Victims or Criminals? The Effects of the Media on the Public Perception of the Role of Children in the Mexican Drug War

Stephenie Michel Falcon
University of Texas at El Paso, smfalcon1187@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd
Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Falcon, Stephenie Michel, "Victims or Criminals? The Effects of the Media on the Public Perception of the Role of Children in the Mexican Drug War" (2013). Open Access Theses & Dissertations. 1814.
https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/1814

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.
VICTIMS OR CRIMINALS? THE EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA ON THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN THE MEXICAN DRUG WAR

STEPHENIE MICHEL FALCON

Department of Political Science

APPROVED:

_________________________________________
Kathleen Staudt, Ph.D., Chair

_________________________________________
Cigdem V. Sirin, Ph.D.

_________________________________________
Benjamin Saenz, M.F.A.

_________________________________________
Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving mother Angelica Falcon-Guardado, who without her financial support and encouragement I would not be where I am today. My brother and cousins, who look up to me and force me to strive for excellence. I also dedicate this thesis to Sergio Martinez, who pushed me to focus on my work, and the many hours of proofreading.
VICTIMS OR CRIMINALS? THE EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA ON THE
PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF CHILDREN
IN THE MEXICAN DRUG WAR

by

STEPHENIE MICHEL FALCON, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science
The University of the Texas at El Paso

May 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success and final outcome of this thesis project required a lot of guidance and assistance from multiple professors. I am extremely fortunate to have received the guidance and assistance from my committee members.

I would like to thank Dr. Kathleen Staudt, my thesis chair, for her guidance on multiple revisions of this thesis. Without her, I would have been lost in regards to the International Review Board process. I am extremely grateful for her providing her support and guidance through her busy schedule.

I owe my profound gratitude to Dr. Cigdem Sirin who took a keen interest in my project, and helped guide me through the experiment process. Without her, I would not have been able to interpret the data from the experiment, and I would not have had any findings.

I heartily thank my outside committee member, Professor Benjamin Saenz, for his suggestions of control variables for the experiment. I am thankful and fortunate to have these three committee members take an interest in my thesis, and make time to guide me in spite of their busy schedules.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................................................... viii

LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 1

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION ...................................................................................................... 2

1.2 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE ............................................................................................... 3

1.3 OUTLINE ............................................................................................................................. 4

CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEXICO ............................................................................ 7

2.1 HISTORY OF POLITICS IN MEXICO .............................................................................. 7

2.2 ECONOMY AND LABOR .................................................................................................. 11

2.3 MEXICO’S EDUCATION SYSTEM .................................................................................... 14

2.4 ADULTHOOD IN MEXICO ................................................................................................... 15

2.5 THE ERA OF THE NINIS .................................................................................................. 16

2.6 THE ONSET OF THE VIOLENCE ..................................................................................... 17

2.7 CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER 3: WIDELY ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND SCHOLARLY THEORIES .................................................................................................................. 21

3.1 INTERNATIONAL LAWS PROTECTING CHILDREN ......................................................... 22

3.2 THE FLAW OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ............................................................................. 28

3.3 CHILDREN JOINING CONFLICT ...................................................................................... 30

3.4 MENTAL CAPACITY OF A CHILD .................................................................................... 33

3.5 EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN USED IN WARS ................................................................... 34
3.6 HOW CHILDREN ARE USED IN WARS .......................................................... 36
3.7 OPERATIONAL CODE OF AN INDIVIDUAL ............................................... 38
3.8 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS .............................................................. 39
3.9 NEGATIVITY BIAS ......................................................................................... 42
3.10 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 43
CHAPTER 4: AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. AND MEXICAN NEWSPAPERS ................. 46
  4.1 READERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS ................................................................... 48
  4.2 EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVELY FRAMED COVERAGE ..................................... 51
  4.3 EXAMPLES OF POSITIVELY FRAMED COVERAGE ....................................... 53
  4.4 THE CASE OF ROSALIO RETA ................................................................. 56
  4.5 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 67
CHAPTER 5: REACTIONS TO THE FRAMING TONE IN NEWS STORIES:
  EXPERIMENTAL FINDINGS ............................................................................. 71
  5.1 METHOD ...................................................................................................... 71
  5.2 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES .......................................................... 74
  5.3 DATA ANALYSIS ........................................................................................ 75
  5.4 RESULTS ..................................................................................................... 76
  5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RE-INQUIRIES ................................. 86
  5.6 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 91
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .................................................... 93
LIST OF REFERENCES ......................................................................................... 102
APPENDIX ......................................................................................................... 111
CURRICULUM VITA ............................................................................................ 117
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 5-1: Dependent Variable: minorsadult2_d.........................................................78
TABLE 5-2: Dependent Variable: dif_minorsadult ..........................................................80
TABLE 5-3: Dependent Variable: deathpenalty2_3..........................................................81
TABLE 5-4: Dependent Variable: dif_deathpenalty ..........................................................82
TABLE 5-5: Dependent Variable: mentaldis2_d ...............................................................83
TABLE 5-6: Dependent Variable: dif_mentaldis..............................................................85
TABLE 5-7: Citizenship Responses .................................................................................88
TABLE 5-8: Hispanic Background Responses.................................................................89
TABLE 5-9: Preferred Name Responses .........................................................................90
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5-1: Magnitude of Change in Attitudes Regarding Minors being Tried as Adults ..........79
Figure 5-2: Magnitude of Change in Attitudes Regarding Death Penalty.................................82
Figure 5-3: Attitudes Regarding Mentally Disabled Standing Trail........................................84
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

War has evolved throughout history, and rules that were once acceptable are no longer considered international norms. I plan to address the issue of the role of children as victims or criminals to the ongoing violence of the war on drugs in Mexico. The “‘war’ against such smuggling is not a normal war, and in any case is not winnable, in spite of the power of U.S. military, police, and intelligence forces and their massive budgets” (Campbell 2009, 15). I will look at the roles that children have historically played during times of war, and how that role has evolved from participant to a protected status. I will look at the different international conventions where children’s rights are defined, and whether they can be held responsible for their actions during times of war.

My underlying assumption is that children will always be victims. This assumption is based on international laws, and research that indicates that children cannot make the conscious decision to participate in armed conflict; even when it appears voluntary it is a result of the violent environment that surrounds them. I hypothesize that the framing of media coverage affects the public perception of children involved in this conflict; public opinion will be a result of how the news depicts these children.

H1: If a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims.

H2: If a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as criminals.

In order to test my hypotheses, I will analyze news articles, from both sides of the border, to determine whether the actions of children are framed in a positive or negative context. After
deciphering whether the news article is framed positively or negatively, I will analyze the comments under the article in the same way, and determine whether or not the comments are in line with the framing of the news article. I will also conduct an experiment with University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) students, in which I provide mock news articles that intentionally frame the actions of children involved in the violence in Mexico in a positive and negative context. I will analyze the pre-test and post-test questionnaires, at the beginning and at the end of the mock news articles, to find support for my hypothesis that framing of the media affects the public perception of the role the children are playing.

By contributing to prior research on child soldiers, this study seeks to demonstrate that the term child soldier can apply to unconventional war; the War on Drugs, which happens to be a concept. This research project will open the door for further studies to analyze the role child soldiers play outside of the stereotypical civil wars in Africa, which have come to be synonymous with the term child soldier.

RESEARCH QUESTION

International law and norms state that children are defenseless, and must be protected against war and armed conflict. International law, and Mexico, define a child as an individual that has not yet reached the age of eighteen. The war on drugs in Mexico has become increasingly violent, and children have started to play key roles in this war since the turn of the century.

Based on the increasing number of children who have become involved in this armed conflict, I believe that attention must be paid to how these children are victims. I hypothesize that the view the public has about these children involved in armed conflict in Mexico is a result of the media coverage. In this study I seek to explain that the framing of the media coverage of
children involved in Mexico’s war on drugs effects the view that the public has on the role of children in drug cartels. The media has a stronger influence on the perception the public has on the role that children play, victim or criminal, in Mexico’s drug war than international law.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The belief that children have rights, and that they need to be protected is a widely accepted international norm. The majority of governments accept the fact that children should not actively participate in times of war, and incorporate children’s rights in their legal system. The International Criminal Court, as well as special tribunals, have brought up charges against warlords in Africa for using children as soldiers. Children have become a protected status, and those individuals that exploit them for the use of violence are now being held responsible.

In the 21st century it is accepted as law that children can not be soldiers during times of war; however, the gap in the literature falls short of applying this term to unconventional wars. The drug war only serves to give the border the image of a “violent drug-trafficking zone. The millions of law-abiding, honest citizens who live on the border pay a high price for that image in the form of an increasingly militarized or securitized border that tears through cross-border intimacy between and within families that straddle the border” (Staudt et. al. 2009, 188). The war on drugs is more like a war on a concept because there is no set battlefield where the war takes place, nor are they fighting another government or uprising, akin to a civil war. This war does, however, affect the everyday lives of everybody that lives on the border; both the U.S. and Mexican side. By definition, child soldiers are victims, and for the first time, I use this term to apply it towards the children involved in Mexico’s war on drugs. I will show that this term can apply to the children involved with the drug cartels, just like it applies to the children involved with rebel groups in the many different countries of Africa. I will analyze the framing of news
articles from both sides of the border, and show that the way the media frames a story is more powerful in influencing the perception of the public than international law itself.

OUTLINE

This research will be separated into six chapters. Chapter two will present a brief history of Mexico. I will discuss the founding of Mexico, and how its political system has come to be structured. Statistics will be given for the labor force in order to provide a general idea of Mexico’s economy. I will use the constitution of Mexico in order to show how Mexico defines a child. I will show that children in Mexico are supposed to be protected by the government, and the education it provides for its youth. I will introduce the new generation of the ninis that is presenting itself in Mexico, and how these children are vulnerable to the ongoing violence of the war on drugs.

Chapter three focuses on previous literature that has led to the belief that the government is responsible for protecting children. I will examine how the international community has come to the conclusion that children involved in armed conflict is unacceptable, and that they are victims in every type of situation. I give examples of international laws that focus on the rights of children, and make states responsible for protecting those rights. One section focuses on the history of the role that children have played during times of war, and how that role has evolved. Examples are provided of how children participated in World War II, and one example where an individual was held responsible for using children in a civil war in Africa. I go on to address the issues of what causes children to participate in armed conflict. I will look at why children volunteer to take part in armed conflict, as well as how they are forced into participating against their will. The chapter goes on to explain that even though children will always be victims of war, the public will not always agree. I discuss the operational code, core belief system of
individuals, and how individuals have strong political beliefs since childhood. I explain how the media can use language to influence the public’s perception of whether or not these children are victims. I will show that critical discourse analysis has been used before to study the importance of framing in different aspects of politics and media. I describe how I plan to show that the clear message expressed in international laws can be altered through critical discourse analysis, and the negativity bias.

In chapter four I plan to analyze U.S. and Mexican media outlets in order to support my hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims, and if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as criminals. I will analyze media sources that are widely available nationally or on the border, and focus on articles that are specifically about children involved in the violence in Mexico. There will be two types of news sources analyzed in this chapter: one group of news articles will be about children involved in the violence in Mexico in general; the second group of news articles will focus on a specific individual, Rosalio Reta, who initially joined the cartel at the age of thirteen, and was arrested at the age of seventeen. I expect to find that the Mexican media will be more critical of the children involved with the drug cartels than the American media. I also expect to find that newspapers on the border will be more critical of the children than newspapers based out of cities further away from the border, due to the proximity of the violence.

In chapter five I will provide the results of my experiment with UTEP students and mock news articles. I expect to find that the individuals who received the positively framed mock news article will view the children as victims, and the individuals who received the negatively
framed mock news article will view the children as criminals; individuals who receive the negatively framed mock article will be more likely to support minors being charged as adults and the death penalty. I also expect to find that individuals who cross the border more often are more likely to view the children as criminals.

Chapter six will be the conclusion. I will restate the definition of a child soldier, and that they are always victims; I will also restate my hypotheses: if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims; and if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as criminals. I will sum up my findings from the analysis of the different media articles, as well as the experiment, and state whether or not my hypothesis and expectations are supported. I will end by stating my caveats, and where future research can go from here.
CHAPTER 2
A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEXICO

Mexico is the fifth largest state of the Americas. With a population of about one hundred thirteen million, it is the thirteenth largest independent nation in the world. Mexico has a long history of European influence, which can be seen through its political structure. This chapter is going to discuss the history of Mexico, and explain how its political structure has developed to what it is today. This chapter will also address the issue of Mexico’s economy and labor force; I will discuss the average income of the Mexican worker, and the unemployment statistics for Mexico and its youth. Employment is linked with education; therefore, one section will explain the education system, and provide percentage rates of the population that completes school. Since the emphasis of this thesis is the role of children, I define what Mexico constitutes as an adult, and his or her responsibilities. Mexico has had a rising group of young citizens that choose not to study or work, they have come to be referred to as the ninis; this chapter will explain what has brought about this phenomenon. I also explain how this group poses a threat to Mexico, and its citizens as a whole. This chapter ends by describing the recent violence Mexico has fallen victim to, due to the war on drugs. I provide the rising number of death rates in hopes to bring to light that everybody in Mexico can fall victim to the armed conflict.

HISTORY OF POLITICS IN MEXICO

The Spanish conquered the Aztec empire, present day Mexico, in the sixteenth century. For three centuries, Mexico was part of the Spanish Empire, the indigenous population decreased by more than half and was replaced with Mestizos, a mixture of the indigenous and Spaniard population. This effect can be seen in present day Mexico because it is the most populous Spanish speaking country in the world, as well as the largest number of Native American
language speakers on the continent. Mexico eventually declared its independence from Spain in 1810; however, in 1846 the Mexican American War occurred, and in 1848 Mexico was forced to give the United States almost half of its territory under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1861, Mexico was invaded by the French, and Maximilian I was placed on the Mexican throne. Mexico remained under outside rule until 1876, when Porfirio Díaz became the first president of Mexico. Porfirio Díaz served as the president of Mexico from 1876-1880, and 1884-1911 (Camp 2007, 37).

Porfirio Díaz was the first president of Mexico, and his actions set the foundation for the political structure of present day Mexico. Díaz modernized the infrastructure of Mexico by creating a strong and stable central government. He increased tax revenues, which brought improvements to public health, railways, mining, foreign trade…but he failed to meet everyone’s social needs, and he maltreated certain groups. Díaz favored foreigners, and he rewarded his friends by giving them political positions, creating corruption at all levels; Díaz did not change life for the poor, which led to an uprising and the Mexican Revolution of 1910. After the revolution, Mexico’s poor were finally freed from the system of large haciendas that went back to the Spanish conquest (Camp 2007, 41-45).

After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the constitution was written to enforce a one term presidency. This enforcement of a one term presidency was in response to Díaz acting more like a dictator than a president. In Mexico, the president is in office for six years, and he can not run for re-election. The constitution also frames the legislative system; Mexico has a bicameral legislative system. Mexico is divided in three hundred districts, where the political parties go against each other for a seat, and two hundred members are chosen based on proportional representation, they do not represent a district instead they represent the party (Payan 2009).
Proportional representation is important because those citizens that did not vote for one of the three major parties for their district will still have a voice.

After the Mexican Revolution, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) controlled politics at the state and national level. In the 1930s they nationalized the oil industry, and in the 1990s they integrated Mexico’s economy with that of the United States, through NAFTA. Seven decades of PRI rule ended in 2000 when Vicente Fox of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) was elected president.

The PRI was founded in 1929, and it has been the dominant party in Mexico. The PRI’s long lasting control of elected offices “allowed it to monopolize the constitutional power formally residing in the two houses of the Congress - the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate” (Nacif 2002, 254). This monopolization of power meant that not everybody was represented in Mexico. A distinguishing feature “of Mexican presidencialismo was the enormous authority of the chief executive did not spring from his constitutional prerogatives but from his ability to mobilize at will the disciplined support of PRI congressional majorities” (Nacif 2002, 254). The PRI had a strong party unity, which meant that they controlled Mexico for about seventy years. Until the 1970s, there use to be sixty four senators, two per state plus two for the federal district (Payan 2009). They are elected like the president, every six years, and they are not eligible for reelection.

The 1997 elections brought an end to the PRI monopolization of power because multiple parties were elected to the Chamber of Deputies. These elections allowed “opposition parties to influence the law-making process [by] breaking the long-lasting dominance of the Chief Executive over the Congress” (Nacif 2002, 284). The multiparty system began to thrive after the 1997 elections. Since 1997, the speaker of the house rotates between the parties because there is
no longer a majority. They are elected every three years, and they are eligible for reelection, however, they must sit out one term because they can not serve consecutive terms.

With the election of Fox in 2000, Mexico finally proved that it could act like a democracy. The year 2000 was the first time that an opposing party won the presidency, and the powers of the president were peacefully handed over to the opposition party. Fox changed the view Mexico would have towards foreign policy. Mexico had always followed the Estrada Doctrine, which favored an enclosed view of sovereignty, but when Fox appointed Jorge Castañeda as his Secretary of Foreign Affairs the view shifted to an openness and an acceptance of criticism from the international community, as well as an increase of national involvement in foreign affairs (Ramírez 2001).

Felipe Calderón brought the presidency back to the PRI in 2006. Calderón focused his presidency on fighting the drug cartels of Mexico. This led to an increase in violence all over Mexico, and an overwhelming number of citizens killed and kidnapped. Enrique Peña Nieto was elected president in 2012, which kept the presidency under the PRI. Peña Nieto has vowed to bring an end to the violence that was brought about under the Calderón administration.

