gun in his hand with a close-up shot.

In the background, there is Daniel, blurred. He is taking his belongings from his van. When they meet, Farhad immediately, without hesitation, points at Daniel's head with the gun. The camera is now in a low angle with a medium shot. Then Lara is shown inside the house, calling her father behind the door net. Then the camera jumps back at Farhad holding the gun at Daniel, now with a medium long shot. Daniel is trying to protect himself by holding up his hand. The sun is shining, so the shots are bright, and parts of the pictures are a bit blurred. This effect makes the whole scene so dreamy, although it is a nightmare. Although the sunlight is strong, three-point lighting is used. As they are talking to each other, the filmmakers used over the shoulder, medium close-up, and medium shots. When Laura is running out of the house towards her father, she is followed by a tracking shot. As Daniel is holding his daughter, a close-up shot is used to show his emotions, that he is in terrible pain. The mother is shown in a medium close-up as she collapses in pain. Non-diegetic sound is playing throughout the whole scene, but it gets dominant only after the gunshot. Farhad is shown in a medium long shot with a strong backlight. He is standing there, surprised and shocked, still holding the gun. He cannot believe what he did. As Daniel and his wife discover that Laura is not harmed, they leave Farhad and run inside their house. Then from the street, Farhad is pictured in a medium shot. Most of the shots were shot from a point as it was observed from the house. Only the last shot changes and looks as if it was shot from the street.

Farhad is angry at Daniel; he thinks he is responsible for the robbery of his shop. He decides to solve the situation on his own; he wants to have justice and revenge. He acts out of anger, and he did not think it through. He almost killed a small child. This scene is the most shocking and the most beautiful scene at once. Daniel is not only the victim of racism and stereotyping, but almost a victim of a shooting. He did nothing wrong, he is not guilty, but that means nothing. Daniel warned Farhad that the door needs to be changed, but Farhad did not understand him. It was not Daniel, who robbed the shop in the middle of the night. The roles changed; the Latino man becomes the victim of crime.

01:36:35 – 01:39:02



Fig. 13. Still from 'Crash' (01:36:35 – 01:39:02)

Ria is looking worried and on the verge of crying. She is with Graham and his mother, who must identify the body of Graham's brother. She is looking at them from a certain distance. When Graham's mother is calmed down, she helps to put her in a chair

on the corridor. Graham's mother tells him that this is his fault because he did not take care of him. Graham gets angry and walks away. Ria looks at him as offering him help, but he does not look at her. Graham walks past by Ria.

Ria comes closer to the camera until a close-up shot is taken from her, then she turns, and the camera is taking its focus on Graham and his mother with a medium long shot. Ria is looking at them and is very worried and sad. She is observing Graham and his mother in a medium close-up shot. Ria is showing her emotions, and she shares their pain. Ria is mostly in the background in this scene; at some point, only her blurred outlines are shown. The lights are warm, but the different shots are dark. They are in a hospital. Ria is always leaving a bit of distance between her and Graham with his mother. The sound is non-diegetic, sets the mourning mood.

Ria is not needed in this scene, but she truly wants to be the emotional support for Graham. Although Graham does not care about her now, maybe he is using her to have a sexual relationship only and nothing more. Ria wants to give comfort to Graham, but he is rejecting her. Ria's feminine side is revealed in this short scene, where she is not trying to be the confident Latina, she is not hiding her true feelings. She would like to be there for Graham in the difficult moments of grief for his brother.

01:42:36 – 01:43:19



Fig. 14. Still from 'Crash' (01:42:36 – 01:43:19)

After falling down the stairs and Maria driving her to the hospital, Jean is finally resting in her bed. Maria helps her to sit up, and she puts her arms under hers. Jean hugs her and tells her: "Do you want to hear something funny?". "What, Mrs. Jean?",

asks Maria. "You are the best friend I've got.", says Jean and keeps hugging her.

The lights are not strong anymore in the house. Medium close-up shots show Jean and Maria hugging each other. Interestingly Maria's face is not shown; her reaction is not to be seen. The camera is zooming in on Jean. She even looks a bit Latina as her hair does not seem to be that blonde anymore in this light. She has a better aura now that she accepted Maria and realized what a lovely person she is.

In this last scene, Jean finally admits how helpful Maria is and how much she did for her and her family. She tore down her burdens and finally sees that Maria is also a loving, kind-hearted

person who needs respect. Although Maria's face is not filmed while Jean tells her she is the only friend she has, probably she was smiling and happy to hear such a compliment from Jean. There is a sharp contrast between the two characters. Jean is a tall, blond, White American in a light pink outfit, while Maria is a shorter, plus-sized, dark-haired Latina in a darker outfit. However, the two women hugging each other could be interpreted as a symbol of unity. The burdens of prejudice and racism are crumbling down.

4.2 Latino/a Stereotypes in *Babel*

Alejandro González Iñárritu's film, *Babel*, is set in three different places, with different characters. Amelia, the Mexican nanny of two American children, gets into trouble when she takes the children to Mexico without the consent of the parents. The problem starts when they want to go back to the United States. Her nephew, Santiago, runs away and leaves them on their own. Amelia and the children are left behind in the desert at the Mexico-United States border. Their only chance of survival is to be found by the border patrol. Prior to that, the mother of the children, Susan is shot on holiday in Morocco with her husband, Richard. They are traveling with a group of tourists, but they leave them in the closest Moroccan village after the accident. They must wait for the ambulance. Susan was shot by a poor Moroccan boy, who was playing with the rifle. Later the boy and his family are tortured by the police.

Meanwhile, in Japan, a deaf teenager, Chieko, is struggling after the suicide of her mother. She has a complicated relationship with her father, who likes hunting. On his latest trip to Morocco, he gave a rifle to poor village boys as a present. Those boys shot Susan with the same rifle, and the story comes around. So, all the characters are connected in different ways in the film. They do not speak the same language but share the same feelings. Everyone is desperate to save their own life and find a balance.

Maurice Yacowar observed that "Three stories are told sequentially, but Iñárritu leaps back and ahead between them. The cut that takes us from Susan's scream at being sewn without anaesthetics [sic] to the silence of deaf Chieko's nightclub perspective seem a relief" (Yacowar 130). Yacowar continues that this cut is a meaningful choice of the director, as it can be interpreted as "our incomplete understanding of a foreign language" (Yacowar 130). When people do not speak the same language, they try to understand each other in different ways, without words. The connection between people is possible without words. "Where the biblical Babel was vertical, a tower built up into the heavens, our modern Babels are horizontal –

geographic, linguistic, cultural, and psychological fences that we erect against the strangers we would rather fear than understand” (Yacowar 130). Yacowar highlighted an important point: people are afraid of the unknown. Not being familiar with people coming from other cultures leads to stereotyping. Until this barrier is broken down, it is a difficult situation for the stereotyped group to prove they are better than what is spread about them in public. However, *Babel* is not forcing the opposite of the stereotypes portrayed by the characters. Iñárritu is trying, but it is not enough. Some characters cannot break from the stereotypes. One possible explanation for this could come from Iñárritu himself. In an interview, he said that “*Babel* is about the point of view of others. [...] It is not about only one country. It is a prism that allows us to see the same reality from different angles” (Iñárritu 7). I must argue with this, as it seems that all the events in the film are connected to the White American couple and their family. They are depicted as the victims of the events, and their lives were in danger through the acts of people of color. One would expect more from a Mexican director. Iñárritu could have depicted Mexican people without the Hollywood stereotypes of Latinos/as. Viewers indeed get a glimpse of life in Mexico, Morocco, Japan, and the United States, but it is only a bird’s-eye view. This glimpse is also full of stereotypes and clichés.

4.2.1 Amelia Hernández, the maid

One of the Latino/a characters in the film is Amelia, played by Adriana Barraza. Amelia is responsible for the children and the housekeeping at the Jones family. Amelia embodies not



Fig. 15. Amelia in ‘Babel’

only the stereotype of the Latina maid but also has traits of the female clown as she puts herself and the children in a dangerous situation because of her silliness. In the eyes of the children, Amelia is a loving and caring mother figure. She loves the Jones children, Debbie and Mike, as her own. She is also teaching them Spanish: she is speaking Spanish with Debbie and Mike (00:10:11 – 00:10:33), although they answer in English. Amelia’s real family is in Mexico, and his son is marrying his girlfriend. Amelia wants to go to the wedding which will be held in Mexico. Unfortunately, the parents of the children have an accident on their holiday in Morocco, and Amelia must stay with the children, missing her son’s wedding. However, Amelia takes matters into her own hands and tries to find another maid to keep an eye on the children, but no one wants to help. Finally, Amelia decides to take the children with her to Mexico without the permission of the parents. It is the only reckless act of her, but it has a huge impact. She is being deported and must end the life she has built in the United States.

Amelia is not a hot Latina woman that is so popular in Hollywood movies. She is a black-haired, middle-aged woman who can also be considered as plus-size. However, in my opinion, her physical appearance suggests her friendly personality. She is a mother, and she tries to protect Debbie and Mike as if they were her children. She leaves them in the desert, but only to save them. Amelia goes alone to search for help and in order to protect the children from the heat, she is leaving them in the shadow of a bush. Amelia's room in the house of the Jones' is decorated with Mexican memories, pictures, and holy symbols. She did not forget about her traditions; she organized her room in a style that she can feel at home. It is not stated in the film, but she could be a widow, as her husband is never mentioned or introduced in the film. Her family in Mexico lives under poor conditions, but they are happy. The two worlds are very different from each other.

4.2.2 Santiago, the nephew

Amelia's nephew, Santiago, played by Gael Garcia Bernal, depicts the stereotype of the *bandido*. He looks a nice man at first, always smiling, but it turns out he cannot be trusted. He is not respecting the law, the police caught him once for drunk driving, and he does it again with children in the car. At the wedding, Santiago is shooting in the air with a gun, like bandits in the old movies (01:00:44). Santiago has no limits, he is drinking too much alcohol at the wedding, although he knows he must drive later. He is not a responsible person, leaves Amelia and the children in the desert so he could save himself. Santiago is also untidy; his hair is long and not well-groomed. He is unshaven and wears old clothes. Even his car is an old one. He is playing with some women at the wedding. He is a bit of a womanizer.



Fig. 16. Santiago in 'Babel'

4.2.3 Officer John



Fig. 17. Officer John in 'Babel'

Although he has just a small role, it is important to mention another Latino character in the movie. A border patrol officer, John, played by Michael Peña. He is the officer who finds Amelia in the desert, but he does not speak Spanish with her, only English. Maybe he does not speak Spanish but has Latin American roots. He is doing his duty strictly, but he drives around Amelia to find the children in the desert.

4.2.4 Analysis of the Selected Scenes

00:08:50 – 00:10:08



Fig. 18. Still from 'Babel' (00:08:50 – 00:10:08)

Amelia is playing with the kids in their family's home. She is speaking Spanish with them. The phone rings, the father of the kids, Richard, is calling. Amelia looks worried while talking on the phone. The children, Debbie and Mike know that something happened, they can feel it.

