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News Coverage Of The Sergio Hernández Case In Newspapers Of The Border Region

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NEWS COVERAGE OF THE SERGIO HERNÁNDEZ CASE IN NEWSPAPERS OF THE
BORDER REGION

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2012

Dedication

Con dedicatoria especial para Dios, porque en los momentos difíciles me dio pan, techo, y
alumbró mi camino.

NEWS COVERAGE OF THE SERGIO HERNÁNDEZ CASE IN NEWSPAPERS OF THE
BORDER REGION

by

RODRIGO GIOVAN BARRAGÁN CERVANTES

THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
3. METHODOLOGY	20
4. DATA ANALYSIS.....	24
5. CONCLUSION.....	55
REFERENCES	60
CURRICULUM VITA.....	66

INTRODUCTION

How news is presented, what words are used to describe the facts, which photos or videos are shown in the stories, as well as other elements that appear in newspapers or television newscasts are 'frames' previously decided by journalists and media. To frame is to choose specific aspects of reality and highlight them more than others in a news story. This process can lead the audience to interpret a problem in one way or another (Entman, 1993). The media can discuss an issue addressing specific points and influence the people with what should be considered valuable information. News coverage necessarily requires selecting certain aspects of a story, making it more visible, while leaving out other aspects. Media frames are part of everyday journalistic routines, which allow news professionals to organize and deliver information more effectively to the target audience (Gitlin, 1980). Media frames are accentuated pieces of information with larger presence and salience in the narrative about a story, becoming more noticeable to the audience. Media and news organizations have the power to alter the audience's interpretations depending on the descriptions they employ for an issue covered. The words they use shape the perception of a story because each word and image has a different meaning that stimulates different emotions.

There are different influences that shape media content; news professionals function as gatekeepers, corporate ownership interests, cultural and ideological elements, among others. Constructing news is a process affected by ruling values and ideologies that are located in every society. All media have their own characteristics and identity, which are influenced by the collective values that belong to the wider community they inform. Media from a specific community will use more arguments to support the insights of the audience for which they produce news content. Among the influences that shape media content,

national identity is considered a common good that encompasses the interests of people and the institutions that shape the nation, among them media and news organizations. During political crisis between two countries or groups, news discourse is structured favoring wider collective interests. They reinforce through different messages and symbols the idea of membership to a specific community, and how that community defines itself, marking the differences between those who belong to it, and those who are external entities. How people comprehend reality is influenced according to the information provided through mass media. News messages guide people's way of thinking about different social issues like politics, economy or immigration, among others. Due to the pervasiveness of these messages, news media are able to establish the patterns of how society perceive and talk about them.

Due to the increasing number of immigrants who have entered the U. S. through the border with México, this issue has become one of the biggest concerns for many U. S. Americans (Dunaway, Abrajano, & Branton, 2007). During the 20th century, Mexican immigration to the United States has changed, rising during the early 1900s, decreasing during the 1920s and 1930s, and rising again especially after 1960 (Flores, 2003). In both the United States and Mexico, people are worried about the crimes that happen at the border, such as smuggling of persons, weapons, drugs, money, among others. The situation is identified as a big threat for the stability of the two nations, but each has its own interests. In the United States the biggest challenges are related to how to stop undocumented immigration and the smuggling of narcotics. On the Mexican side, in addition to these topics, people are more worried about the weapons that infiltrate México, and also about the respect and treatment of Mexican migrants who cross the border in search of jobs in the United States.

This study analyzes the news coverage of two newspapers from the border region between the United States and México (*El Paso Times*) from El Paso, Texas; and (*El Diario de Juárez*) from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, about the case of Sergio Hernández, a 15 year old Mexican teenager who was shot and killed by a U.S. Border Patrol agent in the boundary zone between both countries on June 7, 2010. *El Paso Times* is the major English newspaper in the city of El Paso, Texas. It has a daily circulation of approximately 73,000 copies, and 88,000 on Sundays. *El Diario de Juárez* is the largest newspaper in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México. Although *El Diario de Juárez* does not specify the exact circulation number, the news organization that owns this paper reports that it sells approximately 100,000 copies in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua City, and throughout the state of Chihuahua.

Although scholars have analyzed how migration and border security is covered by the press of the United States (Branton & Dunaway, 2007; Kim, Carvalho, Davis & Mullins, 2011), this research study includes a comparison with how the same issues are portrayed on both sides of the border. This work seeks to demonstrate how media and the information they provide are influenced and shaped by the interests and enduring values of their audiences and how media are used as public arenas where different social groups struggle to express their interests and defend their belief systems.

The Sergio Hernández case is an example of the problems related to undocumented immigration and security that take place at the border. The news coverage of these newspapers reflects the local perspective of two communities that are physically located in the same region, but divided by different political and economic situations. Borders are not only dividing lines, but places where the clash of different cultures occurs through different

social and cultural processes happening everyday, which construct human relations and narratives, making the border an identity marker.

Newspapers in border states frame undocumented immigration with a local focus because these states experience the everyday effects of the border. Media from these states are often concerned about framing illegal immigration as a problem and raising national awareness about it (Kim, Carvalho, Davis, & Mullins, 2011). Local newspapers are always trying to catch stories that raise the interest of the community (Branton & Dunaway, 2006) and in general they represent the insights of the locals (Kim, et al. , 2011).

Using a textual analysis of the stories published about this case in these newspapers, my research objective is to identify news frames and competing meanings of community and identity embedded in the journalistic texts of the *El Paso Times* and *El Diario de Juárez*. The study focuses in particular on editorial characteristics used by local newspapers to transform this newsworthy story into a discourse that moved beyond the journalistic function of informing. The recognition of these frames aims to contribute to the explanation of how media from different nations or social groups frame news using alternative approaches that are built from a broader belief system and organizing values embedded in each society.

This analysis also focuses on the systems of meanings that the print media employ and how they are used to transform the news content into political discourse that moves beyond the function of informing the community. The study analyzes the competing frames of nation, community, and identity promoted in the journalistic texts and the different news narratives that emerged from the same set of facts. Narrative has a very important role in communicating knowledge and information because it is the principal string of meanings and arguments that shape who we are as individuals and as members of a society, giving us

an identity. The research objective is to identify those ideological narratives present in the newspapers from the cities of El Paso, USA, and Ciudad Juárez, México, in the Sergio Hernández case, in order to understand the implications for the border community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FRAMING THE NEWS

Every story told is a different version of reality that reflects individual perceptions and understandings. Every anecdote we hear is already shaped by a previous assimilation process linked to how the reality is comprehended by people. The same fact can be interpreted from distinct approaches depending on each person's characteristics (Goffman, 1974). Just as individuals perceive and interpret things differently, media also do so with the stories they portray and distribute to mass audiences.

The way in which news is presented, what kind of information sources are cited, what words are used to describe the facts, what kind of visual elements are included in the journalistic texts, among other aspects, are "frames" created by journalists and the media. Based on the set of frames they use to structure the news stories, media can define for their audiences key social problems. Entman (1993) explains: "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, as a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment-recommendation" (p. 52). Framing is the process of building news with meaning (Kwon & Moon, 2009).

Media frames highlight pieces of information about a story making them more salient in news reports. These elements are portrayed as more important and have larger presence in the narrative chain. Entman (1993) defines "salience" as "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (p. 53). Gamson and Modigliani (1987), as cited in Scheufele (1999), stated that media frames are the principal idea of a news story, as they draw a line of reasoning to a set of events and suggest a pre-determined way of interpreting facts. People's comprehension of social reality is highly

influenced by the information distributed through the mass media. Every person living in a contemporary community is exposed to media messages, although everyone is influenced at a different level depending on their particular characteristics, media consumption, and education. Even though viewers' opinions are somewhat oriented before being exposed to a news story according to their economic, political or racial characteristics, among others, the media messages, rather than being merely informative, can use different strategies to gain trust and persuade the audience (Soderlund, 2007).

Frames can be established not only for the type of information they include, but also for what they do not show. When media exclude certain definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations about an issue, they shape the news meaning, which is a critical process guiding the audience (Entman et. al., 1993). The use of certain sources, words or adjectives to describe the story are decisions previously made by the people involved in the news production, which might involve objectives to give context to the story or to make it easy to understand for the target audience. By choosing the events to report, interviewing experts who interpret those events, and structuring the final product, news organizations create an implicit discursive environment that define a social problem for the public (Greenberg & Hier, 2001). Information about the same fact using different sources can alter the way in how the message is transmitted. They can decide whether or not it is convenient to address certain issues and present them as public opinion. The process of selecting what is information is set with specific intentions and based on subjective interpretations of journalists and news organizations; therefore the news they produce is always partialized. Because they control one of the most privileged public spaces for exchanging ideas and information, media and news organizations build the bridges of access for people to pre-established versions of reality, disguised as the absolute

truth. They seek and exalt the viewpoints and opinions of some specific groups, while leaving out others as if they did not exist or did not have the same level of importance. Media are not by themselves the unique creators of information; however, due to the ties that bind them to social elites, they are able to disseminate the thoughts and opinions of the sources with the enough political power to use the channels of mass communication (Greenberg et. al., 2001).

Entman (1993) affirms that news coverage requires selecting and highlighting certain aspects of a story, while leaving out other topics, voices, or viewpoints. Media frames function as working routines for journalists, allowing them to identify and organize information in order to present it to the audience (Gitlin et. al., 1980). Different events happen everyday around the world and general interest information is a very broad field, which is why journalists need to focus on certain topics that have relevance for their audience. This process allows them to quickly identify and classify information, and package it for transmission. With the objective of setting the importance of information and providing context, journalists often construct news with an implicit dramatic narrative that emphasizes some kind of conflict where the public finds interest and identification (Carter, Thomas & Dente Ross, 2011). In theory, framing follows the interests of the mainstream community as a way to facilitate the task of information selection and distribution.

