THE MEDIA FRAMING OF THE JUAREZ FEMICIDES:

A DRAMATISIC ANALYSIS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

FOR THE DEGREE

BY

JESSICA LYNN CHOQUETTE

ADVISOR: DR. BETH MESSNER

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY, 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to victims of femicide and their families. May this study create awareness in the media and public of how important it is to work towards the prevention of gender violence on the U.S./Mexican border, where so many women have lost their lives.

There are many people deserving of thanks for helping me complete this thesis. First, I want to thank my marmi and papa for their overwhelming support throughout this entire endeavor. When I was convinced I could not do this, you were the first ones to push me forward. Every success I have is a reflection of my loving parents. Also, Nicole and Steven, thank you for being my biggest advocates and for making me laugh when I needed it the most. No one could ask for better siblings. Likewise, my roommates and closest confidents, Emily and Sammy, thank you for listening to me for countless hours when all I wanted to talk about was my thesis. No amount of verbal appreciation can express my gratitude.

I would also like to thank the Department of Communication Studies at Ball State University. In my career path, I can only hope to find an environment that is as supportive and gracious as this department. Also deserving of thanks is my fellow graduate colleagues. I truly appreciate all the kindness and encouragement given to me throughout the process. I am extremely fortunate to have called you my colleagues.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Will Lugunas with his assistance in language translations. He agreed whole heartedly to be the translator for this study and
graciously spent hours of his time assisting me. Will, I began this study with you as my translator; however, upon the study’s completion I am glad to call you my friend.

My thesis committee is also due many thanks. Dr. Kristen McCauliff, thank you for providing tremendous insight into my study and for increasing my understanding of rhetoric. I am extremely thankful to have had you as a professor who gave me the means and support to explore topics such as media framing and gender violence. Also, Dr. Katherine Denker, thank you for always being my cheerleader when I needed a pep talk, but most importantly for being my mentor. You dedicated countless books, articles, and time to help my study become a success. Your encouragement and guidance will always be appreciated.

And Dr. Beth Messner, thank you for taking me on as an advisee knowing that my scholarship needed work. My sincerest thanks for the countless hours you spent helping me become a better scholar. Without your guidance, my academic road would look completely different. You have inspired me to become a better student, but most importantly a better person. Your mentorship, advice, and wisdom through the years are irreplaceable. It was truly an honor to work so closely with you.

Finally, I would like to thank the activists who have risked their lives to prevent femicides. Activists such as Paula Flores, Marisela Oritiz, Marca Luisa Andrade, Marisela Escobedo, and Susana Chavez are truly the face of heroism. May this study bring their stories to light and show people how essential activism truly is. Ni Una Mas! Not One More!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................... ii

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
   Justification ............................................................................................................... 4

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 14
   Machismo and Chicano Culture .............................................................................. 14
   Masculinity and Economy ...................................................................................... 17
   Juarez, Economic Uncertainty, and the Impact of Maquiladoras ................. 19
   NAFTA Incites Cultural Revolution ..................................................................... 23
   Media Matters: The Power of Framing ................................................................. 26
   Media Framing ......................................................................................................... 33
   Setting the Agenda .................................................................................................. 39

3. METHOD ....................................................................................................................... 45
   Rhetorical Artifact .................................................................................................... 45
   Theoretical Approach .............................................................................................. 47
   Procedures ............................................................................................................... 59
   Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 64
4. ANALYSIS........................................................................................................65
   Artifact Analysis .............................................................................................68
   Keeping Inventory of Femicides .....................................................................68
   Divided Sister Cities: Cross Cultural Femicides .............................................72
   Government Sanctioned Murders: Blaming Mexico .......................................76
   Fallen Heroes: The Activists of Femicide .......................................................83
   Forgotten Women: Death Toll for Femicides .................................................87
   Missing Pieces: No One Speculates ...............................................................91
   Reputation for Impunity: Government is Blamed .........................................96
   Convenient Goats: Scapegoating Femicide Suspects ..................................102
   Summary .........................................................................................................107

5. CONCLUSIONS.................................................................................................109
   Summary Analysis and Discussion of Findings ..............................................109
   Contributions of this Study ............................................................................123
   Limitations of the Study ...............................................................................125
   Directions of Further Research ....................................................................127
   Conclusion .......................................................................................................127

REFERENCES .....................................................................................................131
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Lilia Alejandra Garcia Andrade was employed at one of the hundreds of processing factories in Ciudad, Juarez. As was routine, she worked a 12-hour shift and then walked to the bus stop - - until one evening when she never made it home. Andrade’s mother, who was anxiously awaiting her return, reported her daughter missing at dawn (Shanley, 2010). Days later, the police received an emergency call from individuals living near a waste ground. They reported seeing a young woman being beaten and raped by two men in a car (Shanley, 2010). Initially, the police failed to dispatch a unit to the scene. Then, a second emergency phone call was placed reporting the same incident. An hour after the second emergency call, the police arrived at the scene to find that the suspects and victim were gone (Shanley, 2010). Two days later, Andrade’s body was found on the same waste ground. She had been beaten and sexually assaulted multiple times. Forensics reports indicated that Andrade actually was held captive for five days before she was murdered (Shanley, 2010). She was only 17-years-old.

Andrade was not alone in her experience. For over a decade, Juarez, Mexico has been a killing field for young women. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands of females like Andrade have become the victims of gender-based crimes that often feature sexual and genital mutilation. As of 2011, there were over 420 reports of murdered women; many more murders go unreported (Bracamontes, 2011). These frequent acts of extreme
violence against women are known as “femicides,” which is defined as the act of murdering women because they are women (Fregoso, Bejarnanao, & Rios, 2010, p. 128). Femicide is viewed as the most extreme form of violence against gender equality (Bejarnanao & Rios, 2010).

There are many potential causes for gender issues related to femicides. One possible factor contributing to this phenomenon is the media framing of violence. Recently, the U.S. National Advisory Council, along with other critics, acknowledged that the media is a powerful entity, and as such it can play a role in either promoting or preventing violence against women. For example, the media is accused of glorifying violence because it often portrays women as “willing victims of battery, implied targets of gang rape, victims of abduction, and as being sexually attractive as victims, asking for it” (Baxandall, Baxandall, & Gordon, 2001, p. 172). Therefore, the U.S. National Advisory Council asked the responsible voices of mass media to refrain from glorifying and romanticizing such violence and instead to portray it as unacceptable (Bylerly & Ross, 2006). Their call indicated that the media can have a strong impact on an audience’s behavior and attitudes. In addition, it suggests that media can assign meaning to an event while assisting an audience in understanding an event such as gender violence (Ott & Aoki, 2002). Plainly, the role of media in addressing violence against women is essential to its prevention and eventually its elimination.

However, the current media portrayal of women may complicate gender violence prevention. For example, women in western European media are often depicted as young, fair, slim, beautiful, and preoccupied with men (Downing, 2011). However, these descriptions are not the markings of Latino women. In short, many femicide victims do
not fit the above narrative description. Therefore, our understanding of femicide victims needs to be extended. In addition, media stereotypes of gender such as these reinforce traditional patriarchy and domestic violence (Downing, 2011). Gender research suggests that there is a correlation between mediated sexually violent material and attitudes towards gender violence (Downing, 2011). For example, women are often interrogated in the news media as victims or survivors, and “their characteristics and physical attributes are often subjected to scrutiny” (Downing, 2011, p.193). This suggests that there is a distorted image of women in the media.

Also, articles that report femicide are often descriptive about the victim’s body placement. This form of reporting creates a voyeuristic perspective of femicide that may lead audiences to focus more on the mutilated body rather than the victim in her living form. Sadly, literature needs to be extended on this implication of femicide reporting that focuses more on the body rather than the life.

The examination of the media’s depiction of violence against women is a key concern for this study. It is important to recognize that similar to media framing, rhetorical strategies are strategic because it controls the way messages are understood. Rhetorical strategies will account for the audience, exigence, and constraints in the situation. Both rhetorical strategies and framing are persuasive because they seek to influence collective behaviors and attitudes. Thus, this study examined the mediated coverage of the Juarez femicides. Specifically, the following primary question was asked: What rhetorical strategies have been used by the U.S and Mexican media to portray the Juarez femicides? This question includes three sub-questions: 1) What types of media framing are utilized by both the U.S and Mexican media?, 2) What are the implications of
the framing?, and 3) Are framing strategies different in the U.S and Mexico? By addressing these concerns, this study aimed to contribute to the scholarly literature that discusses how gender violence is depicted. Most importantly, this study hoped to bring to light the stories of women like Lilia Alejandra García Andrade who were framed in the media as mere femicide victims.

**Justification**

This study examines published U.S and Mexican media coverage of the Juarez femicides. More specifically, this study aims to uncover the rhetorical strategies used to portray the Juarez femicides. Through the analysis of mediated discourse, this study intends to unveil how femicides are framed in both U.S. and Mexico media and understand the implications of this framing. Additionally, this study aimed to understand how framing might be different in El Paso, U.S and the sister community of Juarez, Mexico, which are a mere two miles from each other.

There are several reasons why this study is significant. First, the media’s focus on the border region has drastically increased (Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). The media is constantly providing accounts of the socio-economic situation in the border region, such as the increase of the maquiladora process industry, the migration issue, and illegal weaponry and drug trade, “all of which was brought on by the North America Free Trade Agreement” (Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010, p. 105). The press’s coverage of the border events highlights certain themes: crime, violence, corruption, brutality, and gender violence (Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). In perpetuating this image, the press has defined the social reality of the border as entirely negative Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). In
essence, the current representation of the border, in connection to gender violence, has become the dominant narrative in the media (Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010).

This study is also relevant because women are victims of widespread and systematic violence across the globe. Violence against women exists in all societies and “is found in every socio-economic group, ideology, class, race, and ethnic grouping” (Sweetman, 1998, p. 3). According to the 2005 World Wide Sexual Assault statistics collected by George Mason University’s Sexual Assault Services, one in three women will become victims of sexual assault worldwide on an annual basis. In North America, including the United States, wife-battering, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, and sexual exploitation by medical personal have become normal occurrences (French, Teays, & Purday, 1998). As this suggests, violence against women can take many forms. Currently, many cultures feature additional forms of violence against women, including dowry death, female genital mutilation, and neglect of female children. Given this, it is not surprising that Amnesty International identified violence against women as “the most pervasive human rights challenge in the world” and that the World Health Organization argues that such violence needs urgent attention (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 182).

Victims of such violence are chosen because of their sex (Sweetman, 1998). The violence is used to send a message, directed towards women, which asserts that women are meant to be violently dominated (Sweetman, 1998). Despite the prevalence of sexual violence, this issue is taboo in most cultures and can be difficult to discuss. This silence ultimately leads people to conclude that sexual violence is appropriate and impossible to change (Pickup, Williams, & Sweetman, 2001). Scholars have only begun to inquire into
the phenomenon of violence against women (French, Teays, & Purday, 1998). For example, studies that examine twentieth century modern examples of gendered-based violence include those which have occurred in “Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Vietnam, Haiti, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico” (Pineda-Madrid, 2011, p. 35). Gender-based violence also is under scrutiny by scholars because in the last decade there has been an increase in the number of such crimes (Pineda-Madrid, 2011). These are crimes of hate against women; this increase in crimes suggests the relevance of gender violence studies.

This study also provides insight into the cultural codes in communities where violence against women is prevalent. For example, violence in Juarez has been normalized for years. In 2009, the murder rate in the city of Juarez Mexico averaged seven deaths daily in a population of 1.5 million inhabitants. Juarez’s annual murder rate is 133 per 100,000 inhabitants, making this city the world’s murder capital (Geraldo, 2010). By comparison, in 2008, San Antonio and Las Vegas, which have similar sized populations, average less than half the homicides in a year that Juarez experiences in a month (Geraldo, 2010). Several factors contribute to these astonishing statistics. For example, Mexican cities face serious problems with organized crime and key institutional inefficiencies, such as a lack of police training and enforcement impunity (Warner, 2010). Additionally, drug trafficking, illegal smuggling, and overall distrust of the government is a contributing factor (Warner, 2010).

In addition to being the murder capital of the world, Juarez is particularly recognized for its crimes against women. Since 1993, more than 420 women have reportedly been killed in Juarez, while 120 were sexually assaulted and slain.

---

1 Throughout the text Ciudad, Juarez is abbreviated to Juarez.
MEDIA FRAMING OF THE JUAREZ FEMICIDES

(Bracamontes, 2011). Autopsy reports suggest that many of these women experienced extreme torture and mutilation before dying (Marchand, 2004). There are over 350 women also missing in Juarez. Sadly, most of the missing women are presumed dead (Uribe, 2009). Even more astonishing, this remarkably high rate of femicide may only be the tip of the iceberg. Rodriguez (2007) claimed that the Mexican authorities actually only file one-eighth of all femicide reports. Based on this claim, many Juarez locals argue that the femicide number is actually over 5000 (Rodriguez, Montane, & Pulitzer, 2007).

The inconsistent mediated reports of violence against women have left many Juarez citizens outraged, in particular, because the lives of the women behind these femicide quantities appear to be forgotten. The inaccurate figures in the press used to account for the number of femicides dehumanizes victims and allows society to dis-identify with each of them. The use of inconsistent figures creates anonymity for the victims, which may affect future femicide prevention plans. Sadly, the inconsistent media reports may change the societal perception of femicide to a mere quantity. For example, lost is the traumatic story of 17-year-old Sagrario Gonzalez Flores, who disappeared in 1998 while returning home from a maquiladora plant in Juarez. She was later found in a shallow grave, having been stabbed five times (Toronto Star, 2006). Although the Toronto Star reported the story of Flores, it is interesting that this is one of the few media outlets that I located which have reported the name of a femicide victim. In addition, this Toronto Star is not a national media outlet. The mediated femicide figures also mask the moving story of 19-year-old una Guadalupe, a college student, who disappeared in 2001 on her way to a friend’s house. Similar to this is the story of Claudia Gonzalez, who during the same time period, arrived late to the maquiladora plant and found the business
doors locked. Both Claudia and Luna were discovered in a shallow grave site with the bodies of six other women. The press claimed that all eight women had been raped and strangled (Livingston, 2004). These events represent the daily lives of women in Juarez, where fear of sexual violence and death has become second nature. Unfortunately, their lives are not appreciated in the media when they simply become numbers.

The media’s portrayal of gender violence is relevant because the media can act as the “central institution in constructing and enforcing gender relations” (O’Toole & Schiffman, 1997, p 72). However, scholars claim that the media’s usefulness in helping the general public cope with femicide contrasts with the more passive attitudes and consequences toward gender-based violence (Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). In short, despite the visibility of femicide in the press, the act of femicide continues to be prevalent.

It is important to acknowledge that the media plays a central role in turning femicide events into media events (Fiske, 1999). A media event is significant because of the “the clarity it gives to the murky anxieties and political differences” (Fiske, 1999, p. 263). In addition, the media is significant because it serves as the public arena wherein people can engage in political discourse and sometimes political action (Fiske, 1999). In essence, the media has the opportunity to change the postmodern world (Fiske, 1999). However, this becomes problematic when the media inconsistently reports on violence against women in Juarez. In the case of the femicides, the media has the power to give discursive visibility to gender violence. When the mediated discourse has the power to present the issues of rape, mutilation, and murder, it is important to consider how this presentation many influence or limit public policy. For example, the media has the power
to sensationalize femicide and create visibility, it also has the power to influence whether tax dollars should be used to engage in femicide prevention. In the case of the Juarez femicide, the media’s depiction of Juarez and El Paso is unique because it deals with the prospect of a cross-cultural femicide.

Figure 1. Map of Juarez and El Paso. This figure illustrates the close proximity of Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, US. In addition, this study is valuable because it examined how the media frames the spreading of femicides across countries like the U.S. and Mexico. In the media, Juarez is referred to as the “backyard” of El Paso, Texas, since it is only a two miles away from the U.S. city. Although the two cities are in separate countries and represent separate cultures, both communities have experienced the horrors of the femicide. The majority of the femicide victims were Mexican women; however, American citizens are linked to the femicides as well. Violent criminal activity, including rape and murder, have increased along the border of Juarez and El Paso (Webster, 2008). Many Americans have vanished along the border, where they are believed to have been kidnapped or “gone missing” (Webster, 2008). Unfortunately, it is feared that most will turn up in mass grave sites (Webster, 2008). U.S. officials claim that U.S./Mexico border violence is getting out of hand, which is affecting U.S. border security (Webster, 2008). In fact, a recent poll by El Paso Times found that 62 percent of El Paso voters believed that Juarez violence was spilling into El Paso (Valedez, 2008). In addition, 54 percent believed that Juarez violence is impacting El Paso businesses and 46 percent believed the U.S. should increase prevention programs (Valdez, 2008). This
media survey suggested that El Paso citizens fear the prospect of femicide violence in addition to other types of cross-cultural violence. Thus, Juarez femicides are no longer simply a community issue. Instead, the issue of femicide is now crossing the border into El Paso. The media framing of femicide will illustrate how the El Paso community is handling this perceived disorder. The act of femicide is not bound by city limits because it can spread as far it is culturally condoned. This study accounted for comparative differences or cross-cultural codes in Juarez. Studying the mediated accounts of femicides in both cities provided insight into this phenomenon.

As stated previously, the media can play a pivotal role in the prevention of violence against women. For this reason, it is first important to understand how the media frames the phenomenon of femicide. The media’s representation of violence against women is key to understanding its societal implication. The Juarez femicides gained recognition from the global media, but the media’s attention appears to have done nothing to end the crimes. In fact, some media appear to thrive off sensationalizing the violence. For example, Griffin (2010) claimed that although the media made femicides visible, they also “distort and obfuscate issues rather than clarify and illuminate them” (p. 235). Griffin noted that the media reports violence against women in a distorted, misunderstood, and sensationalized manner. This type of reporting hides the facts that violence against women is an epidemic in our society (McKenna & Larkin, 2002).