Richard tells Amelia that someone will come and take care of the kids so that she can go to her son's wedding. Then he asks Amelia to give the phone to Mike, and the two of them speak.

The scene starts with a full shot of Mike running inside the house and hiding next to the couch. Lights are on, the atmosphere is warm. Then a quick full shot of Debbie hiding under a table. The camera turns back to Mike, showing him from a reverse angle. He is hiding next to the couch, and Amelia appears in the background. In this medium close-up, Mike is in focus, and the background is blurred. Then a medium close-up of Debbie shows her still under the table smiling as she hears Amelia calling the kids, looking for them. A medium shot shows Amelia looking for the kids in the kitchen, behind the counter. As soon as she leaves the kitchen, Debbie runs behind her to touch the base, the kitchen counter. Amelia playfully swings the kitchen towel towards her, but it does not touch Debbie. Amelia is still shown in a medium shot, as she picks up the ringing telephone. As soon as Amelia hears the voice of the father of the children, her expressions change, she looks serious. The framing is still a medium shot, it changes into a close-up when she asks about the children's mother, and the camera shows Mike. When Richard tells the details about his wife's condition, the camera goes back to show Amelia in a close-up. He asks Amelia to take care of the kids, without telling what happened to their mother. His voice is calm, so is Amelia's. The scene ends with Mike talking to his father on the phone, shown in a medium shot framing. Throughout the scene, there is no music playing, only the sounds made by the characters can be heard.

Amelia is very playful with the children, acts like a mother to them. She speaks in a very polite manner with her 'boss,' Richard, the father of the children. She is speaking English with him, unlike the children with whom she uses Spanish. Probably the parents asked her to teach the children Spanish, but this is not confirmed in the film. The house is not a luxurious palace, but an average American family house. Amelia is working in the kitchen when the scene starts. She

is holding a kitchen towel when she picks up the phone. It is like a traditional family scene: children are playing, and the “mother” is cooking. An idyllic scene interrupted by the ringing telephone.

00:10:09 – 00:11:46



Fig. 19. Still from 'Babel' (00:10:09 – 00:11:46)

Amelia is putting the children in bed. The kids speak to her in English, but she always uses Spanish while answering them. When Amelia switches off the lights in the children's room, Debbie is calling her name. Amelia goes back to her, and Debbie tells her that she is afraid of sleeping

because she does not want to die as her baby brother did. Amelia calms her, and she stays with her until she falls asleep.

As Mike covers his face murmuring that he does not want to sleep, a close-up over the shoulder shot is used with a focus on Mike. Then a reverse angle shot of Maria, as she is sitting next to Mike and ask him if he brushed his teeth. Mike grins and shows his teeth, and then the camera shows Debbie also grinning. In a medium shot, Amelia gives Mike a good night kiss on the forehead and wraps him up with the blanket. Then in a full shot, she goes to Debbie, also giving her a goodnight kiss. The lights are also warm in the children's room. As Amelia leaves the room, she switches off the lights. Amelia's silhouette is shown lighted from the front as she walks through the door. The house is quiet. Only Amelia's footsteps make a soft sound. Right after she disappeared from the doorway, Debbie is calling her name. She comes on the second call, switches on the lights. Again, an over the shoulder shot shows Debbie in the bed looking at Amelia. As Amelia sits on Debbie's bed, medium close-up shots are changing, showing Debbie and Amelia alternately. We learn from Debbie that they had a baby brother who died in his sleep. The thought of dying while sleeping is bothering Debbie, so she calls Amelia. Debbie wants to feel safe. Amelia leaves the lights on but stays there until the children fall asleep. Gentle guitar music is played as a non-diegetic sound.

Amelia is a second mother to the children. Her calm personality makes the children calm, as well. She has a good heart, and she comforts Debbie. Amelia is depicted as a mother figure. The children are also looking at Amelia as a mother. They are seeking comfort and find it with Amelia. The children feel safe with her.

00:11:47 - 00:13:20



Fig. 20. Still from 'Babel' (00:11:47 - 00:13:20)

but not this time. Amelia tries to find a nanny for a day for the kids. She is calling some friends, also visiting some other Mexican maids, but they all say no. She even tells one maid, that she should lie to her boss that they are her nephews. The maid answers: „Right, because they look so much like me, with my American looking face.”

The non-diegetic guitar music from the previous scene continues as Amelia's room is introduced. Some details of her room are shown. Her make-up table is packed full of her belongings. Her room is light, but the only window is the one in the bathroom connected to her room. Her room looks like a guest room. In a full shot, Amelia is getting out of her bed to pick up the ringing phone in the kitchen. The non-diegetic background music stops. In a long shot, she is standing next to the window and speaking on the phone with Richard. Then as Richard hangs up on her, she is filmed in a medium close-up framing. The focus is on her, what she will do now.

As the children are watching a cartoon about bullfight in the television, Amelia is calling a friend of her to take care of the kids. However, her friend refuses it. In a medium shot, the children are lying on the couch, as if they are waiting for what will happen to them. In a medium close-up shot, Amelia looks at them, thinking about the next step. She takes the kids to another, probably, Mexican maid, as it is shown in a long shot. As the two of them discuss the problem, some over the shoulder medium close-up shots are filmed. Nevertheless, this maid refuses to take care of the kids as well.

She is not demanding when Richard tells her to cancel her son's wedding today. She is trying to persuade Richard to find someone, but right now, he has a more important problem than someone's wedding. He is in Morocco, his wife is in a serious condition, and it is not that easy to find a nanny in America from there. Nevertheless, for Amelia, the wedding is also a great event, especially that it is the wedding of her son. A mother would not miss the wedding of her

children. Richard's situation is, of course, more complicated, his family has suffered a lot. They lost a baby, and now his wife is fighting for her life after being shot in Morocco.

00:13:21 – 00:14:26



Fig. 21. Still from 'Babel' (00:13:21 – 00:14:26)

the wedding. Santiago is afraid that the kids will not behave well, but Amelia tells him they are good children. "Are you sure, Auntie?" – He starts the car, looks into the mirror, and the Mexican music starts again.

Maria is packing for travel; the camera is zoomed in on her bag. A nicely wrapped gift, topped with a photo of Jesus Christ glued to it, is packed in her bag. Outside of the house, Santiago arrives with an old red car. Loud Mexican music is played in the car. The music stops as he stops the car. Then the camera is zooming in through the car's front seat windows to show Amelia with the kids ready for the journey. The camera stays in the car, as Santiago opens the door for the children. The camera turns inside the car as the children are getting in the backseat. The focus is on Mike while they are packing the bags in the trunk. Mike is watching them from inside the car. A sticker of the Holy Mary is visible on the back window of the car. As Amelia and Santiago get in the car, the camera is in reverse angle, and Santiago is in focus. He starts the car and looks in the camera through the driving mirror.

00:30:54 – 00:33:01



Fig. 9. Still from 'Babel' (00:30:54 – 00:33:01)

After all the failed attempts trying to find a nanny for the children, Amelia is packing. The children ask her if they are going to see her house. A young Mexican man arrives with an old car playing loud Mexican music. He is Santiago, Amelia's nephew, and he is taking all of them to Mexico, to

Amelia, Santiago, and the children arrive at the Mexican - American border. There is no control, and they enter Mexico easily. Mexico looks alive and colorful. Many cars, small buildings. They arrive at the place of the wedding.

Loud Mexican music is played as non-diegetic background music. With some long shot of the border area, we get a glimpse of the surroundings. Mexican people are among the cars selling some goods for the travelers waiting in their cars. The kids are looking out of the windows of the car. They are filmed from inside a car in a medium shot framing. Then the camera is moving with the car while it passes a sign calling attention to possible illegal refugees. The border itself is filmed from within the car as if one of the passengers was looking. Santiago makes fun with the children when Mike says that, according to her mother, Mexico is dangerous. Santiago is laughing, but the kids do not seem to enjoy it. Then some long shots of the streets with a tracking shot are filmed as the car goes through a city. It is an exciting place, with many people on the streets. Amelia, smiling, looks at the children in a close-up shot. Debbie smiles back at her. Debbie enjoys the view more than Mike. The music stops as they arrive at Amelia's home. The area is rural, very dusty, and poor — nothing like back in the US.

The children are probably shocked by the place where Amelia lives. It is different than they are used to. The town is colorful, many people on the streets, they even see prostitutes. The children are outside of their sweet American bubble. Mike is repeating what his mother told him about Mexico. He is judging Mexico based on the opinion of his mother. The mother of the children was telling them her negative view of Mexico, but they were still employing a Mexican nanny. This double standard is present in society. It is suitable for a WASP to have a cheap and illegal employee even though they do not like their origin. Nevertheless, all that matters is that she is a cheap workforce, so it is acceptable. After this comment from the mother of the children, one can only imagine how she has treated Amelia in the past.

00:33:18 – 00:34:04



Fig. 22. Still from 'Babel' (00:33:18 – 00:34:04)

Her son and other relatives welcome Amelia. She introduces Debbie and Mike and tells them to go to play with other children. Mike is not willing to go, but Debbie takes his hand, and they go.

The scene starts with a medium long shot, as the relatives are greeting Amelia, the children, and Santiago. In medium close-up shots, they are seen hugging and kissing each other. However, the camera focuses on Mike and Debbie in medium close-up framing. They look a bit lost, and the whole situation feels so unfamiliar, strange to them. Maybe at home, this

affectionate way of greeting one's loved ones is not familiar. In American culture, people like to keep a certain distance from each other when it comes to physical connections. Mike is begging with his eyes not to go and play with other children. However, Debbie is going without a word.

The living conditions of Amelia's family are different from the American way. The area is different from the place where the children come from. There is no proper road where Amelia lives, just a dirt road. The area is poor, the houses are simple, and there are some homemade cabins. The children are close to their home but in a totally different world. There is dust everywhere; it is a hot and dry summer day. However, it is very lively, and people are preparing for the wedding.

00:34:05 – 00:34:30



Fig. 23. Still from 'Babel' (00:34:05 – 00:34:30)

Amelia is preparing herself for the wedding with her daughter. She is wearing an old dress, and her daughter is amazed at how she could fit in a 15 years old dress. "You haven't changed a bit, Ma'!" says her daughter. "Working, dear, hard work... that's what keeps you young.", answers

Amelia, but the girls start laughing when they see that Amelia's dress is ripped a bit at the back.

Amelia is getting ready for the wedding. Her daughter is helping her zipping his dress. She wore that dress 15 years ago, but it still fits her. The girls are wondering about it, but they start laughing after they see the dress got ripped a bit in the back, but they do not tell it to Amelia. A full shot of the room shows their living conditions. Many photographs decorate the wall, some are black and white. The furniture is old, a lot of personal belongings are placed in the room. There are some stickers on a dirty mirror. Also, a religious symbol, a cross, is present in the room. There is no background music, only the characters talking.