Mass media set the discursive structures or frames that people use to interpret and discuss public events (Tuchman, 1978). They can frame an issue in a specific way telling the people what information is important to know, and how they should think about it (Gitlin et. al., 1980). News organizations have the ability to alter the context of the same news story using distinct sources, adjectives, descriptions and attributes to describe the facts. The words they choose shape the perception of a story, because different words carry

different meanings, and provoke different emotions. How the public understands media messages varies with the words used in it (Soderlund, 2007). As John Hartley (1982) observes (as cited in Greenberg et. al., 2001), “what makes news discourse meaningful is not the world it reports, but the sign system in which it is encoded” (p. 565). Even when stories have the same facts and characters, the description and narrative used by newsmakers to portray them can modify how people perceive and understand them, because different frames produce different responses (Chavez, Whiteford & Hoewe, 2010). The messages media present through the news guide audiences to certain conclusions about different topics such as politics, education, economy immigration, among others (Chavez et. al., 2010), thereby influencing how people think about them, generating public opinion and, in the long term, establishing patterns of information and knowledge among society. This process can influence how a public event is understood by audiences because it promotes a specific problem definition, leading to one line of reasoning or interpretation. The way people understand their social and economic roles, political situation, culture and ideology, among other aspects of everyday life, are heavily influenced by how media tell them who they should be and how they should think.

CULTURAL FRAMING

Research done in the fields of journalism and mass communication has shown plenty of evidence that news content is not an objective entity because it is not independent of social influences. Studies analyzing the factors that shape media content have identified diverse sources, such as journalistic routines, corporate ownership, organizational pressures of interest groups, as well as ideological elements, social norms and values. Each source

presents a different level of intentionality of news outlets' content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978); Zhou, 2008).

Framing is a process of constructing news meaning according on a set of organizing principles, which are related to socially dominant values and ideologies (Yang et. al., 2003). These principles are rooted in a community, society or nation. Media frame news according to underlying schemas. Cultural and ideological characteristics are socially shared among the members of a specific group of persons (Shoemaker et. al., 1996). Scholars such as Gans (1980) and Lee and Yang (1995, as cited in Pan, Lee, Chan, & So, 1999), argue that national ideology, culture, and social values are an important framing source for news content when dealing with political issues. These elements play a significant role in influencing news content. News stories are the means by which ideology and culture can be told and retold in ways that society reaffirms itself as an imagined community (Greenberg et. al., 2001). Organizing principles govern thought and actions in a society, as they are embedded in news content as the common frames that link news stories to public understanding (Srikandath, 1991).

Brands (1999, as cited in Yang, 2003) stated that national interest is considered to be a common good that transcends the specific interests of any institution smaller than the nation, including media and news organizations. In times of international political crisis, media structure the narrative flow of events by favoring their own country's interests (Pan, et. al., 1999). Media draw the discourse of news following ideas extracted from their cultural and national background to make the event seem more relevant and meaningful to the target audience. Scholars such as Triandafyllidou and Hall (as cited in Carter et. al., 2011) assert that the nation remains the most pertinent form of collective identity. Smith (1991) argues that national identity is associated with the connections among political, legal

and economic characteristics, as well as history, ideology, culture, and an specific homeland shared between members of a society. Tryandafillidou (1998) states that national identity is more heavily perceived when the identity of one nation is placed against the identity of others (Carter et al, 2011). Identities are not stable and predefined objects, but rather are continually structured and negotiated through social processes and daily activities (Prokkola, 2009).

Every member of a society has built his or her understanding of life according to the interpretations of reality that their predecessors taught them. Insights and beliefs have been transmitted from generation to generation as a way to institute knowledge, conform ideologies, and define cultural traits. We organize our world, interpret information, and create knowledge according to ideological structures transferred to us since the beginning of our social interactions and learning processes.

There are a variety of institutions transmitting cultural values in a society, which traditionally have been the family, religious institutions, educational systems, and the government, among others. With the advancement and expansion of mass communication technologies during the last century, such as radio, television, and the internet, media have also become influential centers for values transference (Srikandath et. al., 1991). Media play an important role in the process of how society's issues are produced and understood. They are a central institution framing the definition of reality and constructing public opinion, defining discourses and subjects of public importance. They have the ability to build representations of problems inside the public sphere to be accepted among the population (Greenberg et. al., 2001). Media build national identity by reinforcing their messages, symbols, and labels that refer membership to the community, thereby setting the boundaries of who belongs to the collective, and who does not. Through news narratives,

they shape ideas of how society defines itself, contrasting the identity of the group against assumptions related to foreigners, privileging dominant discourses and evading subaltern arguments and views (Carter et. al., 2011). Media are public interpreters of facts and spaces for ideological struggles.

News production is a process in which various social groups, institutions and ideologies struggle over the definition of social reality (Gurevitch & Levy, 1985, p. 19). The messages distributed through mass media are loaded with ideological expressions and characteristics that set the codes for interpreting and understanding public events. News content is embedded with political discourse that establishes and homogenizes thoughts and viewpoints that support the dominant perspective. News reports are written with the intent of neutrality; however, there are some specific words selected that subtly uphold the elite's perspective. Selection of words, opinions, images, interviews, titles, and all the elements that shape news reports present the events and topics in ways that legitimate the practices of dominant classes and privilege the general beliefs (Domke, Garland, Billeaudeaux, & Hutcheson, 2003).

Media serve as public interpreters and moral judges of events. They work as mass mechanisms to present and support ideologies and ways of thinking to mass audiences. Media are symbolic arenas where different points of views struggle to reflect their own community interest and concerns. "As public stages, mass media rank among the most important institutionally regulated venues for each community to express discursively its shared experiences and to disclose its underlying cultural and ideological premises" (Pan, et. al., 1999, p. 100). Media are used as a mass apparatus for social values transmission. There are different forces that are constantly shaping news content by establishing labels. Identity, culture, nationality and group perception, among others, play a very important role

for framing news content. The systems of meanings or frames used by news outlets transform a story into a discourse that transcends beyond the simple distribution of information. This communication phenomenon has acquired a great deal of interest for framing researchers and media scholars. In moments of political crisis these frames are always present in the news.

Previous scholars argue that media play a significant role in the process of defining a problem within a community (Kim, et. al., 2011). They have the power to decide what topics are going to be shown in the news, therefore influencing the amount of attention that people pay to them. The news set the topics and issues that are discussed and debated in society (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Information is produced in such a way to homogenize the insights of a social group according to their cultural features and political orientation. “The circulation of cultural meaning through the news media contributes to the social construction of knowledge and performs a central ideological function in the reproduction of social and political inequality” (Molina, 2006, p. 282). News stories are presented according to a set of public values and interests that media share with the community they are informing (Bantimaroudis & Kampanellou, 2007). All media, from the nationwide news agencies to free rural weeklies, are aware of a specific audience for which they work. If people can identify themselves with the news stories, there will be a bigger opportunity for influencing and generating an ideological effect. In order for this to happen, the news story has to be capable of integrating itself with the interests and everyday experiences of the public (Greenberg et. al., 2001). Scholars have identified these groups as “discursive communities,” “a group of people who share a framework to interpret their living everyday experiences, and resort to a set of common conventions to talk about them” (Pan, et. al., 1999, p. 99). Discursive or interpretive communities can shape news content

and determine what is portrayed in the media. Most of the information distributed through the media is related with the mainstream point of view and general understanding of the population. Journalists and news organizations attempt to maintain a close link with collective interpretations of key public events. The discourse they produce is a clear example of how they are related and influenced by a larger ideological system, specifically with issues that create friction between two groups from different cultures, nations or ethnic backgrounds (Molina et. al., 2006).

FRAMING IMMIGRATION: TWO NATIONS, TWO PERSPECTIVES

With the increasing number of immigrants who have entered the United States without documents through the México-U.S. border during the 20th and 21st centuries, immigration has become a nationwide concern for many U. S. Americans (Dunaway, et. al., 2007). According to the Pew Research Center, in 2012, the number of undocumented immigrants living in the United States is 11.9 million, and the majority of them (around 59%) are Mexicans. Thus, Mexico is a key focus in the immigration policy of the United States (Correa & Rojas, 2012). This issue also has turned into a primary topic in the media agenda in both countries, each with its own interests and concerns. Both countries are worried about the porosity of the border and the uncontrolled traffic of persons, drugs, and money, which endangers national security, but in different ways. U. S. Americans are more worried about the people and drugs crossing their boundaries and how to stop them, while Mexicans are concerned about the respect of human rights and the treatment of their nationals who have traveled to the United States searching work opportunities. Interests are reflected in the media discourses of each country as a way to push governments to pay

attention to these problems and provide effective solutions. Although border security is a nationwide concern in both countries, no other community is more affected by these issues than those who live along the U.S.-México border.

The US-México border is more than a dividing line between adjoining countries. It is “a dynamic site that encompasses modern global issues that range from migration to trade to international relations to national sovereignty” (Romero, 2008, p. 9). Borders are instruments established with the objective of protecting, promoting and ruling according to the state's interests in a given territory, and to control mobility in and out this physical space (Prokkola et. al., 2009). “With more than one million daily crossings, the US-Mexico border is the world’s longest contiguous international division between a superpower and a developing nation” (Romero et. al., 2008, p. 42). This region historically has been a place of rising tensions due to the growing interchanges of people and goods between the two countries, and the intentions of governments to control and regulate border traffic. Specifically after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, and the attacks of September 11 in 2001, the U. S. government began to control the border with the objective of detecting and stopping any external threats to national security, thereby instituting a more rigorous verification process at the ports of entry (Carter et. al., 2011). The border's length is approximately 1,969 miles (3,168 km), spanning four U. S. states, California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas and six Mexican states, Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. It is the most frequently crossed international border in the world, with over three hundred fifty million (350,000,000) crossings per year. Besides the economic, political, and security issues present at the border, this place is also a crucial space where US and Mexican national identities are discursively reproduced, and negotiated (Carter et. al., 2011). A border is a

place where limits and barriers are marked and the people encounter differences. The personal, cultural and commercial interchanges are constant at the border, which allow social actors to build their identities based on the characteristics that these processes create (Vila, 1999). At the border, there are multiple episodes of integration, disagreement, conflict and dispute between the populations on both sides and even between different social and cultural groups (Valenzuela, 2003). Borders are not only physical lines; they also have to be understood in wider social and cultural processes and institutions as they construct specific social relations and mythical narratives, therefore becoming identity markers (Prokkola et. al., 2009).