Ultimately, the mediated discourse surrounding the Juarez femicides can have a strong influence on societal attitudes regarding femicide. For example, if the media indicates that an issue is important based on the amount of coverage given to the issue and its cultural relevance, an audience may share this view. In addition, journalists
possess the power to limit public access to political policy which ultimately diminishes political dialogue (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). For example, depending on the value placed on femicide prevention, the media can contribute to public policy that assists with femicide prevention. News of violence against women can have a powerful influence on the public’s perception of a serious social issue and can also influence governmental policy making (Halim & Meyers, 2010). The media typically reflects hegemonic ideologies, “reinforcing and legitimizing established political systems by working to support and maintain the status quo of cultural norms and beliefs” (Halim & Meyers, 2010, p.86). In general, media frames can highlight certain aspects of reality over others which in turn can act to “define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Frames thus act as central organizing ideas within a narrative account of issues or events; they provide the interpretive cues for otherwise neutral facts” (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 301). Media framing can make certain events salient in society while making others invisible (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). The examination of media frames is essential if the media is to play a preventative role in addressing the issue of violence against women.

Femicide studies are a new avenue of inquiry by communication scholars, an avenue to which this study can contribute significantly. This reinforces the relevance of this study. As of now, there are no published studies in the discipline which examine the media framing of femicides. While there are studies in communication research that discuss the perspective of femicides that specifically concern the imagery and discourse (Vega, 2010; Buthelezi 2006; Fragosa, Bejarano, & Rios, 2010; Myers, 2004; Rutiva 2007), there are no studies specifically examining the media framing strategies of
newspapers. Yet despite the lack of scholarship on gender violence and media framing, the media’s framing of femicide is significant to the societal understanding of gender-violence. In addition, the lack of scholarship speaks to the necessity of this study. By determining whether the media is exercising objectivity, practicing silencing, promoting sensationalism, and/or employing cultural myths or stereotypes when reporting on the events, this study assists scholars in understanding the mediated value placed on acts of femicide. Furthermore, scholars can learn something about the perceived significance of femicides in both communities. Comparison of Juarez’s and El Paso’s mediated accounts of femicides also unveiled differences in femicide perceptions and provided cultural insight into the prevalence of gender-violence in cultures similar to Juarez. In addition, this examination uncovered framing that may contribute to the perpetuation of femicides.

This chapter has provided introductory comments about this study. This section also discussed the prevalence of violence against women and applied it to the contemporary example of the Juarez femicides. In addition, it introduced media framing literature in regards to assessing societal issues. The next chapter of this study, the literature review, discusses the rhetorical situation related to the economic changes in Mexico’s that influenced the cultural climate. This chapter will also discuss literature associated with the concept of the femicide. In addition, Chapter Three details Burke’s (1973) discussion of Order and hierarchy and Lippmann’s (1922) concept of agenda setting, which accounts for the rhetorical situation, the audience’s knowledge base of femicides, and the mediated value place on femicides. Furthermore, Chapter Four provides a discussion of analysis. Finally, Chapter Five provides answers to the research questions, and suggests directions for future research.
The purpose of this study is to examine the media framing strategies used by the news sources to portray the Juarez femicides. This section will first describe Mexico’s cultural climate. To understand this portrayal, this study will explain the ideological background of masculinity in Mexico, and provide a brief historical and cultural overview of Juarez, Mexico before and during the femicide phenomenon. Then, given that this study examines framing, a discussion of media framing and agenda setting will be discussed.

**Rhetorical Context**

**Machismo and Chicano culture.** Machismo or Latino masculinity is a notable element of Mexican culture. Machismo is described “as a set of gender attributes that are culturally and historically relevant” (French & Bliss, 2007, p. 232). Men who display machismo are described as “aggressive, oppressive, narcissistic, insecure, loudmouthed, womanizers, massive drinkers, persons who have an uncontrollable sexual prowess, and who party” (Ramierz & Casper, 1999, p. 7). As a Mexican cultural value, machismo is presented as a definitive characteristic of what is means to be a Mexican man (Monsivais & Kraniauskas, 2007).

An examination of the social concepts related to machismo allows us to better understand the gendered behavior in Mexico (French & Bliss, 2007). Through machismo
emerges “the ruthless conduct towards women and the barbarism of circus and vandal-like behavior (Monsivais & Kraniauskas, 2007, p. 15). Despite the ill effects of machismo towards women, Mexicans have continued to encourage and perpetuate machismo behavior for generations. Machismo represents the unique power difference between men and women in Mexican culture (Moraga, 2000). In essence, culturally enacted machismo represents the Mexican gender system: men are privileged and women are not.

Unfortunately, machismo is often used to condone or justify gender-violence in Mexico. Behaviors such as “excessive drinking, fighting, womanizing, abandonment of responsibilities, cockiness, recklessness, displays of extreme jealousy, attempting to control women, subordinates, and demonstrations of physical prowess” all represent machismo performances (French & Bliss, 2007, p.232). Sadly, machismo is a desired quality in men and operates as a “day-to-day dynamic” that influences Mexico socially, politically, and culturally (French & Bliss, 2007, p. 232). This cultural norm is sometimes transformed into a tool of justification for gender violence in Mexico.

On a conceptual level, machismo behaviors illustrate for men how to think and speak about gender and power in Mexico (French & Bliss, 2007). As a reinforcement of social norms, machismo designates what constitutes manly behavior as opposed to inappropriate cultural behavior (French & Bliss, 2007). In doing so, it draws a strict line between what is the appropriate behavior for men and women. Unfortunately, there are often grey areas between appropriate and inappropriate gender behavior in Mexico. This can create a tool that can be used to rationalize gender-violence. In essence, culturally
enacted machismo represents the Mexican gender system; men are privileged and women are not.

Reinforced by social contexts, Mexican gender differences appear to be magnified compared to other cultures (Valdez, 2007). For example, in most cultures, patriarchy and the notion of gender go hand-in-hand. However in Mexico, patriarchy and machismo share a complex interaction with class and ethnicity (Valdez, 2007). Machismo is how Mexican males implement patriarchal ideology (Valdez, 2007). The fact that machismo is a celebrated characteristic of only men reinforces female oppression.

The notion of machismo is also prevalent in the Mexican media (Watson, 2009). This celebrated male characteristic becomes problematic when the media creates machismo-enacted discourse that is used to reinforce existing male stereotypes (Watson, 2009). In essence, the media helps cultivate the machismo characteristics and more deeply embed them into Mexican culture (Watson, 2009). For example, Villegas, Lemanski, and Valdez (2010) studied machismo and sex roles in Mexican television advertisements. Their results suggested that gender is divided into separate categories in Mexican television. Men were represented as virile, strong, and career holders, while women were perceived as docile, calm, sexualized and domestic homemakers (Valdez, 2010).

Another example is a study conducted by Scharrer (2001). Scharrer (2001) examined the media framing effects of exposure to mediated programs that contain both violent actions and machismo portrayals of male characters. Using undergraduate

---

2 Patriarchy refers to “the development and institutionalization of male dominance over women in society” (Valdez, 2007, p. 7).
students as a sample pool, Scharrer’s (2001) found that males exposed to violence and media that featured hyper masculinity had an increase in reports of aggression and hostility. Scharrer (2001) claimed that findings linking television violence exposure to aggression have been exceedingly consistent for decades. Unfortunately, the notion of machismo is sensationalized in the media and only further serves to separate gender roles in Mexico.

**Masculinity and economy.** This section will discuss the connection between economic uncertainty that can create Mexican masculinity and how certain economic conditions can create and perpetuate violence against women.

Economic crisis can reveal the negative implications of masculinity. There are a number of social factors that create conducive environments for violence against women (Wright, 2006). Chief among them are drastic changes to a local economy (Wright, 2006). Capitalism, “like patriarchy, centers on power and wealth” (Wright, 2006, p. 351). Sadly, overall economic instability and poverty make Mexico easy prey for capitalistic organizations, such as maquiladoras which are also known as process factories (Wright, 2006). Furthermore, Thomas and Macdonald (2007) noted that literature increasingly suggests a connection between poverty, gender inequality, and violence against women.

In low-income Latin American communities, domestic violence often increases during times of economic crisis (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). Sadly, women from poor and marginalized communities are often surpressed by patriarchy and machismo attitudes (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). Furthermore, this study revealed that in poor households where a male partner cannot find work, “unemployed men feel their status in the
household and community is undermined; this may lead to the use of violence against their spouses to impose their authority” (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007, p. 27).

Furthermore, Mexican women are more vulnerable in an uncertain economic climate (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). In Mexico, most jobs available to women are exploitive and low-paid (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). However, for many Mexican women these jobs are necessary to provide for their families. Mexican economic uncertainty has driven women into informal and unprotected forms of labor such as street venders, prostitutes, factory workers, domestic servants, and even drug transporters (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). Economic uncertainty has also led to increased migration which exposes women to violence (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007). In Mexico, women still remain in subordinate groups. As such they “hold barely any social, political, or economic power and are subjected to violence” (Wright, 2006, p. 251).

The connection between masculinity and economy is not restricted to Latino cultures. For example, Faludi (2000) examined masculinity and the reaction of American men as they faced economic and cultural pressures at the end of the twentieth century. Like Mexico today, Faludi (2000) discussed what it meant to be a man in the 1950s and the experience associated with changing gender roles and economic factors. When gender norms and economic uncertainty increased, so did domestic violence rates. Similar to Juarez, Faludi (2000) claimed that because of these economic conditions male violence became “the quintessential expression of masculinity run amok, out of control and trying to control everything in its path” (p. 7). Fifty years later, economic uncertainty and masculinity continue to correlate with violence against women; especially in Juarez.
Juarez, economic uncertainty, and the impact of maquiladoras. Since the mid-1950s, Mexico has been in a constant state of change. From 1954 to 1968, the country thrived under the import-substitution model (Tunon, 2000). This model, designed to fuel economic industrialization, triggered rapid expansion in the postwar period (Alarcon & McKinley, 1992). However, in 1970, signs of economic exhaustion became apparent in the form of financial crisis and downturn (Alarcon & McKinley, 1992). In 1982, the Mexican economy collapsed after the government claimed it could no longer meet foreign debt payments (Buchenau, 2005). During this time period, the middle class lost half of its earning power and crime skyrocketed (Buchenau, 2005). Mexico, on the verge of bankruptcy, responded to the downturn by liberalizing foreign trade and promoting exports (Tunon, 2000).

In 1994, Mexico, the U.S., and Canada launched the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This program allows Mexican citizens to work temporarily in the U.S. and has led to an increase in Mexican workers in the border areas of Juarez Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Juarez is recognized for its process factories, also called “maquiladoras,” which assemble products. Currently, there are over 350 maquiladoras in Juarez Mexico (Wiessert, 2011). 85% of the goods produced in the maquiladoras are exported to the U.S. (Mesia, 2008). Due to lax environmental regulations and low tariffs under NAFTA, the maquiladora industry is able to generate significant wealth (Agni, 2008). With support from businesses such as Lear, Amway, TDK Corporation of America, Honeywell, General Electric, 3M, DuPont, and Kenwood, the maquiladora industry is thriving (Rodriguez, 2007).
NAFTA created numerous jobs for Mexicans in Juarez, which ultimately increased its population size. The city, located across the border from El Paso, Texas, now forms one of the largest bi-national residential areas in the world. Juarez and El Paso have a combined population of 2.4 million; Juarez alone has an estimated population of 1.3 million (Weissert, 2011). NAFTA was able to create new jobs for 26,000 Mexicans in 2011 (Weissert, 2011). The increase in jobs led to a dramatic increase in the migrant population (Agosin, 2006). Nearly 50,000 people migrate to Juarez from Mexico and South America a year. As of 2011, Juarez’s maquiladora industry reportedly employs over 250,000 workers (Weissert, 2011).

Juarez attracts industries that seek low-wage employees, thereby, allowing the companies to avoid the high costs of labor union wages associated with jobs in the United States (Botz, 1992). For example, RCA closed its television manufacturing plants in Memphis, Tennessee and Cincinnati, Ohio and moved them to Juarez. Following suit, Zenith moved their company from Chicago, Illinois to Juarez for similar reasons (Botz, 1992). Furthermore, provisions in NAFTA provide the U.S. with some significant protections. For example, a Chapter 11 provision of the agreement allows the U.S. government to sue the Mexican government for monetary losses (Alba & Guzman, 2010). The Chapter 11 provision also allows the U.S. to pollute Mexico without fear of legal repercussions (Alba & Guzman, 2010).

Unchallenged labor laws also have led to a lack of health standards in maquiladoras which set the standard of living in Juarez. For maquiladora workers, working and living conditions are substandard compared to U.S. norms. Reportedly, many of the plants lack proper ventilation, which means that workers are subjected to
harmful toxins during each shift (Botz, 1992). Spending years working in this type of environment has shortened workers’ life spans (Botz, 1992). Furthermore, the living conditions of the migrants in Juarez are poor. Many live in cardboard huts and concrete stalls (Agosin, 2006). It appears that the city has reached its capacity and is unable to support the massive increase in migrant labor triggered by the maquiladoras. As Agosin (2006) noted, “although foreign investment has brought prosperity to the region, globalization has exasperated the conditions that contribute to instability and undeniably created a new market for undesirable elements that feed off vulnerability of the urban poor living on the margin” (p. 14).

Unfortunately, for employees with cultural background that differ from owners/supervisors, such mistreatment is a prevalent issue in organizations such as maquiladoras (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004). For example, Meares et. al. (2004) examined mistreatment through the perspective of employees with different cultural backgrounds than their superiors. Specifically, this study examined workplace power and muted or privileged groups (Meares et. al., 2004). Meares et. al. (2004) defined power as “the production and reproduction of, resistance to, or transformation of relatively fixed structures of communication and meaning that support the interests of some organization members or groups over others” (p. 7). The authors found that power is “not only related to the position within the organizations, but also to gender, socioeconomics, education, and background (p. 5).
Similar to the mistreatment of maquiladora workers, Meares et. al. (2004) noted that power and hegemony\(^3\) are reflected in the workplaces of international employers. Sadly, the process of silencing occurs through coercion and hegemony (Meares et. al., 2004). While organizations, such as maquiladoras, actively coerce workers with threats, hegemony is enacted in daily communication (Meares et. al., 2004). Mistreatment of employees through coercion and hegemony may serve to maintain the power of the organization (Meares et. al., 2004). In organizations such as maquiladoras, one means to maintain power is through silencing which is accomplished with “the participation of marginalized members of society who also at times, do participate in the domination of other groups through the hegemonic process” (Meares et. al., 2004, p. 6).

In the case of NAFTA, the maquiladora industry is essentially responsible for a large portion of the local economy. The maquiladoras generate handsome profits. The majority are owned by U.S. companies and produce revenues over $168 billion a year (Weissert, 2011). Clearly the maquiladoras benefit from the stream of foreign trade revenue; however, the pitfalls of the industry are affecting an entire city. For example, it appears that the benefits of NAFTA have over shadowed its human costs. Juarez is a marginalized community that depends on the economic profit of maquiladoras. Botz (1992) asserted that, “The maquiladoras determine the entire reality of city life” (p. 175). Maquiladoras employ over 250,000 workers (Weissert, 2011) in a city 1,300,000 workers (Botz, 1992). “The rest of the jobs for those who are unemployed, are really extensions of the maquiladora industry: taco selling, teaching schools to the maquiladora children. The

\(^3\) Hegemony is defined as “the involvement of those without power in the normalization of their subjugation” (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004, p. 7).
maquiladora is the axis of the economy” (Botz, 1992, p. 175). Therefore, the maquiladora industries have heavily influenced the cultural climate in Juarez. Because of NAFTA’s organizational power, marginalized maquiladora workers are willing to be subjugated, work in harmful work environments, and live in substandard conditions. Just as Meares’s et. al. (2004) study illustrated, these maquiladora workers are marginalized, are often silenced, and endure mistreatment under powerful organizations. Sadly, the “reality” of this city is a product of a foreign trade opportunity based on cheap labor.

In Juarez, the maquiladora industry acts as a form of emasculation. Men, who are culturally perceived as the primary breadwinners, are now faced with poor economic conditions and low wage jobs. These conditions have generated a threat to perceptions of Mexican masculinity. The notion of machismo is so deeply culturally embedded that it was simply accepted in an unconscious fashion. However, when the maquiladoras started offering work to women instead of men, it brought awareness of machismo and the threats posed to it to the surface.

**NAFTA incites cultural revolution.** In this segment, I will describe the typical maquiladora worker. Next, I will detail the evolving perceptions of gender roles in Mexico due to influence of maquiladoras and the violent backlash that has resulted. Lastly, this section will establish a connection between the maquiladora workers and femicides.

For Mexican women, NAFTA spurred a revolution that ultimately resulted in a cultural backlash. Mexican women comprise a majority of the workers in the maquiladora industry (Alba & Guzman, 2010). Young single women make up 60% of maquiladora workers. They typically earn a weekly salary of $55.00 (Agosin, 2006). The
average work shift is a nine-hour day, for five days a week (Botz, 1992). In addition, the work is difficult because all workers have to achieve high production goals (Botz, 1992).

It is common for maquiladora owners to prefer female workers because it is perceived that men will create problems in the plants (Keller, Ruether, & Cantlon, 2006). This suggests that owners might believe that Mexican women are easy to exploit and manipulate (Keller, Ruether, & Cantlon, 2006). Some critics claim that the trend of employing women ensures a lack of unionization and strikes for pay (Osborn, 2004) because the maquiladora culture assumes that Mexican women who enter hard labor environments need these jobs to support themselves and their families and won’t cause problems for fear of losing this much-needed job (Ward, 1990).

Despite this critique of maquiladoras, Mexican women who typically are responsible for household management welcome the opportunity for employment. Before the maquiladora industry emerged, women largely assumed traditional subservient roles in the household (Tunon, 2000). Prior to 1974, a husband could even restrict his wife from working by legal authority (Tunon, 2000). This restriction was amended by the Federal Labor Law, which allowed married women to work if it did not interfere with their domestic life (Tunon, 2000). These types of laws suggest that women belong in domestic environments and, therefore, they reinforce patriarchal standards.

Maquiladora industrialization changed the roles of women in Mexico (Alba & Guzman, 2010). By practice, women generally limited their working experience to mothering and nurturing roles at home or outside of the home as sexual workers (Alba & Guzman, 2010). Many maquiladora women came from rural communities that were traditionally reliant on men. However, maquiladora women are not as dependent on men
to financially provide for their families as they once were. As maquiladora workers, women can be household providers and secure higher paying positions than the men in their families (Alba & Guzman, 2010). Some have even achieved supervisory positions in maquiladora plants. These young women do not need to find husbands to survive, especially since many bachelors are without jobs (Penida-Madrid, 2011) When women began to change from their traditional roles to the role of maquiladora workers, the perception of gender norms for women began to shift.