00:34:33 – 00:35:41



Fig. 24. Still from 'Babel' (00:34:33 – 00:35:41)

the chickens needed, the children are surrounding him. Santiago asks Mike to help him hold a chicken. Then Santiago takes the chicken and breaks its neck with a sudden move. Mike is in shock, just like Debbie. The chicken starts running without its head, and all the children except for Debbie and Mike, are chasing it.

A medium long shot catches the children running around in the poultry farm. Debbie and Mike are not as cheerful as the other children, but they also participate in the game. In a medium shot, the children are surrounding Santiago. In medium close-up shots, the faces of the children are shown, all curious. There is no background music. The sun is shining, it is daytime. The camera focuses on Debbie and Mike only, and the other children are not introduced. When Santiago breaks the neck of the chicken, Debbie and Mike are shocked, terrified. They do not run after the chicken. Based on their reactions, they have never seen anything like this. People in this part of Mexico live their lives more traditionally. They do not have the luxury to buy everything prepared in the supermarkets. People are farming so that they have what they need.

00:55:55 – 01:01:17



Fig. 25. Still from 'Babel' (00:55:55 – 01:01:17)

Later, Amelia is seen kissing the man inside the house, while the newlyweds are cutting their wedding cake. In the heat of the party, Santiago shoots in the air with a gun. Mike gets scared, and Amelia is comforting him. Santiago is drinking, dancing, and teasing the bride and other girls.

The newlyweds are walking with their guests on the dirt road in a long shot. There is so much dust that they are barely visible while walking. The lighting is still intense, and the orange color suggests that the sun is going down. We see some medium shots from the guests and the musicians. Diegetic sound playing in the scene, the camera shows the Mexican band playing. In close-ups of the dancing newlyweds, their love for each other is conveyed through their expressions. All the guests are watching them, cheering, applauding, and taking photos of them. The camera is focusing on the feet of those dancing using close-up shots. Their shoes are old, and they are dancing in the dirt. Santiago takes Amelia and leads her to her son to have a dance with him. Amelia looks deeply touched by the whole ceremony. She and her son are smiling while dancing, as it is seen in the close-up shot of them. Debbie and Mike are also cheering for them. Later, Debbie and Mike are dancing with Amelia and Santiago. Then an older man approaches Amelia and asks her for a dance. First, she reacts by rejecting and is asking him what his wife has to say about it. Then the man calms her, his wife passed away ten years ago. After hearing this, Amelia agrees to have a dance, although she looks a bit cautious. The two of them are shown in various medium and medium close-up framings.

The party goes on, and some medium shots from the guests show them dancing to faster music. The sound is still diegetic. The musicians are on the stage, entertaining the wedding guests. Children are running around in the dust, playing with each other. The tables and chairs are all the cheap plastic ones. Some guests are dressed up, while others are wearing more casual clothes. Some are wearing hats like the American cowboy hats.

It is night, and the lights are on. Now a DJ is playing the music, and it is still a diegetic sound. People are lining up for food, laughing, and speaking loudly. Everyone seems to enjoy the wedding party. The children are also eating, and Amelia makes Mike eat a burrito. Debbie is enjoying the music. They are filmed in medium close-up shots. The children are relaxed after the shock caused by the chicken slaughtering. Then Amelia is inside the house, on the telephone when the man finds her. They are kissing, and now the sound is non-diegetic. Amelia is loosening up and giving herself a second chance in love.

Meanwhile, the newlyweds are cutting the first slices of their wedding cake. Santiago fires a gun, shoots in the air two times. He portrays the *bandido* stereotype perfectly. He is loud, drinks a lot, and is shooting with his gun. The gunshots break the melancholic, non-diegetic background music, and then the wedding band continues playing music. People are cheering and dancing. Mike got scared by the gunshots, and Amelia is calming him as seen in a medium

shot. The children are experiencing a cultural shock, but they managed to adapt to the new atmosphere quickly.

01:20:35 – 01:21:23



Fig. 26. Still from 'Babel' (01:20:35 – 01:21:23)

The party is still on. Many guests are already drunk. Amelia and Santiago are packing into the car. They want to go back to the United States. Amelia's son tells her that Santiago is too drunk to drive, they should stay for the night. However, Santiago says he is all right. The bride is

also asking them to stay, but Amelia tells her the children have soccer practice tomorrow. She hugs and kisses her son and her new daughter in law. She tells her she should take care of her grandchild, and she cannot wait to be a grandmother. Amelia's son asks again if Santiago is drunk, but he says he is fine. Amelia's son to Santiago: "Remember they got you once already, and you got in a lot of trouble." "Bye man," reacts Santiago. Amelia's son replies: "If things don't work here, I will meet you with the gringos" They smile and get into the car.

In some medium long shots, wedding guests are to be seen still enjoying the party, although a bit drunk. The scene does not look any more like a wedding scene. In another medium long shot, Amelia and Santiago are taking the kids to the car. Amelia's son and his wife are following them. It is still night, and the scene is a bit darker. Once they have put the children in the back seat of the car, Amelia says goodbye to her son and daughter-in-law. His son tells them if "things do not work out here, I will meet you at the gringos." He is referring to going to the United States if he cannot succeed in Mexico. The music band is still playing in the background.

The children are sleeping, they got tired from the busy day. Amelia wants to bring them home with Sebastian. Although he is drunk, Amelia is still willing to go with him. They are all wearing the same outfits as they go straight from the wedding celebrations. Amelia's son is worried because of the state of Sebastian.

01:21:30 – 01:30:07



Fig. 27. Still from 'Babel' (01:21:30 – 01:30:07)

border control point. An officer is asking for their papers. He also asks where they are coming from and where they are heading. Santiago needs to show the truck of the car to the officer. More officers are checking the car, Amelia's purse, and the glove department. Sebastian is getting angry. One of the officers asks Amelia for the parent's letters of permission to take their children to Mexico. Amelia looks worried, she does not have these papers. Debbie wakes up, and the officer asks her if Amelia is her auntie, but she says no. Santiago feels that they are in trouble. Then the officer suspects that Santiago is drunk and asks him to step out of the vehicle. He repeats it as Santiago is not willing to do it. He is repeating it louder and louder and grabs his gun. Santiago gets out of the car, but then another car arrives at the border control, and the officer orders Santiago to get back in the car. He must park the car on the side to have a secondary inspection. Santiago is following the officer to the secondary inspection area, but he is panicking, and so he decides to break through the border. The border patrol is chasing them. Santiago drives off the road, turns off the lights. The border patrol is not following them anymore. Santiago drives into the desert and stops the car. He orders Amelia and the kids to leave the car so he can go and mislead border patrol, and he will come back for them. They leave the car, all crying.

The car is seen in the middle of nowhere in a long shot framing. Only the lights of the car give some light, it is complete darkness on the road. Then the camera is inside the car, filming from the driver's point of view. In close-ups, Santiago is seen to be very tired, even closing his eyes. The car goes immediately off the road a little. There are streetlights only right in front of the border. The night is calm, there are just a few cars at the border.

When the border patrol officer is controlling them and their passport, close-ups are used. Amelia looks worried, Santiago does not show too much respect for the officer. Even Amelia tells Santiago that he is provoking the officer. Another border patrol officer comes and asks Santiago to open the trunk. The officer is inspecting every bag while holding a torch. He also goes to the

front and inspects the glove compartment and Amelia's purse. When things escalate, and the officer suspects Santiago to be a drunk driver, he asks him to pull over to the secondary inspection area — still shown in close-ups. The officer is filmed from the car in a medium shot. The officer tells Santiago: "Park your vehicle, and you get out. Shut your mouth and do as you are told." Santiago does not follow the instructions; he steps on the gas and drives through the border. Mike wakes up, the children and Amelia start to cry. They are filmed in medium close-ups. Mike wakes up, Debbie starts crying, the officers are shouting. Amelia cries: "What are you doing? What are you doing?" Santiago accuses Amelia: "See, I told you! You shouldn't have brought them!" blames Amelia. Amelia is shouting: "Santiago, stop acting like a madman and stop the car! Please, Santiago, stop! Stop!" But Santiago does not stop, he is driving fast and orders Amelia: "Shut those kids up! Shut them up!" Santiago is raging when he leaves Amelia and the children in the dark wilderness. Amelia is shown in medium long shots from various angles struggling in the dark with the children. They have a torch, but still, they barely see anything.

Santiago is blaming Amelia, and he is partly right. Nevertheless, his attitude was more of a problem at the border control. The officers were doing only their job. They are not rude; Sebastian's provoking attitude makes them angry. Probably the whole procedure would have been more peaceful if Sebastian would not be so rude and arrogant. However, he was afraid and made trouble out of fear. He was drunk, and he has been drinking through the whole wedding. We learn from Amelia's son that Sebastian needs to be careful since he was caught before for driving drunk. Probably, he was afraid that one of the officers would put him on a test.

Moreover, the officers got suspicious about why they had two White American children in their car. Amelia did not have consent from the children's parents that would allow them to take them out of the United States. Nevertheless, running away was not the best decision. He put Amelia and the children in danger. His actions reinforce the *bandido* stereotype. The actions of Amelia that led to this situation merely reinforce the stereotypes of the female clown. She was naïve to think that she can take someone's underage children out of their country without the parents' consent.

01:45:12 – 01:46:56



Fig. 28. Still from 'Babel' (01:45:12 – 01:46:56)

wondering. “Because they think we did something wrong, baby.”, answers Amelia. Mike is not happy with the answer: “That’s not true, you’re bad!”. “No, sweetie. No, I’m not. I just did something stupid.”

The shot starts with a bit cloudy blue sky, then it switches to a long shot of the desert. In the next long shot, Amelia is seen lying on the ground with the children. They are sleeping in the shadow of a bush. The camera shows Debbie’s shoes in a close-up. Mike is filmed in another close-up, resting his head on Amelia. In an extreme long shot a border patrol car is to be seen driving through the desert. The camera shows Amelia immediately waking up in a medium close-up shot. She is sitting up, and with an over-the-shoulder framing, the camera shows that she sees the border patrol car. She stands up, waking up Mike and runs toward the car waving and shouting. She is pictured in medium close-up shots and full shots alternately. When she understands that the car does not see her, she goes back to the children. She is crying and hugs Mike, who is skeptical about her. Amelia herself confesses that she made bad choices. However, she is trying to save the children now. She is worried, Mike is against her, Debbie is unconscious.

01:49:12 – 01:53:14



Fig. 29. Still from 'Babel' (01:49:12 – 01:53:14)

Amelia is walking with the children in the border patrol car’s path. Amelia is carrying the still unconscious Debbie. They all look dirty and sweaty. Suddenly the path ends, and they do not know which direction to take. Amelia lays down Debbie in the shadow of a bush and puts her jacket under her head. She tells Mike that she goes looking for help, but he must stay there with Debbie. Mike wants to go with Amelia, but Amelia tells him to stay and take care of Debbie. She

promises she will be back soon. As she is walking, she sees a car approaching. The officer sees her, and he stops. He looks like a Latino but does not speak Spanish with her. She is telling him about the children that they must go and find them. He asks her when she crossed the border. She tells him that she lives in America, she did not cross the border. The officer talks on his radio, and when he comes back to Amelia, he arrests her. Amelia starts to cry. They drive back where she left the children, but they are not there anymore. They are looking everywhere when another border patrol car arrives with illegal Mexican immigrants. They ask Amelia if she came with those people, but she does not know them. One of the immigrants has a small baby with her. They are all dirty and tired and sad. The officer takes Amelia back to his car.