Newspapers in border states cover immigration with a local focus because they directly experience the effects of this issue. These states may be more encouraged to argue why unregulated immigration is a problem in order to raise national awareness about the issue (Kim, et. al., 2011; Branton, et. al., 2006). Newspapers frame different migration issues depending on their proximity to the border, while border media have portrayed immigration stories everyday as a part of their local information, other states rely on special reports that address a more national perspective of the problem (Branton, et. al., 2006). For example, while border media report how many undocumented immigrants are detained everyday, or which are the most used crossing points for the “coyotes,” other states focus on broader topics like the jobs that undocumented people are supposedly taking away from U. S. American citizens. Scholars (Chavez, 2008) found that it is pretty difficult to find news outlets talking about the benefits that undocumented immigrants create, such as how some might define the benefits of a cheap labor work force in a variety of areas such as service industries, agriculture, and manufacturing. Previous research analyzing U. S. national newspapers reporting on immigration related issues such as the *New York Times*,

Washington Post, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* (Chavez et. al., 2012), found that crime related stories such as drug trafficking, violence in Mexican border towns, legal cases, and organized crime, were the topics most frequently covered.

Latino and especially Mexican immigration to the United States has not followed the same patterns as the immigration of other communities that eventually became part of the national body. During the early 1900s, agricultural businesses and politicians working with journalists built a news narrative in which Mexicans were portrayed as an ideal farm workforce willing to work hard for little money. By 1930 this narrative of Mexicans changed as discourses emerged in which they occupied the space of criminals threatening the safety of U. S. Americans, responsible for many national problems such as criminality, drug trafficking and unemployment (Flores, 2003). Referring to the 1930s Flores writes “Mexicans immigrants become almost inherently, even naturally, criminal simply by virtue of their migration to the U.S.” (Flores, 2003, p. 377).

After 1965 Mexicans continued to be portrayed as an external threat challenging the U.S. due to their growing presence and ability to reproduce themselves as a separate community unwilling to learn English and adopt U. S. American values. Mexicans are presented as lacking in modernity contrasted with the symbol of the United States as the first world (Chavez, 2008). Ono and Sloop (2002) examined the rhetoric of immigration focusing on media representations of Proposition 187 in California and found that news reports showed undocumented immigrants as a problem for the state economy, criminals breaking laws by entering illegally to the United States, and carriers of diseases. Even when the United States has been in war, Mexican immigration has been identified as the United States’s most serious challenge (Chavez, 2008).

The ethnic background of a community is a determining factor in how media portray social issues and judge them. If a community is mostly white, local media will have a stronger intention to favor white perspectives. And the same will occur with other groups of different ethnic backgrounds (Grimm & Andsager, 2011). Hall (1981, as cited in Domke et. al., 2003), argued that media build definitions of what race is by providing a forum in which racial ideologies are elaborated. According to this view, certain ideologies based on racial characteristics are presented in news as common sense, with no space to critique them. These statements seem to be founded in everyday reality with the intention of pushing the audience's approbation, thereby justifying governmental policies to control racial and other kind of minorities (Domke et. al., 2003). Portrayals of racial and other minorities create misperceptions for publics because they infer that they do not have the same rights or they are not an important group within the society (Soderlund, 2007).

Although scholars have studied how illegal immigration is covered by the media of the United States, how they frame this phenomenon, which information is published depending on their geographic position, and which solutions they propose (Kim, et. al., 2011; Chavez et. al., 2008; Branton et. al., 2006), this research analyzes and compares how the migration is portrayed in the media from countries like México. Since each country has its particular interests dealing with immigration and border security, it is expected that news organizations from both countries will build news discourse following the interest of their discursive community. Local newspapers have many reasons to make their news stories as appealing as possible to their immediate communities, and they are in general obligated to represent the interest of local communities (Kim, et. al., 2011).

This work seeks to demonstrate how news is influenced and shaped by the interests and enduring values that belong to the group that each journalistic organization target to

inform. During times of political crisis between nations or different social groups, media work as a mass mechanism to defend the collective interest. Contrary to what formal journalistic practices argue, news, rather than presenting truthful, impartial, and objective information, is discourse charged with ideological features that respond to political, economic, cultural, or national interests, among others. My interest for this work is to find how a local story related with immigration and border security was portrayed on both sides of the México-U.S. border by local newspapers. The main objective is to find differences between the news coverage and analyze the distinct journalistic narratives that emerged from exactly the same news facts.

Narrative plays a central factor in building information and knowledge. It is the principal chain of communication because it provides the members of a society with messages that construct a sense of who they are and what characterize them (Greenberg et. al., 2001). It is thus very important to identify those ideological narratives that are present in the news texts in order to discuss their implications and the role they play in defining the perspective of the communities. By analyzing media narratives it is possible to understand the role of the borders for the structuration of collective identities. While academics differ as to what constitutes a narrative, they agree that they seek to make sense of experience, communicating meaning and constructing identity. Meaning is not inherent in an act, but built on social discourses. People commonly define their identity narratives through wider collective discourses (Prokkola et. al., 2009).

METHODOLOGY

This research project analyzes the news coverage of two newspapers from the border region, one from México, *El Diario de Juárez*; and one from the United States, *El Paso Times*, about the case of Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca, a 15 year old Mexican boy who was shot on June 7, 2010, by a Border Patrol agent in the border zone between Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México and El Paso, Texas, United States. I believe this is an interesting case to analyze because the story reflects some of the issues related to border security and migration that occur in this region. The fact that the subjects involved in the story are a Mexican teenager and a Border Patrol agent turn this news coverage into a very interesting collage of information where various border narratives can be identified and analyzed.

El Paso Times is the major English newspaper in the city of El Paso, Texas, and was founded in 1881 by Marcellus Washington Carrico. Currently, the newspaper has a daily circulation of approximately 73,000 copies, and 88,000 on Sundays. It is owned jointly by Media News Group and Gannet Company. *El Paso Times* covers local news and has different news sections such as: national, international, sports, business, lifestyle, borderland, among others. It also develops a strong coverage of news from México and specifically about Ciudad Juárez, the border city located right on the other side of the international border. The newspaper also publishes other weekly, biweekly and monthly publications.

El Diario de Juárez is the largest newspaper in the city of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and was founded in 1976 by Osvaldo Rodríguez Borunda. *El Diario* news organization has a daily circulation of approximately 100,000 copies sold in Ciudad Juárez,

and throughout the state of Chihuahua. It has a partner newspaper in the city of El Paso, Texas, *El Diario de El Paso*. *El Diario* covers local news and has different sections such as: national, international, sports, business, entertainment, among others. *El Diario de Juárez* has a strong focus on the local news from the border city of El Paso, Texas. It also has several weekly and monthly publications.

This study identified and analyzed the news frames used in both newspapers to describe the journalistic facts. The recognition of these frames aims to contribute to the explanation of how media from different nations or social groups frame news using alternative approaches that are built from a broader belief system and organizing values embedded in each society. This analysis focuses on the systems of meanings that the print media from two different countries use to transform the news content into political discourse that moves beyond the function of informing the community. The study analyzed the competing frames of national, community, and identity promoted in the journalistic texts.

The research questions that led to this study are:

RQ1: How did newspapers from the border cities of El Paso, Texas, USA (*El Paso Times*) and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México (*El Diario de Juárez*) cover the Sergio Hernández case?

RQ 2: What kind of journalistic narratives emerge from their coverage and how did they differ?

This study used a qualitative textual analysis and sought to examine how the meanings embedded in *El Paso Times* and in *El Diario de Juárez* journalistic texts produce competing ideological differences. The analysis was based on full-texts files collected from

the digital editions of both newspapers. The searches were conducted using the keywords ‘Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca’ from June 7, 2010, to October 8, 2012.

To get the articles of *El Paso Times*, I typed in the search engine of the newspaper website the keywords “Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca” and chose 30 articles related to the case from both digital and print editions. To get the articles of *El Diario de Juárez*, I tried to use the same method, but after realizing that the digital search engine was not working correctly, I used two personal contacts who work at the newspaper and have access to its digital archive. After performing the search using the same keywords, they sent me all the material they could collect via e-mail. In total I selected 22 articles from *El Diario de Juárez*.

Textual analysis is a qualitative methodology for studying communication that looks at ideological and cultural features that are present directly or indirectly in a text. Text is understood as a complex ensemble of messages created by humans and located in a determined social context that can be interpreted by reading it. Any message, ranging from a political discourse, a movie's script, a song's lyric, a book, or a news report, among other cultural expressions that use a common graphic language, can be studied using this methodology.

Textual analysis requires a review of the chosen artifact through semiotic, narrative, genre, or rhetorical approaches. This methodology presents a specific selection of analyzed text to build and support the central argument. This kind of analysis is effective not only to detect ideas that are clearly present in a text, but also arguments that are indirectly located in it, and similarly omissions that, due to their absence, help to reaffirm the central idea (Fursich, 2009). This process allows researchers to identify relationships between the text and the social and cultural contexts in which they are produced (Carter et. al., 2011). A text

always has to be understood as a social product of political, economic, cultural, and regional situations, among others, present in a determined space and time. The narrative approach helps us to understand everyday experiences and practices, of both individuals and groups, through socially and institutionally imposed norms, which people use to construct their identities (Prokkola et. al., 2009).