The constitution also specifies the protection of human rights. Chapter one of the constitution addresses civil and political rights, in regards to voting, free speech, and political participation; as well as economic and social rights. Mexico’s constitution also addresses cultural and group rights, which focuses on the rights of protected groups like the Mexican indigenous population, women, and children. Due process rights are also protected under the constitution, which means the rights and protection that individuals have vis a vis the police (Payan 2009).
The police force is responsible for enforcing the law on a daily basis. The hierarchy of the police force starts with the “police chief, or el director, then the comandantes, then the tenientes, the sargentos, and, at the bottom [ring], the regular policeman” (Campbell 2009, 205). Although the police are supposed to protect the citizens of Mexico, their duties are compromised when a “cartel purchases the loyalty of the head of the federal police or the military commander in a particular district. This official provides officers or soldiers to physically protect drug loads in a transit or in storage facilities, and in some cases to serve as bodyguards for high level cartel members” (Campbell 2009, 23). The police have proven ineffectual in withholding the law of Mexico.

ECONOMY AND LABOR

Mexico has the second largest economy in Latin America. Mexico’s economy is “closely integrated with the U.S. industrial production sector and international capital markets; its strong fundamentals, sound policy frameworks and management have resulted in favorable financial conditions that have supported national economic activity” (World Bank 2013). When looking at Mexico’s economy as a whole it is considered to be a middle income country. In 2011, Mexico’s GDP was $1,153,343,069,401; the GDP growth for that year was 3.9%, and inflation was at 3.4% (World Bank 2013). Mexico’s economy is linked with that of the United States, and “since Mexico entered the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, free-trade policies have increasingly governed industry and commerce along the border” (Staudt 2008). NAFTA allowed manufacturing plants to move to Mexico where they could operate more cheaply, and this brought a large amount of maquiladoras to Juárez; Juárez became a “magnet for migrants from towns and states to its south” (Staudt 2008).
Although Mexico as a whole is considered to be a middle income country, the same cannot be said for the average Mexican living in Mexico. In 2010, it was estimated that about 52 million Mexicans were living in poverty, this means that about “46.2% of Mexico’s total population lives in poverty, mainly in urban areas” (World Bank 2013). Although the percentage of Mexico’s population living in poverty is high, the labor participation rate is also high, at 64%. This means that the majority of Mexico’s population is employed; however, they do not earn enough wages to live above the poverty line. In 2011, Mexico’s GDP per person employed was $18,461.

In 2011, Mexico’s total unemployment rate was 5.3%; however, this percentage can be misleading because Mexico defines unemployment as individuals who are not employed, but want a job (World Bank 2013). Mexico’s unemployment rate does not account for individuals who are no longer attending school and are not working, which means that the large group of ninis are not accounted for in the unemployment rate. In 2003, there were 560,000 unemployed men in Mexico; in Mexico, “part-time and self-employed persons (e.g., vendors in the streets) are considered employed,” and do not make up part of the 560,000 unemployed (Payan 2006, 25). The “Mexican labor force adds 1 million workers per year but has steadily produced only about 500,000 jobs per annum,” which means that every year 500,000 employable citizens are forced to find unconventional ways to earn an income (Payan 2006, 25).

In 2010, Mexico’s total labor force was reported at 49,616,580, this number incorporates individuals fifteen and older who meet the International Labour Organizations definition of the economically active population (World Bank 2013). Of Mexico’s total labor force, in 2008, 57% had a primary education, 20.20% had a secondary education, and only 17.30% had a tertiary education (World Bank 2013). The majority of Mexico’s labor force has minimal education,
which means that they do not hold specialized jobs that bring in more income. In 2002, the average yearly gross income for a Mexican was $6,143 (USD). In Mexico, the minimum wage is between $4 and $5 a day (Payan 2006, 26).

Drug trafficking has proven to be the “most profitable organized crime in the world, and America is the most important market for illegal drugs” (Payan 2006, 25). The annual income from drug trafficking is almost impossible to prove, but the profits on the U.S.-Mexico border have been estimated at $80 billion (Payan 2006, 25). With Mexico’s high unemployment rate and low income, men and women are willing to risk their lives in order to have a piece of the profit from drug trafficking. For example, in an interview a police officer said that “being a cop was the best-paid job available to [him] at the time. It was better paid than maquiladora plant work. [However], one couldn’t survive on the salary they paid” (Campbell 2009, 204). Even the police earn low wages, which makes them susceptible to accepting bribes. Since 2008, drug cartels have increasingly started to work with legitimate businesses, like pharmacies, where they can launder their money. For example, drug money fueled part of the real estate boom in touristic areas, like Cancun, and in Tijuana cartel members would pay architects to design buildings that they would rent out to legitimate businesses (Lange 2010). Drug trafficking profits for the United States and Mexico combined is estimated at $80 billion, and drug cartels bring an estimated $40 billion into Mexico’s economy every year; to “put that in perspective: Mexico probably made more money in 2009 moving drugs than it did exporting oil, its single biggest legitimate foreign currency earner” (Lange 2010). It is safe to assume that drug money makes up at least half of Mexico’s economy.
MEXICO’S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mexico’s constitution states that every individual has the right to an education. The Mexican education system is divided into four levels: preschool (K1-K3); basic education (grades 1-9); upper secondary education (grades 10-12); and higher education, also referred to as tertiary education (RAND 2007). Under the constitution, the Mexican government is only officially responsible for providing children with an education up until the ninth grade, secundaria.

Mexico has historically had a highly bureaucratic and centralized education system, which educators have said stifles student creativity. In 1992, the government established the National Accord on the Modernization of Basic Education; the federal government transferred responsibility and funding for primary schools to the state (Merrill and Miró 1996). The federal government still has the authority to establish national policies and assist schools in poor districts through the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). Mexico has revamped its curriculum to focus on reading, writing, and mathematics; Mexico has had impressive gains in enrollment levels, but many primary- and secondary-school-age children in rural areas still fail to complete their education programs (Merrill and Miró 1996).

In 2010, one hundred percent of children in Mexico were enrolled in preescolar, the equivalent of pre-school in the United States. The number of children enrolled in pre-school in 2010 increased dramatically from 1991, when it was at sixty three percent. After completing preescolar, the number of children that continue their education in primaria drops to ninety eight percent. Although the percentage of children continuing their education after pre-school decreases, the number of children enrolled in primaria increased by one percent from 2002. The number of children enrolled in school continues to decrease by the time they reach the
In 2010, seventy one percent of children were enrolled in *secundaria*, an increase from sixty one percent in 2002; of those seventy percent of children, seventy three percent were girls and seventy percent were boys (UNESCO 2013).

Once children have completed the *secundaria*, the government is no longer responsible for providing them with a free education. Therefore, children in Mexico may choose to obtain the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma, but that becomes their choice after obtaining the minimal requirement of middle school, *secundaria*. In Mexico, high school is a luxury; children not only need to have the drive to continue their education, but they also need to have the family income to pay for school. This has resulted in a large number of children being undereducated, either by choice or lack of wealth. After the *secundaria*, children “can pursue mid-level education, either through a three-year college preparatory program--the *bachillerato*--or advanced technical training” (Merrill and Miró 1996). In 2010, only twenty eight percent of the high school aged population was enrolled in school (UNESCO 2013).

**ADULTHOOD IN MEXICO**

The Mexican constitution states that the legal age of adulthood is eighteen. Children in Mexico become adults, and are eligible to vote and drink at the age of eighteen. The Mexican government agrees with the international norm that individuals under the age of eighteen are still considered children. Mexican law states that criminal responsibility can not be applied to minors under the age of seventeen. Minors between the ages of sixteen and eighteen can be punished with: counseling, a warning, prohibition to go to certain places, locked up at youth-detention facilities, or other measures of punishment (Guerra 2013). Mexico has laws, like the international system, protecting children from being exploited.
The Mexican constitution states that individuals between the ages of sixteen and seventeen are eligible to work, but they need the permission of the parent or legal guardian. The minimum legal age to work is fourteen, and this is only allowed if the individual has completed secundaria, or received permission from the government; therefore, Mexico, in theory, ensures that every individual has completed the minimal requirement of education prior to entering the work force. Mexico also has restrictions on the amount of hours that children can work. The constitution states that individuals between the ages of fourteen and sixteen can not work more than six hours a day, and they can not work more than three hours without a break. It also states that children can not be employed under conditions that are life threatening, or pose harm to the child.

THE ERA OF THE NINIS

Children in Mexico complete the secundaria by the age of fifteen, but they are not legally allowed to work until the age of eighteen. This leaves a gap between fifteen and eighteen where children have a lot of free time because they can not or choose not to attend high school, which has led to the generation known as the ninis. Nini stands for “ni trabaja, ni estudia,” which roughly translates to does not work and does not go to school. Young men and women between the ages of thirteen and twenty four that do not go to school or do not study have come to be known as the ninis, and there are about ten million ninis across Mexico (Rhoda and Burton 2011).

The ninis have become a huge problem in Mexico, a large portion of the population that does not contribute to society. Five states in Mexico have set in place specific programs to target the ninis to try and persuade them to resume their education or enter the workforce: Chihuahua, Baja California, Tlaxcala, and Hidalgo. These programs vary from “seeking funding to recruit
some of the ninis into local police forces or offering three-years paid service in the military to providing a direct monetary incentive to continue their education or financial incentives to firms that employ ninis” (Rhoda and Burton 2011). States in Mexico have realized that this growing group of young men and women can be dangerous to their society; therefore, it is important that they target them, and make them contribute to Mexico.

The majority of government officials agree that “in the absence of help, many ninis will have few options other than to turn to antisocial and criminal behavior, connected to drug trafficking, drug gangs, petty crime and the sex trade” (Rhoda and Burton 2011). These young men and women become easy targets to be exploited by the drug cartels. The largest concentration of the ninis can be found in Juárez, the murder capital of the world. The ninis are the most vulnerable in Juárez, “ninis as young as [thirteen] are being lured from work and school by drug cartels that use them to kill for cash. They [are] offered $45 a hit, about as much as an unskilled worker earns in a week in Juárez” (Seijas and Bracco 2011).

THE ONSET OF THE VIOLENCE

Violence between drug cartels has been occurring since the 1980s. The Mexican government had taken a passive stance on cartel violence, but that changed when President Felipe Calderón sent 6,500 Mexican army soldiers to the state of Michoacán (Ramos and Gómez 2008). Operation Michoacán was President Calderón’s, and Mexico’s, first step to fighting the drug cartels and the war on drugs. La Familia Michoacána cartel was the first target. Since the goal of the drug cartels is to sell their product in the United States, the border has become the platform for the war on drugs for the Unites States and Mexico; the “border is where the government and the drug smuggling organizations wage their fiercest battles, and where both sides suffer most of their defeats and score most of their victories” (Payan 2006, 23).
President Calderón enlisted the military to fight the war on drugs. He “sent the army and federal police out into drug strongholds on his first day in office in December 2006, promising to turn a tide in a war that was seeing increasingly brazen tactics such as beheadings, assassinations and the attempt to control local governments” (Verdugo 2009). The war on drugs is being fought like an actual war, the military is in armed conflict with the drug cartels. The police force and tactics have been replaced with the military, and their tactics of torture and armed violence. As a response to the government, drug cartels increased their violence with public mutilations. In doing this, they increased public fear while threatening the effectiveness of the government to protect its citizens. These brutal public “drug killings invariably terrorize victims, victims’ relatives, observers, bystanders, and the general public. The result is a climate of fear, anger, hysteria, and paralysis in drug-dominated areas like Juarez;” this in turn makes the citizens feel “insecure and distrustful in their daily lives, and they lose faith in the government and law-enforcement bodies that are supposed to protect them” (Campbell 2009, 167).

At the end of President Calderón’s first year in office there was a total of 2,275 drug related murders in Mexico (Grupo Reforma 2011). Throughout his six years in office the violence continued to increase; there were nearly 60,000 drug related deaths from the day he took office on December 1, 2006 to the day that he left office, December 1, 2012 (EFE 2012a). In 2011 alone, the state of Chihuahua had 4,502 murders, with Juarez having earned the title of murder capital of the world, followed by Mexico state with 2,613; Guerrero with 2,425; Nuevo Leon with 2,177; and Sinaloa with 1,988 (EFE 2012b). Drug cartels not only turned to public displays of murder, but also kidnapping. On top of the nearly 60,000 drug related murders, there are still 26,121 drug related disappearances under what has come to be known as the Calderón era (Sanchez et. al. 2013). Mexico’s drug cartels “have become flexible hierarchies, capable of
responding to the contingencies of the drug war” (Payan 2006, 52). This has resulted in the drug cartels exploiting children, and using them to do their dirty work. Children can more easily blend into society to commit their crimes, while the higher officials of the drug cartels can focus on the big picture, the war with the government.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the majority of its history, Mexico has been under foreign rule. Mexico was first conquered by the Spanish, who murdered thousands of natives and forced the rest to convert to Catholicism; the Spanish left a European influence on Mexico that can still be seen in the present. After gaining its freedom from the Spanish, Mexico was overpowered by the United States; the United States took half of its land and continues to influence Mexico through its economic interactions. Mexico is currently a sovereign state, but its influence from the United States can be seen in the similarities of the constitution, and its economy is also tied in with that of the United States.

Mexico’s constitution ensures that it provides its youth with an education, but a large percentage of its youth does not complete the necessary secondary school. A small percentage of Mexico’s youth continues on to tertiary school and university. Since the majority of Mexico’s population does not get past secondary education, the labor force is primarily made up of general labor occupations. This means that the majority of Mexico’s labor force is not specialized, and remains around the minimum wage.

The lack of well-paying jobs in Mexico has disillusioned a large section of the population. A new group that has come to be known as the ninis do not study or work, which gives them time to get into trouble and get mixed up with the wrong people. Hard work in
Mexico does not pay very much, and this has led to Mexico’s youth working for the drug cartels because they offer them more than they would earn for an honest days work of hard labor.

Mexico continues to fight for the right to govern its own state; however, the fight is now against its own people. Drug cartels have infiltrated the local governments of key cities located in smuggling zones. Corruption in the Mexican government has allowed for the drug cartels to prosper, and be protected from non-corrupt police. President Calderón started a war against these drug cartels in order to free Mexico of non-democratic rule; however, this war has resulted in thousands of deaths, the exploitation of children, and many more victims.
CHAPTER 3

WIDELY ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND SCHOLARLY THEORIES

Since history has been documented, war has been a part of life. War has evolved from the Roman Empire, where male children were groomed to be warriors, to the present day, where many militaries are made up of men and women who voluntarily enlist. War has historically been one nation's army against another nation's army; however, the twentieth, as well as the twenty-first century have shown that war is increasingly unconventional. Today’s wars are not between armies, rather they are nations against radicals who blend in with society.

This chapter discusses the evolution of war in regards to the rights and protection of children. Prior to modern day history, it was expected for males to be warriors, regardless of age. The first section of this chapter discusses what laws have come about to protect children from armed conflicts since World War I. Children are either forced or volunteer to partake in armed conflict, and this chapter addresses the issue of whether or not children ever truly possess the mental capability to make the decision to volunteer in armed conflict. This chapter also provides examples of when and how children have been used in wars. The goal of this chapter is to make clear that children should not be involved in armed conflict, it has become an international norm, and widely accepted belief, that the only outcome of this situation is harm to the child. Although it is widely accepted that children are victims of war, the perception that the general public will have about them will be influenced by their core beliefs, developed in childhood, and the media. This chapter uses critical discourse analysis to show that the framing the media chooses to use has a stronger impact on the public than international norms and laws. Negative framing creates the negativity bias, where individuals will accept the negative framing, and view these children in the worse possible light.
INTERNATIONAL LAWS PROTECTING CHILDREN

After the atrocities of World War I, the international community decided to work together in order to establish a universal norm of who should be protected during times of war, and they came up with the Declaration of the Rights of Children. The League of Nations is the first entity that has defined a child; in 1924 it “unanimously adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Children, thereby adopting the first global charter focusing on children’s rights” which later came to be known as the Declaration of Geneva with the the end of World War II (Abbott 2000, 501). This was the first time that children were differentiated from society as a whole, and children now had rights that needed to be protected. This declaration finally gives children international recognition, and special protections during times of war, as well as peacetime.

Unfortunately, the League of Nations did not last long without the support of the United States, and eventually came to an end with World War II. Following World War II, the United Nations became the new international entity to set international norms, and in 1959 it adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and “set forth the best interests of the child standard and demands that those responsible for education and advisement utilize this standard as a guiding principle...focuses on children as object of international law by perpetuating their reliance on adults to ensure the realization of their rights” (Abbott 2000, 502). The United Nations declaration made the states more responsible in providing and protecting the rights of children. It clearly states that children are incapable of taking care of themselves, and must rely on adults and the state to protect their rights. Eventually in 1990, the General Assembly converted the 1959 Declaration into Convention on the Rights of the Child, and made it a fully binding treaty.

Mexico did not immediately sign this treaty after World War I in 1924. Mexico was admitted to the League of Nations on September 12, 1931; therefore, since the League of Nations
had previously adopted this declaration, Mexico accepted it by joining (League of Nations Archives 2002). Mexico joined the United Nations on November 7, 1945; therefore, Mexico again accepted this declaration in 1959, when it was adopted by the United Nations. When the General Assembly decided to convert this declaration into a fully binding treaty Mexico became a signatory, on January 26, 1990 (UN 2013). Since 1931, Mexico has accepted the fact that children have rights different from the rest of society that the state is responsible for protecting.

After World War II, the international community met again, at what has come to be known as the the Geneva Convention, and set standards for international law, and the humanitarian treatments of the victims of war. The Geneva Convention adopted the League of Nations original Declaration of the Rights of Children, and continued to hold states responsible for providing and protecting the rights of children. The Geneva Convention explains that children “by reason of his [or her] physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth” (UN 1959, 1).