As Amelia is walking with the children, medium close-up framing is used to show their faces. It helps to see how they are struggling. Their loneliness is expressed through an extreme long shot of the desert. No cars, no other people in the whole area. Amelia is also losing her strength; she has trouble walking while carrying Debbie on her shoulder. Mike starts to cry when Amelia leaves them looking for help. Before she leaves, she gently strokes Mike's cheek. It is a close-up shot of Mike as he is left alone with his sister.

Amelia is walking alone in an extreme long shot, revealing again how desperate their situation is in the desert. She is alone in the middle of nowhere. The sun is scorching, Amelia is suffering in the heat in medium close-up framings about her body. She is breathing heavily. There is no background music. Finally, she sees a border patrol car approaching. She starts to run towards the car, shouting and waving her red scarf. The camera is not steady, it is moving constantly while following her. Full, medium, and medium close-up shots are alternating while the camera shows her running.

The border patrol officer looks like a Mexican American, but he does not show empathy. He is arresting Amelia; he is doing his job. Amelia is crying, but he is not moved by it. When they get back to the place where Amelia left the children, the camera is continuously moving as imitating the search after the children. Another border patrol car appears with a few illegal immigrants caught in the desert. They look miserable in the car; their hope is lost. Slow guitar music is playing as a non-diegetic sound. The characters are mute, one can only guess what they are talking about. The sun is going down, the lights are weaker than during the day. The desert is a hopeless place, dry, hot, and no sign of humans.

01:59:30 – 02:01:45



Fig. 18. Still from 'Babel' (01:59:30 – 02:01:45)

Amelia is sitting in an office, still dirty from the night in the desert. A man, a border patrol officer, is questioning her. He tells him that they found the children, but he cannot believe how she could leave them alone in the desert. She is very sad, she asks how the children are doing, but the officer says it is none of her business. He asks her if she knows how many children die trying to cross the border between Mexico and the United States. Without looking, she says quietly: "I raised these kids since they were born. I take care of them day and night. I feed them breakfast and lunch and dinner. I play with them. Mike and Debbie are like my own children.", she starts crying. However, the man does not show any empathy. He says: "But they are not your children, ma'am. Plus, you've been working in this country illegally." "What about my nephew, Santiago?", asks Amelia. "I don't have information on him. We located the father in Morocco. He decided not to press charges.", the officer goes on. "Thank you!", says Amelia relieved. However, the officer has more to say: "Nevertheless, the United States has deemed that you are seriously breaking the law and is determined to immediately and definitively deport you.". Amelia looks surprised and worried, she tells him she rented a home for 16 years and was always working in the States, but the officer tells her she should have thought about that beforehand. Then she thinks and says that she wants a lawyer, but the officer suggests not to. "If you attempt to take this to trial, I can assure you, you'll be prolonging the inevitable. I recommend you accept voluntary deportation.". Amelia breaks down in tears.

The scene starts with a long shot of an office. A man is sitting behind a desk, going through papers and talking to Amelia. She is sitting on the other side of the desk, without handcuffs. She is still dirty from the desert. The officer is shown just a few seconds, but never directly. The focus is now on Amelia. She is filmed over the officer's shoulder in a medium close-up framing. When the officer tells her she will be deported, he looks straight on to Amelia. He shows no emotions. Amelia starts to cry, covers her face with her hand. She believes she has a right to know what happened with the children. In the eyes of the officer, Amelia was only their nanny, not a family member. So, according to the law, she has no right above the children. Amelia is feeling betrayed by the system. She was working in the US for many years, and she

raised the children as her own. But all of this means nothing since she was there undocumented and worked there illegally. Deportation is like a death sentence for her.

02:01:47 – 02:02:11



Fig. 30. Still from 'Babel' (02:01:47 – 02:02:11)

Amelia's son is crossing a road and is heading towards his mother. Amelia is sitting on a pavement in Mexico. When he gets to her, they are hugging and crying.

The camera is moving with Amelia's son as he approaches his mother. It is getting dark, the lights are weak, a bit grey. She is still wearing the clothes for the wedding, and she is still dirty from the desert. When they hug each other, Amelia is crying again in a close-up framing. The only sound is non-diegetic background music. It is again the melancholic guitar play.

Amelia is destroyed emotionally. She had most probably the worst day in her entire life. She lost half of her life in one day. Amelia had good intentions, she did not want to cause any harm to anybody, but in the end, everything has changed. Even without the reckless act from Sebastian, she would be in trouble. She lost her "step-children," but got back her son.

4.3 Latino/a Stereotypes in *Traffic*

Directed by Steven Soderbergh, *Traffic* tells the story of the endless war on drugs in the United States. The story is developing in three directions, but everything is connected. Two Mexican policemen, Javier and Manolo, want to arrest some men transferring illegal drugs, but a Mexican General, Salazar, stops them. He hires the two police officers but soon they realize Salazar is also involved in the drug business. He works for the Juárez Cartel and wants to abolish the Tijuana Cartel. Javier keeps working for him but is very careful. Not like his partner, Manolo, who tries selling information for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Manolo is caught, and Salazar's men kill him in the desert. After Manolo's death, Javier wants to stop Salazar. He gives information to the DEA and in exchange, he asks for electricity on the streets so that children could play baseball and not get involved with the drug cartels. Salazar

gets caught and is killed. Javier's wish is fulfilled, the film ends with him enjoying a children's baseball game in a lighted park.

Meanwhile, in the United States a new judge is appointed for the position as head of the Office of National Drug Control. He is taking on the fight against illegal drugs in the United States. However, his own daughter is consuming drugs and becomes addicted. After realizing how the war on drugs is endless, he resigns from his position and spends more time with his family. Also, in the United States, DEA agents arrest a Mexican American drug dealer, Eduardo Ruiz. He gives more information about his boss, Ayala, to the police. DEA agents arrest his boss, leaving his wife surprised and worried. His wife did not know about her husband's business. To save her husband, she hires a hitman to kill Eduardo Ruiz. Unfortunately, a DEA agent, Ray dies instead of Eduardo. Without a witness, the case is dropped against Ayala. He goes back to his family, and the drug business is continued.

Traffic is introducing not only the drug business but also how it affects the lives of people connected to it. Those who do not use drugs have to suffer from the consequences, as well. "Appropriately, some of the individual stories end tragically, others equivocally, and maybe one with a sense of release and transformation. But none concludes without trauma and resulting deep scars" (McCarthy 24). The war on drugs has ended many innocent lives, and it seems like it has no end. It is easy money for many people who do not care about the damage they cause with drugs. As Deborah Shaw writes, "*Traffic* attempts to provide the 'full picture' in terms of drug trafficking, dealing, use and law enforcement" (Shaw 212). Films about drugs mostly show the trafficking side of the story, condemning Latinos/as as criminals (Berumen and Keller as in Shaw 212). Shaw is right, as she states that *Traffic* is "challenging racial and ethnic hierarchical categories that have traditionally characterized many mainstream Hollywood films" (Shaw 213). In the film, Mexicans are responsible for drug trafficking. It all begins there in the country. Then the second responsible for trafficking are Latinos living in the United States. Latinas are not associated with drug trafficking in the film. The drug dealers are African Americans, but at the end of the chain are the White Americans as consumers.

There are some essential features of the film which need to be highlighted before the scene analysis. Each of the storylines is filmed with different color schemes. All the scenes from the Mexico storyline have a yellowish sepia color, and the shots are overexposed in the daylight. It might imply the heat and the scorching sun in Mexico. The contrast is also strong in this storyline. Some scenes filmed inside are quite dark since Steven Soderbergh decided to use in 50-70% of the film only the available light (Steven Soderbergh Interview 07:33 – 07:49). For

inside shots they used very little light. The Wakefield storyline scenes are filmed mostly in a blue color tone and just a few shots have a well-balanced color. The DEA storyline with Eduardo and Ray are filmed in a balanced, neutral color tone, no extremes. The use of different colors in different places is forcing the contrast.

Moreover, the camera is continuously moving. According to Soderbergh, only four shots of the film were filmed on a tripod. Almost the whole film was filmed with mobile cameras (Steven Soderbergh Interview 07:50 – 08:05). This camera holding technique gives an interesting perspective to the film. Viewers might feel as they are part of the action, as they are there in the film, observing the events from inside.

4.3.1 Javier Rodriguez, a police officer

The character of Javier Rodriguez is played by Benicio del Toro. He is a Mexican policeman who keeps fighting against the drug mafia. A corrupt Mexican army general, Salazar, hinders



Fig. 31. Javier in 'Traffic'

him from arresting illegal drug couriers but later hires him and his partner, Manolo Sanchez. At first, Javier believes that the general is fighting against drugs. Soon Javier finds out the general's true intentions: he works for the Juárez Cartel and wants to abolish their rivals, the Tijuana Cartel. Although Javier keeps working for the General, he is not corrupt. Javier is careful as he knows what the General is capable of. After watching his partner killed by the people of General Salazar, he decides to give information to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Javier is a poor Mexican police officer. He drives an old car and lives alone in a small apartment. He lost his parents some years ago, has nothing to live for, only to fight crimes. The favor he is asking from the DEA agents for the information proves that he has a good heart. He wants to give a better life for children in the city, so they will not become criminals. His looks are not implying a decent man at first. Javier is wearing simple clothes, but never a police uniform. He is smoking, has an attitude of not caring about anything. However, this is only the outside. Javier is observing his environment. He is a troubled soul deep inside. He is afraid when he and Manolo are taken by Salazar's men to the desert (01:44:53). But Javier is not panicking. He accepts his destiny, little does he know it will not be his.

Although Javier is not a criminal, he is portraying the stereotype *el bandido*. He is not a real drug runner, but he is working in the drug business indirectly. Javier helping the general, is

helping the Juárez Cartel. Nevertheless, the audience knows that he is against drugs. His wish reveals a lot about his character. Javier is asking for lights in the parks, so children can go outside and play baseball. He is not asking for money, or anything else for himself. He is trying to create a better future for children. Javier has nothing to lose, but he is careful when telling the information to the DEA.

4.3.2 Manolo Sanchez, a police officer

Manolo Sanchez, played by Jacob Vargas, is a Mexican police officer, working with Javier Rodriguez as partners. After becoming a member of General Salazar's team, he wants to sell information to the DEA. As nothing can be a secret before Salazar, Manolo gets killed in the desert. Manolo and Javier are different. Unlike Javier, Manolo is a bit reckless, kind of naïve. He is going out with the soldiers of the general. Manolo calls them friends, but they are the ones who kill him later. Manolo does not understand how dangerous is the game that he is playing. He is not careful when he is willing to sell information to the DEA. He is paying with his life. Manolo also has a wife, who would need him. However, Manolo is not planning his next steps as carefully as Javier. His childish behavior and his naivety affirm that he is portraying the male buffoon stereotype. The male buffoon is also the sidekick to the protagonist, just as Manolo is the sidekick to Javier.