However, the change also created a violent reaction (Alba & Guzman, 2010) perhaps caused by a cultural backlash (Penida-Madrid, 2011). As Mexican men grappled with the threat of Mexican economic turmoil and lack of employment opportunities outside of maquiladoras, resentment towards maquiladora women began to build in society (Penida-Madrid, 2011). In response to the change, machismo behaviors such as aggression, insecurity, womanizing, and massive drinking become more prevalent (Ramierz & Casper, 1999). In addition, maquiladora women began to be perceived as “home destroyers” and “immoral” (Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1999). For example, Fuentes and Ehrenreich (1999) reported that Mexican tabloids “delight in playing of stories of scandal in the maquiladoras: sex on the job, epidemics of venereal disease, and fetuses found in factory restrooms” are just a few sensationalized stories (p. 33). Fuentes and Ehrenreich’s study illustrated the attitude towards maquiladora workers expressed through media frames. The media highlighted and sensationalized negative maquiladora stories and framed them as everyday events. Despite there being unequal options for women in a globalized economy, maquiladora women have been labeled as “sexual subjects lacking value, worth, and respectability” (Thomas & Macdonald, 2007, p. 28). It
appears that Mexican society and the media have stigmatized maquiladora women, which has set the stage for a violent cultural backlash.

**Femicide in Juarez**

*Media matters: the power of framing.* The following describes the Juarez femicide phenomenon. This portion then describes the type of victim targeted and the initial preventions used by Juarez police to stop the femicides. This section then examines the embodiment of gender violence in the media. Furthermore, this section defines the term “femicide” and examines possible reasons why femicides occur in Juarez.

In 1993, Juarez began to gain fame for more than just its maquiladoras when the bodies of dead young women began to surface in city. One such body was that of 13-year-old Irma Rosales, who through false documentation, found work at the U.S. Corporation International Wire in El Paso, Texas (Botz, 1999). Rosales worked 48 hours a week and was paid four dollars a day to manufacture electrical components (Botz, 1999). Rosales disappeared after returning across the border from El, Paso Texas. Her body was later cruelly deposited in a ditch; she had been raped and smothered with a plastic bag (Botz, 1999). International Wire denied responsibility for the Rosales’s death. Other victims like Gonzalez and Rosales were between the ages of 15-34, were slender, and had a brown complexion and long hair (Pitt, 2010). The majority came from poor families and many migrated to Juarez for job opportunities in maquiladoras (Pitt, 2010). Autopsy reports suggested that many of the women experienced extreme torture and mutilation before dying (Marchand, 2004). Victims were violently raped and often experienced breast and genital mutilation (Penida-Madrid, 2011). Although hundreds of men are killed in Juarez each year, their bodies rarely show signs of this type of body
mutilation (Penida-Madrid, 2011). However, the embodiment of a gender violence victim, such as mutilation, appears to be a way for the media to romanticize femicide (Penida-Madrid, 2011).

Sadly, the media’s depiction of violence and the female body is prevalent. “According to researchers, the treatment of women by the mass media is a fundamental problem in society, as it is the mass media that truly educates the public on social issue and transmit these messages intergenerationally” (Hartley, 2011, p. 464). Scholars who understand the implications of this regularly scrutinize the media’s treatment of the female body. For example, Rutvica’s (2007) conducted a close analysis of female bodies displayed in mediated human trafficking campaigns and found that the use of victimization goes hand-in-hand with “erotization” of the women’s bodies (p. 24).

Furthermore, Rutivca’s (2007) study indicated that in the media, trafficking cases were depicted as the fault of the female who violated patriarchal order. This specific trafficking campaign was launched by International Organization of Migration campaign in Eastern Europe. Rutivca (2007) also found that the media representations of women equate the female body as a passive object and that their bodies are over sexualized. Voyeurism was a common theme in the campaign as well (Rutivca, 2007). There is a sexual element that forces a voyeur to look and then quickly look away (Rutivca, 2007). Rutivca (2007) claimed that the representation of the female body is designed by “patriarchal repertoire of Western culture, a type of cultural text that permeates both high and low culture and is invokes time and again in order to confine the threat of female subjectivity” (p. 38).
There are several other scholars who examine gender violence in the media. For example, Myers (2004) examined the representation of violence against African American woman in local television coverage. Myers (2004) claimed that news “supports the values, beliefs, and norms of the ruling elite that wields social, economic, and political power within a hierarchy” (p. 96). Using black feminist theory, Myer’s (2004) examined the local news discourse from ABC, NBC, and CBS networks affiliates in Atlanta. Myer’s (2004) results suggested that gender, race, and class shaped the representation of the victim and minimized the seriousness of the violent crime.

Furthermore, Buthelezi (2006) examined the gender-based violence apparent in media coverage during the South African “16 days of Activism” campaigns that were sensationalized in the Ilanga, Isolezwe, and UmAfrica newspapers. Buthelezi (2006) claimed that the newspapers reinforce traditional gender roles. Using the framework of conventional schemas, Buthelezi (2006) examined the articles’ language and image use. Buthelezi’s (2006) results suggested that the women were presented as weak and passive victims of violence. Buthelezi (2006) claimed that despite the media’s coverage of an activist event, the representation of the victim is the main focus. This same phenomenon is evident in Juarez.

Juarez is also scrutinized for its media representation of victims. Fragosa, Bejarano, and Rios (2010) discussed the media’s treatment of femicide victims in Juarez. The media often described the bodies as nude, abandoned, and neglected, and failed to discuss their “historical, citizenship, and territorial specificity” (Fragosa, Bejarano, & Rios, 2010, p. 59). This suggested to the authors that the media invokes a process of "invisibility" that allows those in control to maintain impunity (p. 186). The process of
invisibility also creates an abstract concept of a victim because the femicide is sensationalized as representative of all femicides (Fragosa, Bejarano, Rios, 2010). Similar to Rutivca’s (2007) study, Fragosa, Bejarano, and Rios (2010) claimed the media’s treatment allows us to view the victim as an object through a voyeuristic lens. However, while the Juarez media’s treatment femicide bodies as cruelly voyeuristic, the government resources used to prevent femicide is far worse.

Media coverage of the Juarez femicide prompted the Juarez council and police department began to create prevention campaigns to help address the phenomena. Warnings that told women to be wary of parties, alcoholic beverages, and dressing provocatively were publicized throughout Juarez (Fragoso, 2002). One public statement warned Juarez women that their guardian angel would not always be there to take care of them (Fragoso, 2002). Juarez men also were encouraged by the council to participate in activities with women and protect them from harm (Fragoso, 2002). These messages, designed to prevent sexual violence, were directed towards the victims. They did not address the perpetrators of the crimes. Most suggested that the victims had made poor choices, including their choice of clothing, and that these choices triggered their fate (Alba & Guzman, 2010). In other words, the prevention programs suggested that the female victims deserved their fate because they were scantily clad and could be mistakenly perceived as sexual workers. This type of prevention program removed agency from perpetrators and created the image that murdering women in Juarez is tolerated.

---

4 The police department’s prevention campaign could potentially unveil the Juarez hegemonic attitudes towards femicide. However, similar to the Mexican newspaper collection, the campaign materials may take months to locate and access.
This prevention campaign was mediated and unfortunately perpetuated harmful stereotypes about violence against women (Hartley, 2011). The media frames femicide violence in such a way that it becomes victim-centered social problem, where the focus is on the victim and what she has done. This contributes to further victimization (Hartley, 2011). In addition, news coverage of violence against women tends to “blame women for their own victimization while absolving their assailant of responsibility (Myers, 2004). Sadly, the practice of blaming the victim diverts attention from the true root of the problem, men abusing women (Hartley, 2011). Hartley (2011) wrote “that more responsible reporting and media coverage as a whole, namely though eliminating the practice of victim blaming in stories, could achieve important social change by expelling myths and stereotypes that underlie the patriarchal foundation” (p. 328).

As the murders continued, Juarez’s reputation began to suffer. The city was perceived as responsible for over 1000 murders of young women, where one-third of the murders involved rape and sexual mutilation (Marchand, 2010). These murders became known as “femicides” because scholars perceived them as an extreme form of sexist terrorism. According to Fragoso, Bejarnanao, and Rios (2010), “a femicide refers to the murder of women because they are female” (pg. 142). Scholars such as Fragosa (2002) believed that the crime focuses on the suppression of gender and the male assertion of dominance/control over the opposite sex. Femicide can take two different forms: intimate femicide and non-intimate femicide. Intimate femicide is the murder of a woman by a family member or acquaintance (Al-Issa, 1998). Non-intimate femicide is the random act of intentionally killing women, where the woman has no prior affiliation to the perpetrator (Al-Issa, 1998).
The practice of femicide does not just involve a women’s death. It also articulates a message to other women who are experiencing gender suppression and sexual abuse (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003). More specifically, it acts as a silent threat to those who wish to challenge the concrete lines of patriarchy. The message is clear: Mexican women should be silent in society and embrace their traditional domestic roles. Femicide is the most extreme form of violent protest against attempts to promote gender equality.

The term “femicide” first surfaced in 1989 after the “Montreal Massacre” which featured the femicides of 14 female engineering students in Montreal, Canada at the hands of murderer Marc Lepine (Humphries, 2009). The “Montreal Massacre” involved non-intimate femicide. Scholars Caputi and Russel (1990) responded to the massacre in Ms. Magazine with an article titled “Femicide: Speaking the Unspeakable” (Humphries, 2009). In the article, they discussed Lepine’s murderous rampage in which he not only killed the 14 women noted above, but also wounded nine other women. After Lepine’s suicide, police discovered a hit-list of 15 additional Canadian women on Lepine’s body (Humphries, 2009). Initially, the media characterized Lepine as deeply disturbed and misguided. However, Caputi and Russell claimed that the systematic killing of women is never just a result of madness (Humphries, 2009). The public murder of women is “rooted in misogynist attitudes, just as pogroms and lynching resulted from anti-Semitism and racism” (Humphries, 2009, p. 117).

According to Caputi and Russell (1990), a femicide should be considered a hate crime. In essence, a femicide is a hate filled response to the modern societal gender construction (Pineda-Madrid, 2011). The act of a femicide “is based on the belief that women have no autonomy; that they do not own their own bodies or their own lives, and
are, instead, things or goods that belong to men, who can dispose of them as they please” (Fregoso, Bejarano, & Rios, 2010, p. 128). This perspective on the murder of women simply because they are women, suggests the need to consider the act from not just a legal perspective, but a sociological viewpoint as well (Fregoso, Bejarano, & Rios, 2010). For example, the machismo gender role norms in a society can provide a rationale for why men assume they have the right to mistreat women.

Initially, Caputi and Russel (1990) referred to “femicide” as the deliberate killing of women through physical and psychological abuse. Later the term evolved to encompass acts of sexual harassment, forced sterilization, female mutilation, and cosmetic surgery (Humphries, 2009). Now “femicide” applies specifically to intimate violent fatalities, which frequently occur in countries where a “femicide” tends to be politically motivated or culturally condoned (Humphries, 2009).

In the beginning, U.S. authorities theorized that a serial killer was responsible for the attacks on women in Juarez (Rodriguez, Montane & Pulitzer, 2007). However, as Pineda-Madrid (2011) asserted, “what has transpired and continues is not the murders of a few girls and women here and there, the possible works of a serial killer, but rather the ongoing ritualized killing of hundreds of poor, brown girls and women over more than 15 years’ time” (p. 27). The number of victims suggests that these crimes are the work of many perpetrators and not simply a few. Furthermore, the U.S. media claimed that the location of Juarez provided a perfect ground for violence. NAFTA opened the Mexico/U.S. border for free trade.

Prevention plans to stop femicide in Mexico are frequently implemented yet rarely supported by powerful organizations. For example, in March 2011, Mexico’s
United Nations Resident Representative, Magdy Martínez-Solima, asked the Mexican government to legally define femicide, in the hopes it would bring attention to the atrocities (Cattan, 2011). However, Mexican officials refused to elaborate on the issue and barred the U.N. from any attempt to initiate an international investigation of the deaths (Cattan, 2011). Mexican officials defended their decision by claiming that any international investigation would simply be designed to tarnish the government’s image (Cattan, 2011). The government was more concerned about being criticized for cultural impunity, rather than the disappearance of thousands of Mexican women (Anderson, 2004). This focus on cultural impunity diverts attention from the issue of violence against women (Cattan, 2011). After all, the massive number of murdered victims illustrates the state’s inability to protect its female citizens.

Let it be noted— that femicides are not limited to Mexico. Guatemala also is experiencing a similar femicide phenomenon. Since 2000, over 3,000 women have been murdered in that nation (Fregoso, Bejarano, Rios, 2010). Most of these murdered women also showed signs of blade and firearm wounds, rape, strangulation, and dismemberment (Fregoso, Bejarano & Rios, 2010). Similar to Juarez, very few perpetrators have been held responsible for these acts of femicides; many blame the government’s impunity for the lack of prosecution (Fregoso, Bejarano & Rios, 2010).

**Media framing.** In this section, the definition of media framing will be introduced. With the assistance of Kenneth Burke (1973), this section will connect media

---

5 Impunity: is defined as “the freedom from legal sanction or accountability” (Anderson, 2004, p. 243).
framing to the mediation of femicide coverage and its implication. Lastly, this section will describe current agenda studies that exemplify a similar framing of tragedy.

A media frame is a “central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Chandra, 2004, p. 172). Because the media is ubiquitous, it is a powerful tool that can shape how we think (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). In Mexico and the U.S., print media is highly circulated (OECD, 2010). This suggests that print media frames have the power to organize and assign meaning to the news reports of femicide. Furthermore, the U.S. and Mexican media framing may have a strong impact on an audience’s behavior and attitude. Specifically, a media frame intends to promote a specific orientation to its audience, which can affect a society’s attitudes and worldview (Chandra, 2004). For example, framing can influence attributions of responsibility for social problems, such as the Mexican authorities initially blaming the victim (Chandra, 2004). In addition, framing is problematic because it usually focuses on a singular event, rather than the deeper cause (Chandra, 2004). In the case of the Juarez femicides, the way the media defines the phenomenon may influence societal attitudes towards violence against women. The El Paso and Juarez border area has “the lowest poverty rates and the highest literacy rates” (OECD, 2010). Specifically, the Chihuahua state area, which encompasses Juarez, has a 98% literacy rate (Foundation, 2011). For Mexico, print media is among the strongest in Latin America (Edmonds-polis & Shirk, 2012). Because print media is highly circulated, the U.S. and Mexican media has the power to assign meaning to the event, while ultimately can assist an audience in rationalizing femicide tragedy.

There is a strong connection between the mediated and political realms of journalistic and governmental organizations that has the ability to significantly shape
public opinion (Artz & Kamalinour, 2003). For example, Artz and Kamalinour (2003) claimed that “in order for hegemony to unite the public, there needs to be a majority of consent for its ideology” (p. 80). The public will only support the ideal presented by the political force if it aligns with their belief system. In general, the public will not support the ideal presented by a dominant political force (Artz & Kamalinour, 2003). Therefore, “consent has to manufactured by the framing of events through the media” (Artz & Kamalinour, 2003, p. 80). In essence, the media has the power to support hegemonic discourse. For example, if a political force is not able to sway an audience, then the media may assist by framing the event as a strategy to gain consent (Artz & Kamalinour, 2003). When the media reinforces a prevailing ideology, a number of implications can follow. For example, public discourse may be influenced to ensure that public opinion is similar to the viewpoints of certain economic and political interests: “Through framing tactics of the media--- the language used and the ‘objective’ reporting techniques employed---the public is led to believe in a system of free choice, while the influences of discursive communication methods help control freedom of thought” (Artz & Kamalinour, 2003, p. 81). Thus, it is important to acknowledge the hegemonic alignment of the media and political interest. The phenomenon of framing can have tremendous power over an audience. A routinely mediated story, such as a story about femicide, can gravely influence public opinion and reinforce prevailing viewpoints that femicides is unavoidable or perhaps even justifiable. This type of framing ignores deeper societal issues and creates problematic collectivistic attitudes about femicide.

Kenneth Burke (1973) provided rhetorical constructs that we can use to better understand the concept of framing. Although Burke does not directly discuss “media
frames,” he does offer concepts that assist with understanding framing strategies. Burke (1989) examined language frames and claimed that they provide Order in interactions. He measured frames in terms of their “acceptance” and “rejection” by the audience. Frames of “acceptance” maintain social order, while frames of “rejection” damage social order (Burke, 1989). Like femicide, Burke (1989) claimed that societal “diversity, conflict, and division portend the disruption of Order, the class of frames” (p. 33). Furthermore, Burke (1973) claimed that if an audience’s societal needs are met, then the audience will be inclined to accept that framing. If the audience’s needs are not met, the frames will be rejected. Additionally, if the media presents an issue that incites guilt, often it is necessary for the media to help audiences come to terms with an issue through scapegoating, victimage, and redemption (Burke, 1973). Once guilt is incited, society will need redemption, which is the need for purification (Burke, 1989). When a society is need of purifying, one means of redemption is through a scapegoating and victimage because “with redemption comes the redeemer – which is to say, a victim, a scapegoat or a kill” (as cited in Rueckert, 1969, p. 460). The concept of scapegoating refers to the transferring of blame onto an individual and is viewed as a type of victimage used to reduce societal guilt (Burke, 1989). Through victimage, which Burke (1966) defined as “a purification through sacrifice, by vicarious atonement,” the media would allow a community to unburden guilt (p. 478). For Burke, when the mediated discourse is normalized in a society through this process, then the framing was successful (Burke, 1973).

Several communication scholars have applied Burke’s scapegoating process to studies similar to my own. For example, Tonn, Endress, and Diamond (1993) examined
the scapegoating of Karen Wood. In Herman, Maine, Wood was shot by a deer hunter only 134 feet from her backyard (Tonn, Endress, & Diamond, 1993). The tragedy created an intense controversy because the local media immediately came to the shooter’s defense (Tonn, Endress, & Diamond, 1993). The shooter, Donald Rogers, was a veteran Marine (Tonn, Endress, & Diamond, 1993). Using Burke’s dramatistic pentad, Tonn, Endress, and Diamond (1993) discovered that Wood was blamed for failing to protect herself from hunters. Sadly, this is similar to the femicide prevention campaigns in Juarez. Wood and the victims of femicide have been framed as being responsible for their own death.