This declaration, as previously stated, is introducing the fact that children are in a category of their own. Children need the state to protect them, until they reach adulthood and can fend for him or herself. It goes on to say that the child “shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development” (UN 1959, 9). This declaration is saying that the state needs to make sure that children are provided a childhood. This is not just in the context of war, but in general children should not work in any form of employment that threatens his or her health or education. For the first time, it is an international norm that children from every country have access to an education.
Mexico participated and had representatives at the Geneva Convention. Mexico signed the Geneva Convention on August 12, 1949, and ratified it on October 29, 1952. Mexico signed and ratified the Geneva Convention as is, they did not have any declarations or reservations upon ratification (UN 2013). Mexico accepted the idea that children are in a class of their own, and need the state to protect their rights until they reach adulthood. Evidence of this acceptance can be seen in the Constitution, and the restrictions that are placed on child labor, and the right to education.

In 1977, protocols were added to the Geneva Conventions, and sections of them expanded on the rights of children. The protocols spoke specifically of the rights children have during times of war, and the protection that everybody should provide to them. Protocol I states that “parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces” (UN 1977, 77.2). For the first time there is an age limit of who will be internationally acceptable to participate in armed conflict. From the original convention, states are responsible to protect the health of its children, and this protocol takes that issue a step further by stating that young children have the right to be protected from war.

When the necessity arises that more individuals are needed to form the military, then “recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years” is acceptable; however, “the Parties to the conflict shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest” (UN 1977, 77.2). Therefore, children age fifteen to eighteen can be recruited when the necessity arises, but the states must not go directly for the fifteen or sixteen year olds. If states are to recruit children, then they must start from the
oldest ones available. This protocol goes on to state that children will eventually commit crimes when they are involved in wars. When it comes time to prosecuting criminals for their crimes in war, the protocol states that the “death penalty for an offence related to the armed conflict shall not be executed on persons who had not attained the age of eighteen years at the time the offence was committed” (UN 1977, 77.5). Therefore, citizens of every country are considered children of the international community until they reach the age of eighteen. Children who have not reached the age of eighteen can participate in the military, but they cannot be given the death penalty for any offenses they commit, until they reach the age of eighteen and are considered adults. The concept of who constitutes a child is expanded in the protocols, but children are still protected from the worse type of prosecution for any crime that they commit.

Protocol II of the Geneva Convention continues to define the rights of children during times of war. Instead of focusing on the role of states in recruiting children, the second protocol states that “children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, and in particular...children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities” (UN 1977, 4.3c). This focuses on the protection that children must have from war and conflict. As stated earlier, children need adults and the state to protect them, and this protocol is holding every party involved in conflict responsible for protecting children. Whether it is the state recruiting for its military, or rebels fighting a civil war, children under the age of fifteen are not to be a part of any group involved in armed combat.

This protocol emphasizes the fact that children under the age of fifteen are off limits for military groups to recruit; however, it does address the protection that should be provided to children who’s rights were not protected, and were involved in hostilities. Protocol II says that
“special protection provided by this Article to children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall remain applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities despite the provisions of subparagraph and are captured” (UN 1977, 4.3d). Since one of the rights of children under the age of fifteen is to protect them from combat, it is clear that they should not be held responsible for crimes that they commit when their initial rights were violated. Therefore, children under the age of fifteen that are involved in conflicts can not be held responsible, nor punished in any form, for crimes that they commit because they should not have been involved in conflict in the first place.

Protocol I and Protocol II were an addition to the Geneva Convention; therefore, states that signed the Geneva Convention were not automatically obligated to accept both protocols. Mexico is an example of a state that only signed one protocol; Mexico agreed with and signed Protocol I on March 10, 1983 (ICRC). Therefore, Mexico accepts the fact that if they are involved in a conflict they must take all measures to prevent children under the age of fifteen from participating in hostilities. Since Mexico did not sign Protocol II, they do not accept the fact that children under fifteen who do partake in armed conflict should be provided special protection.

The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) held a convention in 1989, in which they took the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and made it binding; this has come to be known as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. They begin the convention by stating that a “child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child” (UNICEF 1989, 1). Instead of differentiating children by age, they provide a universal definition of a child constituting an individual below the age of eighteen. They emphasize the fact that a child’s rights need to be
protected, and that “states parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare” (UNICEF 1989, 36). As previously stated by other conventions, children have rights, and the state needs to protect those rights. The state needs to provide institutions and an environment in which a child’s rights are protected, and every child has access to a healthy and safe childhood.

The convention goes on to address the rights children have during times of war. Like previous declarations, this convention states that a state’s “parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces;” however, when children are recruited “who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest (UNICEF 1989, 38.3). Children under the age of fifteen should be protected from combat at all times; under no circumstances is it acceptable for a child under the age of fifteen to participate in armed conflict. The convention says that children between the ages of fifteen to eighteen can be recruited; however, recruitment should not be focused on the younger children.

The convention also addresses the rights that children have to be protected during times of war. The convention says that states are obligated under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, and parties of the state “shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict” (UNICEF 1989, 38.3-38.4). States are responsible during times of war to ensure that children are not recruited by any side to take up arms, and are not targeted victims.

Mexico signed this binding treaty on January 26, 1990. The Mexican delegates at the convention agreed with the international community that children need to be protected from armed conflict, and it is the states responsibility to to ensure protection, as well as care, for
children affected by armed conflict. On September 21, 1990, the rest of decision makers in Mexico agreed with this international norm, and ratified the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 1998, the Rome Statute was ratified, and formed the International Criminal Court. For the first time heads of states and military leaders would be held responsible for the crimes that are committed during times of war. The Rome Statute took international norms and made them binding; individuals are now held responsible for breaking social norms during times of war. The statute states that “conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities” is considered a war crime, and will be prosecuted by the ICC (Rome Statute 1998, 8.2bxxvi).

Mexico ratified the Rome Statute on October 28, 2005. This means that Mexico has accepted the fact that children should refrain from armed conflict, and it is the state’s responsibility to ensure that children under the age of fifteen should not actively participate in armed conflict, on behalf of or against the state. By accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the people of Mexico are holding their political leaders responsible for the protection of all children from armed conflict.

THE FLAW OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

A general consensus between international relations scholars is that the international system is anarchic. There is no world government or police system to enforce the agreements made between states; therefore, “one of the most serious inadequacies of the present international operating system is in the area of force” (Ku and Diehl 2009, 177). When it comes to implementing international law, international organizations, and states themselves, play a role in helping states comply with their agreements, and enforce punishments when they do not. States
may sign and ratify every treaty made; however, there is no enforcement mechanism in place to ensure that states will abide by the treaties they sign.

The majority of the international laws described above have been incorporated into the United Nations. The United Nations is the closest entity that the international system has to a world government; however, its power derives from what states are willing to allow it to do. Human rights laws have evolved on two parallel paths with the United Nations: charter-based, each UN organ has human rights principles in its charter; and treaty-based, which are human rights treaties that are drafted under the United Nations (Buergenthal 2009, 293-295). The problem with human rights laws, as well as all other international laws, under the UN is that they are susceptible to politicization. States that wield more power can sway laws in their direction or against their weaker enemies. For example, Charles Taylor became the first former head of state to be convicted for war crimes he committed while he was in power; however, President George Bush openly admitted that U.S. troops were water-boarding terrorist prisoners, and he has not been charged with war crimes. Charles Taylor is from Liberia, a weak country that does not have much political pull at the United Nations; however, the United States is a very powerful country, and its former head of state has not been charged for war crimes that are explicitly mentioned in the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

Third party international organizations have also come to play a role in increasing enforcement. States may sign treaties because of the pressure from other states, but they may not have the intention of abiding by those treaties. Human rights have become a hot topic in the international system, and the majority of states sign treaties that discuss this issue because they do not want to be the only state that denies individuals of basic rights. When states do not abide by the treaties they have signed, international organizations sometimes step in; for example, the
UN Refugee Agency (UNCHR) shames countries with “resolutions that explicitly criticize governments for their human rights records, provide substantive information about rights abuses and [give] political [coverage] for the World Bank and other liberal multilateral aid institutions seeking to sanction human rights violators” (Lebovic and Voeten 2009, 79). UNCHR resolutions have been correlated with large reductions in World Bank and multilateral loan commitments (Lebovic and Voeten 2009). States can also play the shaming card to enforce states to abide with human rights and the treaties they sign. States can implement sanctions in order to pressure states to respect human rights; for example, in the 1980s every state, except for Israel, placed economic sanctions on South Africa in protest of the apartheid system (Drezner 2000). These economic sanctions led to the end of apartheid, but the same can not be said of present day Israel; Palestinian human rights are violated every day, and yet no sanctions have been set in place by western states. Like with the UN, enforcement of human rights has a lot to do with the power of a state; weaker states are easier to manipulate because they depend on trade and international funding, but more powerful states, and their allies, will be less impacted by sanctions from weaker states because the weaker states need the help from stronger states.

CHILDREN JOINING CONFLICT

Children enter armed conflict in one of two ways: through forceful recruitment, or voluntary enlistment. According to international norms, as previously discussed, the state is responsible for protecting children from participating in armed conflict. However, international norms do not discuss the issue of children volunteering to take part in armed conflicts. This raises the question if children have the mental capacity to truly “volunteer” to play a role in armed conflicts.
By incorporating technology, the twentieth century introduced new ways to fight wars. Wars prior to the twentieth century are different from today’s wars because they “do not occur on well-defined battlefields; rather, they occur in populated areas where recruiters can easily take children out of buses, schools, churches and away from their villages” (Abbott 2000, 509). Wars no longer occur in deserted designated areas, instead they are occurring in populated cities and directly affecting the citizens. Wars that occur in populated areas give access for recruiters to approach children on a daily basis. Unlike previous wars, children are now at the center of the violence, and are targets of rebel groups. Children have been forced to enter armed conflicts “through the threat or use of violence against them or their loved ones” (Grossman 2007, 326).

Violence has become an everyday part of life for individuals living in conflict-prone areas, and the threat of violence is taken very seriously. When violence is the norm in populated areas, the children are forced to become a part of it in order to protect their loved ones.

In today’s wars, “children suffer serious human rights abuses and represent the principle victims of wars they do not even understand” (Abbott 2000, 504). Military groups target defenseless victims in order to demonstrate the atrocities they are capable of, as well as to instill fear in the population. Children have become easy targets to recruit because they fear these groups, and take their threats very seriously. Children are forced to enter armed conflicts, not because they necessarily believe in the cause, but because they believe that if they do not then their lives, as well as those of their families, will be in danger.

When children are not forced to enter armed conflict via threats on their security, or that of their family, they may choose to enter it voluntarily. This idea of children choosing to pick up arms and fight has been received with much controversy. Some scholars believe that “the culture of violence, the desperation for food, the need for security or the drive to avenge the deaths of
family members prompts such unforced recruitment” (Abbott 2000, 516). As discussed earlier, today’s wars are fought in populated cities; war and violence have become an everyday part of life for children in these areas. When violence becomes a part of a child’s everyday life, they view violence as the only answer to the problems it has created. Children may choose to pick up arms and join the armed conflict because they do not believe that there is an alternative option. When “there is a total breakdown of society, armed groups may provide the only source of refuge and safety for children” (Rosen 2007, 298). Therefore, when children choose to participate in armed conflict, they are really choosing the only source of safety that they comprehend.

Due to today’s wars taking place in populated areas, the structural conditions in a country change in war-torn cities. This results in children of those cities having “personally experienced or witnessed extremes of physical violence, including summary executions, death squad killings, disappearances, torture, arrest or detention, sexual abuse, bombings, forced displacement, destruction of home or property, and massacres” (Shanahan 1997, 1). Children are directly impacted by the wars that occur in populated cities. As stated earlier, children may turn to the military groups because they perceive that as the only way for them not to fall victim to the violence; however, personal experiences with the violence that is occurring may cause children to become enraged. When children become enraged “revenge can be a particularly strong motivation to ‘join up’” (Shanahan 1997, 1). Instead of feeling helpless and defenseless, children may decide to join armed conflict as a way to get revenge for the violence that they have personally experienced.
THE MENTAL CAPACITY OF A CHILD

The thought that children may voluntarily choose to enter armed conflict has brought into question whether they have the mental capability to make that kind of decision. As stated earlier, international laws require that states protect children’s rights because they are incapable of protecting themselves. Therefore, international laws are stating that children can not fend for themselves, and are defenseless against adults. Some psychological “studies show a child’s understanding of the world is fundamentally altered during adolescence, suggesting he or she does not possess the same abilities to act independently or appreciate the rights of others as an adult” (Grossman 2007, 347). Scholars in psychology argue that a child’s brain differs from that of an adult’s, and children can not be held responsible for actions that they commit because their brains are not fully developed.

When a child lives in a war-torn state, his or her “motivation to become a soldier lies in the roots of the conflict that have come to define [his or her] life; therefore, one needs to look critically at whether the child did indeed have freedom of choice in his or her decision to volunteer” (Abbott 2000, 517). When a child grows up around violence, it becomes something that molds their brain. A child who grows up surrounded by violence will not have the same view of right and wrong as that of a child who grows up in a peaceful area. Therefore, when a child makes the decision to pick up weapons and fight, his or her choice is affected by the war-torn environment in which they grew up. A child in a war-torn area will not have the same black-and-white view of right and wrong when choosing to join in armed conflict; therefore adults should not “forget that the capacity of most children to judge what is in their overall best interest is still largely unformed and uninformed” (Shanahan 1997, 1). Children do not have the mental capability to make life-changing decisions for themselves because their brain has not
finished developing to the point where they can think past their decisions, and the consequences that will arise from those decisions.

Once children have become active participants in armed conflict “they are among the most vicious combatants in the war; indeed, the younger child soldiers are, the more vicious they tend to be” (Singer 2001-2002, 49). Since a child’s brain develops as they grow older and obtain experience, violence becomes the only thing they know, and they become very good at being violent. These children have a weakened psychology and they are fearful of their commanders, which makes them “obedient killers, willing to take on the most dangerous and horrifying assignments. Young children rarely fully appreciate the dangers of the battlefield” (Singer 2001-2002, 47). Children are still dependent on adults when they join military groups; therefore, if they see that they are given approval by the adults in their lives they strive to maintain that approval. Children do what they are told, and “if a child does not understand that he or she may choose to disobey an order to protect community welfare or to avoid self-condemnation, it may be inappropriate to hold him or her accountable for crimes when ordered by a supervisor or in the context of collective armed action” (Grossman 2007, 349). Children are easily coerced, and they do not have the mental capability to make decisions with the consequences in mind. A child can not make the decision to voluntarily join armed conflict because their decision is a result of the adults around them.

EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN USED IN WAR

Using children in armed conflict is not a new tactic. The military use of children takes place in three forms: they take direct part in hostilities; support role, like a spy or messenger; or they are used as human shields or in propaganda. Children have been used during times of war
dating back to World War II. Children were used on both sides during World War II, the Allies and the Axis.

During the Holocaust, Jewish people were imprisoned in concentration camps. Men, women, and children were persecuted in large numbers. Jewish children of all ages participated in the Jewish resistance and uprisings in order to survive (Rosen 2005). Jewish children participated in armed conflict in order to survive; therefore, they were victims of war, and not criminals that chose to participate in murder.

Children could be found fighting on the side of the Allies. Some orphans in the Soviet Union joined the Red Army, and were known as “sons of the regiment.” They were “adopted” by the military, and participated in armed conflict. The United Kingdom accepted children aged sixteen and over, with parental consent, into the Home Guard. These children chose to participate in the war, but the UK government still understood that they were children; therefore, they could not participate in armed conflict unless their parents gave them permission.

Children were also used on the other side; Natzi Germany organized the Hitler Youth, and indoctrinated them with the Natzi ideology. Germany initially started using sixteen and seventeen year old boys as reserve troops, but as the casualties grew they began to use them as regular troops. Germany went as far as drafting twelve year old boys (Elgin 2009). Japan armed teenage boys with bamboo spears and other improvised weapons to fight the enemy. They also increased military training in the school system; however, Japanese children did not experience as much war as other children during World War II because the atomic bombs forced Japan to surrender.

The term child soldier has come to be identified with images of African children involved in civil wars. Images of children with AK-47’s during the civil wars that occurred in Africa are
usually the first images that come to mind when thinking of child soldiers. The majority of individuals only connect the term child soldiers to the images of Africa; images of children involved in armed conflict around the world are not usually connected to the term child soldier for many individuals.

Uganda is a classic example of how children were forced into armed conflict, and adults have been held individually responsible. Joseph Kony started the Lord’s Resistance Army in 1987, claiming that he received messages from God. He attacked his own people in order to establish a new theocratic government in Uganda that would be based on the principles of the Ten Commandments. Kony created roaming armies, in which he used young boys and girls as soldiers. Kony and his soldiers displaced many civilians through abduction and severe violence. The Government of Uganda ratified the Rome Statute, and on December 16, 2003 the ICC began to investigate the situation. On October 15, 2005, the ICC issued indictments against Joseph Kony and his top commanders for war crimes (Anwar 2007). Kony forced children to take part in armed conflict, in the role of soldiers, which the international community has agreed is wrong; therefore, Kony is being held responsible for his actions, and he must pay for the crimes because the children were victims.

HOW CHILDREN ARE USED IN WARS

Children still play a role in armed conflict despite the fact that international organizations have made it an international norm that children are to be protected. In 2007, “Over 300,000 children under age eighteen actively participate[d] in armed conflict in 41 countries across the globe...An additional 200,000 children [were] recruited into paramilitary and guerrilla groups and civil militias in more than 87 countries” (Grossman 2007, 325). Military groups have increasingly utilized children as a way to keep a low profile in war-torn areas. Children “serve in
a variety of roles: infantry shock troops, raiders, sentries, spies, sappers, and porters. In short, the participation of children in armed conflict is global in scope and massive in number, a far greater phenomenon than suggested by the scant attention it has received” (Singer 2001-2002, 41). Since wars now occur in populated areas, children have become an important tool for military groups to operate in cities without calling attention to themselves; “military groups employ the battle’s location for their benefit by exploiting children presumed innocence through the utilization of children as spies and messengers” (Abbott 2000, 509). Children blend in with the rest of the population in a city, and police or government agents will not isolate children from the rest of the population. Military groups use children because it is easy for them to maneuver in society without calling attention to themselves.