Fig. 32. Manolo in 'Traffic'

4.3.3 Ray Castro, a DEA agent



Fig. 33. Ray in 'Traffic'

Ray Castro, played by Luis Guzmán, is a Mexican American DEA agent. In an undercover investigation, he and his partner arrest Eduardo Ruiz. He is protecting Eduardo Ruiz in the Ayala trial, but gets killed when Eduardo's car explodes. In one dialog with his partner, Montel, he confesses how he dreams about arresting rich people and White people. His dream may sound a bit racist, but probably he has an unpleasant experience with those people.

He is portraying the male buffoon stereotype. He is the funny Latino who is always joking. Although his jokes are funny mostly for him, he still tells them. He is also a bit chunky for an agent but proves he is in excellent condition when he is chasing Eduardo (00:11:30).

When Ray and Montel talk to Eduardo in the hospital or the interrogation room, Montel is always waiting for confirmation from Ray. Montel is stating something, and then Ray is repeating it as confirming Montel is right. The two of them are depending on each other.

4.3.4 Eduardo Ruiz, a drug trafficker

Miguel Ferrer plays Eduardo Ruiz. Officially he is a Mexican American fisherman, actually, he is a drug trafficker. He gets arrested by DEA agents and is highly protected as a witness against his boss in a trial. At first, he is protecting his boss by not giving any information about his personality. His boss, Ayala, is also his longtime friend. Later, choosing immunity above friendship, he gives his boss' name to the DEA. Nevertheless, to make it official, Eduardo must testify against him. The wife of Eduardo's boss is hiring a hitman to kill Eduardo and save her husband. The first attempt to assassinate Eduardo fails, killing Ray instead of him. Later he gets poisoned on orders by his boss' wife before his testimony in front of the court.

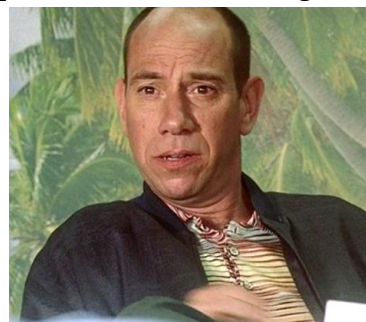


Fig. 34. Eduardo in 'Traffic'

Eduardo's character is playing with the *el bandido* stereotype. He is trafficking drugs into the United States, but he is not the boss of the drug smuggling business. He does not portray the macho type of *el bandido*. He is disguising himself as a fisherman. Eduardo is a criminal, but also a victim. His boss, who is also his childhood friend, sacrifices him.

Interestingly, only one Latina character was in focus of the film. The appearance of Manolo's wife, Ana, is short and only in connection with Manolo and Javier. However, her role is not relevant to the plot, and the scenes with her are not enough to carry out a comprehensive analysis of her character. Another woman, Ayala's wife looks like a Latina, but since her origin is not clear, her character was not considered for analysis.

4.3.5 Analysis of the Selected Scenes

00:00:21 – 00:05:40



Fig. 35. Still from 'Traffic' (00:00:21 – 00:05:40)

Javier and Manolo are waiting in their car in the desert to catch drug smugglers. They arrest the men transporting drugs, but soon the Mexican army and General Salazar appear, and they take over control. Salazar congratulates them that

they are very well informed, but he will take the case from now on.

The picture is yellow as suggesting the scorching sun in the desert. The scene starts with a long shot of the desert. Their car is parked in the middle of nowhere. They are alone until the drug smugglers appear. The camera is not stable, it is handheld. There are small movements that suggest this method. Javier and Manolo are pictured in a close-up shot sitting in their car. Javier is telling Manolo his nightmare about his long-lost mother, but Manolo is not paying attention, he is playing Nintendo. When a plane is landing above them, it is shown in a following shot. The camera is on the right side in front of the car and shows the plane flying above the car. It turns as the plane flies over them. Shortly after the plane, a truck is coming in their way. Javier and Manolo get out of their car and Javier holds his hand up to stop the truck. The camera is placed in the car, as if the viewers were sitting in the car. Then the viewpoint changes, and the camera is in the truck, between the truck driver and his companion. The camera shows Javier and Manolo standing in front of their car. One significant line that is said by the drug smugglers is: "Don't worry. It's just the police." This line says it all, the police have no respect among criminals like drug smugglers. The police, as a law enforcement branch, have no power over the supply, trafficking, and demand of drugs. People involved in drug trafficking are not afraid of getting caught by the police. The drug lords have more power than the police do.

However, Javier still tries his best to stop drug trafficking. He stops the truck and asks the driver whether they have a permit or not for this road, as it turns out to be a private road. To be able to drive there, one must have a permit. The camera is now outside of the truck, behind Manolo showing Javier through the car. The men ask Javier how much a permit would cost. Javier says it is 400 pesos, but as the men reach their pockets, Javier and Manolo take their guns and point at the men. They order them to get out of the truck and show their cargo. One of the men says that they are transporting food. The camera is behind Javier, at the level of his head. Viewers may get the feeling as if they were there on the spot, observing and being part of the action. Then the camera is zooming in on the boxes as they are uncovered, and every box is marked with a number '911' and a scorpion. This mark will be significant later on in the film. Manolo tells the man to open one box to see the food. When the man opens a box, Manolo finds big packages of cocaine in the box. He and Manolo immediately arrest the smugglers.

The camera is moving continuously, following the actors. It is never steady. When Javier closes the truck's lid, the camera is filming from inside the truck. The screen gets dark as Javier closes it. The next shot shows Javier's car going away, followed by the truck. It is a following shot again. Javier is driving the car, with one of the arrested men sitting next to him. Behind them,

Manolo is driving the truck with the other arrested man. In the rear-view mirror of the truck, a black jeep appears, and then it takes over the truck, followed by three other jeeps. The jeeps are shown in the rear-view mirrors of Javier's car. After the jeeps overtook the car and the truck, the camera switches to a long shot, showing all the vehicles. The jeeps stop in front of Javier's car, forcing them to stop. Soldiers with guns get out of the cars. They all point their guns at Javier, still sitting in his car. The camera is zooming in to a medium close-up of some of the soldiers. He looks ready to kill every second. Javier looks surprised, but he immediately puts his hands up. An older man, wearing military outfit and sunglasses also gets out of the black jeep and walks to Javier. He leans down to the driver's side to talk to him. The camera is following him, and filming from inside Javier's car. When Javier is telling the General his name, Javier is shown in a medium close-up shot, sitting at the steering wheel, holding his hands up. In this shot, the General's head is almost out of the screen. The General congratulates him for catching the drug smugglers and asks him who told him this information.

Nevertheless, Javier does not give any information. The soldiers leave Javier and Manolo but take the truck and the smugglers with it. The camera shows all the cars leaving in a full shot as they fade away in the distance. Manolo and Javier are standing at their car a bit disappointed by the failed action. Manolo asks Javier if this man was General Salazar, and Javier confirms it. He is sure that the General is planning something. They get into their car, and the scene ends. The camera is showing them in a full shot. Their car is in the center of the screen.

The scene is very well lit, except for the shots taken from the characters sitting in the cars. The sun is scorching, so the pictures are light. However, the contrast is higher. The white car is radiant compared to the black jeeps. This contrast between black and white is a symbolic element of the scene. Javier's car is white, while the soldier's jeeps are all black. It can be interpreted as the good vs. the bad, since the color white is associated with cleanliness, goodness, innocence, while black is associated with negative feelings. Black is also the color of grief in the Christian tradition, so it evokes feelings like sadness, gloom, and depression.

The only time in this scene when music is played is when the soldiers leave Javier and Manolo. It is a sad and slow melody. Apart from this, through the whole scene, the noises of the events can be heard. This effect makes the whole scene seem to be real. The audience might feel like it is part of the events.

Javier and Manolo are disappointed, the General took the arrested criminals from them. Javier is suspicious of the General but does not know yet what his plan is. Manolo and Javier are not

wearing any uniform, unlike the General's men. Neither does their car have any police signs. Only from showing their badges do we know that they are policemen.

00:08:02 – 00:13:12



Fig. 36. Still from 'Traffic' (00:08:02 – 00:13:12)

Ray and Montel visit Eduardo Ruiz in his office disguised as potential business partners. Ray is being funny, tells jokes, although Montel asked him not to. They are talking with Eduardo and watch as his men arrive with a van to a garage on the other side of the street. Suddenly the van is attacked, Eduardo shoots Montel and runs away.

Montel is wearing a bulletproof vest and is not hurt. Ray and Montel run after Eduardo and catch him in a restaurant by shooting him in the foot.

The scene starts with a full shot of roadside workers digging next to a fence. It is daylight, the picture is light. Then the camera is turning to the left, following the car of Montel and Ray arriving at the scene. This movement of the camera is a pan, connecting the workers and the agents. They are close to each other. The camera is following them as they enter the building. It is a handheld camera as it is moving continuously. In the car, Montel tells Ray not to tell jokes as it might give them away. However, Ray is stubborn, when they are talking to Eduardo, he is telling jokes. No one is enjoying his jokes but Ray himself.

Meanwhile, over the road, hiding in a container, other DEA agents are observing their mission and are prepared to step in if the situation escalates. When Ray and Montel are entering the building, the camera is showing them from a distance in a long shot. It gives the impression as if someone is watching them. The next shot is focusing on a container where the colleagues of them are hiding and observing the mission. The camera is zooming in on the container. In his office, Eduardo wants to talk business, tells them that they would need to do the same what his men do on the other side. They all look out of the window and see a van arrive at a garage. One man gets out of the van to open the garage door, but then many cars arrive, and they are attacked. Eduardo shoots Montel and escapes. Ray immediately checks Montel if he is hurt. Fortunately, the bulletproof vest saved his life. Ray starts chasing Eduardo, and Montel joins him. The camera is following them. Eduardo is hiding in a restaurant in a children's ball pit. Ray and Montel are moving without making any noise in the restaurant. Montel sees Eduardo's shoe among the balls and waves at Ray to come there. Montel says to Ray that they must have lost

Eduardo, and then he shoots Eduardo in the foot. He starts screaming in pain, and Ray and Montel pull him out of the balls.

There is no music playing in the background. The only sound throughout the scene is diegetic. The audience can hear every gunshot, every step, even when the breath of the characters when they are running. These sound effects make the viewing experience more real: viewers can feel like part of the action. Montel and Ray make up a dynamic duo. They are totally different but can work together in harmony. Ray is always joking, trying to be funny, but Montel is the calm one, more relaxed. Ray is the male buffoon stereotype. Eduardo's stereotype, on the other hand, is the *bandido*, the drug lord, but it does not fit him. He does not look dangerous, he looks like – as he states – an honorable businessman. One thing gives him away: he has an armed bodyguard.