The mediated reports of the tragedy in Darfur also reveals signs of scapegoating, according to Murray (2008). Murray examined the ecological cause of conflict within the region and argued that scapegoating and privileging were the root of the issue (Murray, 2008). Additionally, Murray’s (2008) study examined the cultural climate in Sudan that created a backlash of violence. The Sudanese government was accused of oppressing all black Sudanese and of privileging the Janjaweed (i.e., Arab militia), which contributed to cultural tension and violence (Murray, 2008). Ultimately, Murray’s (2008) findings suggested that the mediated reports of genocide helped obscure government responsibility. This type of framing allowed the government of Sudan to go unaccountable for thousands of deaths.

Darfur’s history of violence and conflict is similar to that in Juarez’s. Like the genocide in Darfur, the femicide in Juarez is a complicated phenomenon that provides just one illustration of violence against women. When the Juarez events gained global attention, journalists began to sensationalize the idea of femicide. This heightened
attention to the crime rather than minimizing it. This type of framing could be problematic if it consistently allows individuals to distance themselves from tragedy. For example, the media can assist individuals with making sense of the Juarez femicide; however, this rationalization may create tolerance of femicides.

Framing success does have cultural implications. For example, framing an event as a “tragedy” can simplify an issue, lessen the event’s perceived importance, and result in “cultural dismissal” (Ott & Aoki, 2002). A framing analysis of one such event was conducted by communication scholars after the Matthew Shepard murder. Ott and Aoki (2002) examined this public tragedy through dramatistic analysis and discovered that how the story of a murder starts will determine how the story ends. For Shepard’s story, the beginning news coverage was extremely gruesome and direct. In this case, the media geared the coverage towards scapegoating and objectifying Shepard’s body. This type of framing allowed the audience to distance themselves from the event, lessen any guilt the audience might have felt for the hate crime, and replace their guilt with a sense of redemption.

Ott and Aoki (2002) also examined the media framing of the scapegoating of murder suspects Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson and how it functioned rhetorically to alleviate public guilt. According to Ott and Aoki (2002) the earliest news reports on Shepard’s murder had identified McKinney and Henderson as the perpetrators. The authors (2002) discovered that the media effectively scapegoated the perpetrators by painting them as “wolf”-like and “savage.” This type of framing illustrates the power and implications of scapegoating in the media. The scapegoating also allowed the absolve themselves from their own homophobic guilt.
Abhik (2004) also examined scapegoating in the media. Specifically, the scapegoating of Muslims by the National Hindu party in India. Since the 1980’s, radical Hinduism has been a strong force in Indian politics (Abhik, 2004). Now, Hindu nationalists frequently exploit Hindu-Muslims with xenophobic discourse (Abhik, 2004). Sadly, this discourse has fueled violence in the Muslim community. The author (2004) claimed that scapegoating and victimage are dominant in this community. Through the examination of media coverage, Abhik (2004) discussed the implications of scapegoating against an entire group or groups. As a method to reduce guilt, the nationalist party appeared to scapegoating as an act of purification of the nation. Abhik (2004) believed this type of scapegoat frame could lead to further violence against the Muslim community.

As these studies indicate, the media clearly has the power to influence audience response to femicide issues. Often that frame features the cycle of redemption and the scapegoating process. The media framing of the Juarez femicides is a prime example of a mediated response that can assist an audience in coming to terms with a tragedy.

**Setting the agenda.** This section will introduce and define Walter Lippmann’s agenda setting theory. In addition, this section will describe how agenda setting is studied today, its connection to Petty and Cacioppo’s (1986) elaboration likelihood theory, and how it can be used to lend insight into the mediated coverage of the Juarez femicides.

Another theory used to understand media influence is agenda setting theory. The theoretical idea of agenda setting was created by Walter Lippmann in 1922. Lippmann believed that agenda setting offered explanations for why certain information and issues are sensationalized in public democracy, while others are given little attention. In 1972,
agenda setting theory was revamped by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. McCombs and Shaw advanced agenda setting research through quantitative studies that sought to understand how the media could shape public opinion. More specifically, McCombs and Shaw aimed to understand the influence of media on audience cognition. Their hypothesis stated that routine news coverage can structure and influence the perceptions of an audience (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 1997). The study allowed researchers to understand the power and influence of the media in a way that had not been previously understood, because it provided a means for agenda setting research to be tested, thus offering a measurement of public opinion (Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

An extension of agenda setting is Petty and Cacioppo’s (1986) elaboration likelihood theory. While agenda setting describes what people think about, it is equally important to describe how the media shapes and frames what people actually think (Kott & Citrenbaum, 2010). The concept of agenda setting involves the media making a choice in how to present the message. However, priming and framing effects do “contribute to how media influences what people think about issues” (Kott & Citrenbaum, 2010, p 147).

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) described the elaboration likelihood theory as a conceptual model for how people process information obtained from the media and how that information impacts an audience’s attitude (Kott & Citrenbaum, 2010).

Elaboration likelihood argues that an audience typically follows one of two cognitive paths (Trent, Riedenburg, & Denton, 2011). The first is “thoughtful” elaboration or central processing refers to how the media will present arguments in support of an opinion, which can lead to strong attitude change of an audience member (Kott & Citrenbaum, 2010). “If motivation and ability to elaborate is high, central
processing of a message will occur; a person will carefully scrutinize the merits of the 
message” (Dillard & Pfau, 2002, p. 156). The second is the “peripheral” path, a quicker 
mechanism for processing information (Trent, Riedenburg, & Denton, 2011). In 
retrospect, for a peripheral path, “if motivation and ability to elaborate on the merits of 
the message are low, a person will be less likely to engage in thoughtful evaluation of a 
message” (Dillard & Pfau, 2002, p. 156). Peripheral path can appeal to an audience that is 
poorly prepared to consider an argument (Kott & Citrenbaum, 2010). For peripheral path 
“attitude change may be induced in response to indirect references” (Kott & Citrenbaum, 
2010, p. 148). In short, elaboration likelihood theory allows us to understand the interest 
and knowledge level of an audience and how this acts as a building block for agenda 
setting. It is important to acknowledge an audience or receiver’s knowledge of an issue 
which may help determine the receiver’s ability to elaborate (Trent, Riedenburg, & 
Denton, 2011). An audience’s “educational level, intelligence, or the amount of 
understanding of the issues within an argument” will influence a mediated message 
(Trent, Riedenburg, & Denton, 2011, p. 67). For example, elaboration likelihood 
connected to agenda setting theory would allow us to understand if El Paso and Juarez 
are knowledgeable or even interested in femicide news.

Today, the relevance of agenda setting can be seen in media effects studies. 
Agenda setting is studied by examining how the importance of events is depicted in the 
media. For example, agenda setting theory can provide scholars with insights into why 
stories concerning the African genocide receive less coverage compared to the most 
recent Lindsey Lohan scandal. Many scholars speculate that agenda setting will occur 
when news consumers see the nation’s most important problems as those given the most
mediated attention (Gross & Aday, 2003). Plainly, if the Lindsey Lohan scandal is given more mediated attention than genocide, society may find genocide a less important social issue. For example, in 1981, the initial news reports about AIDS received low visibility in the media. Few stories could be found linking AIDS to a future epidemic. This was because “the issue of AIDS was not yet on the media agenda, nor was the U.S. public aware of the issue” (Dearing & Roger, 1996, p. 56). However, in 1985, the death of celebrity Rock Hudson triggered additional mediated stories about AIDS victims. The news coverage of AIDS began to drastically increase from four to fifteen news stories a week (Dearing & Roger, 1996). Almost immediately, AIDS became a top interest among the general public. The media framing of the AIDS crisis illustrates the effects of agenda setting.

A more recent study of agenda setting was conducted by scholars Miller and Roberts (2010). Miller and Roberts (2010) aimed to understand the use of agenda setting during the Hurricane Katrina crisis. Their study focused on visual agenda setting or the framing of cinematography and photography variables and its effects on the perceptions of consumers (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2003). Using participants from Louisiana State University, the scholars created an agenda setting study that coded mediated messages and visual communication perceptions. Miller and Roberts (2010) reported that participants were highly affected by visual agenda setting. When the researchers re-introduced participants to mediated visuals, the participants experienced guilt, anger, disgust, and a sense of loss. Reportedly, the graphics and pictures included in the mediated stories about the Hurricane Katrina crisis created emotional effects that
increased news coverage demand (Miller & Roberts, 2010), thereby allowing media to set the agenda.

Agenda setting theory also has been used to examine coverage of violence against women in Mexico. Vega (2010) used agenda setting to embark on a content analysis of Mexican radio programming that discussed gender violence. After listening to crime reports on radio stations, Vega (2010) found that the most-mentioned typed of crimes involved violence against women. In addition, her findings suggested that women are representations of victims in the broadcasts and never represented as empowered individuals. Furthermore, the radio broadcasting’s lyrics associated with the music played on the radio proposed that women should be submissive to the whims of men (Vega, 2010). In response, the Mexican media has become a large part of our formal and informal education, which means they play a vital role in searching for solutions (Vega, 2010). For instance, the author argued that the media should be responsible for calling citizens to eliminating violence against women (Vega, 2010). Instead, she discovered that the representation of women in radio discourse depicted women as responsible for the crimes. Sadly, this media representation creates more obstacles for women (Vega, 2010).

Vega’s (2010) content analysis of gender violence in Mexico is just one study that detailed the media agenda setting patterns. In addition, Vega’s findings for radio discourse suggested the need to examine newspaper discourse as well. If the broadcast media has the power to inform and educate the public, then the newspaper media also has the power to socially construct the meaning of gender violence in Mexico. Therefore, U.S. and Mexican newspapers have the power to transform the reality of gender violence. This suggests that newspaper discourse related to the Juarez femicides will uncover
similar representations of women, which illustrates its level of importance for the U.S and Mexico mediated agendas.

Femicide in the city of Juarez is an everyday reality; thousands of women are brutally murdered on a regular basis. The media has sensationalized the stories of the victims, which simultaneously influences societal opinion about the phenomenon. The media can influence perceptions of femicides because it has the power to influence beliefs. In addition, the media has the power to influence social awareness and transform public attitudes. This transformation can ultimately promote social change. In the case of a social issue, it is necessary to examine the media’s influences of an event. This study does just that by examining the media framing strategies used by U.S. and Mexico news sources to portray the Juarez femicides. As stated earlier, the media can impact an event’s perceived importance, meaning the media can sway societal attitudes towards violence against women.

This literature explained the ideological background of masculinity or machismo in Mexico, and its correlation with the Juarez economy and femicide. In addition, this section provided a brief historical and cultural overview of Juarez, Mexico before and during the femicide phenomenon. This section also discussed NAFTA’s cultural influence in Juarez and the social issue of Juarez femicides. Lastly, this section introduced the concept of media framing and then followed with a theoretical description of agenda setting. Attention now turns to the method that was used to analyze the media framing of the Juarez femicides.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This study examined mediated rhetoric about the Juarez femicides. The following overarching question was asked: What rhetorical strategies were used by the U.S and Mexican media? This question includes three sub-questions: 1) What types of media framing are utilized by the U.S and Mexican media?, 2) What are the implications of the framing?, and 3) Are framing strategies different in the U.S and Mexico? The following section discusses the artifacts examined to uncover the media framing of the Juarez femicides. Burke’s (1950) dramatism theory and Noelle Neumann’s (1971) spiral of silence theory are later discussed, followed by an overview of the procedures that guided this analysis.

Rhetorical Artifact

In this section, I will discuss the two main artifacts examined. This section will also detail the history, circulation, past awards, and dynamics of the selected newspapers. This study examined local U.S and Mexican newspaper discourse surrounding the femicides. To analyze framing strategies, this study has selected two local newspapers, one from Juarez and the other from El Paso. Specifically, this study examined the El Paso local newspaper the El Paso Times and the Juarez local paper, the El Diario. Both media outlets are regionally close to the femicides and have similar demographic audiences. These newspapers appeared to contain the most femicide news feed available. These
newspapers were located through digital databases and library archives by using the search box phrase “femicide.”

The first artifact, the *El Paso Times*, is a daily newspaper founded in 1981. Published in southern Texas, the *El Paso Times* is the only newspaper printed in English in El Paso. This newspaper has a daily circulation rate of 72,204 papers and is distributed in West Texas and Southern New Mexico. According to elpasotimes.com, the *El Paso Times* is “the most comprehensible news in the El Paso County.” This media outlet claimed to have received journalistic awards for investigative journalism, features, business news, writing and photography (elpasotimes.com).

The second artifact is the *El Diario*, which circulates in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; Nuevo Casas Grandes, Mexico; El Paso, U.S.; Las Cruces; Mexico and New Mexico, U.S. The *El Diario* is a Spanish-language paper and has a daily circulation rate of 70,296 copies (diario.com). The *El Diario* is the fourth largest newspaper in Mexico and is the largest distributed newspaper in Juarez. The newspaper’s most recent recognitions were received in 2002. At this time, the paper received the Small Business Award of Excellence, the American Hospital Leadership Public Service Award, and Association of the United States Army Outstanding Media Recognition Award (diario.com). While the *El Diario* has not been acknowledged for awards in past 10 years, its persistence in investigative journalism in the face of potential danger should be recognized.

The *El Diario* is recognized for aggressively covering Mexico’s violence, even though neighboring media outlets limit their coverage for fear of repercussions (Johnston, 2010). According to a 2010 addition of the *NYdailynews*, “At least 22 Mexican journalist have been killed in the last four years: at least eight of those were targeted because of
their reports on drug trafficking and corruption” (Johnston, 2010). Reporters from *El Diario* were among the 22 murdered. For example, in 2008, an *El Diario* reporter was murdered in front of his family while preparing to take his daughter to school. The reporter, Armando Rodriguez, was reporting on routine slayings committed by organized crime in Juarez (Johnston, 2010). In that same year, *El Diario* correspondent Ortiz Monroy also was gunned down while leaving a municipal office in Juarez. The motive for Monroy’s murder is unknown (reporterswithoutborders.com, 2008). Most recently, in 2010, an unidentified gunman murdered two *El Diario* photographers (Licon, 2010). As a result of this violence, many regions of Mexico are experiencing virtual media blackouts because media outlets fear retribution for their coverage of organized crime (Licon, 2010). The *El Diario de Juarez* is recognized as being one of the few Mexican newspapers that diligently engage in investigative journalism.

**Theoretical Approach**

The analysis of the *El Paso Times* and *El Diario* newspaper articles was guided by Burke’s (1950) application of dramatism theory and Noelle-Neumann’s (1971) spiral of silence theory. These theories were chosen because of their potential to shed light on the framing process and assist in understanding the rhetorical situations related to the femicides and the media framing process. While this study aimed to understand the strategic uses of framing as discussed in dramatism theory, the use of spiral of silence theory was implemented to acknowledge the silencing taking place throughout Mexican media outlets, including the *El Diario*, which ultimately affected the framing strategies used in the newspaper itself. In addition, the spiral of silence theory was able to account for mediated quotations from citizens that illustrate the level of disorder in Juarez. As my
sub-research questions indicate, this study aimed to understand the types of framing, the implications of the framing, and determine whether the framing is different in the U.S. coverage as opposed to Mexican coverage of the femicides. The spiral of silence theory helped account for any differences in framing.

First, I will justify the application of dramatism, and then I will describe the theoretical components used in this approach. Burke (1968) defined dramatism as:

A method of analysis and corresponding critique of terminology designed to show the most direct route to the study of human relationship and human motives via a methodical inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions. (p. 445)

Dramatism can be used to study media effects because it accounts for the importance placed on public issues (Soroka, 2002). As Burke (1966) noted, the mediated report is fact, yet even in a language that allows for much freedom of word order, the fact remains that, once a sentence is formed, it is necessarily a series of words released in a certain order” (p. 464). The ordering of words and “facts” has implications for how readers understand the events and their importance. Dramatism can be applied to controversial events or issues of high salience because it assumes that mediated facts can be arranged and rearranged in relation to one another. Although the facts of femicide are mediated, the arrangement of these facts could be a contributing factor to an audience’s understanding of and attitude toward femicide. The power to arrange facts may ultimately change the way readers understand the event being covered.

Dramatism also provided a theory of framing with the potential to examine human action. The concept of drama implies action (Burke, 1989). Action can be analyzed
through a dramatistic lens because it includes the notion of “conflict, purpose, reflection, and choice” (Burke, 1989, p. 10). For Burke (1989), “society is best studied through the content of its culture (p.29). This includes the study of action, language, ceremonies, and rituals that a common culture has created and perpetuated. Societal action also can be explained through motive, which is revealed through analysis of human language and behavior (Bobbitt, 2004). However, human motive is not confined to the realm of human action (Bobbitt, 2004). Burke (1989) depicted language as symbolic action. For Burke (1989), the study of language involves the study of symbolic construction of situations and events. Studying symbolic action allows researchers to examine a culture’s symbol-use and dissect the meanings behind the symbol construction. As Bobbitt (2004) noted, human action does not have absolute meaning.

The media framing of the Juarez femicides contains stories of human action that may influence societal understanding of and attitudes towards the act of femicide. A complete media framing analysis needs to include “linguistic frames, its vocabularies, and of the symbols with which it describes itself” (Burke, 1989, p. 29). In addition, dramatism provided an explanation for the observed effects of framing. Framing acknowledges the use of a selection process in the media. The media has the power to choose what is known about a situation, which can eliminate other possible interpretations. The Juarez femicide acts is the story for local media outlets who act as the storytellers. The media functions as the storyteller who articulates how an audience can

---

6 Symbolic Action is defined as “technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than as means of conveying information” (Burke, 1989, p. 10).
make sense of tragedy. As a storytelling device, the media has the power to choose and reject facts concerning femicide. In essence, the media has the ability to explain femicide to an audience. Dramatism recognizes that this type of power can change the response to femicide issues. Burke’s dramatism also allowed me to understand the narrative components of an event. For example, the five elements of the pentad (i.e. act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) reflect the type of questions that reporters discussing the Juarez femicide will ask: Who committed the crime?, What was the crime?, When was the crime?, Where was the crime? and Why was the crime committed?