Children are not only used because they blend in with society, but because they are easy targets for military leaders to manipulate and control. Military leaders are attracted to use children as “soldiers because they consider children expendable, less demanding and easier to manipulate than adult soldiers” (Abbott 2000, 507). As mentioned earlier, a child’s brain is not fully developed, and they do not understand that they have a choice to disobey the military leaders. Children are easy to manipulate, and military leaders mold them to be the soldiers that they desire. Once children join armed conflict, many of them “fight on the front lines, facilitated by increasingly light-weight weapons that they can carry, facing the conventional dangers of injury and death during armed conflict...Other children are used as spies, messengers, porters, and servants” (Grossman 2007, 327). Children are put on the front lines of armed conflict, and face the risks of death because they are easily manipulated. Military groups view children as expendable because they will die in conflict, or they will reach the age where they are no longer valuable to maneuver in society without calling attention to themselves.
OPERATIONAL CODE OF AN INDIVIDUAL

International law, psychology, and sociology scholars agree that children are easily manipulated. Children need to be protected, and international law has placed that responsibility on the state. International law, as well as scholars, have made it clear that children are victims of war, whether they are targets or participants. Although international law states that children are victims of war, citizens of the state do not always share that same view, and part of this can be explained with his or her operational code.

Operational code is the philosophical and instrumental beliefs that make up the belief code of an individual (Walker 1983). These are the core beliefs that individuals have developed throughout their lifetime, which affects their political decisions. An individual’s operational code refers to “a set of general beliefs about fundamental issues of history and central questions of politics as these bear, in turn, on the problem of action” (George 1969, 191). These core beliefs provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence an individual’s choices. This core belief system “influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making; it is an important, but not the only, variable that shapes decision-making behavior” (George 1969, 191).

When processing new information, “individuals tend to filter [that] information through their pre-existing beliefs in such a manner as to maintain the consistency of their beliefs (Renshon 2008, 822). Therefore, when deciding whether the children involved in the violence in Mexico are victims or criminals, international law is not as important as pre-existing beliefs; individuals react to a subjective reality that they filter through their belief system. If an individual is raised to believe that the death penalty is acceptable since childhood, or that everybody is responsible for their actions, then international law will not matter because an
individual’s “beliefs act as a lens through which [he or she views] reality, [and] that lens does not seem to be readily altered” (Renshon 2008, 823).

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Children are victims of war, but the way that the media uses language to inform the public about the war will influence their perspective. Norman Fairclough says that language has the power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, and social identities. He argues that this is a “signifying power (the power to represent things in particular ways) which is largely a matter of how language is used” (Fairclough 1995b, 2). Fairclough states that there are two types of discourse: “primary discourse,” which is the representation or reporting of discourse; and “secondary discourse,” which is the discourse that is represented or reported. The way that secondary discourse is interpreted can be controlled by the way that it is contextualized in the primary discourse (1995a, 55). For example, primary discourse is the way that a story is reported, and secondary discourse is reporting a story with a set biased about the issue.

In terms of the media, Fairclough argues that the “social function of the media [...] is to legitimize and reproduce existing asymmetrical power relationships by putting across the voices of the powerful as if they were the voices of the ‘common sense’” (1995a, 63). Every news station is known to have a set agenda; therefore, it can be accepted that every news station uses some sort of framing. Framing can be defined as “interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses ‘a world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (Staudt 2008). The framing that occurs in the media are sometimes the focus of social struggle and conflict or cultural hegemony; news stations know their audience, and will frame a story in a way that they believe their audience will respond (Fairclough 1995b, 56).
Media coverage will emphasize the core values that underlie its targeted audience; therefore, the media will portray children as victims or criminals based on the individualism, egalitarianism, or other values that define their audience (Kellstedt 2000, 249). For example, if the audience believes that every individual, regardless of age, is responsible for his or her actions, then the media will most likely portray children as criminals. The way the media chooses to frame a story will also play an important role in how the public perceives the role of children. Individuals may generally view children as innocent victims, but when the media frames the story to make children out to be viscous criminals the original individual may change his or her mind on children always being victims. An example of when the media influenced the perception of the American people is in 2005; the bloody summer in Nuevo Laredo was covered by the media, but they “completely ignored the positive aspects of what [was] going on […], including, for example, that most people continued living their daily lives worrying about the same thing that everyone else does: work, school, and so on” (Payan 2006, 49). The media focused on the violence, and made its viewers believe that this city had nothing to offer but violence. Framing of a story can alter an individual’s perception; framing effects “violate the invariance assumption since preferences depend on the frame employed during elicitation, thereby rendering standard conceptions of (rational) preferences meaningless” (Druckman 2004, 673). Under certain framing conditions, an individual may be led to believe something that he or she would generally not believe.

During times of war, media framing has been crucial to gaining the support of the population, as well as against. When reporting news stories during times of war, the media will use words to bring the story close to home. For example, when reporting the death of a soldier they may state that “our youngest soldier in the conflict has died,” or to distance the war from the
audience they may say “the Allies launch their onslaught on tyranny from air, land, and sea” (Richardson 2007, 201). In the case to bring the war close to home, the media will use possessive words that make the audience relate to the story; however, they can also use words that do not connect the audience to the story.

Framing is used by the media during times of war, including the war on drugs, to influence the perceptions of the public. In the United States public opinion on the war on drugs “has been largely shaped by news stories from popular media and reports from law enforcement agencies that depict certain minority groups as being associated with the use, transportation, distribution, and sale of illicit drugs and thus responsible for the country’s ‘drug problem’” (Sirin 2011, 84). The media frames stories to make certain individuals to be criminals; therefore, public perception on the war on drugs is influenced by the media. The majority of Americans get their news about the war on drugs from the media, not personal experience; therefore, the “media not only chooses the content of drug war stories, but they frame the issue as well, providing the general public with a certain view of the border” (Payan 2006, 48). The media frames stories the way they believe their audience wants to hear; therefore, the media may racially profile news stories that deal with drugs. The Drug Enforcement Agency is tied to racial profiling, they “developed the profiling of drug couriers during the mid-1980s to interdict interstate drug trafficking” (Sirin 2011, 86). Therefore, if the media is framing stories the way they believe their audience wants to hear, then they may be racially profiling the children involved in this war on drugs; individuals who initially believed that children are always victims may view these children as criminals because of the way they are being framed in the media.

Framing is used in politics and the news reports about politics all the time, and not just during times of war. Framing is used by politicians all the time in order to build support for their
issue or party. Framing is a form of manipulation, and “some group members may knowingly and willingly play the manipulator’s game because it either serves their interests or provides them a safe escape from damaging self-motivated behavior” (Maoz 1990, 81). If the media is framing their stories the way they believe their audience wants to hear, then there are hints within society that these children are not all victims, as can be seen in Sirin’s 2011 article. The media is manipulating the audience, which means that individuals who do not have a view on the role of these children may by default take on the view that they are criminals. By the media portraying these children as criminals, and the words they choose to explain that, they leave the audience with no other choice than to agree because they know what the children are doing is wrong. The media frames the stories to show that the actions of these children are those of criminals, but it does not show that they are being taken advantage of, and by default they are victims.

NEGATIVITY BIAS

When reporting the news, the facts remain the same, but the use of language, framing specifically, can elicit different emotions. A phenomenon in journalism has been to place an emphasis on negative news; journalist go by the saying “if it bleeds, it leads” and “bodybag journalism” (Grabe and Kamhawi 2006, 346). This negative news has a bigger impact on the audience because the brain is built “with a greater sensitivity to unpleasant news” (Marano 2003). Negative news sells more because the brain “reacts more strongly to stimuli it deems negative,” which means that “attitudes are more heavily influenced by downbeat news than good news” (Marano 2003). The brain’s focus on the negative has come to be known as the negativity bias.
The brain’s attentiveness to negative input has evolved from the instinct to survive. The brain has developed a system that makes it unavoidable for an individual not to notice danger, and to respond to it (Marano 2003). The negativity bias can be defined as a “general tendency for negative information, events, or stimuli to have a greater impact on human cognition, affect, and behavior than comparatively positive instances” (Hilbig 2009, 983). Hence, if the media frames stories negatively, the audience is more likely to form attitudes based on the negative story. These negatively framed stories “signal a potential survival risk and therefore elicit [an] automatic emotional and cognitive response” from the reader, which turns into strong views against the focus of the news story (Grabe and Kamhawi 2006, 349).

The strength of the negativity bias can be seen in the English language. A study of the English language showed that 62% of words that describe emotions are negative, while only 38% describe positive emotions, and 74% of emotions that describe personality traits are negative (Busman 2012). It is easier for an individual to tell a story negatively, and his or her audience will pay more attention than to a positive story. When the media frames a story negatively it is more likely to capture the attention of the audience because “bad stereotypes are quicker to form and have a stronger influence on [an individual’s] behavior than good ones” (Busman 2012). Negatively framed stories have the power to influence an individual’s perspective, as well as his or her beliefs.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has addressed international norms and laws that define children as victims of war; however, the public will not always view them in that light due to their operational code, media framing, and the negativity bias. War has evolved, and it is no longer acceptable for children under the age of eighteen to participate in armed conflict. International conventions and
treaties have been signed, in which states agree that children have special rights that the state is responsible for protecting. When armed conflict breaks out, whether in the traditional sense or unconventional, states have agreed that they are responsible for protecting children from recruitment from the state or rebel groups. The problem that has arisen is that there is no enforcement mechanism that ensures states follow the treaties they sign. The problem of politicization is present at the United Nations, and states that do not wield much power are the only ones pressured into abiding by the treaties they sign. The same problem can be seen when international organizations try to shame states into abiding by their signatures; however, if a state that wields strong power does not back them up, then economic sanctions do not work.

Although international norms and laws state that children should not participate in armed conflict, it is still a significant issue that occurs today. In civil wars and domestic conflicts, rebel groups still use children in their armed conflicts against the state. Children play key roles in espionage for rebel groups, in the form of spying, information gathering, lookouts, and in general just being able to blend into society. Children join these rebel groups due to threats on them and their family, or through voluntary enlistment. Sociology and psychology scholars have argued that it is never a child’s choice to partake in armed conflict. If a child is not threatened into participating, then he or she participates because they have been exposed to a society filled with violence, and their brain has not developed to the point where they can recognize the consequences of their actions.

In different fields of study it is recognized that children need to be protected until their brain fully develops, and children will always be victims of war whether they participate or are just affected by violence. The public, however, will not always view the children involved as victims due to their operational code and negative framing of the media. The brain is hardwired
to respond to negative information with greater emotion than positive information; therefore, the media plays a stronger role in affecting the public’s perception of the role of children in armed conflict than international law.
CHAPTER 4
AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. AND MEXICAN NEWSPAPERS

Freedom of press is a right that journalist have fought for in many countries. In the United States the freedom of press is protected under the first amendment of the constitution, and in Mexico it is protected under Articles 6 and 7 of the constitution. Although individuals of both countries have the right to free speech, that freedom is limited by the agendas of the news stations they work for. In the United States, news stations sometimes clearly favor either the Democrat or Republican party, or report stories from a liberal or conservative viewpoint. In Mexico, journalists have not only been confined by the agendas of their employers, but also by the federal criminal defamation law, up until it was eliminated in 2007, the civil insult laws, and attacks (murder, bomb, gunfire) from drug cartels (Freedom House 2011). Reporters in Mexico “have been especially hard hit by drug violence, to the point that Mexico has become one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Since 2000, around fifty journalists have been assassinated, and hundred threatened or assaulted, mostly in drug-related instances” (Campbell 2009, 215). News stories may also be intentionally or unintentionally slanted because they are written from a government agency press release.

In this chapter, I examine news articles about children involved with the violence in Mexico and drug cartels. Both, the United States and Mexico define an adult as an individual who has reached the age of eighteen; therefore, all individuals under the age of eighteen can be considered children. The first time that the public hears about children involved with the drug cartels and the violence in Mexico is usually through the media; the majority of people are not directly affected by the violence, so they believe what they hear on the news. Norman Fairclough argues that the “power to control discourse is seen as the power to sustain particular
discursive practices with particular ideological investments over the alternative (including oppositional) practices” (1995a, 2). Fairclough says that the way texts work within sociocultural practice is what defines discourse analysis.

Fairclough breaks down news articles in order to see how the media frames a story, and what type of reaction they are expecting to get, and I plan to do the same with the news articles in this chapter. The first step to analyzing news articles is to analyze the particular words that are used because words “convey the imprint of society and of value judgements in particular - they convey connoted as denoted meanings” (Richardson 2007, 47). I focus on online news articles that are accessible to the public, and originate in Mexico, in the United States, and the border region. I analyze each news article, and the adjectives and pronouns that journalists choose to use in describing these non-adults. I focus on which pronouns or verbs that they repeat, or what information each journalist chooses to keep from the reader. I look at news articles that mention war, drugs, or children in the headlines because headlines serve two main functions “to alert the reader (receiver) to the nature or the content of the text,” and a semantic one (Richardson 2007, 197). I analyze all of the comments, if any, left at the end of each news article in the same way. I expect to find that the comments left below the articles will share the same view of the children, victims or criminals, and that U.S. articles will not be as critical of the children as articles from the border or Mexico.

The news articles are differentiated into two types. One group of articles focuses on kids involved in the violence in general, and are separated by their positive or negative framing. The second group of articles focuses on the case of one specific child, and how the different newspapers from different regions report on the same story.
READERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS

The online U.S. newspapers and blogs used are the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, and *Fox News*. The *New York Times* has been online for at least nineteen years, and its print edition, as well as internet edition, is accessible all around the country. I chose to use this media source because it is widely accessible to individuals of all beliefs across the world, and it has been published continuously since the late 1800s. Not only does the *New York Times* have a long history, but it has won more Pulitzer Prizes than any other news organization, one hundred and eight, and it is America’s most popular newspaper website (Rainey 2012). Of the people that visit the *New York Times* online, about sixty percent are from the United States. Fifty three percent of its readers are male, forty one percent have a college education, and seventy five percent of its readers are Caucasian (Quantcast 2013a). They lean more to a U.S. liberal viewpoint, favoring the views of the Democratic party.

The *Huffington Post* is a news website and blog that was started in 2005. Republicans have argued that this is a liberal website, but journalists have called it an advocacy website, just focusing on the facts (Bekken 2009, 32). I chose to use this media source because it was one of the only national news sources that had multiple stories covering the violence in Mexico and children; on numerous Google searches this was the only news source that consistently appeared. Seventy one percent of people that visit the *Huffington Post* website are from the United States. The majority of its readership is made up of moderately educated Caucasian women over the age of forty five (Alexa 2013a).

*Fox News Channel* is an English twenty four hour cable news channel that consistently sides with the Republican party. The *Fox News Channel* was created by Rupert Murdoch who hired Roger Ailes as its founding CEO, and it launched on October 7, 1996 (Mifflin 1996). I
chose to use this media source because it is widely accessible across the country, and it is well known to have a U.S. conservative viewpoint, primarily siding with the Republican party. There were few conservative news sources that discussed the violence in Mexico and children, this was one of the only ones that discussed a child involved in the violence; the majority of the other conservative news sources discussed how the drug cartels exploit American services (fire department, immigration...), and the danger Americans face if the violence spills over the border. This news source offers a viewpoint from the other side of the American political spectrum; this ensures that I provide U.S. liberal and conservative views on this issue. About eighty three percent of the people that visit the Fox News website are from the United States. The majority of its readership is made up of educated Caucasian men over the age of thirty five (Quantcast 2013b).

Reforma is a Mexican newspaper, founded in 1993, that comes out daily in Mexico City, and covers national news stories. I chose to use this media source because it is the number two ranked newspaper in the country, and individuals outside of the country can subscribe to have access to archived articles. Reforma reports with a neutral viewpoint, and it translates stories from U.S. newspapers. Reforma is a part of Grupo Reforma, the largest printed media company in Mexico and Latin America. Ninety four percent of its readers are from Mexico. The majority of people that visit the website, reforma.com, are men with a postgraduate education (Alexa 2013b).

Borderland Beat is an online blog dedicated to reporting organized crime on the border of the United States and Mexico. I chose to use this media source because this blog is considered the leading source of news for the Mexican drug war; this blog is dedicated to reporting the violence from the war on drugs, and individuals from both sides of the border have access to this
website. The founder is anonymous, and goes by the name *Ovemex*; he protects his identity because the cartels have murdered journalists reporting on the violence of the drug war, which in turn has silenced the drug war coverage by many mainstream media outlets. The purpose of *Borderland Beat* is to share information about day-to-day survival, and he hopes a grassroots citizen journalists’ movement will bring change and end the war (Copeland 2011). About fifty five percent of people that visit this website are from the United States, and twenty one percent are from Mexico. The majority of people visiting this page are moderately educated men (Alexa 2013c).

*The El Paso Times* is a daily newspaper that comes out in El Paso, Texas, it was founded in 1881. About eighty percent of the people that visit this website are from the United States, and about ten percent are from Mexico. I chose this media source because it is the local newspaper, and the individuals that will take part in the experiment portion of this thesis (the next chapter) all have access or have been exposed to the *El Paso Times*. It has a large Hispanic readership, which is moderately educated, and has an average household income of under fifty thousand (Quantcast 2013c).

*Univision* is a Spanish-language media company that serves the United States. *Univision* is a television channel, I chose to use this media source because it can be accessed all over the United States, and Mexicans that live on the border also have access to this channel. *Univision* has been online since 1995, and about twenty six percent of people that access this website are from the United States, and twenty four percent are from Mexico. The majority of people visiting this website are Hispanics between the ages of 25-34 with no college education (Quantcast 2013d). Univision is known for its pro-Hispanic immigration reform.
EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVELY FRAMED COVERAGE

Two articles that framed their stories negatively, and made the kids appear to be pure criminals, are in Spanish. One of the newspapers is the *Reforma*, from Mexico, and the other is *Univision*, whose main audience is in the United States, but can also be accessed across the border. Both of these articles use pronouns that distance the reader from the child, and make it sound like the child made the choice to commit crimes by himself.