00:23:52 – 00:25:43



Fig. 37. Still from 'Traffic' (00:23:52 – 00:25:43)

Ray and his partner, Montel, are visiting Ed in the hospital. Montel loses his temper quite fast as they start talking. Eduardo is shouting back at him, but soon they are interrupted by the guard. Montel tells the guard that everything is ok. Eduardo says he wants immunity. Eduardo is trying to explain that he is a legitimate

businessman, but Montel shouts at him cursing. Then Montel and Ray start to discuss that Eduardo is losing. They have found cocaine at his place. They want to know whom Eduardo is working for. Eduardo says, “I know another big word: immunity.”

Somehow the DEA agents seem to be aggressive and Eduardo seems to be the more sober-minded. He is in a difficult situation, but he is calm. After Montel shouted at him, he also gets angry. From the duo of Ray and Montel, Montel is the leader, and Ray is more like following Montel. Ray is often repeating what Montel says. Maybe Ray is looking at Montel as the boss from the two of them and wants to emphasize Montel's words.

Handheld camera, medium shots of the three of them. Eduardo is reading a newspaper, but when he sees Ray and Montel, he looks annoyed. He is even asking in an unpolite manner, “What the hell are you doing here?” Montel is ignoring him. He is asking how he feels sarcastically. Eduardo is not answering but looks at them annoyed. Then he tells them that he has a legal fishing business, but Montel gets angry. Ray remains calm and tells Eduardo

peacefully that he is in trouble. Ray is indicating that Eduardo must cooperate with them. Then Montel starts to list all the points where Eduardo is found guilty. Montel wants to hear the name of Eduardo's boss, otherwise, he is the only one who must take all the accusations. Eduardo says that if he tells them the name, he will be killed before getting to the court. Montel is confident, saying they can protect him. Eduardo says he wants immunity. Montel and Ray look troubled.

Medium and medium close-up shots are used in this scene. Eduardo is sitting up in the hospital bed, while Ray and Montel are moving around in the small room. Montel is angry and restless, while Ray is calm and patient. It feels like Eduardo and Montel hate each other, but Ray is more neutral when it comes to feelings. Ray even holds back Montel when he loses his temper. The scene is light, the natural daylight is used effectively. The scene is closing with some slow melody, a nondiegetic sound.

00:26:29 – 00:28:27

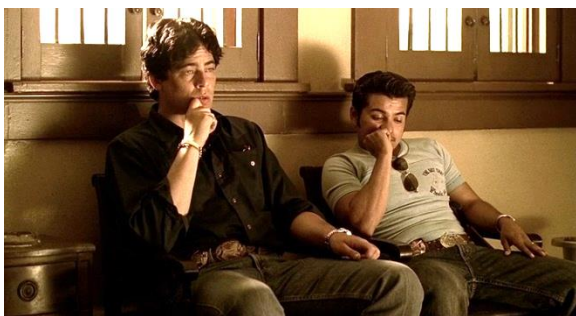


Fig. 38. Still from 'Traffic' (00:26:29 – 00:28:27)

Javier and Manolo are waiting at Salazar's office. Only Javier can meet the General. Salazar knows everything about Javier. Javier is not surprised about it. Salazar tells him that he is planning to "wipe out" the Tijuana cartel. He asks Javier to find a man, named Francisco Flores.

While waiting, Javier and Manolo look worried. Probably they are a bit afraid, they must have heard how powerful the General is. Only Javier is invited into the office of the General. He wants to talk to Javier alone. When inside the office, Javier is sitting in front of the office desk of Salazar. Salazar is reading out loud personal information about Javier from a book. The shots are medium and medium close-ups. It is daylight, and the room is well lit. The scene has a warm, orange, and yellowish color scheme. Salazar is offering a job for Javier. Salazar looks at Javier meaningfully as if he has no other choice than working for him. Javier stays calm and says if he can help, then he will do it.

Salazar is playing his role very well: he demonstrates his power over Javier (and everybody else) but acts as an uncle. He wants to be respected, and to earn that respect, he is showing his power. Salazar is only interested in Javier and he does not want to talk to Manolo. Salazar must know that Javier is the leader in this duo. Javier is wise and calm, while Manolo is depicted as

young and reckless. Salazar speaks only with Javier, but he accepts that Manolo is the right hand of Javier. Although, Salazar never mentions Manolo to Javier. Javier is respectful of the General.

00:40:37 – 00:41:32

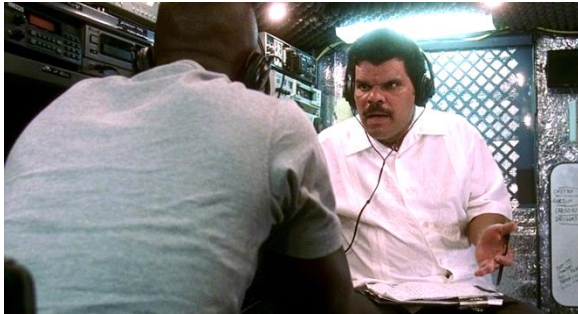


Fig. 39. Still from 'Traffic' (00:40:37 – 00:41:32)

Ray and Montel are eavesdropping the wife and the lawyer of Ayala, Eduardo's boss. They are outside of his house. They cannot hear clearly, but Ray is sure that Ayala's wife is also involved in drug trafficking. Montel does not think so, and they make a bet. Ray tells Montel how he is dreaming about "busting the top people, the rich

people...White people".

Sitting in their van, Ray is sure that the wife is also included in the drug smuggling business. Montel thinks she is not, and Ray asks him if he wants to bet. Montel takes his money from his pocket and says he has twenty dollars. Ray takes ten dollars from him to make it even. Montel looks confused.

The two of them are filmed with over the shoulder medium close-up shots. When they stop listening and make a bet, the shot changes to a medium shot, showing more details of the inside of the interception van. Ray confesses his dream to Montel. He wants to catch the rich people and White people. Ray wants justice, he does not like people who think they can rule above everybody. His personal life is not mentioned in the film, but probably he was discriminated against by the people he mentions. Now, as a member of law enforcement, he can bring justice to the people. On the one hand, Ray's dream is understandable, he is probably a victim of racism. On the other hand, not all rich and White people are racist. With this belief, he is also stereotyping White people, by collecting them all in the group of racists.

00:50:41 – 00:52:33



Fig. 40. Still from 'Traffic' (00:50:41 – 00:52:33)

Ray and Montel are interrogating Eduardo in an interrogation room. Eduardo tells them how they smuggle the drugs in cars, hiring drivers who have nothing to lose. They do so, because not every car is searched through at the border. Also, according to Eduardo, the Mexican "law

enforcement is an entrepreneurial activity.” However, Ray and Montel want new information. They warn him he needs a different attitude if he wants to convince the jury. Montel tells Eduardo that he made a mistake, so they caught him. Eduardo admits he was greedy but says that they are childhood friends with his boss, that is why Ayala trusted him.

The scene starts with an establishing shot, showing Eduardo, Ray, and Montel sitting at a table in an interrogation room. Medium close-up shots are used, sometimes combined with over the shoulder shots. When the camera focuses on Montel or Ray, it is always filmed over Eduardo’s shoulder. He is the center of attention now. Eduardo is wearing prisoners’ clothes. The room is painted dark, even the table has a dark color. Although the room has windows, the electric lighting is on. Montel is the one leading the conversation, but Eduardo tells them everything. Eduardo looks as if the whole investigation has no aim; he is confident that no one can stop drug smuggling. Nevertheless, Montel and Ray are interested in information that they do not have yet. They are eager to catch more people involved in drug trafficking. They want to do their job as good as they can.

01:03:21 – 01:04:40



Fig. 41. Still from 'Traffic' (01:03:21 – 01:04:40)

Manolo’s wife, Ana, is visiting Javier to ask where Manolo is. She thought they were together somewhere last night. She tells Javier that she found a piece of paper among Manolo’s clothes. On the paper, the number 911 and a scorpion sign are printed.

The scene has a warm color tone, as it is set in Mexico. With an establishing shot, Ana is crossing a street. The camera is following her with a tracking shot. She stops at the door of Javier’s apartment, and only enters when Javier tells her to. She tells Javier she is worried about Manolo since she does not know where he is. Javier tells her to stop worrying because it makes her ugly. It is a strange reason for not worrying. Ana is not surprised by this answer. She goes on and tells Javier what she found among Manolo’s clothes. Javier’s reaction is not revealed in this scene. The camera is zooming in on his hands when he checks the small piece of paper that Ana found. He must have recognized the symbol as he crumples the paper in his hands. Javier knows that Manolo is playing a dangerous game. He is in trouble, he behaved recklessly and put himself into danger.

01:04:41 – 01:05:04



Fig. 42. Still from 'Traffic' (01:04:41 – 01:05:04)

Javier is questioning Manolo on the street where he has been.

Javier wants to protect Manolo. He grabs Manolo by his shirt and is questioning him about the small paper that Ana found. Manolo tells him he has been hanging out with the soldiers of Salazar. Javier is warning him to be more careful and not to be a fool. Javier, as a friend, feels obliged to warn Manolo and protect him as he can.

01:05:05 – 01:05:49



Fig. 43. Still from 'Traffic' (01:05:05 – 01:05:49)

Javier is eating at a street food restaurant, when two men appear. They order something as well, but one of them says to Javier in Spanish: “Javier Rodriguez, the word is you are not happy with your work. Maybe we can help.” They leave a note next to Javier’s plate. Javier does not act surprised, he puts his plate on the note

and continues eating, looking after the men who walked away in the meantime.

Javier acts like a professional, he takes the note under his plate immediately, without looking at it. He knows that Salazar’s men are everywhere, and he does not want to look suspicious. He does not know who they are, so it is better to be careful. Medium shots are used in the scene; the camera is zooming in on the little note that Javier gets. It is not revealed what is written on that paper. Javier is filmed from the other side of the restaurant. This position of the camera gives the feeling as if Javier was being observed, although there is no proof of that. The color is a warm amber color, as in other scenes set in Mexico.

01:18:25 – 01:20:45



Fig. 44. Still from 'Traffic' (01:18:25 – 01:20:45)

Javier is meeting the DEA agents who left a message for him at the restaurant earlier. He gets in their car in a parking garage and they go to a swimming pool. Javier gives them information about the situation in Tijuana. All three of them are in the water, talking about what Javier wants to get in exchange for the information. He only

wants lights in the parks so that children can play baseball in the evening, and it is safe for them. Javier tells the agents if the children play baseball, they will not become “burros para los malones” (“donkeys for the mobs,” my translation).

Javier is in the United States meeting the DEA agents that contacted him in Mexico. He is in their car, but they do not want to tell him where they want to take him. Javier is panicking but has another place in mind. The three of them end up in a swimming pool. Javier is willing to help the Americans, but he wants lights in the parks in exchange. Javier hints that it is crucial that the United States “takes interest in Tijuana now”. Though, it is not clear if he gives more information about the current events in Tijuana.