This study did not follow any formal method of criticism; rather it generated the units of analysis directly from the content of the newspapers. This methodology allowed the data to reveal insights independent from any preconceived theories to ensure an original explanation (Foss, 1995). The artifact was coded by interpreting the major features according to their intensity and frequency. Foss defines intensity as parts of the text that seem important or significant, and frequency as things that are repeated and showed up with some regularity. The newspapers were coded several times to check the relationships and contradictions among the major features. After coding the major features the next step was to analyze them and formulate an explanatory schema that was developed during the data analysis section and conclusion of this study.

It is important to note that the conclusions and interpretations of this work were shaped by my interpretations. While this work is not a determinant conclusion of the topics that it covers, its objective is to contribute to the field of journalism studies analyzing how news is structured discourse charged with different ideologies that respond to diverse interests, ranging from political, economic, private, cultural or national, among others.

DATA ANALYSIS

After reading the texts several times, I found some relationships and common topics within the stories that I classified into four categories for each newspaper. The categories are formed by narratives that share ideas, descriptions, keywords or adjectives. The first two categories looked at how the news narratives described Sergio Hernández, the Juárez teenager, and the Border Patrol agent, Jesús Mesa Jr. Both newspapers constructed an image of each subject and the role that they played in this particular case. The third category was an analysis of the journalistic sources that each newspaper resorted to get information and guide their coverage. Journalistic sources can be excellent points of analysis of news coverage because they represent where news organizations get their information. The journalistic sources are one of the most important pillars of narrative; besides giving information they also provide opinions and arguments, and guide the story towards a particular ideological stance. The fourth category studied the coverage more generally analyzing factors which shaped the editorial line of each newspaper. This category focused more on examining the stories reproduced during the editorial tracking of the case and how the newspapers reflected their position within their pages during the time frame set for this study.

The categories were selected after coding the principal topics found in the texts, that is, by interpreting the major features of the artifact that include some of the more salient components. The codes that inform the four categories of this study were identified using intensity and frequency, as specified during the methodology chapter of this research. Codes represent ideas drawn from the coverage according to the narrative used to describe

and explain the Sergio Hernández case. The coding process aims to find an explanation of the artifact of analysis.

The data analysis is divided in two sections, one for each newspaper. During this step I explain my interpretations of the categories and illustrate them with quotes from the news stories. I also look at how these categories and interpretations find resonance in previous theoretical explanations. This step aims to develop an explanatory construct to build conclusions and the central argument of this research.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: HERNÁNDEZ AS VICTIM

In *El Diario de Juárez* coverage, Sergio Hernández was portrayed as a victim of unjustified use of lethal force by the border patrol agent. According to the narrative, he was not doing anything wrong, he was just a kid who went to play with his friends at the river when suddenly an agent shot him. *El Diario de Juárez* states in its news stories that the teen was killed by the American agent. Although the newspaper does not say it directly, it is through the way they describe the moment when the shooting happened that this narrative emerged. *El Diario* based its description of the crime scene in the narrations provided by the eyewitnesses, who stated that Sergio was just playing at the banks of the river when the agent shot him for no reason. For example, *El Diario* reported this account of how they described the scene:

De acuerdo con personas que observaron los hechos desde la porción mexicana del lugar, el adolescente de 14 años de edad y estudiante de secundaria recibió un disparo en la cabeza cuando se encontraba jugando con otros tres menores en el cauce del río Bravo. Murió de

manera instantánea. Otros que atestiguaron lo que sucedió desde la joroba del Santa Fe, y que pidieron la reserva de sus nombres, dijeron que los cuatro jóvenes se encontraban caminando sobre la estructura de concreto que flanquea el lecho del Grande. De pronto comenzaron a jugar entre el lodo, lo que los llevó hacia la mitad del río, por lo que "un oficial en bicicleta con una camiseta y casco blanco" algo les gritó y comenzó a dispararles, aseguraron. (Chaparro & Ponce, 2010)

The fact that *El Diario* stated that Sergio was playing on the border recreated an image that the teen was innocently in the territory of the United States. This description suggested his ignorance of committing a criminal act that deserved to be punished by taking away his life. The idea of a peaceful and quiet teenager reinforced his role as victim.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: HERNÁNDEZ AS NON-AGGRESSOR

One of the most notable differences between the news coverage was that *El Diario de Juárez* minimized the fact that Sergio was throwing rocks to the agent. When the newspaper recreated the shooting this factor was not well detailed. The Mexican newspaper focused on how Sergio was attacked and killed by Mesa Jr., but minimized the fact that Sergio had apparently thrown stones at the officer. Again, *El Diario* resorted to the eyewitnesses to reconstruct the crime scene, but these people never referred to the alleged aggression of Hernández, as shown in these extracts:

Dijo que en ese momento el grupo empezó a correr por diferentes lados, pero el hoy fallecido se ocultó detrás del muro que sostiene las

vías del lado mexicano, pero en ese momento intentó asomarse para ver si los agentes norteamericanos continuaban en el lugar, y fue cuando le dispararon en varias ocasiones y le dieron en la cabeza.

(Chaparro & Ponce, 2010)

In this case the minimization of the supposed attack, although it seems to be a minor detail, actually played a very important role because it questioned the idea that Sergio was who first attacked the U.S. agent. This alleged assault of Sergio was the principal argument of the U.S. authorities to defend the actions of the agent.

Although the newspaper did refer to the rock-throwing attack, when it did it cited the American agencies as the source of information, giving the idea that this accusation was made only by the U.S. authorities, but not as part of its field coverage. For example,

Los investigadores estadounidenses han dicho que el agente estaba tratando de detener a unos inmigrantes ilegales cuando fue atacado a pedradas por personas al otro lado del río Bravo, que marca parte de la frontera internacional. El policía disparó su arma y Hernández Güereca recibió dos disparos. (Associated Press, 2012)

Another interesting factor of the coverage is that *El Diario* rejected the notion that there was a rock assault through the declarations of the family members of Sergio. Right after being informed of the apparent aggression of which Sergio was being accused, *El Diario* gave space to his parents and siblings to defend the actions of the young man:

De acuerdo con la familia, el menor se encontraba sólo jugando y, contrario a lo que ha asegurado la Patrulla Fronteriza, no hay pruebas

de que haya lanzado piedras al patrullero que le disparó. (Rodríguez, 2012).

Ellos (los agentes) decían que les habían tirado pedradas, pero los muchachos dicen que no es cierto y aunque eso haya sido cierto no es justicia que lo hayan matado", afirmó Rosario, hermana de Sergio (Gallegos, 2010).

As a matter of fact, in the majority of the editorial framing the accusation that Sergio was throwing rocks was minimized, rejected or omitted, turning this factor into a key point of analysis, because media can alter news perception not only with the information they offer, but also with what they do not present. As scholars like Entman (1993) explain, when the media exclude certain explanations about an issue they can shape the meaning of what really happened, altering the public's understanding of the process.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: HERNÁNDEZ AS CHILD

El Diario de Juárez coverage also emphasized and constructed a positive image of Sergio. *El Diario* focused more in describing everyday life events of the teenager and narrating the things he liked to do, and what he aspired to be when he grew up. The newspaper told of how Sergio liked to play soccer in his spare time, was a good student, and was responsible and loving with his family. It was clear that the newspaper spent more time with the relatives trying to know more positive characteristics about him. As previous research indicates, even when the stories have the same facts and characters, the

descriptions that journalists construct can modify the way people see them (Chavez et al, 2010). For example,

Su hermana Rosario dijo que Sergio era un adolescente alegre, que le gustaba bailar, pero no era pandillero, como lo han querido hacer pasar algunos, y que se dedicaba al estudio. Es el único de los cinco hermanos que logró entrar a la preparatoria. Mientras hablaba de su hermano, Rosario mostró un documento de reconocimiento que le entregaron al adolescente por el esfuerzo que realizó para mejorar su desempeño como estudiante en el ciclo 2006-2007 en la secundaria Montesinos, donde cursó dos años, porque luego se cambió a la Federal 7. También mostró reconocimientos que le entregaron por su destacada participación en torneos de fútbol rápido, que era su pasión. Su madre comentó que Sergio quería terminar la preparatoria para luego incorporarse al Cípol o enrolarse en el Ejército. (Gallegos et. al., 2010)

The newspaper stories described the details and aspects that built a dignified image of the boy, who by several U.S. media was identified as a human trafficker in U.S. territory.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: AGENT AS ABUSER

El Diario de Juárez also described with more detail the accusations that the family made against the agent, accusing him of using excessive force against Sergio. For example, *El Diario de Juárez* publicized the allegations and arguments that Sergio relatives used in

their demand for retribution and efforts to sue the United States government. Within these stories *El Diario* reproduced several critics who belittled and criticized the method of operation of the United States Border Patrol, which did not happen in the U.S. media. Even though the newspaper did not make the accusations directly, the fact that they published and detailed the content of the demand reveals the support provided from the newspaper. Communication scholars such as Entman (1993); Scheufele (1999, 2007) and Gamson and Modigliani (1987), among others, have identified this process as “framing”, that is selecting some aspects of reality and giving them more space or salience in a message. In other words, they make some information more notable and meaningful to audiences. Here is an example of how *El Diario* described the accusations of the family:

La demanda se interpuso justo el pasado lunes en la corte federal de El Paso, a nombre de los padres del menor, quienes acusan al agente de haber utilizado “fuerza mortal” y de disparar de manera intencional antes de tratar de realizar un arresto. La demanda cita, además de otras cosas, que las personas acusadas habían tolerado, consentido y alentado un sistema de brutalidad y uso excesivo de la fuerza por la Patrulla Fronteriza; fracasado de forma sistemática, al no supervisar adecuadamente e investigar esos incidentes, y creó un ambiente y una cultura en la que a los agentes se les animan a proteger la mala conducta de los oficiales. (Ponce, 2011)

The newspaper also gave voice to Sergio’s family that enabled them to label the agent as a murderer and to criticize the American authorities in how the trial developed to supposedly protect the officer. After examining these declarations it is remarkable how the

tone and the kind of aggressive adjectives used by the family members, which focused on blaming the agent for killing an unarmed minor as shown below:

“A los de Estados Unidos les digo, y siempre les voy a decir, que esa persona que están encubriendo es un asesino, un cobarde que se ensañó con un niño, y que no es cierto que son un país justo y transparente como ellos presumen,” insistió Hernández, padre de Sergio (Rodríguez et. al., 2012).