The *Reforma* article titled, “Recluta Narco a Jóvenes Para Defensa,” which roughly translates to drug traffickers recruit young for defense, starts off as a sympathetic title. Adán García, the author, says that drug traffickers recruit, which means that the drug traffickers are targeting individuals that they want to enlist. The title makes it sound like the drug traffickers are targeting young individuals in order to use them for their defense, not that young adults are seeking to join the cartels and kill.

The somewhat sympathetic view in the titles changes with the first paragraph of the story. García says that a group of young adults between the ages of 16-22 were arrested. Right away he groups the children, individuals under the age of 18, with adults; there is no distinction between child and adult. He goes on to say that at least a dozen of the thirty four arrested were between the age range of 16-22, including one under 16. He says that the group that was arrested took control of the police station, detained the director and five agents, with the intention of putting them with the public population in jail. After taking control of the police, the group acted like police, and the cartel depended on them for weapons that they stole from the police. The intertextual analysis of this story can be applied to the repetition that all of these individuals arrested were acting like police, and stole the weapons for the drug cartel (Fairclough 1995b, 82). Throughout the story, García repetitively groups all of the individuals arrested together. He does
not differentiate child from adult, nor does he explain in what capacity the children were used for. He lists the crimes committed, and holds all individuals arrested equally accountable.

Not only does García not differentiate child from adult, but he glosses over the fact that less than half of them were children. He states that at least a dozen were between the ages of 16-22, and one was under 16; less than thirty percent were adults, but he repetitively groups all of the individuals together. Therefore, the majority of individuals arrested were adults who could have coerced or threatened the children. Instead of focusing on the adult to child ratio of the individuals arrested, García groups all of them together and holds them equally responsible. This story frames the children as criminals, and treats them like adults.

*Univision* also frames their story, “Capturan a Menor Acusado de Homicidios en Sinaloa,” negatively, which translates to a minor accused of homicides in Sinaloa is captured. The author of this article does not reveal his or her name, the identity of the author is kept anonymous with the letters AFP. The author refers to him as the minor which does not allow the reader to relate to him in any way; he is simply a killer who happens to be underage (Richardson 2007).

The negative view from the title continues throughout the story. In the first paragraph, the author says that the accused is 16 years old. The author does not allow the reader to relate to the child; instead he is related to a criminal because he is accused of committing crimes. The author goes on to say that when arrested, the adolescent had 30 grams of crystal meth. Again, the author distances the reader from the child because by referring to the child as an adolescent it does not allow the reader to relate to him. This statement also implies that the child is a criminal because he has broken the law by having drugs in his possession. The author goes on to say that the minor confessed to participating in various assassinations. The author is repetitive in
referring to the child in ways that the reader will not relate to or feel sympathy for (Fairclough 1995b; Richardson 2007). By choosing the word participate, the author makes it sound like the child made the choice to kill. The author concludes the story by stating that one of the first minors to make national headlines for being an assassin was “El Ponchis,” who was 14 years old at the time. Nowhere in the article does the author address the question as to why he became an assassin. He never mentions an adult presence, or who he reported to. The author makes it sound like the child chose to become a murderer; he did drugs and murdered as he pleased.

There were only four comments at the end of this article, and all of them were from a negative viewpoint, just like the article. Of the four commentators, three can be identified as males, and the fourth has an ambiguous username. One commentator has a picture, and along with his username he can be identified as a male in his thirties. All four comments stated that he is not a child, nor does he deserve to be called a child because he knew what he was doing. One comment said that the parents are to blame for not teaching him better. Two comments said that he should be locked up for life; he will-fully committed the crimes, and now he has to do the time. The last comment said that he should die, and God will punish him. Again, just like in the article, none of the comments view him as a child; he is viewed as a criminal who chose to murder.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVELY FRAMED COVERAGE

The Huffington Post, a U.S. online newspaper blog in English, frames the story about the children involved with the violence in Mexico positively. Laura Steiner uses positive adjectives and pronouns that describe the teenagers as victims. The article is titled “Mexican Drug Cartels Recruit Young Latinos in Southern California.” The title starts off as a somewhat positive view on the children involved with the drug violence because she emphasizes the fact that the ones
being recruited are young Latinos. Steiner chose to use the word recruit, which means that the members of the drug cartels are out looking for these young latinos, and not the other way around.

The article starts off by saying that cartels lure young people into their illicit work. Immediately Steiner describes the young people as victims because the cartels are tempting them with promises in order to get them to do their illegal acts. Steiner starts the first paragraph by differentiating the children as victims of the drug cartels. She goes on to say that these young Latinos were involved in street gangs, which made it easier for them to fall prey to the cartels. She glosses over the fact that these children were involved in street gangs and were probably already committing crimes, but she emphasizes the fact that it was easy for them to fall prey, making them victims of the drug cartels. She continues this sympathetic framing by saying that children as young as 11 are used by the drug cartels, and referred to as expendables. Steiner brings the story close to home by referring to them as children, the reader is able to relate to the story because they have young children or personally know young children; children can be seen as a possessive pronoun, which makes the reader feel that he or she can relate to the story (Richardson 2007). By stating that the drug cartels refer to them as expendables, it makes it sound like they are victims that are used and then disposed of by the drug cartels. She continues to refer to them as children throughout the article, and says that they are involved in different forms of cartel crimes because they are easy targets, and children under 14 have constitutional immunity. By constantly referring to them as children, she is forcing the reader to relate in some way; she emphasizes the fact that they are children, and that the drug cartels are targeting them and using them, making them victims (Fairclough 1995b; Richardson 2007). She gives a brief example of Edgar Jiménez Lugo, “El Ponchis,” a 14 year old boy from San Diego that was
convicted of homicide. Stiener never states that he confessed to murdering dozens of individuals, or how much money he made from each hit; she glosses over his crimes, and withholds information from the reader, in order to make him sound like a victim (Fairclough 1995b). She concludes the article by saying that some young people are allured to drug cartels, and are drawn by the idea of being a part of a group. Even though children may choose to be a part of the drug cartels she makes it sound like they are lacking family, love, or support; making them victims of a hard life.

The majority of the comments left under this article shared the same view as the article, that the children are victims. There were a lot of comments that were personal attacks against other commenters, and I chose to ignore them, as they do not relate to the news article. Of the comments that related to the article, twenty four comments viewed the children as victims, and fifteen viewed them as criminals. Four of those commentators can be identified as male, and it was an even tie as to whether or not they viewed these children as victims. Three of these male commentators had Anglo-Saxon names. The majority of the commentators did not have usernames that would reflect their gender; however, five of them used the first letter of their first name along with their last name. Two of these commentators had Anglo-Saxon last names, and they both viewed these children as criminals, and the two that had Spanish last names viewed these children as victims.

All of the positive comments viewed the children as victims; however, they can be separated into three groups as far as who they blamed. The first group blamed the drug cartels for the violence, and they all said that the children were being exploited by the drug cartels. They said that the children had no choice but to kill and commit crimes because if they chose to go against the drug cartels then they would face death themselves. The second group of
comments blames the education system. This group of commentators say that the children are victims of under-education, which in turn leads them to believe that the easy money of the drug business is acceptable. The third group blames the U.S. government, and its lack of harshly punishing drug crimes. They say that children are victims of the drug cartels, but only because the United States allows them to prosper. They argue that if the United States would harshly punish drug crimes, then there would not be so many drug addicts, which allows for a prosperous market for the drug cartels, and in turn allows the drug cartels to exploit children.

All of the negative comments view the children as criminals, and they can be separated into two groups. The first group argues that these are illegal immigrants, or children of illegal immigrants, that are joining the cartels; therefore, they are criminals by just being in this country. They argue that they are here illegally, and they will always be criminals, and they should be deported back to Mexico. The second group says that they are old enough to make their own decisions, and should be held accountable for their actions. They say that they should be sentenced as adults, and others said that all drug crimes should be punishable by death.

THE CASE OF ROSALIO RETA

Rosalio Reta is a nineteen year old who is spending the rest of his life in a U.S. prison for being a hit-man for the Zetas drug cartel. He is from Laredo, Texas, where he was recruited by the Zetas at the age of thirteen, and continued to work for them until he turned himself in, at the age of nineteen. The New York Times, a national newspaper in the United States, portrays him as a victim. Fox News, a national U.S. cable news channel, portrays him as a criminal. The El Paso Times, an English newspaper on the U.S. side of the border, portrays him as a victim. Borderland Beat is also an English newspaper on the U.S. side of the border, but their article portrays him as a criminal. The Reforma, a Mexican national newspaper, and Univision, an
American Spanish news station that can be accessed from both sides of the border, also portray him as a criminal.

The *New York Times* article, titled “Mexican Cartels Lure American Teens as Killers,” immediately portrays children as victims. The title says that cartels lure American teens, lure is a very strong verb, which means that they are baiting teens to join them, making them victims. James McKinley Jr. immediately brings the subject close to home by referring to them as American teens because these can be the readers’ teenage kids or their neighbors, it is not random teenagers that the cartels are baiting.

McKinley Jr. starts the story with the same sympathetic viewpoint as the title. He starts the story by describing how Reta and his friend grew up poor, and were lured by the cartels with promises of riches. Immediately, he portrays a picture of poor kids that just want wealth, but were taken advantage of by the drug cartels. McKinley Jr. wants the reader to sympathize with their poor upbringing. He goes on to describe their role as victims who never stood a chance against the cartels. Throughout the article he is repetitive of the fact that the cartels lure children, and recruit them with promises of riches (Fairclough 1995b). He says that the cartels lurk in teen hangouts to recruit them. Once recruited, he says that the cartels sent them to training camps where they had instructors to teach them hand-to-hand combat, and how to shoot assault rifles. McKinley Jr. makes it sound like the cartels target poor children, and then train them like the military; he describes the cartels like the armed forces, and once targeted the children have no choice but to do what they are told. Towards the end of the story, he goes back to describing how Reta was a good, well-mannered kid before he turned thirteen. Again, he is trying to make the reader sympathize with the child because he was a good boy, until the cartels got their hands on him. Towards the end of the article McKinley Jr. says that behind his tough and emotionless
eyes is an innocent laugh of a nineteen year old boy. He concludes that paragraph by describing his demonic look, flames and horns tattooed on his face, but ends that sentence by stating that his voice is soft and melodic. James McKinley Jr. is trying to make the reader see past his looks and crimes, and feel sympathy for this soft innocent soul behind the hard exterior; he wants the reader to see past his evil look and actions, and this peaceful soul he is describing. He wants the reader to see him as an innocent boy that has not grown up or matured after the cartels used him, and created his hard exterior.

All but one of comments left under this article did not address Rosalio Reta as being a victim or a criminal. One commentator, who can be identified as a male, said that he knew what he was doing, and should be held accountable; he chose to commit the crimes; therefore he got what he deserved, the rest of his life will be spent in jail. The other eleven comments avoid blaming Reta or the drug cartels for his crimes, rather, they blame the U.S. government laws for allowing drug cartels to prosper. These comments focus on the legalization of marijuana; they argue that if the United States would legalize marijuana, then there would not be a market for the cartels to sell to in the United States. Their main point is that if the United States were to legalize marijuana people would purchase it in distilleries, and not off of drug dealers that may have links to the cartels. None of the comments specifically mention it, but it seems that the underlying assumption is that if the cartels cannot prosper, then there would be no need to recruit children.

The Fox News article, “The Day I Met a Cartel Assassin,” gets straight to the point, Reta is a criminal. Immediately, Ayse Wieting is telling the reader that the individual this story is about is a criminal, an assassin; he immediately puts Reta in the wrong, framing him negatively, as a criminal (Fairclough 1995a, 195-196). Before even reading this article, the reader already
has in his or her mind that this article is about an interview with a hit-man, who kills people for money; therefore, he is immediately associated as a heartless killer.

Wieting starts the article by describing the trip he had to go through to meet the convicted murderer in prison. Like the title, he is disassociating the reader from the criminal; the reader does not relate, nor feel sympathy for Reta (Richardson 2007). In the third paragraph the tone changes, Wieting starts to describe Reta as an innocent child. He says that Reta was a good kid from a poor family of ten children. He refers to Reta’s nickname, “Bart,” after his love of skateboarding like Bart Simpson. Wieting is allowing the reader to feel sympathy towards Reta because they can relate to his childhood.

Wieting goes on to explain how Reta transformed from an innocent child to an assassin. He says that Reta got involved with the wrong people, making it sound like Reta chose to be a member of the cartel; however, in the next sentence Wieting says that cartel henchmen recruited Reta, and lured him with money. This last sentence makes Reta appear to be a victim of the drug cartels because they went looking for him, and baited him with promises of money. In the next paragraph, Wieting continues with the framing that Reta was a victim. He says that Reta was groomed to kill by a band of Mexican Special Forces; he was prepared by the cartel to be a killer. Depending on whether the reader feels sympathy towards Reta, this sentence can be interpreted as Reta being a victim; the cartel took advantage of him at a young age, and all he knew how to do was kill. This sentence can also be interpreted as Reta being a criminal, he was trained like a soldier, making him a professional killer.

Towards the middle of the article, Wieting says that Reta had to prove he was a man at the age of thirteen, with his first execution, making it clear that he was no longer a child. He makes Reta sound like a predator stalking his prey; he says that Reta would monitor his victims,
and at the right moment he would pull the trigger. He goes into more detail by explaining that Reta preferred to kill people execution style. By giving the reader an image of how he would kill, Wieting brings fear and anger to the reader which makes them view him as he is framing him, as a criminal (Fairclough 1995a, 195-196). He goes on to link Reta with the violence in Mexico as a whole; he gives the total number of people killed to date, and says Reta was part of the carnage. He makes him sound like an animal, which disassociates him with the reader. He goes on to say that Reta was part of an assassination cell, making him sound like a terrorist. Wieting is repetitive in using pronouns to consistently frame him as a criminal. He continues to frame him negatively by saying that confessions and convictions of others prove that he is a criminal on both sides of the border, and not just the two crimes that he is serving time for.

Towards the end of the article, Wieting explains how Reta attacked a popular Mexican nightclub. He says that Reta disobeyed orders from the Zetas by orchestrating that attack, and the Zetas tortured him, but he ends that sentence by saying that Reta has said that a rival cartel kidnapped and tortured him. He immediately dismisses the fact that Reta was also a victim of the violence, and demonstrates to the reader that Reta is a loose cannon that did not even listen to his own cartel. He goes on to say that Reta was eventually arrested after this incident, he ignores the fact that Reta turned himself in.

Reta is appealing one of his convictions, but Wieting tells the reader that he will spend the rest of his life in prison no matter what he says or does. Indirectly he is telling the reader that Reta is a criminal who will spend the rest of his life behind bars. He continues to say that he cannot believe that Reta is a killer, and that he did not feel threatened or scared by sitting next to him. He continues to juxtapose his evil look with his soft-spokenness, also mentioning that he is a vegetarian. He seems to be saying that Reta comes off as a likable person; however, he
concludes the article by stating that his trail of dead bodies tells a different story. It seems like he is saying that looks can be deceiving, and although Reta portrays a different personality he is still a criminal. He ends by saying that Reta has a long time to think about the decisions he made when he was thirteen; he is a criminal who made his decisions at a young age.

The *El Paso Times*, another U.S. newspaper, portrays Reta, and children like him, as victims. The article, titled “Boy, 16, Arrested in Slaying of Informant,” starts off with a somewhat sympathetic view towards the child. The first word is boy, which means that they are immediately referring to him as a child. Daniel Borunda refers to him as a boy, and then states his age as a teenager, which shows that he is trying to get the reader to sympathize with him because he is a boy; a child, which is synonymous with innocence and naiveté.

Borunda starts off the article with the same sympathetic view as the title by consistently referring to him as the boy. He states in the first paragraph that the boy is accused of being a part of a hit squad and that his arrest is the fourth in the death of one detective. Borunda emphasizes that the boy participated with a group, and he is not the sole murderer. He wants the reader to know that the boy participated in the murder, but there were adults involved that may have pulled the trigger, or orchestrated the whole plan; he makes it clear that the boy did not act alone, which can make the reader sympathize with the fact that he is being used. He goes on to state the names of the three other individuals arrested in the crime, a thirty, eighteen (an Army Pfc.), and seventeen year old. He says that the alleged shooter and alleged getaway driver, the eighteen and seventeen year olds, have no gang ties, and then he names the high schools each one graduated from. He brings the story close to home to the reader because he puts the two teens in their community; he basically tells the reader that they are good kids that graduated from high
school, and are not involved in gangs, they were used by the thirty year old that planned the whole hit.

Towards the end of the article, Borunda says that the drug cartels draw teens with their promises of easy money. He continues to sympathize with the children involved, and blames the cartels for being predators. He says that drug cartels are recruiting El Paso teens in our schools. This brings the story right into the readers’ living room, because he is saying that these are our schools; he is telling the reader that the cartels are taking advantage of our teens in our schools, which gives the reader possession, and a direct link to the story (Richardson 2007, 201). He concludes the article by giving the example of Rosalio Reta, a teen from Laredo that was lured by the Zetas at the age of thirteen. Again, he is saying that the drug cartels are baiting and exploiting American teens. He simply states that Reta is serving a seventy year sentence for two hits in Laredo. Borunda does not address his involvement with the drug cartels, just that he was lured in at a young age, so it is not his fault. He gives a story about teens in El Paso that were used by the drug cartels, and then explains that they are recruiting our kids, and then states that Reta is serving time for crimes he committed under the Zetas; he gets the reader to sympathize with children, and blame the drug cartels for exploiting them, and then glosses over the case of Reta in order to keep the reader’s sympathy.