The scene is shot mainly with medium close-ups. The color tone is neutral, as all the scenes within the DEA storyline. When they are in the swimming pool, the natural light makes the picture overexposed. Javier is enjoying the swimming pool. It is one of the few scenes in the movie, where he is playful. He is happy that finally someone shows some interest in helping him, and so he has the chance to help his community.

01:40:40 – 01:43:48



Fig. 45. Still from 'Traffic' (01:40:40 – 01:43:48)

DEA agents escort Eduardo out of the court to a car. Francisco Flores, the hitman, has already put the explosive device under Eduardo’s car and is waiting for the right moment. Eduardo asks the agents if they can walk back to the hotel. Francisco Flores is on the phone, getting instructions from Ayala’s wife. When the agents

and Eduardo are walking past the parking lot, Francisco Flores gets out of his car and aims to shoot Eduardo. Nevertheless, instead of Eduardo, Francisco is shot by a shooter hiding in one

of the surrounding buildings. The agents start shooting Francisco, and Ray runs to get the car. Montel tries to warn him as soon as he realizes there might be a bomb, but Ray starts the engine, and the car explodes.

Many full shots are used in this scene, showing the group of agents protecting Eduardo. When Francisco is on the phone with Ayala's wife, the camera is in the car, showing the group of agents walking by. The shooter is revealed by showing the window of a building, then switching to an over the shoulder shot from behind the shooter. When Francisco gets shot, and the agents start shooting him, the camera begins to move rapidly. This rapid movement of the camera simulates the chaotic situation. The camera is not focusing on only one agent or Eduardo. It is always moving, trying to show all the men. When the shooting is over, Montel gets a bit closer to see Francisco's face. Montel remembers in a flashback that they walked past by him sitting in a car. Then he tries to warn Ray, shouting his name, but he does not hear it. Then the explosion is shown with various shots: a full shot of the car from the side and the front, then a long shot from the street with people running scared.

There is a soft and melancholic sound playing in the background, it is the only non-diegetic sound. All the men are wearing suits. Although Eduardo is a criminal, protected by the DEA agents, he mingles well within their group. Eduardo was afraid to go by car for a reason, he is familiar with the liquidation techniques of the cartels. The DEA agents were not careful enough. Mantel is also late realizing the situation. Ray cannot hear Montel warning him, he wants to get the car and protect Eduardo as fast as he can. Unfortunately, it cost him his life.

01:44:01 – 01:47:50



Fig. 46. Still from 'Traffic' (01:44:01 – 01:47:50)

Manolo is found by Salazar's men in the United States. They put him in a car, where Javier is already sitting inside. They take them back to Mexico and head to the desert. On the way, Manolo is the only one speaking, asking them not to tell Ana how he died. In the desert, Manolo and Javier must dig holes for their bodies. In the end, the soldiers of Salazar kill only Manolo and bring Javier back to Tijuana.

Manolo made a mistake by wanting to meet with the DEA agents in a prominent place, a restaurant. Javier before was more careful. Manolo is panicking in the car, he knows they will be killed. Javier stays calm through the whole scene, even when his friend is killed. The scene

starts with a neutral color tone, but when the characters reach Mexico, it turns amber again. The contrast is strong, and the picture is overexposed again.

As it turns out, killing Manolo but leaving Javier alive was the plan of Salazar. It was the initiation ceremony to get accepted in the General's "family", according to his soldiers. They tell Javier they had to go through the same process. General Salazar feels like a king, who can do whatever he wants as no one can control him. He is just playing around, killing everybody who could mean trouble for him.

01:49:58 – 01:50:47



Fig. 47. Still from 'Traffic' (01:49:58 – 01:50:47)

Javier is sitting in a car, looking despondent. He stops the car and starts hitting the wheel angrily. He gets out of the car and starts walking on the street.

Slow and melancholic sound is playing in the background as a non-diegetic sound. The scene starts with a medium close-up shot of Javier. Then as he was in hypnosis, the camera zooms in on his face. He looks emotionless, his mouth is open. He is staring in the remoteness. Suddenly, as waking up from the hypnosis, he stops the car. The sound of the sudden break can be heard. He gets out of the car, and the camera switches to a full shot of the street where he stopped the car. The car is not his old white car anymore. He has the black jeep as the soldiers of Salazar. He leaves the car in the middle of the street and starts walking. He acts like suddenly he got an idea. Javier wants to break out from this crazy world of power and drugs. Deep inside, he is troubled, and he lost his friend and colleague.

01:53:33 – 01:55:17



Fig. 48. Still from 'Traffic' (01:53:33 – 01:55:17)

Javier is meeting the DEA agents in a hotel in the United States. They are questioning him with a lie detector. After his confession, they smuggle him back to Mexico.

The scene begins with an over the shoulder shot from behind Javier, showing a man sitting opposite to Javier. The shot is switched, and Javier is shown from over the shoulder of the man. Then a full shot of the room reveals, there are more men present. The two DEA agents from the swimming pool and some other agents were listening to Javier giving all the information to the DEA. The other agents confirm that Javier was telling the truth, as a polygraph was connected to him while confessing. The DEA agents tell him to be careful, but he says they must worry about only the lights in the parks in Tijuana. That is the most important thing for him. The agents look worried about him and try to cheer him up by saying he should be proud of himself for helping the DEA.

Next, the camera is placed in the trunk of a car. When they open the trunk, Javier and one of the agents are filmed looking around carefully. Javier crawls inside the trunk, the agents close the door, and they are bringing him back to Mexico. The same slow and melancholic sound is playing when they are smuggling Javier back to Mexico. Bringing him back to Mexico hidden in the trunk was the safest option. No one has seen him together with the DEA agents. Otherwise, he could be killed by Salazar's men.

Javier cares a lot about his community. He is not worried about himself; he is worried about the children that can be the victims of drug cartels. The DEA agents try to protect him, but as the staging in this scene shows, they are above him. While Javier is sitting, the agents are standing and giving orders to him to be cautious.

4.4 Comparison of the selected films

The three selected 21st century Hollywood dramas have many common features. First, the ethnic background of the directors is not necessarily influencing the use of stereotypes, as I first thought. Iñárritu, being the only Mexican among the directors of the selected films, is depicting an unappealing portrayal of Mexicans. After watching *Babel*, viewers may think that Mexicans, and so Latinos/as, are troublemakers. Meanwhile, in *Crash*, Paul Haggis used the Latino/a stereotypes to establish the appearance of the characters. At the end of the film, it becomes clear that it is not the looks that classify a person, but their actions do. Also, in *Traffic*, the actions of the protagonist and his sidekick break their *bandido* stereotype.

Second, many of the characters of the three dramas are Latinos and Latinas. They are mostly in leading roles, with just a few exceptions. However, Latino/a characters in supporting roles also

share enough information for analysis. Besides the Latino/a protagonists, White protagonists are always present, usually played by famous actors. In *Babel*, Amelia (Adriana Barraza) is the protagonist, but her role is overshadowed by the parents of the children, played by Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett. In *Crash*, it is difficult recognizing the protagonists since many characters' progress is followed through the events in the film. The film is also starring Sandra Bullock, whose name catches the attention of viewers, leaving a small space in the spotlight for all the other actors, including Latinos/as. The cast in *Traffic* is similar in its structure to the cast of *Babel*. Javier (Benicio del Toro) has a significant role in the events of the film, but Michael Douglas takes all the credit by playing the White victim of drug trafficking.

Finally, all three dramas are portraying Latinos/as with stereotypes. All the Latino/a stereotypes that were listed in Chapter 2 are easy to detect in the films. Latinos and Latinas are represented as criminals, being loud and wild. The stereotypes are ruling the description of Latinos/as. Appealing attitudes like passion for their own cultures and devoutness are hidden, only the stereotypes are emphasized. It is only Daniel in *Crash* and Javier in *Traffic*, who are identified as *bandidos*, but their personality differs from the stereotype. They are not criminals, although their appearances suggest so. It can be concluded that the stereotyped characters in the films directed by White directors do have the traits of the assigned stereotypes, but they loosen up those stereotypes. In the case of the Mexican director, the Latino/a actors are stereotyped massively, and they never break from their stereotypes.

Babel is about Mexicans and Mexican immigration. Other nations are also mentioned in the film, but for the thesis, I focused only on Mexicans. In the leading role is a Mexican maid, Amelia, working in the United States at a White family. She is speaking Spanish with the children; she speaks English with her employers and the immigration officers at the border. She is a typical mother figure; she takes care of foreign children as if they were her own. Her recklessness comes from despair; she wants to see her son's wedding but cannot leave the American children alone. At the end of the film, it is revealed that she has been working in the US illegally for 16 years. It makes people think about how she could avoid any contact with the authorities for such a long time. Nevertheless, the problem is not with her illegal work, but she puts the American children in danger. Her silliness reveals that she is representing not only the stereotype of the Latina maid but the female clown as well. A similar character to Amelia is Maria in *Crash*.

Another Mexican character in *Babel* is Santiago, the nephew of Amelia. He is the *bandido* in this film. He plays loud Mexican music in his car. He looks unkempt, he has a gun and shoots

in the air just for fun. He drinks a lot and then drives drunk putting everybody in the car in danger. He is cruel as he is slaughtering a chicken with their bare hands in front of children. Santiago is disrespectful to the authorities at the border. Nothing positive is revealed about him in the film. It is a surprise from a Mexican director to have such a scandalous Mexican character. In the two other films, the *bandidos* are different. Of course, there are worse depictions of *bandidos* in *Traffic* (the General and the members of the cartels), but they are more in the background.

Babel is depicting Mexicans as loud, dirty, poor, and speaking English mixed with Spanish words. The landscape changes immediately after the US border. The land is dry, the sun is scorching, and there is no proper road at the wedding venue. The focus is on Mexico, but the rich Mexican culture is not introduced. The picture about Mexico and the Mexicans is a bit degrading in the film, although the audience might feel sorry for Mexicans after they see how poor they are. Nevertheless, the Americans are the victims in the film. The mother of the children is shot in Morocco and is fighting for her life. They also lost a baby, and now the children are in danger because of Mexicans. However, the unluckiest person in the film is Amelia. She loses everything that she has built over 16 years in the United States. Her American dream is destroyed as she is deported from the US.

It was not expected from a Mexican director that the traditional *bandido* stereotype would be portrayed so perfectly according to the taste of Hollywood. It was a big surprise that a Mexican was not brave enough to go against the stereotypes, investing more effort into a better depiction of Mexicans. In my opinion, Iñárritu could have chosen a different topic or a different aspect of how to introduce Mexican life in *Babel*. He opted for the common Hollywood stereotypes about Mexicans.

