

Public Abstract

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Title:Reviewing the Image of the Photojournalist in Film: How Ethical Dilemmas Shape Stereotypes of the On-Screen Press Photographer in Motion Pictures from 1954 to 2006

Since the 1930s, photojournalists in motion pictures have been portrayed as everything from screwball and comic relief characters to stubborn and ruthless sidekicks. With the exception of James Cagney's tabloid photographer character in *Picture Snatcher* (1933), the early on-screen photojournalists were largely supporting characters who displayed absurdly unethical behaviors.

Through textual analysis of fictional films featuring photojournalists in leading or supporting roles from 1954 to 2006, this study examined the stereotypes of the on-screen cameraman in motion pictures. Furthermore, ethical situations or dilemmas faced by these characters were taken into special consideration for the purpose of determining how these situations aided in creating or developing the characters' stereotypes.

This study found that the 1930s and 1940s image of the photojournalist changed after James Stewart's portrayal of a lonely and voyeuristic magazine photographer in *Rear Window* (1954). Stewart's cynical and detached L. B. Jeffries established a stereotype of on-screen photojournalists that persisted through the 1970s. By the 1980s, the heroic but ethically challenged war photojournalist stereotype evolved and dominated the journalism-genre films of the decade. *Under Fire* (1983), *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *Salvador* (1986) were some of the films that perpetuated this recurring stereotype. Varied and alternative stereotypes of photojournalist characters were the predominant trend in motion pictures from the final decade of the 20th Century and into the mid-2000s. Although the number of appearances of on-screen cameramen in motion pictures has increased, their role-related responsibilities and ethical dilemmas have changed alongside trends and technological advances within the field.

The findings from this study suggest that filmmakers have stereotyped a variety of professions and in particular, journalism. The implications for stereotyping are important because oftentimes, the on-screen photojournalists' role-related responsibilities and ethical decisions are portrayed negatively, which in turn, projects a negative image on the profession itself. Further research could examine the implications of stereotyping in motion pictures on other professions, or examine how motion pictures have stereotyped other journalism-related occupations as well.