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: AGENT AS BORDER CROSSER

El Diario assured readers in several news stories that the Border Patrol agent crossed the border to México to shoot Hernández, which was proven false after the viewing of a video that recorded the incident, and clearly showed that the Border Patrol agent always stayed in U.S. territory. Although the information was not properly confirmed by the journalists who wrote these stories, *El Diario* published different reports to show how the agent did not respect the international border and supposedly shot the teen while being on the Mexican side of the border. Again, the Juárez paper cited eyewitnesses to exhibit the agent's fault and to prove his abuse of power and evidence of his guiltiness, although really none of that happened. Below is a description of this alleged act.

Agente cruzó a México y tiró a matar: testigos

Cuando disparó contra el adolescente, el oficial de la Patrulla Fronteriza estaba en territorio mexicano y tiró a matar, asegura una mujer que fue testigo de ese incidente desde la joroba del puente Paso del Norte (Santa Fe), por donde caminaba la tarde del lunes de regreso

a Ciudad Juárez. "El agente cruzó el río (Bravo) y lo mató en México", afirma exaltada y molesta porque se permite que pasen incidentes como éste que le costó la vida a Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca, de 15 años, justo abajo del "Puente Negro", usado para cruzar mercancías por tren. La versión de que el agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza cruzó a México también fue dada a conocer ayer por María Guadalupe Huereca, madre del menor asesinado.

La mamá de Sergio señala que hay testimonios de personas que se les han acercado para informarles que el agente norteamericano cruzó y mató a su hijo en territorio mexicano (Gallegos, 2010).

In *El Diario de Juárez* coverage it is also notable in how they use the word 'Migra' as a derogatory term to refer to the agent. "Migra" comes from the word "Migración" and it is a popular term in México to refer to the people who work at U.S. American Immigration agencies. The way in which the journalistic narrative of *El Diario* used this term reflected that it was being utilized in a derogatory manner. The newspaper described how the people who were at the bridge at the time of the shooting insulted the Border Patrol members and called them killers. It also recounted how some of the eyewitnesses were supposedly threatened by the agents to not give any information of how the things happened, as the following example illustrates:

Mientras agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza revisaban el lugar de los hechos y tomaban fotografías, algunas personas que caminaban de El Paso a Ciudad Juárez por el puente Paso del Norte gritaban insultos a los patrulleros del lado estadounidense. "¡Pinches migras asesinos!", se escuchó un grito (Chaparro & Ponce, 2010).

The use of certain words or adjectives to describe the news facts played an important role in how the news was interpreted by the public, as some researchers (e.g., Soderlund et. al., 2007) have demonstrated. Words can alter the way information is perceived because they have different meanings that provoke different responses. For example in the last quote the use of words such as “pinches” and “asesinos” are adjectives seeking to show the agents as ruthless murderers against public opinion.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

After analyzing and identifying the news sources where *El Diario* obtained its information, it became clear that they used more eyewitnesses to narrate the shooting rather than official sources. The newspaper relied on people who said they saw the incident and were interviewed at the place where the shooting took place; in effect *El Diario de Juárez* developed more intense field coverage to portray the story. The people who were walking around the border or crossing the international bridges between El Paso and Juárez were the main narrators of the event. Below is one such example of a description provided by the eyewitnesses published in the paper:

Yo estaba en el astabanderas del puente esperando a mi esposa y de repente vi a los muchachos que entraban del lado americano, los agentes de migración lo corretean, se regresan. Estando del lado mexicano (los jóvenes) llega un oficial, no sé si es de migración o de la Policía, en bicicleta y le tiró de balazos a los muchachos", refirió un testigo mexicano, (Chaparro et. al., 2010)

There were some descriptions where *El Diario* not only based its coverage on eyewitnesses, but also on persons who supposedly were told by actual eyewitnesses about what happened, as the following excerpt demonstrates.

Lorenza Núñez, residente de la zona Centro de El Paso y quien ayer se encontraba a metros de la malla metálica que divide a ambos países, dijo que tanto su hija de 21 años como su sobrina de 18 vieron tendido el cuerpo del adolescente asesinado. (Chaparro et. al., 2010)

Compared with the *El Paso Times*, the Mexican newspaper presented a more vivid story based on the experiences that people lived, rather than just publicizing the version that the authorities reported.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: OFFICIAL SOURCES

Although *El Diario* quoted some official sources such as governmental institutions, the content they provided clearly was not as frequent and intense as the information disclosed by eyewitnesses and family members. *El Diario* cited some spokespeople from the U.S. American agencies in charge of the investigation, but their presence was limited to certain stories. These people only appeared in certain reports and their role was more focused on describing the shooting rather than judging or commenting about the facts as shown in this example:

Ramiro Cordero, portavoz de la Patrulla Fronteriza en El Paso, confirmó la versión de los disparos, aunque explicó que la investigación del caso es llevada a cabo por el FBI.

Andrea Simmons, vocera del FBI, informó por su parte que a las 18:45 horas de ayer "al menos un agente" de la Patrulla Fronteriza detonó su arma de fuego en contra de alguien. (Chaparro et. al., 2010)

The use of official sources was more inclined towards the investigation of the case, how the incident was being evaluated by the American government and what resolutions were given by the institutions in charge of investigating the shooting as shown in this example:

El Departamento de Justicia de Estados Unidos exoneró ayer de todo cargo al agente de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza (CBP), Jesús Mesa Jr., acusado de asesinar en junio de 2010 al juarenses Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca, de 15 años. La decisión se dio a conocer en un comunicado conjunto del Departamento de Justicia y la Oficina del Procurador federal en el Distrito Oeste de Texas. (Alarcón, 2012)

Along the coverage is possible to identify how the presence of the official sources in *El Diario de Juárez* is less and limited compared with the use of eyewitnesses and family. Although *El Diario de Juárez* quoted official sources to describe some facts, it did not use them to give opinions or judgments about the case, however, these expressions are more loaded towards the family side as shown later in this analysis.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: OFFICIAL MEXICAN SOURCES

El Diario de Juárez also cited official Mexican sources not so much to describe how the shooting happened or how the investigation was being developed, but rather to condemn the incident and cry for justice. In the following examples, Mexican sources were

used mostly to reject the use of deadly weapons against an unarmed person at the border. Sources were from different levels of the government, but their role was more limited and focused on demanding that the government of the United States carry out a full investigation of the case and raised concerns about preventing such incidents from happening again. Mexican sources also deplored the decision of the U.S. government not to bring criminal charges against the agent involved in the shooting:

Anoche el Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua presentó un breve posicionamiento sobre los hechos donde lamenta profundamente la muerte de Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca. Además exige una investigación a fondo por parte de las autoridades norteamericanas (Chaparro et. al., 2010).

El gobierno de México presentó este viernes una nueva nota diplomática de protesta al gobierno de Estados Unidos, donde expresa su más enérgico rechazo por la decisión anunciada por el Departamento de Justicia de ese país de no presentar cargos penales en contra del agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza que realizó el disparo que ocasionó la muerte del menor mexicano Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca, durante el incidente que tuvo lugar el 7 de junio de 2010 en la línea fronteriza de Ciudad Juárez. (El Universal, 2012)

El Diario also reported on an extradition warrant of the agent that the Mexican government requires of its American counterpart, but this issue was only present in some notes and it was the U.S. authorities who set the tone and provide more information on this legal process, as the following news account demonstrates:

La Fiscalía General del Estado (FGE) solicitó una orden de aprehensión de un juez de Garantía por el asesinato de Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca. Jorge González Nicolás, titular de la Fiscalía de Investigación y Persecución del Delito, indicó que México tiene un tratado de extradición con Estados Unidos que debe cumplirse, porque es recíproco. (Chaparro, 2012)

After analyzing this coverage, it is remarkable that the Mexican sources did not play a very important role during the trial, as they were pretty much limited to condemn the Border Patrol agent's actions, to ask for a full investigation of the incident, and to claim justice, but they did not have an important position in the legal development of the case because it occurred in the United States.

While the sources presented in the editorial coverage of *El Diario* seemed to be neutral and restricted to offering information, the way in which the journalists chose to frame these issues oriented the narrative to a particular stance. Although at first glance the sources were limited to provide clear and accurate information, the media used them in such a way that the news events came to reflect the interests of the journalists, news organizations, and citizens of México (Greenberg et. al., 2001).

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: THE TRIAL THROUGH THE EYES OF THE FAMILY.