In understanding the dramatic action, we can then study Burke’s cycle of redemption. This study utilized Burke’s discussion of redemption, mortification, and transcendence to examine the framing strategies in the mediated accounts of femicide. These concepts are ingrained in “dramatism.” Burke assumed that language constitutes action and action “corresponds to the neurological aspect of the human being” (Foss, 2009, p. 355). For Burke (1950), the study of human interaction always includes the drama of suffering, struggle, sacrifice, and tragedy. Suffering is a part of being human. Examining tragedy and suffering is fundamental in understanding human behavior. In the case of the femicides, the media has the power to explain tragedy and suffering to its readers.

To understand framing strategies, we must first examine what society views as social Order. The concept of Order is essential in dramatism. Burke (1973) argued that society needs to function on a level of order. According to Bobbitt (2004), “language inevitably leads to the development of some type of social order” or a cultural hierarchy (p. 35). For Burke, “language frames provides us with Order in interactions, so too the
terminologies we develop create frames of acceptance and rejection of authority” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 33). Burke (1984) claimed that frames are of three types: acceptance frames, rejection frames, and transition frames. Acceptance frames consist of responses to moments of social unrest that represent the sign of a problem needing correction (Goodnow, 2011). Unlike acceptance, rejection frames will exploit a moment of conflict in a system which justifies a revolt against social Order (Goodnow, 2011). In retrospect, transition frames can identify problems in the system, yet they do nothing to change that problem (Goodnow, 2011).

To understand acceptance, rejection, and transition frames, one must recognize that the source of Order in society is authority or hierarchy (Gusfield, 1989). For Burke, “hierarchy is constant in society because in every area of life there is an orderliness of principle, or high and lower, nobler, and baser” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 33). To maintain Order, the hierarchy establishes rules which it anticipates will be obeyed.

The very need for hierarchy also implies the potential for its opposite—lawlessness (Gusfield, 1989). Human are capable of being corrupt, just as they are also capable of following the hierarchy (Gusfield, 1989). The hierarchy perpetuates the moral code and norms in society. References, such as “thou shall” and “thou shall not” illustrates a society’s code of behavior. However, the struggle to follow the moral code and maintain order/morality is constant for human beings (Burke, 1973). The breaking of Order and disruption of a moral code could be exhibited in the changing gender roles in Juarez. To the community of Juarez, women playing traditional roles may represent Order. The result of broken Order for women who left those traditional roles behind may be femicide. The investigative journalism in Juarez, which has led to the death of many
MEDIA FRAMING OF THE JUAREZ FEMICIDES

journalists, also could be viewed as disorder in society. In Juarez, investigative journalism has become dangerous. For journalists wishing to challenge the hierarchy that requires journalistic silence and patriarchy, the result of broken Order can be death.

If Order becomes broken, then society begins to experience anxiety that in turn generates guilt. Burke (1989) believed that man is an essentially morally ethical animal that is laden with guilt. He perceives this as an inherent state among symbol-using animals. Society will search for ways to reduce guilt, which Burke claimed only occurs through the process of redemption, mortification, or transcendence (Brock & Scott, 1990). Burke (1989) claimed that the redemption drama is part of the larger dramatistic system. Redemption is “the need for some process of purification or cleansing of that sin and its accompanying sin” (Bobbitt, 2004, p. 33). The concept of guilt implies the need for purification (Burke, 1989), because redemption is only achievable after individuals take responsibility for culture’s problems (Jasinski, 2001). Yet, people are uncomfortable with internalizing a cultural problem. Therefore, during the redemption stage, people may start to recognize the need for redemption or a redeemer. This type of internalization will create guilt.

Often humans are motivated to rid themselves of this guilt, which can be accomplished in several ways. According to Burke (1989) one means of redemption is through a scapegoat: “with redemption comes the redeemer – which is to say, a victim, a scapegoat or a kill” (as cited in Rueckert, 1969, p. 460). Society needs someone to blame and this individual becomes a scapegoat and experiences punishment to help relieve societal guilt. The concept of scapegoating refers to the transferring of blame onto an individual (Burke, 1989). For this approach to be successful, the phenomenon of
scapegoating needs to be accepted by a whole group (Douglas, 1995). Scapegoats are chosen based on societal rules that validate behavioral standards. For example, in “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” Burke (1974) discussed the persuasive strategies that Hitler used to dehumanize the Jewish population. Burke (1974) noted Hitler’s acute awareness of the society’s needs and so he suggested a common enemy. Hitler used propaganda to indoctrinate Germany to the idea of an international devil (Burke, 1974). The political climate worked to Hitler’s advantage because society needed a redeemer. Society needed a place to lay blame for the country’s problems and Hitler’s scapegoat was a way to reduce the German citizen’s guilt and mortification.

In addition, Tonn’s et al. (1993) study illustrated the scapegoating process. Tonn et. al. (1993) noted that “individuals who compromise a particular community may explain their own behavior as motion because it is controlled by communal traditions or ‘laws’, norms they as ‘agents’ nonetheless devised” (p. 166). As stated previously, Tonn et al. (1993) discussed how the Maine hunting community began to feel guilt for the murder of Karen Wood. Tonn’s et. al. (1993) study revealed that the hunter and shooter, Donald Rogers was often exempt from blame for the murder of Wood. Instead, Wood was often victimized for being ignorant of the hunting community’s norms (Tonn et. al., 1993). These testimonials framed Wood as an outsider (Tonn et. al., 1993). Similar to the initial femicide prevention campaigns, Tonn et. al. (1993) explained how the right environment can lead a community to scapegoat.

A second means of redemption is mortification. Mortification involves bearing the guilt oneself rather than placing it on another (Burke, 1970). The ultimate form of mortification is death (Burke, 1970). Burke (1970) wrote that “death would be the proper
narrative-dramatic way for saying mortification (p. 206). Mortification can be translated into the steps from the act of admitting one’s “sin” to “death” (Burke, 1970).

Mortification is central to the redemptive sacrifice, which is closely associated with Order (Burke, 1970). In comparing mortification with redemption, Burke (1970) claimed a variant of mortification would be the “suicide” of human motivation, while the variant of redemption is the sacrifice of a chosen victim. Mortification is created through motive and can serve as a guide in creating collectivist behaviors. As a motive, “mortification can promote cultural purification or redemption through a dual process of internalization” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 187). Through mortification, society will be able to experience redemption behavior. Sadly, it is really through mortification and victimage that most terrible historical perversions occur (Rueckert, 1982).

Additionally, rather than searching for an external scapegoat, people can also experience self-mortification/victimage. For example, rather than searching for an external scapegoat, with self-mortification the public will blame themselves for femicide crimes. Self-mortification involves a “victimization of self,” which allows mortification to “transform the self into the scapegoat” (Jasinske, 2001, p. 365). This takes away the need for an external scapegoat. For example, if Juarez or El Paso audiences were experiencing self-mortification, there may be evidence in the media that suggests the community is blaming themselves for femicide violence. However, self-mortification is not always the solution for cultural problems, so consequently scapegoating can be a more effective means of reducing guilt in many circumstances.

The third means of redemption relevant to this study is transcendence. Transcendence means “to designate not a mere comparison of disparate goals but more
importantly a combination of disparate matters and even of polar opposites” (Lindsay, 2001, p.153). For example, transcended people may be able to read femicide news articles and acknowledge the influence of framing strategies or silencing tactics. In regards to media frames, an example of a transcended frame may be a renaming of femicide. If the media transcended, they may rename the femicide event as “homicide” rather than “femicide.” This renaming process would represent a community’s desire to release guilt through transcendence. To Burke (1969), transcendence is only accomplished if circumstances are widened. Specifically, transcendence takes place when individuals learn to take the “oppositional motives into account, and widen his/her terminology accordingly, thus arriving at a higher understanding” (Burke, 1969, p. 40).

In the media, people are encouraged and invited to transcend but it is difficult to witness the media’s portrayal of a transcended individual. In addition, people experiencing transcendence may acknowledge the presence of human motive in framed issues. Transcended people will recognize that mediated information is not entirely accurate and note the societal need to reduce guilt through the cycle of redemption. Again, people who have transcended do not have to experience guilt.

The political tension in Juarez suggests a climate that may prompt the community’s need for redemption. Thus, in this analysis, close attention was paid to the political climate that fuels the cycle of redemption process. The collectivist attitude towards tragedy is important to understand the femicide framing by the news media. Dramatism can help us understand the difference that frames make in the world. How do these frames invite us to view the world, particularly violence against women, and the value attached to the Juarez femicide? This theoretical framework of dramatism
contributed to the understanding of violence against women in Juarez because the media filtered femicide stories through a specific frame which may affect how an audience understands gender. Specifically, this approach can uncover media framing strategies that allow us to understand reasoning behind the perpetuation of femicides in this community and may lend insight into the motives that undergird the femicide phenomenon.

Understanding what society views as Order is important for understanding the dramatistic trends. If violence against women is being perpetuated in the media, then understanding how society views violence is extremely essential.

The spiral of silence theory has also informed this analysis. While this study primarily aimed to understand the framing strategies evident within the artifact, doing so necessitates an understanding of the larger rhetorical situation where citizens experience silencing as well. Thus, a researcher needs to acknowledge the possibility that silencing is taking place in the areas where femicide occurs: in the Juarez community and in the media. Spiral of silence is explained as:

Observations made in one context spread to another that encourage people either to proclaim their views or swallow them and keep quiet until, in a spiraling process, the one view dominated the public scene and the other disappeared from public awareness as its adherents became mute. (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 298)

Formulated in 1971, Noelle-Neumann described spiral of silence as an individual’s willingness to publically express opinions on a controversial topic, which in turn represents how one perceives public opinion (Geer, 2004). Noelle-Neumann argued that if people perceive a publicly held opinion to be inconsistent with their own, then they will be less likely to express their own opinion (Geer, 2004). Subsequently, the
suppression of public opinion will create one-sided perceptions on public issues. In addition, the notion of media framing can be illustrated in the spiral of silence theory. Silencing can influence framing techniques and affect the way an audience rationalizes tragedy. The examination of silencing in societies in which femicides occur help explain the techniques of framing evident in Mexican newspapers and answer questions about the use of framing strategies.

There are three major components of the spiral of silence theory. The first is fear of isolation (Noelle-Neumann, 2005). Noelle-Neumann claimed that individuals will behave in certain ways to avoid public criticism and retain public status (Miller, 2005). For this study, Juarez citizens and Journalists function as the “individuals.” For example, in Juarez, citizens may be less likely to participate in organized rallies against the authorities. In addition, Noelle-Neumann claimed that coercion and threats can promote fear of isolation (Miller, 2005). Individuals may fear repercussions for having beliefs that are inconsistent with the public. For example, journalists in Juarez may experience coercion and threats from others which suppresses their journalistic voice in the media.

The second component of spiral of silence is the assessment of public belief. It is important for individuals to be able to assess public opinion to understand the public’s perceptions on a particular issue. Noelle-Neumann (1993) argued that media presentations can influence the public’s opinion and sometimes lead to inaccurate interpretations of the public climate (Miller, 2005). Positions presented by certain media outlets are likely to be constant and continuous (Miller, 2005). For example, due to fear of isolation, Juarez journalists may only publish certain femicide information which would affect the overall interpretation of femicide issues in the public.
The third spiral of silence component is an individual’s willingness to speak. Noelle-Neumann claimed that this results from a combination of the first two components. If individuals fear public isolation based on mediated public opinion, then they will be less willing to publically declare their inconsistent belief (Miller, 2005). For example, although journalists continue to investigate organized crime in Juarez, many have lost their lives for doing so. The fact that 22 journalists have died in Juarez may suppress current journalists from publishing pieces that are inconsistent with the “keep silent” belief.

The most accessible way to determine public opinion is through the media. The mass media can shape public opinion by choosing to cover an issue or by the manner that the story is covered. If the media chooses to incorporate public opinion that represents a public attitude toward one side of the coverage, this will provide social cues that may influence the rest of public opinion (Geer, 2004). For example, in the examination of femicide media coverage, the political climate could account for potential silencing. As stated previously, the staff of El Diario and neighboring media outlets are constantly in danger, which may make reporters wary of conducting investigative journalism related to this topic. Many reporters are murdered for taking stances on public issues. If individuals gauge public opinion through media outlets, the political climate in Mexico could influence the coverage and perception of such mediated issues.

News reporters in Juarez are under constant threat which could result in censorship of coverage. If reporters detail too much information, they invite danger into their lives. Censorship of coverage will most certainly affect public opinion and media framing styles. Individuals viewing the media coverage may adapt a consistent belief so
that they can identify as part of the public. These individuals may not simply fear ostracism. In this situation, the fear is much more real. In Juarez Mexico, an inconsistent view could mean the murder of a friend, family, or oneself. Thus, the utilization of spiral of silence theory can help explain the media framing. If silencing is taking place, then framing strategies will be affected. For example, media framing assists us with coming to terms with tragedy. When mediated outlets are silenced, they have to be more strategic when framing a message. This strategic framing may be represented in the mediated discourse related to the Juarez femicides.

**Procedures**

The following section of the thesis will describe the procedures associated with this study. This section will first detail the article selection process, which includes the number of articles chosen, the selection criteria, and the justification for this process. This section will later introduce the translator and discuss the use of translation software. Finally, this segment will move into a discussion of the coding and analysis procedures.

**Article selection process.** This study was able to acquire 18 articles from the *El Diario* and an additional 18 articles from the *El Paso Times*. The total number of 36 articles, 18 from each paper, provided this study with enough data to analyze framing strategies and the differences in frames. In addition, this study aimed to retrieve a few articles from *El Diario* and *El Paso Times* that covered the same crime to provide a better comparison of framing strategies from the two newspapers. Articles chosen applied to the 2004-2011 date criteria and detail only Juarez femicides. *El Diario’s* digital database is comprised of 2004-2011 articles. For this reason, the 2004-2011 dates were chosen for both artifact selections. The 2004-2011 dates allowed this study to analyze current and
past framing strategies, which accounted for the changes in framing. In addition to selecting only 2004-2011 articles, all articles detailed the murder of women in Juarez or exhibited speculation about who may be responsible for those murder. This allowed me to examine the potential for the framing of tragedy and the framing of blame.

A different retrieval processes was used for each newspaper. For the El Paso Times, articles were retrieved through the El Paso Times digital database and Lexus Nexus search premier. These were located by searching the term “femicide.” All chosen articles were published between the target publication dates (i.e., between 2004-2011). The process for obtaining articles from the El Diario followed a more circuitous path, which limited article selection. Unfortunately, the El Diario only updates its digital database monthly, which makes acquisition of articles difficult. For this reason, all retrieval of El Diario articles occurred through the newspaper’s library manager. This individual controls the Juarez library database. The library manager was asked to select newspaper articles from the dates of 2004-2011 that detailed the murder of women in Juarez. The El Diario library manager then passed the task to his secretary, who was asked to find two articles for every year from 2004 to 2011. I also obtained five articles from El Diario’s monthly updated digital database. I have a total of 18 articles. While obtaining the entire newspaper in which each article was published would be ideal, unfortunately only the articles were sent. As this description suggests, article accessibility was difficult yet successful.

---

7 I do realize that the lack of accessibility and selection process may affect the analysis of the media framing.
Correspondent, translator and translation software. As noted above, this study analyzed newspapers that were printed in two different languages. The El Paso Times is published in English and Spanish; however, the El Diario only circulates in Spanish. Therefore, assistance in Spanish to English translation was necessary to access and analyze El Diario’s framing strategies.

This study made use of a Spanish speaking phone correspondent and translator. This study will first discuss the phone correspondence process. A phone correspondent was necessary to acquire the Spanish news articles from El Diario because the staff only spoke Spanish. For this reason, I recruited George Laguna (a pseudonym to protect the phone correspondent’s identity). Laguna’s services were acquired through a prior working relationship. At present, Laguna is an Indiana resident who visits Mexico approximately eight times a year. During Laguna’s travels to Mexico, he has frequented Juarez.

Laguna acted as this study’s phone correspondent with the El Diario library manager. With his assistance, phone calls were placed to Juarez to inquire about attaining news articles to be examined for this study. Luguna was able to make contact with the library manager from the El Diario in the hopes of having articles either scanned and sent electronically or physically mailed to me; however, the retrieval process was long. Luguna’s phone correspondence with the El Diario library manager began in September 2011. By October 14th, Gonzalez had convinced the library manager’s secretary to email news articles detailing femicides. With Luguna’s assistance, the library manager sent me 13 articles.
The translation process will now be discussed. Translation of the articles written in Spanish were approached in two ways: working with a translator and employing translating software. For purposes of anonymity, this study’s translator will be identified as Nick Garcia. Garcia was located through a current working relationship. He has fluent language skills in English and Spanish. His translation skills were beneficial in understanding the mediated context associated with the media’s framing of the femicide stories.

Of Latin American descent, Garcia was born in Las Angeles, California. He is currently working towards a degree at Ball State University. Garcia lives in Indiana and is employed as customer service representative (personal communication, 2012). Despite his Indiana residence, Garcia does have relatives and family from Mexico (personal communication, 2012). In addition, Garcia was taught to speak Spanish by his family and relatives, who were born in Mexico.

Garcia was not familiar with femicide before this study. When asked his opinion on femicide, Garcia stated, “Femicide is a disturbing reality that occurs in many underdeveloped countries and cities. Personally, I believe femicide is an issue that the general public needs to be aware of in order to prevent the mass murdering of women” (personal communication, 2012). In addition, Garcia blamed femicide on the government and believed officials are not determined enough to end femicides (personal communication, 2012). Garcia also believed that government impunity is the main reason behind femicides (personal communication, 2012). Despite Garcia’s lack of femicide knowledge, he was willing to invest time in this project. However, Gonzalez did not have experience as a scholar. For this reason, I educated Gonzalez on the importance of
objectivity when translating. The use of *Translation Plus* software (discussed below) assisted with the translation process.

To assist Garcia with translating, translating software was also purchased. The *Windows* program *Translation Plus* is able to translate entire documents from Spanish to English. However, these full translations were not entirely accurate. Thus, Garcia reviewed the digitally translated documents and modified the translation when appropriate.

**Coding and analysis.** All translated articles were coded based on the article’s focus. To understand framing strategies, all 36 articles were separated into categories. The development of categories depended on the “focus” of an article. For example, articles were categorized depending on whether reporters mainly discuss the victims, suspects, solutions, or neither. Special attention was paid to articles from both the *El Paso Times* and *El Diario* that reported on the same femicides. These were examined to determine whether the articles reported similar information or whether the femicide coverage was detailed differently in the U.S. paper as opposed to the Mexican paper. In comparing both the *El Diario* and *El Paso Times*, I also looked for what information is and is not provided. This not only offered insight into the framing strategies employed, but illustrated the occurrences of silencing.