*Borderland Beat* is another U.S. online newspaper blog that focuses specifically on the drug war in Mexico. The article, “The Black Kiss: Zetas Groomed Texas Teens as *sicarios* [paid killers] at 13,” starts off with a sympathetic view towards the children, but it has an overall view that they are criminals. The title appears to describe the children as victims of a specific cartel, stating that the Zetas prepared the teens to be used for a specific purpose. The title makes it
sound like the Zetas chose these teens, and then trained and prepared them to be hit-men, and they did not have a choice.

The author starts the article by telling the story of the childhood of Rosalio Reta and his friend Gabriel Cardona, and how they grew up poor. As with the title, the author is describing the children as victims of a hard life that is forced upon them; however, this sympathetic view immediately changes with the second paragraph. He switches from discussing their poverty, and how they were seduced by cartels, to focusing on how they were trained to be killers. He says that they were trained killers living in a wealthy neighborhood, and he juxtaposes their narco training and riches to their hardworking successful neighbors. This juxtaposition brings the story to the readers’ living room; the reader works hard for his or her family, when these kids are making easy money by killing people. These kids could be their neighbors, and that sympathy they felt for them at the beginning of this article is gone because the author has made the reader realize that they are not safe in their own neighborhoods (Richardson 2007, 201).

The author concludes the article by telling the stories of how each one was captured and convicted. He starts with Cardona, and his confession of kidnapping and killing two American teenagers. The author says that Cardona erupted in laughter as he gave his mocking description of their pleas. He emphasizes the fact that these were brutal murders; Cardona kidnapped these teens, tortured them, and then killed them with a broken bottle. He refers to Cardona’s victims as teens, although he is a teen himself the author makes a differentiation between Cardona and his victims. He is showing the reader that Cardona is a cold blooded killer, and a criminal, because he has no remorse as he recounts the story, and is even laughing at his crimes. The author also makes the reader view him as a criminal by explaining the extent of his crime; he not only committed murder, but he made them suffer. He continues the article by stating the crime
that led to Reta’s arrest, an assassination attempt. He says that Reta opened fire and threw a grenade into a popular bar, but did not kill his intended victim. Again, the author is showing the reader that Reta does not have any concern for people in general. He had his intended victim, but he put the lives of many innocent people at risk by attacking a popular public hangout; he killed four and injured twenty five. He concludes the article by saying that the young killer has stories about the inner workings of the depraved and violent drug cartels. By referring to him as a killer, the author is automatically putting him in the wrong, and is telling the reader that he is a criminal (Fairclough 1995a, 195-196). His last statement puts Reta and the violence of the drug cartels as being one in the same; he is a criminal, just like all the other members. The reader no longer has any reason to feel sympathy towards him, but instead anger for the crimes that he has committed.

The majority of the comments share the same negative view as the article, that he is a criminal. There were a lot of comments, which I chose to ignore, that were personal attacks against or between commentators. Of the comments that did respond to the article, and addressed the issue of Reta and children involved in drug cartels, seven were negative and two were positive, and all of the comments were anonymous. The negative comments all shared the same view, that he made the choice to kill, and he should be killed in return. They view him as the nineteen year old that was sentenced for two murders, and not the thirteen year old that was trained to become a hit-man. The two positive comments say that he was a kid, and the drug cartels are to blame for his exploitation. One of the comments says that kids in general are young and dumb, and believe whatever promises the cartels make. The other comment said that kids in his situation do not have a choice, they either kill like they are told, or they themselves are killed.
The *Reforma*, a Mexican newspaper also has a negative view of the children involved with drug cartels, they are criminals. The article, “Chicos Ladrones y Sicarios”, which means teens, thieves and hit-men, starts off with a negative view of children involved in the violence. The title sets the tone that teens are criminals, the author automatically puts these children in the wrong and tells the reader that this story is about criminals (Fairclough 1995a, 195-196).

Gustavo Fondevila starts the article off by stating that 95% of elementary school children paint images of kidnappings and murders. He says that childhood innocence has been replaced with images of violence, thanks to the drug cartels. He says that kids now dream about growing up to be *narcos* or hit-men. He brings the story close to home to the reader, because he is showing them that the violence of the drug cartels has tainted the majority of children in Mexico, their future (Richardson 2007, 201). Before he gets to the case of Rosalio Reta, Fondevila states that the young are good at killing and torturing because they do not understand the consequences of their actions, which makes it sound like he wants the reader to sympathize with these children; however, this image of children being victims is short lived. He says that Reta started at eleven, and by the time he was thirteen he was already a member of the Zetas cartel, and until he was captured he left a trail of savage violence. Unlike the other articles, Fondevila tells the reader that Reta initiated his membership into the Zetas, not that they lured or recruited him. This makes it sound like he made the decision to enter into a life of violence. He also chooses to say that his trail of violence ended because he was captured, not that he turned himself in (which every other article has stated). By omitting information, Fondevila is trying to make the reader believe that Reta chose to commit murders, and was unstoppable, until the authorities stepped in, making him a criminal (Fairclough 1995a, 195).
Fondevila concludes the article by giving statistics for the city of Mexico. He says that the week prior to the article, November 22, 2010, 34% of the people arrested were minors involved in organized crime. He states that the delinquents that participate in violence today are more violent than ever before. These statements distant the reader from the children because he refers to them as minors and delinquents, not words that the readers can relate to or feel sympathy for; on the contrary, the readers may feel anger towards these delinquent children that are tainting the innocence of the children of Mexico (Richardson 2007). He goes on to say that eight out of ten kids believe they can have a future in the drug business. Fondevila differentiates the children of Mexico who are forced to grow up witnessing this violence, they are victims, and the children who are involved with drug cartels and participate in the violence, they are criminals. He concludes this article by saying that we are losing the most important war, the future of our children. He brings this story close to home with the reader because these are their children, possessive pronouns, the future of Mexico that is being tainted by the violence of the drug cartels (Richardson 2007, 201).

Univision, a U.S. news station in Spanish that can be accessed on both sides of the border, depicts these children as criminals. The title of their article, “Narcos Mexicanos Reclutan Estadounidenses por Facilidad Para Cruzar Frontera,” starts off with a sympathetic viewpoint. The title says that Mexican narcos are recruiting U.S. citizens because it is easy for them to cross the border. It initially sounds like the article is going to focus on drug cartels targeting Americans, and using them for their benefit, they fall victim to the drug cartels.

The idea that these U.S. citizens are victims of the drug cartels is immediately washed out with the first paragraph. Luis Chaparro says that the new recruits are employed to transport weapons, drugs, commit robberies, and other cartel related crimes. By stating that they are
employed, Chaparro makes it sound like these individuals choose to commit their crimes; since this is a job, individuals are not forced to commit crimes, and can quit at any time. He then gives an example of a sixteen year old teen that was arrested in Juárez for directly participating in at least six kidnappings. By choosing to say that he directly participated, not that he allegedly or is accused of participating, Chaparro is telling the reader that this child is guilty of the crime of kidnapping (Fairclough 1995a). He says that the child participated, which means that he made the choice to kidnap people, not that he was ordered.

Towards the end of the article, Chaparro briefly mentions the case of Rosalio Reta. He says that Reta was contracted by the Zetas to introduce drugs to Laredo, his hometown; again, Chaparro makes it sounds like a job, and people can quit their job at any time. He never mentions Reta’s age, or how he came to be involved with the cartel. He is also telling the reader that he is to blame for the current drug problems in Laredo because he introduced them to drugs; Chaparro makes it sound like Reta chose to join the cartel, and brought violence to Laredo by doing so, making him a criminal. He concludes the article by stating that U.S. citizens lend their services to the cartels; regardless of age, individuals are choosing to help the cartels, and they are criminals. Chaparro groups all individuals involved with the drug violence together; he only mentions age once, and immediately he connects him to the violence. His overall message to the reader, which he repeats throughout the story, is that these individuals choose to be a part of the violence, which makes them criminals (Fairclough 1995b, 82).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analyzed different online newspapers that addressed the issue of children involved in the drug war in Mexico. I looked at the New York Times, a U.S. newspaper, Fox News, a U.S. cable news channel, the Huffington Post, also a U.S. newspaper and blog, the
Reforma, a Mexican newspaper, and various news outlets that can be accessed in the border region: the El Paso Times, Borderland Beat, and Univision. These newspapers are available online, which makes them accessible to a wider audience in different regions.

Of the six news articles analyzed I found that three U.S. newspapers printed in English depicted these children as victims. The New York Times, the Huffington Post, and the El Paso Times all framed their stories from a positive viewpoint, making the children appear to be victims of the drug cartels. However, not all U.S. newspapers view these children as victims; Borderland Beat, an English newspaper and blog, Univision, a U.S. based news station in Spanish, and Fox News, an English cable channel, along with the Reforma, a Mexican newspaper in Spanish, all depicted these children as criminals. All of the news articles I examined in Spanish depicted these children as criminals, who chose to participate in the ongoing violence. Borderland Beat and Fox News are the only online English news sources that depicted these children as criminals; however, unlike the other English newspapers, Borderland Beat focuses solely on the Mexican drug war.

The majority of the articles analyzed were written by journalists with Spanish last names. Of the nine articles reviewed, six were written by individuals whose last names are in Spanish, and three were written by individuals with Anglo-Saxon last names. Five of the journalists with Spanish last names framed the children in their articles as criminals, and only one journalist with a Spanish last name framed the children in his article as victims. Two of the journalists with Anglo-Saxon last names framed the children in their articles as victims, and only one framed him as a criminal. The majority of the commentators could not be identified by their usernames; however, of the comments that could be identified, six of them had a Spanish last name, and five had an Anglo-Saxon last name. Four of those commentators with Spanish last names viewed the
children as criminals, and two viewed them as victims. Just like with the journalists, individuals with Spanish last names are more likely to view these children as criminals. Four of the individuals with Anglo-Saxon last names viewed the children as criminals, and only one viewed them as victims. Unlike with the Spanish last names, it is unclear whether individuals with Anglo-Saxon last names are more likely or less likely to view these children as criminals because the comments did not go along with the journalists.

The comments left under the news articles coincided with the viewpoint of the article. News articles that depicted the children as criminals had comments that also viewed them as criminals. The majority of the comments that viewed them as criminals held the belief that these children are old enough to know right from wrong; they chose to commit their crimes, and should spend the rest of their lives in jail, or be murdered. The comments that viewed these children as victims had different people to blame for the violence, but they all agreed that the children are not at fault. One group argued that the cartels are to blame for the crimes that these children commit because it is a life or death situation if they chose to go against the cartels. An overwhelming amount of comments blamed the U.S. government. Many comments argued that if the United States would legalize marijuana, then the drug cartels would not need children to do their dirty work because there would not be a market for them in the United States. Others argued that the United States does not punish drug crimes harsh enough, which allows the cartels to thrive off of all the American drug addicts.

Overall, my hypothesis holds true that news articles that frame the children involved in the drug war as victims project that perception to their readers, and vice versa for those that frame them as criminals, and this is regardless of what international law dictates. I also found that news articles in English are more likely to frame these children as victims, while news
articles in Spanish frame them as criminals. However, one caveat to my research is that readers may gravitate to media outlets that share their same view in other issues; therefore, if a reader does not already have a view on a particular issue, he or she may choose the view depicted in the article because he or she already shares other views with that media outlet.
CHAPTER 5

REACTIONS TO THE FRAMING TONE IN NEWS STORIES: EXPERIMENTAL FINDINGS

Understanding how the media frames a story is not just knowing how to analyze and dissect a news article, but also knowing how to intentionally manipulate an audience. As seen in the previous chapter, I find support for my hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in Mexico negatively, then the audience are more likely to view the children negatively, and vice versa for positively framed news articles. The problem with analyzing news articles lies in the fact that individuals may gravitate to news sources that share their ideological views; therefore, instead of capturing the influence of positively or negatively framed news articles, I may have captured the general agreement between the news source and its readers. In order to control for this anomaly, I conduct an experiment where I can control and manipulate the information individuals receive.

In this chapter I explain my experiment, and its findings. I start by describing the questions before and after the mock articles, and how I manipulate the framing tone (negative versus positive) using mock articles. I also explain my recruitment strategy; and who participated in the experiment. I define my independent and dependent variables, as well as my control variables, and whether or not my hypothesis is supported. One section is dedicated to the findings, and what theories can be supported with this experiment. I conclude this chapter by addressing the flaws of this experiment, the questions and selection process, and explain what changes need to be made the next time this experiment is conducted.

METHOD

The experimental manipulation for the media framing was achieved by designing a mock news article that intentionally uses positive or negative pronouns, and either provides the reader
with facts about the death toll rate or the increasing exploitation of children. One group of respondents was given a negative mock article, and the other was given a positive mock article. When designing the mock article, I used the facts from a *PBS News Hour Extra* summary about the violence and the youth in Mexico. The headline of the positive and negative news articles set a neutral tone, and was the same for both articles. Using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, the facts remain the same, but the emphasis on child or adult pronouns differed from the positive to the negative article. The mock article started with the actions of a fourteen year old male who confessed to being a *sicario*, and kidnapping for the cartel. The second paragraph described the actions of a thirteen year old female who worked as a lookout for the cartels, and her information led to murders. The last paragraph in the mock article discussed the children in Mexico in general, regardless of gender they are participants and perpetrators of the violence in Mexico. Fairclough also states that the information that is not in the article is as important as the information that is in the article; therefore, at the end of the positive article the focus is on the increasing exploitation of the children, and at the end of the negative article the focus is on the violence and the death toll rate (1995a, 194-197).

In order to get a general idea of who the respondents are, as well as their general views, a questionnaire was provided prior to the respondents’ exposure to the mock articles, which included questions about the age, gender, family income, and citizenship of each respondent. Since the experiment was conducted at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the respondents are most likely to be Hispanic; given the fact that UTEP’s population is about seventy percent Mexican American. The pre-questionnaire focuses on whether or not the respondent is Hispanic, how he or she identifies themselves, and if he or she has ever lived in Mexico. I also asked for their general view on minors being charged as adults, individuals with
mental disabilities, and the death penalty. My goal was to control for their views prior to reading the articles, and compare it to their views after reading the articles in order to see if the framing of the article had an effect on their views. Since social status is still a strong issue in Mexico, a question on income is asked in order to see if income has an effect on their view, as well as being a parent or identifying as American versus Hispanic.

The goal of the mock article is to test my hypothesis that if news articles frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the readers will also view them positively, and vice versa for negatively framed news articles. The experiment allows me to control and manipulate the information that the reader is receiving; however, the location of my experiment may conflict with the findings because of the proximity to the Mexican border. The data has the possibility to be skewed due to the fact that individuals on the border are exposed to more media that focuses on the violence, as well as personal experiences that may lead them to already possess strong views about the children and violence in Mexico. In order to control for this outside influence, the second questionnaire focuses on where the respondents get their news from; their news source for the war on drugs, and news in general. In order to control for their personal experience having an impact on their view, another question is asked to determine whether or not they cross the border, or if they know somebody who has personally been affected by the violence in Mexico. In order to find out if their views have changed after reading the intentionally framed news article, the question for their general view on minors being charged as adults, individuals with mental disabilities, and the death penalty is asked again.

With the questionnaires, I control for outside media influence and personal experience in order to see how strong their ties or views are towards this issue. I also control for the proximity of the border by finding out whether or not the respondents live or have lived in Mexico, and
how often they visit Mexico. The independent variable is the condition of the article that the respondent read, either positively or negatively framed. My main dependent variable is attitudes regarding minors being charged as adults. I also have two additional dependent variables that are relevant for this study given their centrality vis-à-vis attitudes about criminal justice: attitudes regarding the death penalty, and whether mentally disabled individuals should stand trial. Views of the public do not always coincide with the law; Mexican law states that minors between the ages of sixteen and eighteen can be locked up at youth-detention facilities, but criminal responsibility is not applied to children seventeen and under, there is no death penalty in Mexico (Guerra 2013).

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

A total of 84 undergraduate students participated in this experiment. All participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions. The participants signed a consent form, where they were informed that their participation in the experiment was completely voluntary, and they were not going to be rewarded nor punished for their choice to either participate or not. If they chose to participate, they were informed that their responses would remain confidential. The only document linking the participant to the experiment was the consent form, but they were informed that it would be collected separately, and that no questionnaire could be linked to a specific respondent.

A caveat in the sampling process is that the classes that the respondents were recruited from were upper-division classes with a focus on politics outside of the United States. As such, the individuals enrolled in these classes already have an interest in the actions and events of other countries. These individuals self-selected themselves to learn more about what interests them, which means that they may already have more knowledge in this area than the average UTEP
student. On average, political science students are more exposed to current events either by choice or by discussions in class, which means that the respondents in this experiment may have more knowledge on the violence in Mexico, and stronger opinions and views on the roles of the individuals involved in the violence than the average UTEP student.

DATA ANALYSIS

There were two different tests used to analyze the data of this experiment. The first test used was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). ANOVA “allows researchers to determine if the mean scores of different groups or conditions differ” (Rutherford 2011, 1). The independent variable, the condition of the mock article each respondent read, is compared to the differences in the dependent variables: minors charged as adults, individuals with mental disabilities standing trial, and who should face the death penalty. ANOVA “operates by comparing the sample score variation observed within groups. If the experimental manipulations exert a real influence, then subjects’ scores should vary more between the experimental conditions than within the experimental conditions” (Rutherford 2011, 21). ANOVA was used to see if there was a variation in dependent variables based on the condition of the article.