El Diario de Juárez also focused more on the pain that the family of Sergio suffered after his death, particularly during the trial of the Border Patrol agents. The coverage reflected the drama that they were living, by delving into their continued pain and suffering through the description and detail of tragic moments for the family. For example, as the

body laid flat on the ground next to the river, the newspaper made much more descriptive coverage of the crime scene. The story goes further into the context and the reactions of the people who were there. This is a quote from the crime scene description of *El Diario*:

Del lado mexicano los familiares rogaban a los policías mexicanos los dejaran ver por última vez a Sergio, pero no se los permitieron. Posteriormente llegó la madre de la víctima, que al ver a su hijo sobre la plancha de concreto entró en una crisis nerviosa, por lo que tuvo que ser contenida por los elementos policiacos para evitar que ingresara al lugar. Después de varios minutos el Servicio Médico Forense se llevó el cuerpo y la familia pudo entrar al punto donde quedó Sergio. Fue entonces cuando la madre de la víctima comenzó a gritar en contra de los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza (Chaparro et, al, 2010).

As a clear example of the tragic moments that *El Diario* reported on, the newspaper included an entire story that described the funeral and burial of Hernández. This story narrated how the relatives and friends of Sergio were suffering, cursing the Border Patrol agent and claiming divine justice, as illustrated below:

El grito de "¡justicia!" lanzado al unísono cuando el féretro de Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca fue abierto para que su familia se despidiera de él, desbordó el llanto a gritos de quienes lo acompañaron hasta su última morada, en una de las colinas de la Sierra de Juárez.

"¡Mira cómo te dejaron esos méndigos!", exclamó entre alaridos Rosario, una de las 4 hermanas del adolescente que el lunes murió de un balazo que un agente fronterizo disparó hacia este lado desde la rampa del Bravo.

El llanto inundó el ambiente del panteón Jardines del Recuerdo, hasta donde los deudos, vestidos con camisetas blancas con la leyenda "In memory of Keko", trasladaron sus reclamos y exigencias de justicia.

Mientras dos de sus hermanas exigían justicia a gritos, Coral, la mayor de la familia Hernández Güereca, se desvaneció; le pasó en tres ocasiones, una de ellas al llegar a la iglesia, por lo que tuvo que ser auxiliada por sus hijos y sobrinos, quienes la mantuvieron recostada entre sus brazos.

María Guadalupe Güereca, la madre de Sergio, se recostó sobre el vidrio del ataúd. Ahí lloro por unos minutos sobre el cuerpo de su hijo. A su lado sus hijas gritaban: "Keko, párate", "papito abre tus ojos", "nos arrastras la vida." (Gallegos, 2010)

This *El Diario* coverage gets to a point where the reader could identify the family members of Sergio and in some way feel their affliction. It was a more emotive coverage, full of sadness and anger. Through the declarations of the family and the sources that *El Diario* used, the news narrative portrayed a great injustice, and provided more space to the family members to express their profound sadness. The pages of *El Diario* were the public forum where the family could claim justice, as the following example demonstrates:

La familia de Sergio Adrián Hernández Huereca, el adolescente asesinado en junio de 2010 por un elemento de la Patrulla Fronteriza, informó no esperar compensación económica alguna, sino sólo buscar justicia y que se limpie el nombre del menor señalado públicamente en diferentes medios como delincuente relacionado con el tráfico de emigrantes. Entrevistados ayer al respecto, hermanos y la madre de Sergio Adrián reportaron no tener conocimiento sobre el monto exigido por el abogado, y reiteraron que ellos sólo buscan que se castigue al agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza que le disparó al adolescente y que se retiren las acusaciones hechas por fuentes del gobierno norteamericano y citadas en diferentes medios de comunicación de que el menor se dedicaba al tráfico de humanos. Esto es para demostrar que él no era la persona que ellos dicen, para probar que no era un delincuente”, dijo Rosario Hernández, de 25 años y una de los cinco hermanos que le sobreviven al fallecido (Rodríguez, 2011).

Although it may not have been direct, the coverage blamed the agent for using lethal force against a minor. Scholars such as Pan (1999) discuss how media are public stages for communities to express their cultural and ideological premises. It is clear how through its journalistic lines, *El Diario* allowed the Hernández family to defend their son against the charges made by the U.S. authorities. It was as if the newspaper served as a ring where the stakeholders could fight to defend their position.

EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ: FAMILY REPRESENTATION DURING THE TRIAL

Throughout the development of the border patrol agent's trial, *El Diario* focused more on how the family dealt with the decisions that the authorities were making. For every resolution or declaration that the people related to the case, *El Diario* consulted with and reported on the family to see how they responded or thought about those issues. *El Diario* built an editorial position, tracking the family perspective, pointing out the feelings and needs of the family. The following extract shows how the story was being framed from the family perspective:

A dos años del homicidio de Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca, la familia dice ver con coraje e impotencia la rapidez con que el Gobierno norteamericano procura justicia para sus ciudadanos y, en contraste, protege al agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza que ellos consideran el homicida del adolescente mexicano.

Apenas el pasado martes, los padres del menor acudieron a una reunión con funcionarios del Departamento de Justicia norteamericano que, informaron los progenitores, tenían la intención de convencerlos de que no había manera de presentar cargos contra el agente – identificado como Jesús Mesa Jr. – y, así, justificar la exoneración dictada en abril pasado. Sin embargo, luego del encuentro los padres de familia dijeron sentirse contentos por al menos haber logrado que los funcionarios reconocieran tener

información equivocada sobre el crimen, como el hecho de que el agente disparó contra el menor en tres ocasiones, y no una, y por la espalda. (Rodríguez et. al., 2012)

As an example of this family position, when the American authorities revealed that Hernández supposedly had a criminal record for smuggling people to the United States, *El Diario* immediately consulted Sergio's mother to deny the allegations and provide a space where the relatives could defend the innocence of the teen against public opinion:

El menor juarense de 15 años al que un agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza baleó y mató era uno de los contrabandistas juveniles de inmigrantes más buscados en El Paso, según los registros federales de arrestos que recibió The Associated Press (AP).

María Guadalupe Güereca Betancourt, madre de Sergio Adrián, negó que su hijo haya sido detenido como traficante de indocumentados.

Los documentos recibidos por la AP muestran que Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca había sido arrestado un mínimo de cuatro ocasiones desde el 2008 y dos veces en una misma semana de febrero del 2009, como sospechoso de internar ilegalmente indocumentados por la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México.

La madre de la víctima mencionó que las autoridades migratorias norteamericanas "buscan lavarse las manos" por haber disparado contra su hijo al asegurar que lo detuvieron en cuatro ocasiones durante el 2008.

"Ya no halló ni que pensar, han dicho tantas cosas de él; que Dios los perdone por tantas habladurías", señaló. (Alarcón & Chaparro, 2010)

El Diario also carried out more extensive coverage of the family members and close friends of Sergio. The newspaper cited these sources to reflect the anger that they were feeling at that time, claiming that the case was an injustice and that the agent used excessive force against Hernández. The following extracts of *El Diario* were loaded with emotions that demonstrate rage, courage and voices demanding justice:

Con coraje en su voz y lágrimas en sus ojos, Jesús Hernández, padre del adolescente asesinado presuntamente por un agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza, exigió ayer al presidente Felipe Calderón "que se amarre los pantalones" ante las autoridades estadounidenses y vea que se haga justicia en este incidente que le costó la vida a su hijo Sergio Adrián, de 15 años.

"Su madre mencionó que fue hasta el puente para pedir dinero a su hermano porque necesitaba comprar cosas que le encargaron en la escuela, pero ya no regresará a las aulas "porque fue asesinado por un agente de la migra". "Lo que se hizo con mi hijo fue un crimen, un acto de cobardía", declaró entre lágrimas María Guadalupe mientras narraba ante los medios de comunicación que su hijo fue asesinado arteralmente justo debajo del "Puente Negro." (Gallegos et. al., 2010)

Although the newspaper did not say directly that Hernández was an innocent victim of Border Patrol brutality, throughout the narrative, the words they used and the way they described the facts might alter the way the readers perceived and interpreted the story.

EL PASO TIMES: HERNÁNDEZ AS AGGRESSOR

In the news coverage of Sergio Hernández case in *El Paso Times*, the teen played a very different role than in *El Diario de Juárez*. In the news narrative of the American newspaper, Sergio was always represented as an aggressor because he was throwing rocks at the agent. When the newspaper described the facts of the shooting, it stated that the agent fired his weapon because he was being attacked by Hernández with rocks. Since the beginning of the coverage, the *El Paso Times* clarified that the agent used his gun because Sergio and his companions surrounded him and assaulted him with stones. These are examples of how *El Paso Times* described the shooting and explained why this event happened:

A boy identified as Sergio Adrián Hernández Guereca, 15, was shot by a Border Patrol agent in El Paso near the Paso del Norte international bridge. The victim was throwing rocks at Border Patrol agents, according to the FBI. (Ortega, 2010)

In the majority of the *El Paso Times*' stories, the journalistic narrative specified that Sergio was who first attacked the agent after the agent arrested his friend, building an image of violent and criminal intent by the Mexican teenager.

EL PASO TIMES: HERNÁNDEZ AS SMUGGLER

In the *El Paso Times* coverage Sergio was also labeled as an undocumented people trafficker. The *El Paso Times* repeatedly noted that Sergio was arrested on several

occasions in years prior to this incident and was accused of helping undocumented immigrants cross over to U. S. American territory through the border. The newspaper reproduced information from the American press agency, the Associated Press that first published this news. According to unnamed sources of the federal government of the United States, Hernández already had a long criminal record:

Officials said that Hernández was on the El Paso juvenile smugglers most-wanted list at the time of his death and that the teen's most recent charge of smuggling undocumented immigrants into the U.S. was in 2009. (Borunda & Ybarra, 2010)

As shown in the last example the paper clarified that Sergio was a smuggler of undocumented immigrants, highlighting his criminal actions, which is the principal argument of why the teen was shot.