Coding also included searching for media framing strategies. This process consisted of examining all 36 articles and looking for patterns to suggest components of the cycle of redemption. More specifically, articles were separated based on the article’s illustrated components of scapegoating, mortification, and transcendence. To make this
determination, I asked myself questions such as: Who is blamed for the femicides? Who is portrayed as the victim? Is anyone portrayed in the role of redeemer?

**Conclusion**

This section first discussed the artifacts examined to uncover the media framing of the Juarez femicides. This chapter then explained the method employed to conduct this study. Finally, this chapter discussed the procedures that guided this analysis. In the next sections, CHAPTER FOUR provides an analysis that details the types of media framing in Mexico and the U.S, discusses their similarities and differences throughout *El Diario* and the *El Paso Times* articles. Finally, CHAPTER FIVE provides answers to the research questions, and provides directions for future research.
Burke’s cycle of redemption is exemplified in the newspaper articles from both Juarez and El Paso. The media accounts arising from both communities illustrate components of redemptive behavior. This chapter will first discuss Burke’s dramatism and its significance to the media, and then summarize the cycle of redemption in regards to the mediated accounts of the Juarez femicide. The next section will introduce the artifact analysis of both the U.S. and Mexican newspaper articles.

Burke’s (1989) dramatism allows us to witness the way that the Mexican and U.S. newspapers accounted for the unfolding violence in Juarez and how the populace of both Juarez and the U.S. attempted to grapple with the horror in their midst. In the media, femicides set the stage for a narrative that includes redemptive qualities. In Burke’s terms, the disorder in Juarez and El Paso, as illustrated in the press, has resulted in a community laden with guilt which is in need of purification.

Although dramatism has many elements, this study specifically used the cycle of redemption as a tool for analysis. The first stage of the cycle of redemption is Order (Burke, 1989). Order is equal to hierarchy. Initially in Juarez, Order was maintained through a separation of gender roles. Men were the primary bread winners, while women were domestic caregivers (Alba & Guzman, 2010). The enactment of NAFTA shifted the gender roles and ultimately changed the fate of women in Juarez (Alba & Guzman, 2010). With jobs in maquiladoras, women became financially self-sufficient, whereas
many men remained unemployed. And yet, despite the lack of jobs for men, Juarez continued to be flooded with thousands of migrants searching for factory positions, which only adds to the disorder. (Agosin, 2006). Despite the large available labor force, women are still preferred employees for maquiladora (Agosin, 2006).

The gender shift created a violation of Order in Juarez (Alba & Guzman, 2010). Burke (1973) argued that society needs to function on a level of Order or hierarchy. Hierarchy is constant in society, because in life there is orderliness (Burke, 1973). There are always higher, nobler, lesser, and baser elements in society (Gusfield, 1989). For Juarez, the hierarchy was maintained when men largely occupied in the workplace. However, now women were taking men’s jobs. This set the stage for disorder and women became the target of resentment for male society’s anger about increased male unemployment and economic uncertainty. Despite the availability of a large male labor force, maquiladora owners appeared to prefer hiring women because they are viewed as being less trouble and would work for cheaper wages. Sadly, women were the one’s blamed for the disorder in Juarez, not the maquiladora owners who hired them. Burke would argue the consequences for violating Order can be extreme, and the situation in Juarez is no different.

To traditional patriarchal society, women in Juarez were being disobedient, which resulted in community guilt. Burke argued that disobedience against the Order triggers guilt, a type of pollution. Therefore, the women’s disobedience against the traditional patriarchal structure in Juarez resulted in the community’s guilt. To reduce the resulting pollution and guilt, men in Juarez entered into the redemption process. One way to seek purification through victimage is for men in Juarez to find a scapegoat. The concept of
scapegoating refers to the transferring of blame onto an individual (Burke, 1989). As a result, women became scapegoats and were the targets of horrible gender crimes. Thus, we initially view the cycle of redemption illustrated in femicides.

The media indicates that eighteen-years-later, a new Order has been created in Juarez. The media discusses Juarez’s reputation as a city full of organized crime, gang violence, and government impunity (Warner, 2010). Illegal crime organizations have created a new hierarchy in Juarez which features them as those who enforce Order and silencing. Sadly, those who continue to commit femicide acts may also be the ones who enforce the new Order. The press’s media frames suggest that this new Order demands a tolerance for femicide. For investigative journalists, relatives of femicide victims, and female activists, this reality is overwhelming. Those who violate Order to investigate and report on crimes or demand compliance with the law risk death. In short, every individual who works for femicide prevention violates the new Order in Juarez. The mediated articles examined in this study illustrate that individuals who work to prevent femicide risk death at the hands of those determined to maintain the new Order.

Burke’s (1989) cycle of redemption is also apparent in El Paso. The media suggests an increase in femicide activity along the border region has challenged El Paso’s sense of safety and its reputation. Clearly, El Paso is experiencing its own form of community disorder. Although the femicide killing grounds are only a mere two miles away, the rigid border regulations previously put El Paso citizens at ease. In Burke’s (1989) words, the media suggests that El Paso’s sense of safety and Order is under threat. As indicated in the press, Burke (1989) would argue that El Paso is experiencing guilt because of the prospects of cross-cultural femicides. Again, El Paso means to reduce
guilt through scapegoating, which is through the form of victimage. El Paso’s choice of scapegoat: Mexico.

**Artifact Analysis**

Analyzing the strategies used by the U.S and Mexican media to portray the Juarez femicides will lend insight into the examination of gender violence. Using Burke’s dramatism theory, I examined both the U.S. and the Mexican media. First, I examined the U.S. media frames and their implications. Four themes were identified in the U.S. *El Paso Times* print media: Keeping inventory of femicides, Divided sister cities, Fallen heroes, and Government sanctioned murders. Next, I examined the Mexican media frames and implications. Four themes were also identified in Mexico’s *El Diario* print media: Forgotten women, Missing pieces, Reputation for impunity, and convenient goats.

**U.S. Media Themes: The *El Paso Times***

*Keeping inventory of femicides.* For eighteen years, Juarez Mexico has been a killing field for women. Juarez is recognized as the deadliest city in the world (Geraldo, 2010). Gender scholars claim that NAFTA and the maquiladora industry changed the gender roles in Juarez, which ultimately created a backlash in the form of mass violence against women. As of 2011, there were 420 reported femicides in Juarez (Bracamontes, 2011). However, Mexican authorities’ are accused of only filing one-eighth of all femicide reports, which means the number of femicides is likely much higher (Rodriquez, 2007). In fact, Juarez locals argue the number is over 5,000 (Rodriguez, Montane, & Pulitzer, 2007). Clearly, the actual femicide death toll is arguable; a fact that should be recognized. In this section, I will explain how the U.S. media frames the figures of femicides and examine the implications of this framing.
The U.S. media routinely use numbers to explain the scope of femicide crime. This form of framing often makes the victims appear less human which may affect an audience’s emotional connection with femicide. For example, two *El Paso Times* articles from 2004 reported the number of victims as “300” and “400” (Valdez, 2004). Often these figures are inconsistent, yet nonetheless they are a popular tool of *El Paso Times*. The figures are used regularly to exemplify extreme disorder in Juarez. As noted earlier, Burke (1973) argued that society needs to function on a level of Order. Order, and the hierarchy upon which it is based, “is constant in society because in every area of life there is an orderliness of principle” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 33). Order was broken in Juarez when women left their domestic roles to search for paid labor and a shift in gender perceptions. Arguably, one result of broken Order is mass femicide. The use of mediated figures and reports of increased femicides, illustrates both the longevity and magnitude of the disorder in Juarez. The femicide has been ongoing since 1994. Rather than constantly stating the date, the U.S. media appears to use the growing figures to exemplify the ongoing magnitude and ongoing occurrence of femicides. The media appears to be highlighting the scope of the crime; however, this type of framing also illustrates the nature of Mexican society and implies that the Mexican government is incompetent. Ideally, mediated femicide figures would illustrate the tragedy of femicide, yet it appears to have unfortunate repercussions.

When used to explain the scope of the crime, the constant citing of femicide figures has unfortunate implications. Specifically, the routine use of these numbers makes the victims anonymous. For example, in 2004, the *El Paso Times* published an article concerning the disappointment experienced by relatives and friends of femicide victims
because of the lack of government assistance and overall investigative negligence (Valdez). In the report, the journalist initially stated that the femicide toll is “300 women and girls”; however, two months later this same journalist claimed that “400 women have been killed in Juarez and Chihuahua city since 1993” (Valdez, 2004). While, the main focus of this article is on a U.S. couple accused of femicide crimes, in both articles, the stories of femicide victims are missing. The victims have officially become quantities. Consequently, the figure creates anonymity for the victim, which makes it difficult for an audience to focus on one face among many, to connect with any of the victims. This is problematic if an audience is constantly bombarded with femicide death tolls because the articles come off as impersonal and cold. Audiences identify with faces: not with numbers. With this type of frame, it may be difficult for an audience to identify with and care about the victims. This cold form of reporting has dismissed the lived experience of the victims and consequently invited the audience to do the same. Without the individual stories of femicide victims, an audience may not become personally involved in femicide issues. When the need for prevention is so dire, we can’t afford for media to dismiss femicides with the use of routine figures. The victim’s story is extremely relevant.

The use of femicide records is problematic for another reason. As is suggested by several of the examples above, journalist constantly miss-report the actual death toll of femicide. For example, four years after the above 2004 article reported 400 victims, a 2008 reporter claims the femicide rate is only 420 (Bracamontes, 2008; Valdez, 2004). This suggests only an increase of 20 victims in four years. By contrast, another 2008 article discusses the continuation of femicide in Juarez and refers to a story concerning three femicide victims that “brought to 1,000 the number of girls and women killed in
Juarez;” illustrating inconsistencies as well as anonymity (Bracamontes, 2008). This article is completely inconsistent with the first 2008 article that claimed the femicide number was 420 (Bracamontes, 2008). Three years later, a 2011 article gives an update of femicide death toll and claims that “in 2010 the number was 389 and in 2009 it was 259” (Cardenas, 2011). Both of these numbers quoted in 2011 are visibly lower compared to the above 2008 articles (Cardenas, 2011; Bracamontes, 2008). Although this form of inconsistent reporting seems callous, I would argue the real issue is that journalists do not seem to be taking these hate crimes seriously. This form of inconsistent reporting suggests that these journalists do not view femicide as an issue worthy of accurate reporting. The constant miss-reporting of femicide illustrates the lack of value placed on femicide hate crimes. In addition, the miss-reporting may also suggest that journalists view this as solely a Mexican issue unworthy of further investigative reporting.

The media’s use of death tolls for femicides also has another unfortunate implication. Through constant use of figures, we lose the fact that these women experienced death, rape, and mutilation. Furthermore, we lose any representation of the victim in their living state. Wiesel and Friedman (2010) note that through the media’s constant use of death tolls “victims are not merely statistics, they are less than that: they are an idea” (p. 384). Shortly, femicide becomes just an idea; not a frequent, horrible, tragic event. The death toll of femicides does not capture the immediacy of death or even the reality of life. The constant use of figures is just one more way for the media to unintentionally rob the victim of identity. For example, a 2010 article discusses forensic artist Frank Bender, who assisted the Juarez police with femicide investigations (Valdez, 2010). The article states that “more than 800 girls and women have been murdered in the
city” (Valdez, 2010). Again, while the figures illustrate the scope of the tragedy, the focus is on Bender and his work, not the victims. Furthermore, a 2011 article claims 227 women were reported missing this year (Cardenas, 2011). Missing from the article are the names and demographics of the women, which illustrates the constraints of the media as a public information guide. Sadly, femicide victims are stripped of life; as well as identity.

In sum, the articles illustrate the El Paso media’s attitude toward femicide. Although the use of figures illustrates the scope of the crimes, the result is victim anonymity. The victim’s names or history are rarely noted or recognized in a story. Few of the articles mention the victim’s family, background, occupation, likes, and dislikes. As a result, we have no idea who these women were, or even the reason why they died. The U.S. media appears more worried about the total number of the victims (even though they do not appear to engage in the investigative reporting needed to produce accurate figures), rather than the larger issue: women are targets for murder. By using this framing device, the El Paso Times has successfully distanced its audience from femicide. As a result, audience members do not have to experience guilt. However, it becomes more significant when femicides disrupt the Order in the U.S. As the next theme indicates, the threat of cross-cultural femicides will force the U.S. to examine the issue.

**Divided sister cities: Cross-cultural femicides.** Juarez and El Paso are unique sister cities. Surrounded on both sides by mountains and dessert, their regional differences are only distinguishable by the thin trickle of the Rio Grande (Rice, 2011). On one side of the river is the U.S.; the other side is Mexico. Yet it is still a national border and border life always relies on the dividing line (Rice, 2011). The recent war against
government impunity, drug cartels and gangs has made Juarez one of the world’s most
dangerous cities. However, El Paso has remained eerily peaceful and prosperous (Rice,
2011). In fact, El Paso consistently ranks as one of the safest cities in the United States, in
grotesque disparity to its sister city (Rice, 2011). Recently, Juarez has seen an increase in
its homicide rate; it has experienced an estimated 3000 murders (Rice, 2011). By
contrast, El Paso has had only five murders in the same time frame (Rice, 2011). This
drastic increase in Juarez violence has left many El Pasoans\(^8\) fearful for their
community’s reputation as a “sister city.” Many El Pasoans view femicide border
infiltration as inevitable (Rice, 2011). In this section, I will examine how the U.S.
newspaper articles frame the spreading of femicide violence.

Often, the U.S. media sensationalizes El Paso’s border fears by exemplifying the
El Paso community’s broken sense of Order. Specifically, femicide figures and mediated
quotations illustrate the underlining fear of cross-cultural femicides. For example, a
recent \textit{El Paso Times} poll found that “62 percent of El Paso voters believed Juarez
violence is spilling over into El Paso (Valdez, 2008). In Burke’s terms, El Pasoans are
experiencing and/or sensing broken Order. El Pasons fear the impact of spreading
violence because it could ultimately affect their economic and domestic life. This
community has prided itself on and has taken comfort its reputation as a safe city parallel
to a deadly one. Yet the media suggests citizens are fearful that reputations seems to be
dissolving. To illustrate, an \textit{El Paso Times} article details a citizen’s fear of being
associated with Juarez: “when people find out I’m from El Paso, they say, ‘Oh my god
that’s where all those killing are’ “We just have to work to change that perspective”

\(^8\) El Paso citizens are regionally recognized as “El Pasoans.”
(Bracamontes, 2008). Clearly, emerging border violence has jeopardized the reputation of El Paso. El Paso citizens are beginning to experience anxiety, which according to Burke’s model will, soon generate guilt.

One way to avoid the generation of guilt is for the El Paso community to deny the need for anxiety. Burke calls this “transcendence.” Individuals will experience transcendence when they take “oppositional motives into account, and widen his/her terminology accordingly, thus arriving at a higher understanding” (Burke, 1969, p. 40). In this case, *El Paso Times* allows the public to avoid experiencing guilt by simply dismissing the claim. For example, in a 2008 article, El Paso citizen Sam Pacheo claims “every border community has to constantly work on its reputation and on making itself attractive to those who don’t live here.” This author suggests that El Pasoans’ fears are unnecessary because reputation repairs have always been routine in this community and others like it. The denial of violence also relies heavily on the argument that El Paso is an FBI crime index “safe city” (Bracamontes, 2008). In other words, the media argues that El Paso is not really threatened - it is dealing with the same common challenges faced by other border cities and it is still a “safe city.”

This type of framing appears to strategically ignore the current threat just across the river and to avoid any connection with Juarez; clearly, distancing continues. For example, a 2008 *El Paso Times* article states, “El Paso officials say there is no reason for El Pasons to worry. City leaders are not concerned with the violence having an impact on this side of the river” (Bracamontes, 2008). In spite of the drastic increase in Juarez border violence, this comment aims to put El Pasons at ease. Arguably, the denial of violence that breeds femicides is a way of restoring Order. Despite the changes made in
the El Paso community, such as increased border security, media quotations that suggest the violence is not spreading is a way to distance the community from the crimes. This distancing allows El Pasoans to perpetuate the semblance of a peaceful city.

The sister cities’ grotesque dissimilarities also functions as a way for El Pasoans to ignore future femicides on the border. As stated previously, femicides are not restricted by cultural borders and will spread when they become culturally condoned. Tolerance can come in unusual forms, even denial. This denial is evident in an El Paso Times article in which one citizen claims “the city must be prepared to distance itself from Juarez in the future” (Bracamontes, 2008). El Pasoans are invited to separate themselves from the violence, and maintain their reputation of peaceful community in the future. Yet by denying the existence of emerging violence, the media is framing the femicide as an irrelevant issue. Such framing suggest that El Paso is not concerned with femicide violence. For example, In El Paso Times, a citizen stated, “El Paso is nice. It’s just the violence getting bad in Juarez” (Bracamontes, 2008). Evidently in the media, reputation maintenance is all that matters, not the potential U.S. victims of these tragic crimes.

In summary, this media frame clearly exemplifies an underlining fear in El Paso. However, the media frames this as a fear for the city’s reputation, not as a fear for future U.S. femicide victims. Citizens are invited to uphold the community’s status by dismissing their fears of violence. Although I would argue that the femicide issue is already cross-cultural, the blatant denial of the event is a clear way of maintaining Order. The presence of this media frame suggests that this community will eventually have to acknowledge the potential for U.S. femicide. Clearly, the fault lies not with their community; but with the sister community. Regardless, as a result of broken Order, the
community’s need to avoid guilt is strongly apparent. With potential guilt, comes the need for redemption. In the spirit of the cycle of redemption, this community needs a scapegoat.

“Government sanctioned murders”: Blaming Mexico. The U.S. media has become wary of Mexico’s scapegoating strategies. For example, in the 1990’s Juarez officials routinely blamed the victims of femicides for their own deaths (Dominquez-Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). In the press, the victims were often blamed for the way that they dressed and for the places that they frequented (Dominquez-Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010). Presently, it is becoming difficult for Juarez officials to pacify the U.S. community with such fallacious arguments. With a recent increase in femicides, paired with alleged investigative inconsistencies, the U.S. media is no longer fooled by this femicide “myth.” In this section, I will explain the U.S. media’s framing of Mexican government.