The other test used to analyze this data was the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). ANCOVA is a combination of regression and ANOVA, and it “allows researcher to determine if the group or condition mean scores differ after the influence of another variable (or variables) on those scores has been equated across groups” (Rutherford 2011, 1). ANCOVA is used to determine the “covariation (correlation) between the covariate(s) and the dependent variable and then remove that variance associated with the covariate(s) from the dependent variable scores, prior to determining whether the difference between the experimental condition (dependent variable score) means are significant” (Rutherford 2011, 6). Each condition was taken
independently, and the focus was on how much the dependent variable changed in the pre-test to the post-test. ANCOVA offers researchers “a way to obtain a more precise assessment of the effect of the experimental manipulations on the dependent variable” (Rutherford 2011, 216). In this specific case, ANCOVA is used in order to see the difference in views on minors being charged as adults, the death penalty, and whether individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial after reading intentionally framed mock news articles while controlling for key socio-demographic factors (such as age, gender, income, and race/ethnicity of the respondents).

RESULTS

Out of a total of eighty-four individuals who participated in this experiment, exactly forty-two of them were exposed to the positively framed mock article, whereas forty-two of them were exposed to the negatively framed mock article. There was an even split between male and female respondents; therefore, there is an equal representation of men and women, and intentionally framed articles that can be compared. The problem, however, lies in the overwhelming representation of Hispanics; almost everybody that participated in the experiment was Hispanic.

My hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children positively is not supported with this data. The control variables used were: age, gender, income, identified as Hispanic, parent of a minor, U.S. born, and if the respondent has crossed the border to Mexico. After conducting sensitivity analyses with different model specifications, the results indicate that my hypothesis is not supported that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims.
Mexico still has a strong class structure, and social status is something significant; however, when the data was run to see if a link can be made between respondents’ views on minors being charged as adults, the death penalty, and their family income it proved to be insignificant, as all of the tables show p > .10. No connection, positive or negative, could be found between the respondent’s income and his or her views.

UTEP has a high Mexican American population, as well as many students who come from Mexico to attend classes. Immigration is a hot issue in the United States, and some individuals want to differentiate themselves from Mexicans with a direct link to Mexico, and Mexicans whose parents or grandparents migrated to the United States. There was a question in the pre-questionnaire to control for this issue. Respondents were asked if they were from a Spanish speaking background, and if so what they preferred to be called. Respondents were given the choice of widely used ethnic terms in the United States: Chicano(a); Hispanic; Latino(a); Mexican American; and American. The data was run to see if individuals who identified as American, distancing themselves from Mexico, had a different view from those that identified closer with Mexico. Again, the data did not find anything significant. The majority of respondents, whether Mexican or American citizens, prefer to be called Hispanic, and the data was run to see if there was a difference from their views and everyone else's. The only significant finding, where p < .05, with this control variable can be found on Table 5-1, Hispanics are more likely to believe that minors should be charged as adults; however, the problem with this finding is that an overwhelming number of respondents identified as Hispanic.
Table 5-1. Dependent Variable: minorsadult2_d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>0.521a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>2.755</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>3.521</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentofminor</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usborn</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossborder</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition_num</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>4.992</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>5.514</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = 0.095 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.017)

Since there was an equal amount of male and female respondents, the data was run to see if there was a difference from male and female views. As with all the other scenarios, the data did not prove to be very significant when comparing the views of men and women. The only significant findings with this control variable can be found on Table 5-3 and Table 5-6. Table 5-3 shows that men are more likely than women to support the death penalty, this finding is significant because $p < .05$. Table 5-6 is somewhat significant, $p < .10$, in finding that men are more likely to support that individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial.

The proximity to the border is one of the most important control variables of this experiment. Residents of El Paso, Texas have been known to travel to Juarez for leisure and business, but the violence has interrupted this process. There are many students at UTEP who cross the border every day in order to attend classes, as well as residents of El Paso who cross the border in order to visit family that lives in Mexico. One of the control variables measured
whether respondents have crossed the border to Mexico or not, and a significant finding was that respondents who cross the border are more likely to support that individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial. Table 5-6 shows that this finding is significant because $p < .05$.

Whether respondents received the positively or negatively framed mock articles, there was not an effect on the minors being charged as adults variables. This variable was measured as those who said that minors should never be charged as adults versus those who said they should be charged as adults whenever they commit a crime, when they commit felonies, or when they have a history of committing crimes. In Table 5-1, no significance could be found, $p > .10$, from the condition of the article and the views of the respondents. Respondents that read the positively framed mock article were no more likely to say that minors should not be charged as adults, than respondents who read the negatively framed mock article.

![Fig. 5-1. Magnitude of Change in Attitudes Regarding Minors being Tried as Adults](image-url)
When the deviation of the pre-test to the post-test is compared, there is greater variation in terms of change of attitude in the negatively framed mock news article, as can be seen in Figure 5-1. Very few respondents changed their views after they read the positively framed mock article, but 30% of respondents who read the negatively framed mock article were more likely to change their mind that minors should be charged as adults. Although there were not significant findings when looking at the post-test individually, when comparing the pre-test to the post-test this shift in view proved to be significant because \( p < .10 \) in Table 5-2. Table 5-2 is comparing the change in the response that minors should be charged as adults before and after reading the intentionally framed mock news articles.

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

**Table 5-2. Dependent Variable: dif_minorsadult**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>1.968a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.559</td>
<td>.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentofminor</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usborn</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossborder</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition_num</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>1.809</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>33.383</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>35.351</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .056 (Adjusted R Squared = -.061)
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

**Table 5-3. Dependent Variable: deathpenalty2_3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>4.715^a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.067</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.067</td>
<td>3.324</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>1.568</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentofminor</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usborn</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossborder</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition_num</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>40.420</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>374.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>45.135</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .104 (Adjusted R Squared = -.006)

An ANCOVA test did not show any significance from the condition of the article respondents read, and their view on who should face the death penalty. The death penalty variable was measured as those who said no one should face the death penalty versus those who responded that anyone who commits a brutal crime and anyone over the age of eighteen who commits a brutal crime. The dependent variable, death penalty, proved to be insignificant because p > .10 in Table 5-3; therefore, respondents who read the positively framed mock article were no less likely to support the death penalty than those who read the negatively framed mock article.
### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

#### Table 5-4. Dependent Variable: dif_deathpenalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>.083&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.240E-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.240E-5</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentofminor</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usborn</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossborder</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition_num</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>1.997</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1.863</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>1.946</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = -.075)
The deviation from the pre-test to the post-test proved to be significant. Respondents who read the negatively framed mock article were more likely to change their position towards approving the death penalty than individuals who read the positively framed mock article, as can be seen in Figure 5-2. Respondents who read the positively framed mock article did not show much change, their views stayed almost the same. Table 5-4 shows that this pre-test post-test comparison finding is significant because p < .10.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Table 5-5. Dependent Variable: mentaldis2_d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>1.642a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>1.374</td>
<td>.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>1.194</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>1.210</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentofminor</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>1.308</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usborn</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>2.499</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossborder</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition_num</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>1.645</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>9.709</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>11.351</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .145 (Adjusted R Squared = .039)

When focusing on the post-test of the dependent variables, the only one with a moderately significant finding can be found with the negatively framed mock news article and whether individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial. Respondents who received a negatively framed mock news article were more likely to say that individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial, this is significant because p < .10 in Table 5-5, and Figure 5-3
shows the difference in attitudes based on what type of framing the respondent was exposed to. Figure 5-3 shows that individuals who read the negatively framed mock article were more likely to say that individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial, than those who read the positively framed article. The variable mental disabilities was measured as those who said they should never stand trial versus those that said they should stand trial whenever they commit a crime, when they commit felonies, or when they have a history of committing crimes. However, when comparing the deviation from the pre-test to the post-test the experiment had no effect on respondent’s views on when individuals with mental disabilities should stand trial. Overall, respondents did not change their view on this issue after reading the intentionally framed mock articles, as can be seen in Table 5-6; these findings are not significant because p > .10.

![Fig. 5-3. Attitudes Regarding Mentally Disabled Standing Trial](image)
These pre-test and post-test findings support my hypothesis that if news articles frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the readers will also view them negatively. Although the minors charged as adults variable and the death penalty variable did not prove to be highly significant, their significance can be attributed to the negativity bias. Views on the death penalty and minors being charged as adults are strong beliefs that are usually embedded in individuals at a young age. Every individual has an operational code in which they process information and develop their views and opinions based on their core beliefs. An operational code can be defined as philosophical and instrumental beliefs that make up the belief code of an individual (Walker 1983). This operational code is difficult, if not impossible, to change; therefore, the findings in this data, although not strongly significant, prove to be a step in supporting this hypothesis because these core beliefs show some changes with one mock news article.
Negativity bias states that negative information has a greater impact on human cognition, and the brain reacts more strongly to stimuli it deems negative (Marano 2003). The data from this experiment shows that respondents who read the negatively framed mock article were more likely to change their views in regards to minors being charged as adults and the death penalty, than respondents who read the positively framed mock article, whose views mainly remained the same before and after reading the article. Benjamin Hilbig found that “information by itself [is] deemed more valid whenever it is more negative” (2009, 985). His findings, like my findings, show that negatively framed articles are more believable than positively framed articles. Shiv et. al. also found that negative framing is more effective than positive framing in stimulating a response from individuals (2004, 207). Negative framing of a news article is more likely to affect the reader’s perception of the issue at hand.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RE-INQUIRIES

This experiment did not prove to have strong statistically significant findings; therefore, it should be revised and re-examined. There were important findings; however, quantitatively, these findings were not statistically significant. One of the most important flaws of this experiment was the sample size. There were only a total of eighty four respondents, which may have impacted the significance of the findings. If this small sample size showed some findings in supporting my thesis, then a larger sample size may have had more views change, and made the findings significant. The next time this experiment is conducted, the goal for the sample size should be at least three hundred respondents.

One of the major flaws was that the respondents already had their set views, and the questions to find out the respondents’ views in both questionnaires was general. In the pre-questionnaire the respondents are asked for their general view on minors being charged as adults,
and the death penalty. In the second questionnaire, the question is repeated in exactly the same words; therefore, I am not capturing their views in response to the mock news article, rather I am capturing their general views in both questionnaires. The next time this experiment is written the dependent variable questions can remain the same, general, in the pre-questionnaire; however, in the questionnaire following the intentionally framed mock news article the dependent variable questions should refer directly to the children in the stories. For example, the question should ask whether or not the individuals in the story should be tried as adults or juveniles. Another way the dependent variable should be framed, in order to see if the respondent blames the individuals in the mock news story for their actions, is to ask how responsible the individuals in the news story are, as well as how responsible they view the drug cartels.

Another flaw in the structure of the questionnaires is the placement of the dependent variable questions. This experiment used the exact same question in both questionnaires for the dependent variable, and in both questionnaires they were located at the end. The dependent variable is more important than the control variables; therefore, the dependent variable questions should have followed the intentionally framed mock news article in order to capture the respondents views immediately after reading the article.

The limitations in the recruitment pool should also be acknowledged. Individuals in political science courses discuss current events, and issues that affect politics; therefore, it can be assumed that these respondents have had in depth discussions of the violence in Mexico, and have formed strong views. When compared with the general population of UTEP students, political science students may be exposed to more media outlets and current events; findings from data that deal with current events, and is collected from political science students cannot be generalizable to the overall population of El Paso or UTEP.
A flaw that is to be expected, but skews the data, is the overwhelming representation of Mexican Americans. UTEP has a large Mexican and Mexican American population; therefore, a question in the pre-test asked respondents for their citizenship status. Respondents were given the citizenship choices of: U.S. born; naturalized U.S. citizen; legal permanent resident; Mexican; and other (they are numbered in the order stated). Table 5-7 shows the respondents choices; the majority of the respondents were U.S. born citizens, which can be blamed on the small sample size. In order to achieve some variation for this variable, respondents who chose U.S. born were coded as a one, and everybody else was coded as a zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(U.S. Born) 1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>85.71</td>
<td>85.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Naturalized U.S. Citizen) 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Legal Permanent Resident) 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>96.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mexican) 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>98.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Other) 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-8 shows that the majority of respondents identify as Hispanic; the majority of respondents in experiments conducted at this university are going to be Hispanic. The flaw in these experiments are that findings may not be generalizable to the nation as a whole, but any findings that may be found can be applied to Hispanics as a group. In the pre-test, respondents were asked if they were from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background; if they replied yes it was coded as a one, and if they replied that they were not from a Hispanic background they were coded as a two. Eighty one out of the eighty four respondents replied that they were from a Hispanic background.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HispanicBG</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Yes) 1</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>96.43</td>
<td>96.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No) 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the majority of respondents replied that they are from a Hispanic background, there is variation on how they identify. In the pre-test, respondents who replied that they were from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background were asked what they preferred to be called: Chicano(a); Hispanic; Latino(a); Mexican American; American; or other (they are numbered in the order stated). Table 5-9 shows their responses; out of eighty two respondents, thirty four prefer to be called Hispanic. The major flaw in this variable, and coding, is the sample size; due to a small sample size the variable Hispanic was coded as one for individuals who prefer to be called Hispanic, and zero for all others. In order to achieve variation, and address the issue of individuals in the United States who want to distance themselves from Mexico, the variable American was coded as one for individuals who prefer to be called American, and a zero for the others. This small sample size did not allow for a comparison of respondents who identify as Chicano(a) or Mexican American, two terms that closely link them to their Mexican heritage, or Spanish speakers from other countries (e.g. Cuba, Spain). The border creates a unique complexity of citizenship and identification; however, the small sample size did not allow for this issue to be addressed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PrefName</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Chicano/a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hispanic)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41.46</td>
<td>46.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Latino/a)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.98</td>
<td>57.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mexican American)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.29</td>
<td>75.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(American)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.85</td>
<td>91.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Other)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data did prove to have moderately significant findings in the pre-test and post-test of the negatively framed mock news articles. The death penalty and minors being charged as adults are strong views in an individual’s operational code that are not likely to change, but this short mock article proved to have some changes in these views. Negative information is more likely to spark a reaction from an individual, but the effectiveness of a framed message “depends upon the extent of cognitive elaboration the target engages in” (Shiv et. al. 2004, 199). The next time this experiment is conducted, more articles should be provided to the respondents; respondents should be exposed to at least three negatively framed mock articles in order to find out if more exposure to negatively framed media will change an individual’s view on these strong beliefs, as well as positively framed mock articles. These multiple articles should vary in the gender of the individual committing the crimes, in order to find out if there is an effect on gender and an individual’s views. This experiment provided an example of a male and female teenager working for the drug cartels, but it did not ask respondents for their views on each individual. The next time this experiment is conducted, one story can still give multiple examples, but a question should be provided to measure how responsible the respondent views the male and female; a question should ask how the respondent believes the male should be punished, and how the female should be punished. Another way to control for the effects of gender would be to
provide respondents with different versions of the negative mock article, and only replace the gender of the individual committing the crime; the story would remain the same, but the gender of the individual in the story would change, and the response as to how that individual should be punished can show whether or not gender has an impact on whether individuals view the children involved in the violence in Mexico as victims or criminals.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the experiment in this chapter was to investigate whether framing has an effect on the perception of the audience. I tested my hypothesis that if news articles frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, the readers will also view them positively and vice versa for negatively framed news articles. With this experiment, critical discourse analysis is tested in order to support the hypothesis that news stories are framed with the intention of generating a certain response from their audience.

The data from this experiment did not prove to find anything very significant; however, it did show that the hypothesis is in the right direction. The most significant findings were in comparing the deviation from the pre-test to the post-test, specifically in the negatively framed mock news article. Individuals were more likely to change their view on whether minors should be charged as adults and the death penalty if they read the negatively framed mock article, when compared to respondents who read the positively framed mock article. The findings that negatively framed articles are more likely to change an individual’s views are in line with findings from other scholars testing the negativity bias.

The control variables did not prove to be very significant due to flaws in the experiment process. An overwhelming majority of respondents identified as Hispanic, which means that generalizations and differentiations on ethnicity could not be made. This experiment did not
have strong statistically significant findings; however the hypothesis was supported that if news articles frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the readers will also view them negatively. There were no changes in the view of respondents to support the hypothesis that if news articles frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the readers will also view them positively.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Mexico is the fifth largest state of the Americas, and it borders the United States, Guatemala, and Belize. Mexico has a population close to one hundred fifteen million, making it the thirteenth largest independent nation in the world. Mexico’s proximity to the United States has placed it in the middle of the drug trade, which has resulted in the increased violence in the war on drugs. Drugs are smuggled from Columbia, through Mexico, and into the United States, which has created a power struggle between drug cartels, resulting in violence. Drug cartels are fighting each other for control over profitable smuggling routes, and at the same time they are fighting the government in order to continue with their illegal activities. Armed conflict has become a part of everyday life in Mexico, and children are becoming the targets and perpetrators of violent crime.

Today, war is unconventional when compared to previous times; the war on drugs is not a war between armies or governments, the enemy blends into society without uniforms to differentiate them. This increase in unconventional war means that children play an important role for the drug cartels in Mexico because they can blend into society the best, and police are less likely to suspect them. Children are intrigued with drug cartels because they can earn more money than a legal and traditional job in Mexico.

The use of children in armed conflict is forbidden under international law, but this does not mean that they are not being used. Since the end of World War I, states have agreed that children must be differentiated from the rest of society, and they have different rights that the state is responsible for protecting. This idea that the state needs to protect children from war, and provide them with an education has continued to evolve since the first Declaration of the
Rights of the Child; states have accepted this international norm, and the majority of states have child rights embedded in their constitution.

International laws, which Mexico has signed and accepted, define children as victims of war in every situation. Sociology and psychology scholars agree with international laws that children will be victims of armed conflict whether they partake in the violence or not. The international norm is that any individual who has not obtained the age of eighteen is considered a child, and only as a last resort can children between the ages of fifteen and eighteen be recruited by the state or any party involved in armed conflict. Psychology scholars have said that the brain has not fully developed by the age of eighteen, and children do not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. International law coincides with this finding, because when captured, children involved in armed conflict cannot be prosecuted for the crimes they commit, and children can never face the death penalty.