EL PASO TIMES: HERNÁNDEZ AS ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSER

In the *El Paso Times*, Hernández was also portrayed as illegally crossing into the United States, which is what sparked the shooting by the border patrol agent. Unlike *El Diario de Juárez*, where the teenager was portrayed as just playing on the banks of the river, in the *El Paso Times* stories he was crossing into the United States illegally through a hole in the border fence. This newspaper immediately detailed Sergio's illegal actions and narrated how after he and his friends saw the Border Patrol agent approaching they ran back to Mexico and threw rocks. Here is another description of the crime scene and how the incident happened:

The agent shot at a group of Mexican nationals who had illegally crossed into the U.S. about 6:30 p.m. after they surrounded him and threw rocks at him, said Special Agent Andrea Simmons, spokeswoman for the FBI in El Paso. (Ybarra, 2010)

The *El Paso Times* discussed throughout its coverage on how Hernández was in the territory of the United States without the required authorization. The newspaper labeled Sergio and his peers as illegal immigrants or illegal aliens, denoting their criminal actions. Although the word illegal was not used incorrectly, as Sergio himself was in an unauthorized area, adjectives such as “illegal” were never mentioned in the Mexican newspaper editorial coverage, but were often used exclusively in the U.S. newspaper as shown below:

According to the FBI, Border Patrol agents were responding to a group of suspected illegal immigrants being smuggled into the U.S. near the Paso Del Norte bridge, across from Ciudad Juárez around 6:30 p.m. Monday. (Torres & Sherman, 2010)

The agents were responding to a report of a group of suspected illegal aliens being smuggled into the U.S. There were three of them. (Ybarra et. al., 2010)

According to these descriptions that the *El Paso Times* developed about Hernández, he was definitely portrayed in a different way compared with the role he played in the Mexican newspaper. While in *El Diario de Juárez* Sergio was playing at the border with his friends, ignoring that he was in a forbidden territory, in the *El Paso Times* he was helping undocumented immigrants to enter into the United States, and when he was discovered, he ran back into México and attacked the Border Patrol agent with big rocks. Although Sergio

is just one person, the descriptions, adjectives and words that the newspapers used built two different characters. As Harley (1982) observes, what makes news discourse meaningful is not the world it reports, but the sign system in which it is encoded.

EL PASO TIMES: AGENT AS VICTIM

In the *El Paso Times* coverage the agent, identified as Jesus Mesa Jr., acted in self defense when he was attacked with stones by several illegal immigrants who tried to enter into the United States without authorization. In this news narrative the agent did not use excessive force against the teen; rather he was doing his job and protecting himself. According to what the *El Paso Times* reported, Mesa followed the Border Patrol protocols and used his gun when he thought his life was in danger:

On June 7, a U.S. Border Patrol agent shot Sergio Adrián Hernández Güereca near the Paso del Norte Bridge. U.S. authorities said the agent was defending himself against rock throwers after he apprehended a young man who had crossed illegally into the United States. (Chávez, 2010)

While in *El Diario de Juárez* the attack with rocks was minimized and in many cases not even mentioned, in the *El Paso Times* this factor was classified as a severe attack that could have killed the agent. According to the following arguments exposed in the *El Paso Times* through different sources, the rocks could have caused severe damage and could be considered lethal weapons,

T.J. Bonner, president of the union representing Border Patrol agents, said rock throwing aimed at Border Patrol agents is common and capable of causing serious injury. (Torres et, al, 2010)

In another report,

Silvestre Reyes said some rocks are the size of a baseball. They can endanger an agent's life, and when an agent's life is in danger he can use deadly force to defend himself. (Ybarra, 2010)

In an effort to denote the seriousness of the rock throwing attack, the *El Paso Times* mentioned that during the last few years the attacks by rock throwing at immigration officers had increased along the México-U.S. border, turning this issue into a serious security problem for both countries. The *El Paso Times* also mentioned that prior to the incident where Sergio Hernández lost his life, the Border Patrol regularly received threats from rock throwing:

The Border Patrol confirmed Sunday that it has received threats since last week's shooting of a 15-year-old Juárez resident who allegedly threw rocks at a Border Patrol agent. We've received telephone calls with threats, and there's been intelligence to that effect, but so far the threats are uncorroborated," Border Patrol Agent Ramiro Cordero said Sunday. In the past, we've had bounties of \$250,000 and \$25,000 placed on the heads of our agents, but none of those threats were carried out. I do not believe we had a bounty specified by these latest threats (Washington, 2010).

The main argument of the *El Paso Times* is that the officer shot the Mexican teenager because he attacked him with stones. After analyzing the backstory and its development, it is apparent how the newspaper invested more time and space to highlight

the arguments that demonstrated how the agent acted ethically and, in compliance with his duty of defending the border, killed Sergio Hernández because he endangered the agent's life. Also in the case of the agent, it was also apparent how the newspapers built totally different perspectives of his actions and character. While in *El Diario de Juárez* the agent shot Hernández apparently for no reason, in the *El Paso Times*, Mesa Jr. used his gun after being attacked by several illegal immigrants with stones, defending his life and doing his duty.

From this analysis, it is clear how the newspapers framed both characters in a different way; in other words, they highlighted some specific aspects about them that shaped how the audience perceived them in one way or another. Rather than just presenting the characters, both newspapers built a series of actions embedded with meanings. As researchers (Kwon et. al., 2009) explain, framing is the process of building news with meanings, and in this case, both characters and their actions played different roles that meant something different to the audiences. Although some could say that framing news is mostly an decision without intention, the media made these decisions based in ideologies that they had previously identified among their target public.

EL PASO TIMES: AGENTS AS SOURCES

After examining and identifying the journalistic sources that *El Paso Times* used in its editorial positioning, I noted that they were mostly from the United States government. The *El Paso Times* cited agencies such as the Border Patrol and the FBI several times when it described how the shooting happened, what caused it and what were the results. The coverage became more focused on what officers and spokespeople stated, rather than

developing more fieldwork sources around the crime scene and interviewing more eyewitnesses as *El Diario de Juárez* did. In the *El Paso Times* there were no vivid descriptions of the crime scene about how the people were crying and suffering when Sergio's body was laying next to the bridge. In contrast, as shown in the next few examples, the *El Paso Times* focused more on describing how the incident happened according to the information that the agencies in charge of the investigation provided:

According to the version by the FBI, Border Patrol agents stopped one man on the river levee by a railroad bridge known as the Black Bridge. Another agent arrived on his bicycle along the concrete apron that forms the riverbank on the U.S. side. The agent on the bicycle detained a second man, but the other men in the group ran into Mexico and began to throw rocks. The agent on the bicycle, who had a man on the ground, gave orders to the men who returned to Mexico to stop throwing rocks and to leave the area. However, the men continued to throw rocks at him, officials said. The agent then opened fire, shooting several times. (Borunda & Ybarra, 2010)

Although the *El Paso Times* also cited some eyewitnesses who spoke about the incident, the frequency with which these sources appeared in the coverage is noticeably less compared to the official sources. Also the intensity with which members of the family showed up in news articles was more limited in comparison to the coverage in *El Diario de Juárez*. Family members were usually cited, but did not play a role as important as in the other coverage. Their participation was lower and with less space available within the newspaper stories:

Three Juárez bridge vendors interviewed Wednesday said they saw the Border Patrol agent shoot Hernández and disputed claims that the teenager threatened the agent. "The kid wasn't throwing rocks," Estelle González said. "He was only watching." (Borunda & Ybarra, 2010)

Another big difference that I perceived between both coverages was the type of sources which they used in order to guide the editorial positioning. Unlike *El Diario de Juárez*, where most of the opinions and judgments of the case were made by family members, in the *El Paso Times* there were sources such as officers, lawyers, politicians and legal experts who made most of the statements. The *El Paso Times* used more U. S. American sources for relevant views and comments on the case. In most of the notes were U.S. official sources who were cited for providing the information. These characters were not only limited in describing the facts, but also commented on who was responsible for the shooting. Below is an example during its coverage:

U.S. Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, said a proper border fence could have prevented last Monday's shooting by a Border Patrol agent of a 15-year-old Juárez resident. King said Sergio Adrian Hernandez Guereca, the shooting victim, was charged in the United States with alien smuggling in 2009, and appeared on a most wanted list of juvenile smugglers compiled by authorities in El Paso. When faced with a life-threatening situation, this agent appears to have responded to lethal force with lethal force as authorized," King said in a statement. "But, this incident could have been avoided if the

administration had lived up to its responsibility under the Secure Fence Act to build fences on our border. (Washington, 2010)

As (Greenberg et,al, 2001) highlights, the media are not themselves the primary definers of news, but they have the capacity to reproduce the viewpoints of those sources who possess access to the mass communication devices. Although the *El Paso Times* did not give opinions about the case, the sources selection was a determining factor that show how media frame information, depending on the kind of sources they used.

EL PASO TIMES: MEXICAN SOURCES

In the *El Paso Times* the role of the Mexican government sources was, as in *El Diario de Juárez*, limited to condemnation of this event. Although the *El Paso Times* quoted different representatives of the Mexican government, their statements were focused on rejecting the use of lethal force against Sergio Hernández and demanding a full investigation of the incident:

Upon learning about the incident, President Calderón instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ask the U.S. government for a full and deep investigation of this incident and to hold those responsible accountable to the full extent of the law. (Ortega et al, 2010)

Although the coverage contained Mexican sources, they played a secondary role, focused on criticizing the use of firearms against migrants, asking for a full investigation of the case, and demanding that incidents such as the shooting did not happen again. As a matter of fact, the *El Paso Times* cited more Mexican sources when the incident first

occurred, but over the two year period of the news coverage these sources took a secondary role and the *El Paso Times* focused more on giving voice to the government sources of the United States.