Burke (1989) claimed that one way to reduce guilt is a scapegoat: “with redemption comes the redeemer – which is to say, a victim, a scapegoat or a kill” (as cited in Rueckert, 1969, p. 460). The concept of scapegoating refers to the transferring the blame for guilt onto an individual who will bear away another person’s or community’s guilt (Burke, 1989).

Burke noted that victimage accounts for individuals who blame another. In this case, the U.S. media appears to blame the Mexican government for the disruption of Order. For example, in two El Paso Times articles, the femicides were called “government sanctioned murders” (Benanti, 2004; Valdez, 2006). Such references suggest that the U.S. media does not seem to consider NAFTA, the resulting
consumerism, and the illegal drug and weapons trade fueled by America buyers, as having played a role in creating an environment that was ripe for femicide. Despite U.S. factories profiting on poor working conditions and cheap labor costs, the U.S. media still blames the Mexican government for all femicide crime. For example, in *El Paso Times*, one victim’s mother stated, “The murders must be solved. The murders must stop. Officials must be held accountable” (Valdez, 2004). Again, this insinuates that the Mexican authorities are to blame. Nothing is said about U.S. culpability, such as the consequences of NAFTA eliminating the Juarez middle class and the U.S. consumerism of maquiladora products.

In a way, using the Mexican government as a scapegoat is a safe strategy. “Government” and “officials” are abstract groups. The concept of a “government” scapegoat is abstract because no individual is identified to take the blame. This is apparent in another *El Paso Times* article which reported that “a court found Mexico in violation of human rights conventions under the American Convention Human Rights” (Lozano, 2011). The U.S. scapegoating tactic involves blaming a collectivist group. However, scapegoating is not effective on hegemonic governments and the thousands of officials that comprise that government. In addition, placing blame on an entire country or government is not an effective strategy to eliminate femicide because a government is a non-faced entity.

Components of media silencing may also influence this form of scapegoating. Silencing refers to an individual’s willingness to publically express opinions on a

---

9 Hegemony refers to “a structural space or level that is only significant insofar as it gives rise to, stabilizes, manages, shapes, expands, and/or controls the wider system in which it is embedded” (Haugaard & Lenter, 2006, p. 67).
controversial topic, which in turn represents how one perceives public opinion (Geer, 2004). Although only Juarez journalists have experienced the repercussions of investigative journalism, the unstable border could be reason enough for U.S. journalists to be silenced because they might potentially suffer the same retaliations experienced by Mexican investigative journalists. Therefore, information given to the *El Paso Times* for its stories on femicide is potentially limited. Juarez journalists may be fearful to share information to *El Paso Times* for fear of retribution, which will ultimately affect the U.S. media. I would argue that the U.S. media is likely to lack adequate information sources from Juarez. Although this type of silencing is complicated because it is intentional, the U.S. media may still suffer the effects of silencing in Juarez. This could account for why no specific government official or groups have been blamed by the U.S. media.

Ironically, the Mexican government, whose responsibility it is to restore Order, is actually accused by the U.S. press of the just opposite. In 2010, the *El Paso Times* reported that the Human Rights Court[^10] “has sentenced the Mexican government in relation to the murder of eight women whose bodies were found in a cotton field in November 2001” (Valdez, 2010). As this quotation suggests, the Mexican “government” is being blamed for flawed femicide investigations and is now receiving foreign pressure to fix the problem. The media suggests that femicide is solely a government issue and fails to acknowledge the U.S.’s involvement in creating Juarez’s economic uncertainty. Another *El Paso Times* article claims that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights “ruled that the Mexican government did not thoroughly investigate the 2001 cotton field

[^10]: The Human Rights Courts is a convention that has “the jurisdiction to hear a contentious state-to-state case referred by the Commissions concerning state of emergencies” (Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 190).
murder\textsuperscript{11} cases and instructed the government to reinvestigate them and follow other directives” (Lozano, 2011). The Human Rights convention is demanding that the Mexican government reinvestigate this ten-year-old murder and help solve the femicide tragedy.

Reports of continuously botched Mexican femicide investigations have reinforced the U.S. media’s attempt to scapegoat the Mexican government. To account for failed investigative efforts, Juarez officials are notorious for blaming crimes on potentially innocent individuals or other scapegoats. In a sense, to reduce the guilt of the Mexican government, this is one attempt to exercise its own version of scapegoating. It appears in the media that these individuals are often selected to the role of scapegoat because the government believed that something about them made them plausible criminals. For example, a 2004 \textit{El Paso Times} article details the scapegoating of two U.S. citizens Cynthia Kiecher and Ulises Perzabel, who were accused of killing Viviana Reyes. The couple denied the allegations and claimed they were tortured into signing a confession. Mexican officials denied the allegations, yet later released the couple after receiving pressure from the U.S. Consul’s office (Valdez, 2004).

When scapegoating failed, Mexico encouraged foreign investigative efforts. An \textit{El Paso Times} reporter stated in 2010 that forensic artist, Frank Bender, was brought to Juarez to assist with the investigation. However, Bender’s had many reservations about the investigation after his time in Juarez. Reportedly, Bender feared for his life and suspected “that the police were involved somehow in the abductions of the missing

\textsuperscript{11} The “cotton field murders” refer to the murder of eight Juarez women in 2001. All eight women were located in the Juarez dessert and the event became symbolic of femicide.
women” (Valdez, 2010). Furthermore, Bender was allegedly forced to work in his hotel room and his visits were closely monitored (Valdez, 2010). With stories like Bender’s, the U.S. media has framed the Mexican government as not only being responsible for, but potentially committing femicides.

Despite Mexico’s alleged attempts to solve femicides, people interviewed about the cases still blame the government. For example, in one El Paso Times article, Irma Perez, whose daughter was a femicide victim claimed “all we’ve had up to now is nothing but talk. They’ve no intention of arresting any of the state officials who were negligent or who failed to investigate the homicides properly” (Valdez, 2004). The citizens who are quoted in the media obviously distrust the Mexican government. The majority of the El Paso Times articles blame the Mexican government for being negligent in stopping the crimes. For example, in one El Paso Times article, femicide activists Marisela Ortiz claimed, “The authorities should recognize the magnitude of the problem and develop campaigns to prevent this trend from continuing. The authorities don’t want to recognize that the cases continue” (Cardenas, 2011). To Ortiz, the Mexican government is obliged to create conditions to protect women. It is important to recognize that the media has the power of selection. The journalists get to choose which testimonies are published and which are left out. The fact that the majority of testimonies are in opposition of the Mexican government suggests framing in itself.

Despite previous prevention plans created by the Juarez council, the U.S. media claims the Mexican government and local officials show little interest in addressing the
violence against women. In fact, many U.S. articles reference government impunity\textsuperscript{12} as the main contributor to the femicides. Now, a common assumption in the U.S. is that Mexico in its entirety surrounded with government impunity. For example, in a 2010 article, the founder of Justice for Our Daughters Association, Norma Ledezma described the femicides as a unique situation “all stemming from cultural impunity” (Valdez, 2010). Similar to other quotations, Ledezma believes that the government is solely responsible for femicides. Another 2004 reporter discussed the femicide protests and claimed that the protesters are fighting against a “corrupt Mexican judicial system” (Valdez, 2004). The focus on Mexico as a corrupt nation riddled with impunity lends support to the U.S. scapegoating scheme.

This media frame once again allows the U.S. to distance itself from femicides. It is not portrayed as a U.S. issue; it is portrayed as a Mexican one. The media does not acknowledge that the U.S. has anything to do with femicide. Therefore, NAFTA and maquiladora consumerism can be dismissed as potential culprits. Mortification, or the bearing of the guilt on oneself rather than placing it on another, is not presented as the solution to reduce U.S. guilt caused by femicides. If the U.S. were to mortify itself, there would be no need for an external scapegoat. Instead, self-mortification is not perceived as the solution for this cultural problem or a way to expound guilt. It appears that it is simpler to rely on external scapegoats rather than internally addressing the problem. Consequently, the U.S. media’s use of scapegoating does not contribute to femicide prevention. As the U.S. press continues to report femicide figures and blame the

\textsuperscript{12} Impunity: is defined as “the freedom from legal sanction or accountability” (Anderson, 2004, p. 243).
government for femicides, women and female activists in Juarez are still dying. Yet as the next frame suggests, the U.S. media appears to think the activists who are dying for the cause are still worth sensationalizing. Undoubtedly, the media cannot pass up the drama of a martyr or soon-to-be martyred activists. Especially when it correlates with the claim that the Mexican government is primarily responsible for femicide.

**Fallen heroes: The femicide activists.** Initially, the acts of femicide in Juarez could be seen as an attempt by factions of Mexican society to restore Order. When women began to leave domestic environments for employment in maquiladoras, the traditional patriarchal Order of Juarez was disrupted. Their deaths may have been meant to threaten other women into returning to their traditional roles.

Eighteen years later, a new Order is accepted where femicides are forcefully tolerated, which complicates the roles of femicide activists. The new Order is reinforced by a fear of retaliation and vengeance. In this section, I will explain how the U.S. media frames the female femicide activists. More specifically, the following examples detail the U.S. media frames that suggest the Mexican government is incapable of protecting female activists. The story of the activists also illustrates the power of silencing and Order in the region of Juarez.

Silencing of the press has always been an issue in the region of Juarez. In the last four years, 22 Juarez news reporters have been murdered (Johnston, 2010). Staff from *El Diario*, which prides itself on investigative reporting, were among the 22 murdered (Johnston, 2010). Reportedly, many of the journalists were working on investigative stories at the time of their death (Johnston, 2010). Their deaths represent the power of
silencing in Juarez. The journalists were literally silenced so that the story of femicide could not be told.

Silencing also has occurred among women\textsuperscript{13} femicide activists. These activists play a major role in the drama of the femicide. In a way, they represent actors in the drama. The courageous few individuals, who risked it all, lost everything for their efforts. Their stories illustrate the new sense of Order in Juarez; the Order that demands silence.

For example, a 2010 \textit{El Paso Times} article describes the life of femicide activist Paula Flores (Valdez, 2010). Flores, recently announced that she and her family were leaving their Lomas de Poleo\textsuperscript{14} home in Juarez because of constant threats and attacks against them (Valdez, 2010). In fear for her remaining family, Flores fled to El Paso and closed down her femicide prevention operation. Reportedly, Flores was one of the most visible femicide activists (Valdez, 2010). Yet, despite her “good works,” stories about Flores revealed that she was constantly being threatened (Valdez 2008; Valdez, 2010). The U.S. media reports of Flores insinuate that the Mexican government is incapable of protecting her, even though she was risking her life to do work that the government should be doing. Flores’s activist efforts challenged the concrete lines of Order and resulted in threats of violence. Sadly, the U.S. media focused on the threats aimed at Flores and her decision to flee to the U.S, not her actual prevention activities or the failure of Mexican official’s prevention campaigns. This demonstrates the degree in which Order is maintained in Juarez.

\textsuperscript{13} I specify state “women” because all reported stories discuss the lives of female activists.

\textsuperscript{14} Lomas de Poleo is a Mexican residential area between Juarez and Chihuahua State (Gaspar de Alba, 2007).
Flores’s story is similar to the U.S. press’s portrayal of activist Marisela Ortiz and Marca Luisa Andrade. Ortiz was the founder of Nuestra Hijas de Regresso a Casa, an organization that fights femicide. In a 2010 *El Paso Times* article, Ortiz stated, “It is very concerning that women continue disappearing” (Cardenas, 2010). The article continues with Ortiz claiming that the Mexican government should create conditions that protect woman (Cardenas, 2010). The media’s choice to select Ortiz’s statement which blames the Mexican government for femicide further aligns with the above theme that view femicide as a Mexican government problem.

Another of the “fallen hero” theme was apparent in a 2011 *El Paso Times* article that stated “Ortiz fled from Juarez after receiving several death threats against her family” (Valdez, 2010; Cardenas, 2011). Reportedly, before Ortiz fled, she had filed a lawsuit against “several groups” for human trafficking. She claimed that she could “identify several groups that could be involved in this situation” (Cardenas, 2011). However, the group’s names were never reported in the article. This same article details the story of Andrade, the legal director of Nuestra Hijas de Regresso a Casa, who was threatened after her house was burned down. Andrade also fled Juarez.

The press reports appear to indicate that there is a growing trend of women activists fleeing Juarez due to threats against their lives and a lack of government protection. A 2011 *El Paso Times* article reported the story of Cipriana Jurado (Licon, 2011a; Licon 2011b). Jurado founded the Center for Information and Solidarity for Working Women (Licon, 2011a). She was recognized for “defending poor working conditions in the maquiladoras and advocating against femicides in Juarez” (Licon, 2011a; Licon 2011b). Reportedly, Jurado was friends with fellow activist Josefina Ryes.
Unfortunately, Ryes and her sons were murdered in January 2010 (Licon, 2011a). *El Paso Times* reported that Jurado was seeking political asylum in El Paso (Licon, 2011a).

Like Ryes and her sons, the mother of femicide victim Marisela Escobedo was murdered for her activist efforts. The *El Paso Times* reported the story of Escobedo in 2011 (Licona). Escobedo was publically murdered in front of the capital (Licon, 2011a; Licon, 2011b). Capital cameras caught Escobedo running from her assailants before being “gunned down” (Licon, 2011a; Licon, 2011b). Her death was recorded during broad daylight. Escobedo’s murder was a message for other activists who wished to challenge the new Order. Courageously, Escobedo drew attention to herself in an effort to avenge her daughter’s death. Sadly, Escobedo paid with her life. Thus, once again the U.S. media details the death of a beloved hero which further supports the argument that the Mexican government is insufficient at protecting woman. The media’s frame suggests the message in Juarez for femicide activists is to keep quiet or face the consequences. Sadly, femicides have increased, but so has the murder of activists and femicide investigators. In the press it appears that journalist, the relatives of femicide victims, and femicide activist all risk disrupting the new Order; the Order that demands silence. In fact, seven out of eighteen articles detail the stories of activists who had no government protection. The stories of these women appear to be used in the media as a way to further support placing blame on the Mexican government. In addition, the activist’s experience

---

15 According to El Pueblo Newspaper, Cipriana Jurado was granted political asylum in July 2011.
suggests that if you speak out against femicides, you risk violating Order. Unfortunately, this may deter future femicide prevention.

A month after Escobedo’s murder, the *El Paso Times* reports the death of famous activist Susana Chavez (Licon, 2011b). Chavez was famous for coining the term “Ni Una Mas” or “Not One More”. Reportedly, Juarez police officials located her mutilated body. The Chihuahua attorney general claims “three 17-year-old boys who are gang members had axphyxiated Chavez in the early morning” (Licon, 2011b). The boys are also accused of cutting off her left hand with a saw to make it look like a narcotics crime (Licon, 2011b). After her murder, the boys allegedly dragged her half naked body through the streets of Juarez (Licon, 2011b). The initial police statement also claimed that Chavez was in her early 20s (Licon, 2011b). However, Susana Chavez was actually 36-years-old. This frame reinforces the fact that the Mexican government neglected even the most prominent femicide activists. The frame also suggests the consequence for those fighting for femicide prevention is death. Unintentionally, this framing device makes Juarez appear as a city that does not welcome social change and creates the perception that femicide is the fault of the Mexican government.

Overall, the U.S. media encourages its audience to distance themselves from the femicides by creating the perception that femicide is a Mexican issue. By using the evidence that many female activists have died because they tried to prevent femicide, the media frames reinforce the notion that Mexican government is to blame for the lack of protection of women. However, the insinuation that the Mexican government is solely responsible for femicide is problematic because the government is comprised of thousands of individuals. In addition, if the media frames the femicide as just a Mexican
This section of my thesis detailed the U.S media framing of the Juarez femicides. It uncovered the use of frames that emphasize the anonymity of the victims through femicide death tolls, dismiss El Paso’s border troubles, scapegoat the Mexican government, and use the death of fallen activist heroes as a way to reinforce government blame. The next four themes will discuss the Mexican media themes as identified in *El Diario*: Forgotten women, Missing pieces, Reputation for impunity, and Convenient goats.

**Mexican media themes: *El Diario***

**Forgotten Women: Death toll for femicides.** Femicide is a longstanding problem in Juarez. Citizens have lived with femicide for 18 years. Despite countless campaigns launched to protect women, including increased maquiladora transportation and a large military presence, efforts have fallen short. Women are still dying and families are still mourning. In fact, femicide it is not only expected, but an ever-growing problem. Sadly, the death tolls increase daily. In this section, I will discuss the Mexican media’s use of femicide tolls which leads to namelessness.

As in the U.S. media, the use of femicide figures is common in *El Diario* articles. Monthly death toll reports are published to chronicle the femicides in Juarez. At present, these reports are as common and expected as the femicides themselves. For example, one *El Diario* article reports the monthly 2011 death toll: “in January, 16 women and 10 minors” were killed (Sosa, 2011). Sadly, the use of a monthly femicide death tolls are
routine in Juarez media, which suggests the prevalence of gender violence in this community. This specific monthly death toll marked February 18 as the deadliest day of the year where, “four women were killed” (Sosa, 2011). Allegedly, March, April, May, and June ended with “29 crimes against women” (Sosa, 2011). The year ended with 123 femicides total (Sosa, 2011). Journalist Sosa (2011) claims a “significant fact is the increase in killing women.” Missing from the article are the names of the victims. Even with 123 victims, not one name is given. Numbers have officially replaced faces. Each victim’s story is lost and added to an end-of-the-month mediated crime report. In the U.S. media, viewing the victims as “Others” would be more likely; however, in the Juarez media the use of othering is disconcerting. The victims of Juarez are their “sisters,” “mothers,” “friends,” and “relatives.” Yet still the Juarez media portrays the femicide victims as numbers, just as they are portrayed in the U.S. media. The fact that the Juarez media is Othering their “sisters” suggests the power of silencing in Juarez. In short, these journalists will go to great lengths, such as erasing the memory of a fellow Juarez “sister” by portraying her as a quantity, just to maintain the new Order in Juarez.