Meanwhile, *Crash* is focusing on social problems concerning every ethnic group and the relationship between the different ethnic groups. The main characters are representing every major ethnic group in the United States. Again, I only focused on the Latino/a characters and how they are treated in the film. The stereotypes are present, but the Latino/a characters do not follow their stereotypes as in the other films. Ria is not only the harlot and the dark lady; she is a successful, strong woman working as a detective. Of course, the stereotypical traits are presented clearly, but it is not what determines her character. From my point of view, Ria's character is shaped more by her professional career than her origin. One action that triggers the loud Latina in her is when she is called Mexican. Probably it is just annoying for her to hear it

quite often, but what if she also looks down on Mexicans as the White Americans do? There is no evidence for this in the film; she must be only annoyed by it.

Maria in *Crash* is the Latina maid, who does not speak much or does not have much action. However, her character is still memorable. She is calm, even when a White woman is shouting with her. She is a friendly and kind person, but she must suffer from her domineering White employer. Maria is also mixing Spanish with English, just like the maid in *Babel*. Their characters are very similar, but Maria is not reckless. She does not get into a difficult situation.

Crash is depicting only one Latino character, Daniel. He is an honest man who works hard to earn a living and provide for his family. Because of his looks, people associate crime with him. Daniel looks precisely like the *bandido* stereotype, but he does not act according to the stereotype. He becomes the victim of the racist rant of a White American woman and a Persian man. Daniel's stereotype, the *bandido*, is different from the stereotype of Santiago in *Babel*. While Santiago behaves like a bandit, Daniel is his opposite. Still, everybody is stereotyping and prejudging him at first sight. He is almost shot by the Persian man who accuses him falsely.

The Latinos/as in *Crash* are living in the United States, whether illegally or not, is not revealed. They all have proper jobs, yet they are not respected by others. Ria, Maria, and Daniel are trying their best but cannot break from the stereotypes. As if society will not let them do so. It is the society that needs to change.

Meanwhile, *Babel* and *Crash* share some similarities in Latino/a characters, *Traffic* is presenting a different topic in connection with Latinos/as: drugs. Mexico is introduced as a corrupt country, where police have neither respect nor power. The military is helping drug cartels to grow their businesses. The main Latino character is Javier, a Mexican police officer. He knows his country is responsible for producing and smuggling drugs into the United States. After an unsuccessful mission, he becomes part of the system. From the inside of the drug business, he realizes the problem is more severe than he thought. He takes actions and provides information to the United States, so they could also help Mexicans. He loses his colleague, Manolo, in the war on drugs. Javier's stereotype is the *bandido*, but he is the only one who destroys it with his actions. He is more of a hero, wants to give children a chance for a better life. Javier is not asking for money in exchange for the information. He is asking for lights in the parks, so children can play baseball instead of getting involved in crime.

On the other side of the border, Latinos/as are fighting the same fights in the war on drugs. In Mexico, according to the film, only two men are trying to stop drug trafficking, meanwhile, in

the United States, an entire organization, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) is trying to put an end to the business with drugs. A Latino DEA agent, Ray, and his partner arrest a drug trafficker, Eduardo. Eduardo is stereotyped as a *bandido*. He is not the boss in the drug business, but he is willing to reveal everything to the DEA. He is not like Santiago from *Babel*, he is refined, but he is a serious lawbreaker. He gets killed before his testimony against his former boss. The cartels have power not only in Mexico but in the US as well. Ray gets killed while protecting Eduardo. Interestingly, only the Latino characters lose their lives in the war on drugs. The cartels kill Manolo, Eduardo, and Ray.

In *Traffic*, the screenwriters felt the need to represent the male buffoon. Manolo and Ray are portraying it. Manolo is the childish version of it, being a sidekick to Javier. Ray, despite his job at the DEA, is the funny buffoon telling jokes. Although the male buffoon has initially been created as the comic counterpart of the *bandido*, Manolo and Ray are not criminals. Both men are fighting against drug trafficking.

White Americans are also not left out of the plot. Just as in *Babel* or *Crash*, White Americans are also affected by the events. In *Traffic*, they are the consumers (e.g., the daughter of the judge played by Michael Douglas) and so they are the victims of drugs.

The three dramas are using similar Latino/a stereotypes. The *bandido* is present in all three of them, with different changes, but the core is the same: a criminal. The actions of the characters are different from the stereotypes in *Crash*. In *Babel* and *Traffic*, the Latino/a characters do accordingly to the stereotype assigned to them. One exception is Javier in *Traffic*. His character is like Daniel's in *Crash*. In some cases, a character is portraying a combination of stereotypes. However, either the looks or the acts of a character always agree with a certain Latino/a stereotype. Not a single Latino/a character was represented without a stereotype.

From the cinematographic techniques, filmmakers used colors and camera angles differently when they were filming the Latino/a characters. In *Traffic*, the color of the Mexican scenes was yellow, a bit orange. The yellow color implied the heat in the dry land during summer. While in the same shot, White Americans were filmed from a low angle camera position to show them superior to Latinos/as. With other races, Latinos/as were filmed from the same level. The position of the camera is an excellent tool indicating the hierarchy and social status of the characters on screen. The costumes of Latinos/as always looked simple and practical. Through their costumes, Latino and Latina characters were always illustrated according to their social status. Except for Ria in *Crash*, although her clothes looked messy and used.

Between the three films, there are some differences in the representation of Latinos and Latinas. Unfortunately, all the films are portraying this ethnic group inferior to White Americans. The stereotypes are present in every film, showing that not even a Mexican director is willing to introduce a new representation of Latinos/as in Hollywood cinema. Hollywood is creating a degrading and unpleasant image of Latinos/as. Berg is not exaggerating when he says that “according to Hollywood, then, beneath every Latino is a savage, a Latin lover, or both, and at heart every Latina is a Jezebel” (Berg 77). The core of the problem lies in society, not in Hollywood. Until people are not standing up against discrimination, stereotypes like the ones present in Hollywood films will not disappear.

5. Conclusion

Hollywood has an enormous role in spreading stereotypes. The public opinion is influenced through the decision of writers and filmmakers, how they represent different ethnic groups on screen. Latinos and Latinas are also suffering from the prejudicial behavior of people working in the film industry. Some stereotypes were created in order to put White people in a better light. The White heroes needed an enemy. In other cases, stereotypes were taken from real-life but got altered in order to degrade races other than Whites. Stereotypes are dangerous as they show a false image of the stereotyped group, in this case, about Latinos/as. The audience is not researching the stereotypes, and people are not questioning if those stereotypes depict reality or not.

The research results are quite disappointing. Many stereotypes about Latinos/as are present in 21st century Hollywood dramas. However, these stereotypes are changing; they are following cultural, economic, and political changes. Stuart Hall agrees as “films must condense and modify representations to accommodate the market (As in Valdez 288). Hence the changes in stereotypes are significant. The constant changes in stereotypes describe the changes in society and public opinion. Drug lords and gang members took the role of bandits in the *bandido* stereotype. They do not look the same anymore, they wear modern clothes and live a modern life, but their actions are still criminal. The historically good figure, the Mexican freedom fighter, was deprived of its positive characteristics, and Hollywood writers created the bandits, the enemy for the White heroes. Not only the stereotype of the *bandido* but also the stereotype of the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady are transmitting distorted images of Latinos/as.

The examined movies may vary in their topics, but all of them are depicting Latinos/as by using the stereotypes mentioned above. The representation of Latinos/as is always following the same pattern. All the analyzed characters were representing one of the Latino/a stereotypes. Some characters resembled the Latino/a stereotypes in their actions, while others looked like the stereotypical figure but acted differently. It can be concluded that a Latino/a stereotype is always represented through a Latino/a character. It does not matter whether the director of the film is a Latino/a or White American. Latino filmmaker Alejandro González Iñárritu used the same Latino/a stereotypes in his film, *Babel*, as White directors Steven Soderbergh (*Traffic*) and Paul Haggis (*Crash*).

Latino/a stereotypes might change through the years, but they are always fitted to the actual politics. More films and TV shows need to be examined to see further developments. This thesis could allow carrying out research in just a small part of the mechanism behind stereotypes and how they are used in these films. However, I would suggest further research in this field so that the discrimination against Latinos/as could be stopped. No group is better than the other. People must learn how to live together in peace and accept the differences. This aim is not easy to achieve, but we must be hopeful. With research like this thesis, we can aim to open the eyes of people and encourage them to accept others.

Within the restrictions of the thesis, it was not possible to examine more ethnic groups or more films. However, it would be necessary to have further research about all the ethnic groups that are represented and discriminated against in the media. More research would lead to more public talks and perhaps to a brighter future ahead of us.

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Images

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- Fig. 18. Still from 'Babel' (00:08:50 – 00:10:08). *Babel*. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Paramount Classics, 2006.
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- Fig. 21. Still from 'Babel' (00:13:21 – 00:14:26). *Babel*. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Paramount Classics, 2006.
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Fig. 48. Still from 'Traffic' (01:53:33 – 01:55:17). *Traffic*. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. USA Films, 2000.

Appendix

English Abstract

Everybody is stereotyping. It is the way how the human brain is functioning. Categorizing and arranging others into groups supports a faster recognition of the surrounding world and is the basis of stereotyping. Stereotypes are essentially not harmful. Unfortunately, stereotyping often highlights the disadvantageous characteristics and features of others. The mass media plays a significant role in spreading stereotypes. As part of the mass media, the Hollywood film industry also prefers to use stereotypes when portraying certain groups. Ethnicities are mostly affected by it. Since Hollywood cinema is reaching a broad audience, it can easily influence public opinion. Being one of the largest minority groups in the United States, Latinos and Latinas are often stereotyped in Hollywood films. Hollywood fails to provide a decent representation of Latinos/as. The *bandido*, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, the dark lady, and the Latina maid are all Latino/a stereotypes present in most Hollywood films starring Latinos and Latinas.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Jeder benutzt Stereotypen. So funktioniert das menschliche Gehirn. Das Kategorisieren und Anordnen anderer in Gruppen unterstützt eine schnellere Erkennung der umgebenden Welt und ist die Grundlage für Stereotypen. Stereotype sind im Wesentlichen nicht schädlich. Leider hebt die Stereotypisierung häufig die nachteiligen Eigenschaften und Merkmale anderer hervor. Die Massenmedien spielen eine wichtige Rolle bei der Verbreitung von Stereotypen. Als Teil der Massenmedien bevorzugt die Hollywood-Filmindustrie auch die Verwendung von Stereotypen bei der Darstellung bestimmter Gruppen. Ethnien sind meist davon betroffen. Da das Hollywood-Kino ein breites Publikum erreicht, kann es die öffentliche Meinung leicht beeinflussen. Als eine der größten Minderheitengruppen in den Vereinigten Staaten sind Latinos und Latinas in Hollywood-Filmen oft stereotypisiert. Hollywood bietet keine anständige Darstellung von Latinos/as. Der *bandido*, „the harlot“, „the male buffoon“, „the female clown“, „the Latin lover“, „the dark lady“, und „the Latina maid“ sind allesamt Latino/a Stereotypen, die in den meisten Hollywood-Filmen mit Latinos und Latinas vorkommen.