Although Mexico has signed international laws that hold it responsible for protecting the rights of its children, it does not mean that international law is always followed. There is no international enforcement mechanism to ensure that Mexico, as well as other states, abide by the treaties that they sign. International law falls victim to politicization, whether it is the United Nations or other international organizations, threats of enforcement are only used against weak states. The United States is a superpower, smaller and weaker states cannot successfully enforce the United States, or its allies that it supports, to follow international law because the super power has less to lose from economic sanctions or shaming.

Governments have accepted the international norm that children will always be victims of armed conflict; however, the populations under a government do not always share the same view. The majority of individuals, living outside of Mexico, are exposed to the violence in
Mexico through the media; therefore, the way that the media frames a story, as well as their core beliefs through which they process that story, will have a bigger impact on an individual’s perspective of the role these children play than international law. The negative framing of media leads to the negativity bias, where individuals are more likely to believe negative stories, and allow them to shape their views. In the United States, many individuals “are all too ready to believe the worst about Mexico. Murder and drugs feed stereotypes of the ‘other’ in this post-9/11 world of continuous U.S. rhetoric about security, defense, and terrorism” (Staudt 2008). The framing of the media has a direct effect on the perception of the public.

When analyzing U.S. and Mexican newspapers, I found that intentional framing is present, either positive or negative; there were no articles framed in a neutral manner. U.S. newspapers that were written in English were more likely to frame the children involved in Mexico’s conflict positively, and the comments that the readers left under the article also viewed the children as victims. The articles written in Spanish were more likely to frame their news stories negatively, and the comments from the readers shared the view that these children were criminals. Analyzing the different newspapers showed support for my hypotheses that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims; and if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as criminals.

Another finding from analyzing these newspapers, that is worth further research, is that journalist with Spanish last names are more likely to frame the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively than journalist with Anglo-Saxon last names. I only looked at ten different news articles, and found this pattern; however, the majority of the articles were written by
journalist with Spanish last names. In the future, one can analyze more news articles, in order to determine whether this finding can be generalized to the public as a whole.

The experiment did not prove to have strong statistically significant findings; however, the deviation from the pre-test to the post-test did prove to be significant. The experiment did not support the hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims. Individuals who received the positively framed mock news article were less likely to change their views after reading the article. The experiment, however, did show support that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as criminals. Individuals who received the negatively framed mock news article were more likely to change their views on the death penalty, and whether minors should be charged as adults, than those who read the positively framed mock article.

The findings from the experiment did not have strong statistical significance, but it did show support for the negativity bias. This experiment was one short article, and it proved to have changes on the respondent’s beliefs. In the future, this experiment should be conducted again with more strongly framed mock articles, or multiple negative mock articles in order to find significant support that negatively framed media will influence the negative perspective of the reader, as well as to test if the gender of the individual in the story affects the respondent’s beliefs. This thesis has shown that individuals create their core beliefs when they are young, and new information is processed through those core beliefs; in the future this experiment should separate the gender of the perpetrator in the article, and ask specific questions about the perpetrator, in order to find if the negativity bias is stronger or the same when the perpetrator is a male or female.
The most significant flaw to this experiment was the sample size. There were only a total of eighty four respondents; although there was an equal representation of male and female respondents, there was not much variation for any other variable. The next time this experiment is conducted, the sample size needs to be at least three hundred. With a larger sample size, the experiment will allow for more comparisons to be made between multiple variables, perhaps, even making the findings statistically significant. In order to make the findings from this experiment generalizable, the ideal situation would be to recruit respondents from all over the United States. This large variation of respondents would require that the sample size be at least 1,000; a large sample size and variation of citizenship, ethnicity, proximity to the border, primary source of news (local, national, or international) would allow for this experiment to make comparisons of views, and find the consistent variable between respondents who view these children as criminals versus those who view them as victims. The border creates a unique environment for identity politics, and the complexity of citizenship, which could not be explored, due to the small sample size. The drug war has become part of the landscape of the border; therefore, the border region may not be the best place to conduct this experiment because these respondents have been more exposed to the violence than the average American (Payan 2006, 49). The ideal situation for this experiment, if it had the funding, would be to randomly select respondents from the voter registry, and interview them one-on-one, read them the mock articles, and ask them the questions; this would allow for a greater variance in respondents, making the findings generalizable, as well as being able to document facial expressions of shock, disbelief, or agreement.

Overall, there was support for the hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico negatively, then the audience will view the children as
criminals. There was little support, mainly from analyzing newspapers and the comments left by readers, for the hypothesis that if a news article frames the children involved in the violence in Mexico positively, then the audience will view the children as victims. Analyzing news articles, and the comments that readers left under the articles showed support that readers will view the children as criminals if they read negatively framed articles, and the experiment also supported this finding. The caveat to this finding is that the experiment did not have strong statistical significance, and the comments below the news articles may share the views of the article because individuals resort to media outlets that share their beliefs. Future research needs to address this issue more extensively in order to have strong statistically significant findings of the negativity bias.

The drug war is fought on multiple levels, “including military confrontations and the struggle to shape and control ideas in information” (Campbell 2009, 216). Therefore, the answer of what should be done is also on multiple levels. The basic step is to inform the public, “the North American public should move beyond criminalization and militarization strategies to deal with the border” (Staudt et. al. 2009, 202). Militarization helps to feed the negative framing of the media, with images to go along with the negative story, which in turn adds to the negativity bias. The strategies of militarization ignore, “and thus aggravate everyday structural violence that emanates from excessive levels of global neoliberal economic inequalities” (Staudt et. al. 2009, 202). The war on drugs is not a conventional war, and it can not be fought with weapons; Mexico needs to fight this war with education. Mexico needs to get passed bureaucratic politics, and educate the public about internationally accepted human rights, children are victims of armed conflict (Staudt et. al. 2009, 202).
Mexico not only needs to educate its public, but the journalists also need to be made aware of their strong influence on the public. Freedom of speech has been a struggle for journalists in Mexico; Mexican journalists want to report the facts, and not be censored by the government. In the United States, there is a code of ethics that journalists try not to cross, and Mexican journalists should self-impose something similar. Mexican media is known to show more graphic images to go along with their negatively framed stories, which helps increase the negativity bias. When it comes to minors, journalists should state at the end of the article that Mexican law does not hold minors under the age of sixteen criminally responsible, or that international law, which Mexico has signed, views these children as victims. Journalists should undergo training that informs them about their power of persuasion and laws that coincide with their area of specialty, without infringing on their freedom of speech.

There is no immediate resolution for the war on drugs, and “the seemingly bottomless U.S. demand for illegal drugs, and the feisty adaptability of transnational drug cartels” makes this a never ending war (Campbell 2009, 274). The United States intends to grant Mexico billions of dollars, through the Merida Initiative, to fight drug trafficking, but no amount of money is going to fix a broken policy; instead, Mexico needs “revised practices, innovative strategies, and new ways of thinking about the DWZ [drug war zone]” (Campbell 2009, 274). For example, Mexico needs to start looking at this as an unconventional war that it is not winnable through military means. The strategies of drug cartels are similar to those of terrorist groups like al Qaeda. Both of these groups are:

- mobile, international, rapidly changing, and technologically savvy. They are also quite willing to use violent force and actions designed to kill – but just as importantly, to terrorize and traumatize. Last, both types of organizations recognize the importance of
the Internet, television coverage, and the mass media generally for the promotion and
diffusion of their causes: for recruiting, putting a particular spin on events and actions,
creating an identity and mythos, and attacking their rivals. (Campbell 2009, 273)

Mexico is at war against rebel groups within its border, and, as recent events in the international
community have shown, all parties to armed conflict are held accountable for war crimes.

Mexico ratified the Rome Statute, and accepted the ICC, in 2005. The ICC has jurisdiction over the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression; as well as when the accused of committing a crime is a national of a state party, the alleged crime was committed on the territory of an accused party, and when a situation is referred by the UN Security Council (Rome Statute 1998). Mexico is fighting a war within its territory against a group of rebels who are committing crimes against humanity and war crimes. Mexico has the opportunity to influence international law by bringing cartel leaders to be prosecuted at the ICC. Cartel leaders may not be the ones on the streets recruiting children and terrorizing the public, but, as in the case of Charles Taylor, they are allowing these crimes to happen through their funding and orders. For example, Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán Loera, also known as "El Chapo Guzmán," is considered the most powerful drug trafficker in the world; he is wanted in Mexico, the United States, and by INTERPOL. Instead of extraditing him to the United States, as Mexico usually does, he should be tried at the ICC when he is captured.

Mexico has signed international laws where they agree that children need to be protected from war, and it is time that Mexico hold these cartel leaders responsible for abiding by the law of the land.

Mexico also needs to reconsider its economy. Mexico does not have enough jobs as it does laborers, and a large percentage of those that are employed still live in poverty.
Mexico’s cheap labor allows for an environment where drug cartels can thrive. Drug money is appealing to those individuals who cannot find work, as well as those individuals who cannot support their family off of their income. For one job, drug cartels offer individuals the same amount of money that a U.S. unskilled laborer makes in a day; therefore, an individual can make more money working for the drug cartels than a legitimate source of work. The police force is also affected by cheap labor, although this job pays more it is still not enough to support a family. Drug cartels take advantage of this situation by corrupting and having police under their payroll, which in turn makes the drug war ineffectual because the ones who are supposed to be fighting the cartels are working for them. This cheap labor creates a never ending cycle because individuals will always be willing to work for the cartels because the wages of legitimate employment do not suffice. Unless Mexico reconfigures its economy, the drug cartels will always win because their mass amount of profit, as well as control of the government, is appealing to individuals living in poverty.
LIST OF REFERENCES


http://noticias.univision.com/narcotrafico/noticias/article/2012-09-12/nino-sicario-sinaloa-detenido-mato-23-personas#axzz2OZnOWt2W


Nacif, Benito. 2002. “Understanding Party Discipline in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies:


Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions. 8 June 1977. UN Treaty.

http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/INTRO/470


nytimes.com#!demo&anchor=age-gender-container


foxnews.com#!demo&anchor=panel-GENDER


elpasotimes.com#!demo&anchor=panel-GENDER


univision.com#!demo&anchor=panel-GENDER


APPENDIX

NEGATIVELY FRAMED EXPERIMENT

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
2. How old are you? __________________
3. What is your citizenship?
   a. U.S. born
   b. Naturalized U.S. Citizen
   c. Legal permanent resident
   d. Mexican
   e. Other (Specify): __________________
4. Are you from a Hispanic or Spanish-Speaking background?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Skip Question 5)
5. What do you prefer to be called?
   a. Chicano(a)
   b. Hispanic
   c. Latino(a)
   d. Mexican American
   e. American
   f. Other (Specify): __________________
6. What is your race?
   a. White
   b. Black
   c. Asian
   d. Hispanic
   e. Other (Specify): __________________
7. When should minors be charged as adults?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never
8. When Should individuals with mental disabilities stand trial?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never
9. Who should face the death penalty?
   a. Anyone who commits a brutal crime
   b. Anyone over the age of 18 who commits a brutal crime
   c. No one
10. What is your family income?
    a. Under $15,000
b. $15,000 - $30,000  
c. $30,000 - $50,000  
d. $50,000 - $75,000  
e. Over $75,000

11. Have you ever lived in Mexico?
   a. Currently live in Mexico  
b. Lived in Mexico up until five years ago  
c. Lived in Mexico as a child  
d. Never lived in Mexico

12. Have you ever attended school outside of the United States?
   a. Yes (Where): _____________________  
b. No (Skip Question 13)

13. When did you attend school in another country?
   a. Semester abroad  
b. Until grade school  
c. Until high school  
d. Until university

14. Are you a parent of a child under 18?
   a. Yes  
b. No

---

**Mexico’s Youth and Drug Violence**

A 14-year-old young man was sentenced to three years in Mexican prison for homicide, kidnapping and drug and weapons possession last month. The young man confessed to working for a drug cartel, killing four people whose beheaded bodies were found suspended from a bridge. He claimed he was forced to commit these crimes by gang leaders, and under the influence of drugs. Authorities say the young man began killing for a South Pacific drug cartel at age 11. His three-year sentence is the maximum time the state of Morelos allows for minors.

A 13-year-old young woman was also taken into custody after a confrontation between police and gunmen. The young woman confessed to working for the drug cartel, the Zetas, for a month and was paid about $800 during that time. She acted as a “hawk”, or look-out keeping track of people who entered and left Luis Moya, a community of about 10,000 residents in central Mexico. When reporters asked the young lady how she entered the drug cartel, she coldly stated, "By necessity."

These teenagers are two examples in a country where young people are increasingly becoming the perpetrators of violent crimes in Mexico. In 2010 alone, Mexico experienced its highest casualty rate under President Calderón, 15,273.

1. Where do you get your information from on the War on Drugs?

2. In what language do you primarily watch the news?
   a. English  
b. Spanish
3. What is your main source of news?

4. Does your household subscribe to a paid television service like cable TV, satellite TV, or fiber-optic TV?
   a. Yes
   b. No, don’t have now but did at one time
   c. No, never had it

5. Do you personally know anybody that has been affected by the violence in Mexico?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Have you ever crossed the border to Mexico?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Skip Question 7)

7. How often do you cross the border?
   a. I used to cross the border in the past, but not anymore
   b. Once a year
   c. A couple times a month
   d. Once a week or more

8. When should minors be charged as adults?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never

9. Should individuals with mental disabilities stand trial?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never

10. Who should face the death penalty?
    a. Anyone, regardless of age, who commits a brutal crime
    b. Anyone over the age of 18 who commits a brutal crime
    c. No one
1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
2. How old are you? ________________
3. What is your citizenship?
   a. U.S. born
   b. Naturalized U.S. Citizen
   c. Legal permanent resident
   d. Mexican
   e. Other (Specify): ________________
4. Are you from a Hispanic or Spanish-Speaking background?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Skip Question 5)
5. What do you prefer to be called?
   a. Chicano(a)
   b. Hispanic
   c. Latino(a)
   d. Mexican American
   e. American
   f. Other (Specify): ________________
6. What is your race?
   a. White
   b. Black
   c. Asian
   d. Hispanic
   e. Other (Specify): ________________
7. When should minors be charged as adults?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never
8. When Should individuals with mental disabilities stand trial?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never
9. Who should face the death penalty?
   a. Anyone, regardless of age, who commits a brutal crime
   b.Anyone over the age of 18 who commits a brutal crime
   c. No one
10. What is your family income?
    a. Under $15,000
    b. $15,000 - $30,000
    c. $30,000 - $50,000
d. $50,000 - $75,000  
e. Over $75,000

1. Have you ever lived in Mexico?  
a. Currently live in Mexico  
b. Lived in Mexico up until five years ago  
c. Lived in Mexico as a child  
d. Never lived in Mexico

2. Have you ever attended school outside of the United States?  
a. Yes (Where): ____________________  
b. No (Skip Question 13)

3. When did you attend school in another country?  
a. Semester abroad  
b. Until grade school  
c. Until high school  
d. Until university

4. Are you a parent of a child under 18?  
a. Yes  
b. No

**Mexico’s Youth and Drug Violence**

A 14-year-old boy was sentenced to three years in Mexican prison for homicide, kidnapping and drug and weapons possession last month. The boy confessed to working for a drug cartel, killing four people whose beheaded bodies were found suspended from a bridge. He said he was threatened by gang leaders and under the influence of drugs while committing these crimes. Authorities say the boy began killing for a South Pacific drug cartel at age 11. His three-year sentence is the maximum time the state of Morelos allows for minors.

A 13-year-old girl was also taken into custody after a confrontation between police and gunmen. The girl admitted to working for the drug cartel, the Zetas, for a month and was paid about $800 during that time. She acted as a “hawk”, or look-out keeping track of people who entered and left Luis Moya, a community of about 10,000 residents in central Mexico. When reporters asked the young lady how she entered the drug cartel, she remorsefully replied, "By necessity."

These teenagers are two examples in a country where young people are increasingly becoming both targets and the perpetrators of violent crime in Mexico. Cartels see children as easy prey and expendable recruits as their members fall daily in number, and the youth in turn, aren’t presented with many alternatives.

1. Where do you get your information from on the War on Drugs?

2. In what language do you primarily watch the news?  
a. English  
b. Spanish  
3. What is your main source of news?
4. Does your household subscribe to a paid television service like cable TV, satellite TV, or fiber-optic TV?
   a. Yes
   b. No, don’t have now but did at one time
   c. No, never had it

5. Do you personally know anybody that has been affected by the violence in Mexico?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Have you ever crossed the border to Mexico?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Skip Question 7)

7. How often do you cross the border?
   a. I used to cross the border in the past, but not anymore
   b. Once a year
   c. A couple times a month
   d. Once a week or more

8. When should minors be charged as adults?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never

9. Should individuals with mental disabilities stand trial?
   a. Whenever they commit a crime
   b. When they commit felonies
   c. When they have a history of committing crimes
   d. Never

10. Who should face the death penalty?
    a. Anyone, regardless of age, who commits a brutal crime
    b. Anyone over the age of 18 who commits a brutal crime
    c. No one
CURRICULUM VITA

Stephenie Falcon was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. The first daughter of Angelica Maria Falcon-Guardado. She graduated from Los Angeles High School, Los Angeles, California, in the spring of 2005 and entered The University of Texas at El Paso in the fall. While pursuing a bachelor’s degree in political science, she obtained an internship with Congressman Reyes, a United States Congressman for the eighteenth district of Texas during the fall of 2008 through the spring of 2009. She received her bachelor’s of arts degree in political science and creative writing from The University of Texas at El Paso in 2009. In the fall of 2009, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Permanent Address: 1401 Magruder Apt. 183
El Paso, Texas 79925

Or

smfalcon@miners.utep.edu