While perhaps the use of U. S. American sources was due to the trial that took place in the United States, it is important to mention that after examining the articles, both newspapers tended to give more space to people who represented the local point of view. Communication researchers (e.g., Kim, et. al., 2011) have identified that the local newspapers are always searching for stories that reflect the interest of their communities, and they generally represent local viewpoints. In other words, it is clear through their editorial perspectives that both newspapers sought arguments and opinions that reflect the way of thinking of local community members they represented. For example, in the American newspaper, sources that defended the actions of the Border Patrol agent were much more common. On the other hand, in the Mexican newspaper sources tended to defend the actions of the adolescent because that was how the paper presented the overall nature of the case.

EL PASO TIMES: TRIAL COVERAGE

After reading the news coverage of *El Paso Times*, it became clear that this was more officially oriented as news stories focused on the development of the case in the U.S. courts and in the resolutions that resulted from the trial. In the *El Paso Times* coverage there were a greater number of legal experts talking about the case based on regulations and ordinances. Unlike *El Diario de Juárez*, where the coverage was more sentimental and oriented to reflect the pain of the Hernández family, the U. S. American newspaper

maintained an editorial policy focused on discussing the progress of the trial and its possible legal encumbrances. The *El Paso Times* coverage put aside the sentimentality of the case and was dedicated to explaining the progress of the trial and how the authorities carried out the decisions about it as I evidence in the following excerpts:

Prosecutors interviewed law enforcement and civilian witnesses, watched video footage of the killing, went through Hernández Güereca's autopsy, analyzed evidence collected from the scene, and reviewed Mesa's training, disciplinary and personal records, the letter stated. In addition, they collected witness interviews from Mexican prosecutors and consulted with the International Boundary and Water Commission about jurisdictional issues.

The FBI also "created a digital reconstruction of the scene and a master recording that synchronized multiple video recordings of the incident into a single digital presentation," the letter said.

However, the letter stated, the case fell apart because the scope of federal law was limited to prosecuting civil-rights violations committed within U.S. territory. (Martínez, 2012)

As shown above, the *El Paso Times* coverage was more focused on publicizing regulations and protocols that the U.S. authorities continued to use to investigate the case. The *El Paso Times* reflected the ruling voice of the law which was continuously present during all the editorial coverage.

CONCLUSION

After conducting an exhaustive analysis of the news stories of the Sergio Hernández case in the *El Paso Times* and in *El Diario de Juárez*, it is clear that both newspapers framed the story in different ways. The daily newspapers oriented their narrative considerably differently, building distinct roles of the same characters, giving expressive space to diverse sources, and in general telling a different story from the same set of news facts.

On the one hand, *El Diario de Juárez* structured a narrative where Sergio was presented as a victim of the Border Patrol brutality. This coverage is loaded with anger, courage, and a feeling of injustice since the shooting took place on June 7, 2010. On the other hand, the *El Paso Times* presented the story more as a matter of duty. This coverage portrayed the agent as a defender of his personal integrity, the border, and protector of his country. Every journalist knows what sources to turn to for certain types of responses. In this case, both newspapers knew exactly what information would be obtained based on the sources consulted. If *El Diario de Juárez* appealed to witnesses and relatives of Sergio to perform their coverage, is because they knew that those sources would reflect the suffering and pain of the family due to the loss of a child. On the other side, if *El Paso Times* decided to use the sources of the Government of the United States, it is because they knew before hand they would find a version limited to describe the facts and defend the actions of the Border Patrol agent, since he was an employee of the federal government.

While the purpose of this study is not to judge the way in which the events occurred or express an opinion in its resolution, it did aim to identify how border newspapers recounted this case to their audiences, identify which narratives were built and try to find an

explanation of why they did so. As Greenberg et. al. (2001) contend, narrative is the most important factor in building information because it is the main means of communication, providing the community with messages that explain news and information. In analyzing media narratives, it is possible to find some ideas and expressions that represent some ideological characteristics of social groups. As Prokkola et. al. (2009) argue, people usually define their identity based on collective discourses.

This study confirms that media are able to shape information according to how they present it, reaffirming framing theory, which states that news organizations can alter the way that information is perceived based on the set of frames or narratives they use to describe the facts (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Soderlund, 2007). I have confirmed that there is no journalistic objectivity as we learned during classes in college. On the contrary, from the moment reporters decide to address a particular problem or use certain sources or keywords to describe the story, they are influencing the way society thinks and talks about this issue. Although journalistic objectivity is practically impossible, I think every journalist has a great responsibility to accurately relay the facts to reflect reality. Journalists have the power to build ideologies, and that power conjures obligations of accountability to their audiences. I believe that even if the facts of a news story are not consistent with the point of view of the community that journalists inform, this is not a reason to withhold information. The duty of a journalist is always to report the stories as impartially as possible, presenting the facts as they happened, and showing the point of view of all parties involved.

After examining the texts, I uncovered how both newspapers established different patterns of information and structured different conclusions that influenced how audiences understood the case depending on which source was read (Chavez et. al., 2010). The

newspapers worked in each line of reasoning and interpretation of the case. As exposed in the data analysis of the study, although the facts of the story were exactly the same, the narratives extracted from the stories were different and reflected distinct versions of reality. As researchers (e.g., Scheufele et. al., 2007; Kim, et. al., 2011) explain, news organizations have a determining role in defining a problem within a society, and with that ability they have to choose what information is shown or written about in the news, defining the topics that are discussed among the community.

Through journalistic narratives, each newspaper tended to support the local point of view that reflected the interest of the community they belonged to. Greenberg (2001) points out that because media are privileged public spaces that exchange information, journalists purposely seek and represent the insights of some groups and exclude others, shaping versions of reality to the public. *El Diario de Juárez* gave more space to the family of Sergio Hernández to defend his innocence and accuse the Border Patrol agent of using excessive force. The Mexican newspaper maintained a close relationship with the affected party, developing the coverage from the family point of view and highlighting their critiques and conclusions about how the case was resolved by the authorities. On the other hand, although apparently the coverage of *El Paso Times* was straight forward and to the point in that they tried to just report the events, the fact that they based their editorial positioning on how the authorities were developing the investigation also supported the local point of view. While I am not saying that the American newspapers always will represent the official point of view in every story, according to the analysis that I developed for this specific case, those were my interpretations. If the story were reversed, meaning that an American child had been shot by a Mexican cop, the narrative of both papers would have been most certainly different. In each newspaper I found specific characteristics such

as keywords, adjectives, opinions, and descriptions that I did not find in the counterpart. Both newspapers highlighted the viewpoints and opinions of some specific groups, and left out others as if they did not have the same level of importance, in such a way to turn the news stories into political discourse that went beyond the function of information.

Although the results of my analysis are not necessarily generalizable to represent every resident of El Paso or Ciudad Juárez, I did find factors that somehow reflected certain perspectives of each community about issues such as immigration and border security. Communication researchers (Pan, et. al., 1999; Bantimaroudis, et. al., 2007) state that news stories are portrayed following sets of public values and interests that media share with the community they inform in order to make the events seem more meaningful. Greenberg (2001) explains that if people can identify themselves with the news, there is a bigger chance of generating an ideological effect, but the news stories have to integrate the everyday experiences of the public. During my study, I identified that news stories followed some ideas relevant to the border communities. The Mexican narratives supported the defense of Sergio Hernández and in general the respect of the Mexican migrants who come to the United States seeking better life opportunities. The American narratives supported the defense of the Border Patrol agent and in general the duty that these officers have of protecting U. S. American soil.

This project contributes to the communication field by identifying at a local level how during political crisis between two different communities media usually function as a mass mechanism to defend collective and national interests. As I previously mentioned, although the journalistic discourses of these newspapers cannot be categorized as the shared perspective of all the people of El Paso and Juárez, their narratives give us an idea of the perspective from which both communities address issues of migration and border security.

As Pan, et. al. (1999) argues, media are mass forums where communities disclose their shared experiences and beliefs.

Because this work is based only on my interpretations of the artifacts of analysis, I believe that future research in this topic should use also quantitative methodologies to find hard data that can add to the analysis of comparative studies between Mexican and American newspapers. Also, researchers can use focus groups with diverse ethnic backgrounds to analyze how they perceived the news coverage. It would also be useful to read the texts and evaluate how demographics play a role in the interpretations people have about the news coverage. These types of comparative studies are very important because they remind us that journalism, beyond being a simple act of selection and distribution of information, is a process of mass communication that defends and exalts ideologies, which generate public opinion, knowledge, and traits that define the identity of a nation or social group.

As a personal conclusion I have to say that after conducting this research project, I definitely have changed the way that I perceive and do journalism. This research has taught me that behind every story there is a prefabricated discourse that reflects different interests, which may be economic, corporate, editorial and cultural, among others. All these aspects play an important role in defining the editorial position of news organizations against the different scenarios that occur in a society. I believe this experience has made me a more critical journalist, and has allowed me to take some time to analyze the work that I previously performed robotically to meet a work routine. However, from now on when I write a note or a report I will have the ability to understand what kind of information I have, and how it can be more critical and useful.

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CURRICULUM VITA

Rodrigo G. Barragán was born and raised in México City, the last of a five sibling Mexican family. He graduated from journalism in the School of Journalism Carlos Septién García in 2008. He started his professional career in *Reforma* newspaper, where he worked as an editorial assistant, digital editor, and general assignment reporter in the State of México. In January 2011, at age 25, he moved to El Paso, Texas, and entered the University of Texas at El Paso to pursue a master's degree in communication. By December 2012, he graduated with the thesis "NEWS COVERAGE OF THE SERGIO HERNÁNDEZ CASE IN NEWSPAPERS OF THE BORDER REGION." In the United States, he began working as a production assistant at the Spanish language local television station of Telemundo, in El Paso, Texas. Rodrigo is currently seeking to expand his professional experience in the United States with the objective of becoming a professional journalist with international experience, and also one day he would like to disseminate his knowledge as a journalism professor.

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