These constant mediated death tolls illustrate the disorder in Juarez. Those who promoted the gender shift, the women seeking to violate the traditional patriarchal Order by working in maquiladoras, continue to pay for their crimes. Today, 18 years of femicide has created a new Order in Juarez; femicide is forcefully endured. Mediated femicide death tolls reinforce the new Order and illustrate components of silencing; femicide is still a commonly committed crime. Femicide victims are constantly referred to with numerical figures. The fact that the Mexican media fails to personalize these women is a strong indicator of silencing. For example, a 2009 article reported that “the
year ended with 163 murders committed against women” (Minjares, 2009). The article continues stating “33 femicides recorded in December, making it the most violent year against women and sets a new record in the history of the city” (Minjares, 2009). Reportedly, “22 victims were minors.” (Minjares, 2009). Another 2009 article states that “the murders of women increased by 9 percent last year compared with the record in 2006” (Minjares, 2009). The article also stated “2007 totaled 25 cases” while “in 2006 there was a total of 23 murders of women” (Minjares, 2009). Allegedly, this brought the femicide total to 677 (Minjares, 2009). The routinely reported figures illustrate the chaos in Juarez. Femicides are still being committed at an alarming rate. Apparently, the new Order forces maquiladora employees, Juarez citizens, and the press to be tolerant of femicide.

Unfortunately as femicides increase, so too does the anonymity of the victims. Femicide figures have now become a gloomy form of community inventory. Sadly, in both of the 2009 articles examined, only one name was give: 10-year-old femicide victim Jennifer Valdez. Reportedly, Valdez and her mother were both murdered (Minjares, 2009). Her mother’s name was not given. Like most media sources, El Diario will sensationalize for shock value. Valdez’s youth ensured her name would be reported largely for its shock value. For the other 122 femicide victims in 2009, this was not the case.

Although most femicide records are reported bi-monthly, occasionally singular femicide crimes catch the media’s attention. These singular crime reports usually illustrate a dramatic increase in femicide counts. One such example is the “cotton field murder.” In 2001, eight women were located together in a desert burial ground. These
victims are recognized as the “cotton field eight.” Five out of 18 El Diario articles reported on or mentioned the “cotton field testimonies.” However, only a 2007 article listed seven of the eight victims’ names: “Claudia Ivette Gonzalez, Esmeralda Herrera Monreal, Laura Berenice Ramos Monarrez, Mary Rocina Galicia Meraz, Maria de los Angeles Acosta Ramirez, Mayra Juliana Reyes Solis, and Merlin Elizabeth Rodriguez Sanez” (Cano). While the victims’ names are mentioned in this one article, the other articles illustrate that the Mexican media prefers to frame stories around gory details of the crimes and the death toll figures. The victim’s names are not relevant to most of the stories; only the body count. This suggests that the media has lost sight of the stories of these women. Consequently, there is an increase in anonymity and femicide.

Some citizens also see another problem that arises from the use of figures: a strategy to receive resources. A 2007 article reported on a protest staged by mothers of femicide victims. Reportedly, the mothers were protesting against the Mexican government for the government’s use of femicide figures. The mothers claim that the figures are being used by the government as a way to justify the use of the community’s financial resources (Orozco, 2007). The increase in femicides has resulted in the improvement of forensic laboratories, transportation systems, and increased militarization in Juarez (Lugo 2008; Gaspar de Alba & Guzman, 2010). As one mother’s quotation stated “it angers us to see them fill their mouths with our pain; to them we are a statistics” (Orozco, 2007).

The use of the “femicide inventory” has downplayed the tragedy of femicide. The victims have no faces or stories. In fact, most of them remain nameless in the media. For instance, out of 18 articles examined only one 2004 article details a complete femicide
crime (Quintero). Reportedly, the 23-year-old female victim was sexually assaulted and strangled in an abandoned house (Quintero, 2004). The suspect was identified by name: 26-year-old Jose Luis Montes (Quintero, 2004). However, even with 48 hours between the time of crime and the publication of the news story, the media still did not (or chose not to) report the victim’s name. Sadly, the Mexican media has stripped these women of their identity. Even in full femicide reports, the victim appears to be less relevant than the suspect. This type of framing suggests that past and future femicide victims will remain nameless. If femicide victims are not framed as relevant, then the killings will continue and few will have to answer for these crimes against humanity.

**Missing Pieces: No one speculates.** Despite the increased numbers of femicides, reports on the perpetrator or suspected perpetrators of these crimes are rare in the sample of articles I examined. Unless someone is arrested by the police, the media appears hesitant to speculate about who is responsible for the femicides. In fact, speculation about perpetrators, such as those related to drug cartels and gangs, is absent entirely from the femicide articles I analyzed. Instead, the reports focus on the rising death tolls or location of victims’ bodies. To clarify, when I reference the term “speculation,” I am not referring to subjective journalism. In this sense, “speculation” is referring to the any reference that El Diario embarked on further investigation of the crimes. For example, any explanation for why the crime was committed is missing. In this section, I will discuss the missing pieces of El Diario stories: the names of those responsible.

---

16 As a researcher, I did lack understanding in Mexican media law. To be wary of generalizing, I did contact El Paso Time’s publisher, Sergio Salinas, who confirmed that there is no Media law in Mexico that prevents journalists from speculating about crimes.
The new Order demands silence. Therefore, in Juarez, investigative journalism is just a term, not an act. Accusations and speculations could get a journalist killed. To avoid the disruption of this Order, most journalists tend to avoid pointing the finger. The only exception is if the police pointed their fingers first. In other words, if the police name a suspect or indicate that they have arrested someone, this information does get published.

Juarez is a city recognized for organized crime. Despite this recognition, not one newspaper article in my sample discussed the prospect of organized crime being culpable for femicides. Uniquely, the *El Diario* prides itself on investigative journalism. Yet it would appear that this media outlet decidedly never embarks on further investigation past the police reports.

To make up for this absent portion of the crime drama, the media will provide “filler” information, such as the murder location, descriptions of the victim’s clothes and appearance at the scene, and updated femicide tolls. In essence, the media is reporting just enough, while reporting very little. The lack of detail leads me to believe that silencing is strong in Juarez, where journalists are routinely murdered for digging too deep. This suggests that Juarez journalists are afraid to violate Order, and they have every right to be. These missing pieces scream oppression. For example, a 2008 article reported that there were “a total of 25 murders of women in 2007” (Minjares) and that femicides are “a phenomenon that occurs not only in this border, but around the world (Minjares, 2007). The article concludes by reporting the range in ages for the 25 victims. As this example illustrates, no information about the perpetrators is reported. Similar to femicide anonymity, the perpetrators are also nameless. A 2005 article adopts a similar approach.
It discusses the exhumation of 53 women’s bodies (Alcala). The article explains the exhumation process and the future forensic work needed to help identify the victims (Alcala, 2005). It also names the forensic team, describes their backgrounds and concludes by noting the gory placement of the victim’s bodies (Alcala, 2005). Strangely, the perpetrators and/or those potentially responsible for the crimes are never named, nor does the newspaper discuss the prospect of organized crime.

Out of 18 El Diario articles examined, 11 discussed femicide crimes specifically. All 11 articles failed to identify or even reference the prospect of organized crime involvement, unless the authorities had done so first. The articles focus more on the death toll, grieving mothers, and forensic efforts, than who likely committed the crimes. For example, a 2009 article reported the femicide of 39-year-old female who was the mother of two children (Gabriel, 2009). In addition, the article reported the location of the scene and stated that crime scene ballistics were not secured (Gabriel, 2009). There was no further indication of any investigative journalism in the article. Sadly, finding solutions, such as who committed the crime, is not framed as relevant. Perhaps this phenomenon is a result of silencing. The lack of investigative reporting may be because journalists are fearful of repercussions that efforts to uncover the identities of criminals may trigger. Therefore, the silencing of journalists may help fuel the increase of femicide. Clearly, in the right crime organization, there is no worry about becoming a suspect. Unfortunately, Juarez is packed with effective crime organizations. Those who committed femicide are safe to do so again.

Another example of a lack of investigative reporting is in a 2004 article that reported on the sexual abuse and strangulation of a 23-year-old female (Quintero, 2004).
Reportedly, witnesses saw “a man” pull her towards the back of a car near an abandoned house (Quintero, 2004). After reporting the potential location of the scene, the article concluded with “the victim was wearing a white blouse and jeans, was approximately 1.50 meters tall and had curly hair” (Quintero, 2004). Sadly, missing from the article was any description of the potential perpetrator. The one responsible for the femicide, “a man,” was only referenced one time in the article.

The media routinely reports the stories of witnesses, yet appears content to perpetuate the frame that no one is culpable for femicide. For example, a 2009 article collected testimonies from alleged witnesses in a particular murder location (Minjares, 2009). One witness claimed, “We don’t know why or who it was” (Minjares, 2009). In the same article, a police report is quoted and indicates that the witnesses “declined to send a message to the authorities of the three levels of government” (Minjares, 2009). When the El Diario reporter asked why, one witness stated, “For what? There is no way to investigate, as though they were going to do something” (Minjares, 2009). Allegedly, the witness’s families supported their decisions to keep quiet. It is important to acknowledge that the media has a selection process. The media has the power to choose and corroborate their frame of femicide that insinuates no one knows who is responsible. Uniquely, this article is absent of any investigative journalism in which the El Diario prides itself on.

According to Noelle-Neumann (1993), there are three components of silencing: fear of isolation, assessment of public belief, and willingness to speak. The third component, willingness to speak, would account for Mexican journalists who fear the repercussions of investigative journalism; they are less willing to publically declare their
belief in their articles (Miller, 2005). Their silence becomes a perfect illustration of the way that Order is maintained in Juarez. This is also evident in another 2009 article that reported a murder witnessed by a 13-year-old boy (Minjares). Reportedly, the boy claimed “the gunman wore a mask and looked at him for a matter of second”; he then “fled in a vehicle whose characteristics were not observed” (Minjares, 2009). Reportedly, the boy had no further information to give. Although these testimonies could be accurate, it is interesting that the media fails to report on information outside of testimonies and police reports. Again, the lack of investigative journalism suggests a level of silencing in Juarez.

Clearly, the new Order in Juarez ensures the continuation of femicide. Journalists and witnesses are cautious with words. As a journalist, sharing too much information could result in death. Juarez journalists have the power to reach a mass public, yet the consequences of violating Order are more powerful. Despite El Diario purportedly being an investigative media outlet, all 11 articles examined visibly lack any indication of investigative journalism outside of citizen quotation and police reports. Although this is a city recognized for its organized crime, El Diario never even references drug cartels or gang violence as potentially contributing to femicide crimes. In addition, suspects are only reported after they are arrested. Arguably, government impunity and fear of retribution has many journalists scared to investigate femicide crimes. It may be perceived as safer if the authorities speculate first. Consequently, secondary reporting has become a survival mechanism.

This style of reporting does nothing to help address the crisis represented by femicide. These articles do not focus on those responsible, but rather on the gory details
of the crime itself. Unfortunately, femicides are increasing. Secondary reporting and flawed journalistic investigations that resulted in silencing that may be contributing to a tolerance of femicide. It is not surprising that the lack of solutions or even discussions of potential solutions have many Mexican citizens livid with the authorities. Shockingly, articles seldom contain quotations from Mexican citizens who speculate about femicide crime. Instead, their blame falls on the “government’s” shoulders.

Reputation for impunity: The government is blamed. While the perpetrators responsible for committing femicides are seldom identified in the press, government blame is plentiful. Mexico is recognized as a land overflowing with government impunity. Sensationalized scapegoating and stories of extortion have resulted in overall distrust of the government. As the *El Diario* articles indicates, Juarez citizens and foreign officials view government funded femicide campaigns in Mexico as simply performative or just for show. In this section, I will discuss the media framing of “government” in the Mexican media.

Since Juarez citizens, including the press, are unable to safely identify the actual perpetrator of femicide, they are in need of a scapegoat. As noted earlier, Burke (1989) asserted humans are often motivated to rid themselves of this guilt through a scapegoat. To help relieve societal guilt for the horrors being committed in their midst, Juarez citizens need someone or something to blame. Blaming the government has become a less dangerous scapegoating strategy than identifying drug cartels or other culprits. The terms “authorities” and “government” represent the faces of many, which makes accountability by specific individuals difficult. It appears that the media would rather blame a faceless entity; it is less risky than pointing to on particular person. This is an
ironic twist. Rather than focusing on the true perpetrators of crimes, the public’s blame has fallen on law enforcers. Not only is this a safe strategy, but it aligns with the government’s reputation for impunity; therefore, the chosen scapegoat is a believable one. In short, citizens and foreign officials are stating what is already believed to be true; there is widespread government distrust in Juarez.

The presence of government distrust is extremely visible in the articles from the Mexican press. Although *El Diario* reporters never directly blame the government themselves, they frequently include quotations from people interviewed for the articles who do so. This occurs in the case of Edgar Alvarez Cruz, who was arrested for his alleged involvement with the cotton field murders, but who insists he was framed by the government (Neito, 2008). In a 2008 article, Cruz’s father, Fidel Alvarez stated, “We are desperate, do not know what to do, we are afraid that they will come to plant evidence” (Neito, 2008). The use of term “they” illustrates the Alvarez’s fear of government impunity. Alvarez never directly blames the “government,” yet he insinuates that those responsible for femicide investigative efforts, such as government officials, will stop at nothing to absolve the authorities of blame and place the blame elsewhere. The media, who is responsible for the selection process, chooses to incorporate citizen quotations such as these to illustrate the extremes to which citizens believe their government will go to identify and “prove” the guilt of a suspect. However, missing from the articles are any selected quotations from citizens who support the Mexican government.

Quotations from citizens are not the only form of reporting that suggests the government is responsible. *El Diario* also routinely selects testaments from foreign officials who blame the government for femicides. For example, according two articles,
the government’s poor response to femicides caught the attention of the American Human Rights Court, which began to criticize the government about its apparent human rights violations (Minjares, 2010; Alcala, 2007). In response, a 2007 article reported that the State Executive of Mexico, which is comparable to a U.S. presidential cabinet member, never received questions from the Human Rights Court concerning violations. The articles goes on to state that the official thoroughly believes in “the responsibility to respect all in an unrestrained manner the rights of the governed, the rights of man” (Cano). However, the Human Rights Court believed differently. A 2010 article reported that the court of human rights “declared the Mexican government guilty of three femicides that occurred in the cotton field” (Minjares). The El Diario indicated that the government had failed to publish “a web page which contains current reports of all the missing women,” nor had the government revised protocol to immediately search for victims (Minjares, 2010), which could have been a solution to personalize the victims and give them back their names. The article continues to suggest the Mexican government is culpable of femicide by quoting a Human rights official who stated “Mexico State was responsible for violating the right to life, personal integrity, and personal freedom to detriment victims” (Minjares, 2010). Although the media frames the “government” as being in violation with human rights, their reports do not specifically name those individuals responsible for flawed femicide investigations. Even with powerful foreign officials, the “government” remains an abstract entity in the media. In retrospect, there is little in the mediated articles that argue in the government’s defense. This could suggest that the media agrees with the Human Rights Officials in the claim that the “government”
is responsible for femicide. This form of blaming may negate any form of femicide prevention campaign launched by the government.

A year later, the situation had not changed. The government was still under attack in the press. A 2011 article titled “Her daughter was in the morgue for 9 months” criticizes the slow-working Mexican authorities. One quotation stated, “We hold the authorities personally responsible for inadequate investigations” (Cano). The article also quotes a victim’s mother who stated, “Put yourself in our place! We want the support and understanding from the authorities.” (Cano, 2011). This mediated statement insinuates that the Mexican government is unsympathetic to the plight of the femicide victims’ families.

These articles insinuate that many citizens are frustrated with repeated government impunity. The voices of the victim’s families are sometimes used to cast the finger of blame. For example, a 2007 article illustrates the plight of femicide relatives who were promised government compensation (Orozco, 2007). One mother stated, “We do not want them to give us anything. They have muddled justice with the rewards but have failed to even do that because we have not received the funds they speak of. They say they help only to cover the eye of the one in charge” (Orozco, 2007). The mediated quotation suggests that the government is not only responsible for flawed investigations, but also for protecting those who commit femicide. Another quotation by the mother of 16-year-old femicide victim Elmeralda Juarez Alarcon stated, “The governor holds his head up high by saying that 95% of the femicides are resolved and it is not true, none of the 23 cases of mothers who came together in seeking justice is solved” (Orozco, 2007). In response, the government-sponsored Chihuahua Women’s Institute director, Luisa
Revilla stated, “the Institute serves comprehensively 66 mothers and children of victims and said that the group members who protested do not receive medical and psychological care because they do not want it” (Orozco, 2007). Arguably, compensation for 66 out 676 women seems imbalanced. This media frame implies that the government is lying about resolved femicide figures, which illustrates the power of impunity in Juarez.

In addition, these mediated quotations that frame the government as deceptive will affect the audiences’ perception of government; therefore, citizens of Juarez will be likely to view the government as deceitful. These frames of blame overshadow femicide issues and act as an ineffective form of scapegoating. For example, in another 2008 article, Mexican Attorney General Patricia Gonzalez Rodriquez, who appears to be speaking out against her government, stated that, “The government has failed to realize the areas of prevention, effective programs to prevent femicide” (Minjares, 2008). Gonzalez continues by saying, “We are fighting to topple the impunity that existed for many years in the case of the femicides” (Minjares, 2008). This type of media frame indicates that the government is deceptive and ineffective. As stated earlier, in the media articles that I examined, no citizen quotations were published in defense of the government. In the media, the only opposing response was made by government officials themselves.

It is common to see words like “we” and “they” used in the articles which make use of scapegoating. The quotations from Juarez citizens suggest their perceptions that there is an in-group/out-group system in place. The media version of the in-group/out-group system indicates that in Juarez, citizens are viewed as the “in” group, while government officials are regarded as the “out” group. This suggests that the media may
be on the side of the citizens, even though they are silenced in terms of their attempts to be activist journalists. It also illustrates the extent of government blame. The Mexican government may not have been present at femicide crimes, but to the citizens and victim’s families, their inability, if not unwillingness, to deal with the problem shows tolerance for it. To citizens in Juarez, a lack of effort apparently is just as bad as wielding the weapon used in the crime. This observation is supported by a 2010 article, which reports the results from a questionnaire about trust of the government. The questionnaire was distributed to a vast majority of Juarez citizens (Nieto). Reportedly, “only three percent of all believed and trust government action before the insecurity” (Nieto, 2010). Most respondents claimed “they do not believe the authorities seriously and responsibly address the crimes of men and women in Juarez (Nieto, 2010). This survey illustrates the overall degree of government distrust in Juarez. Unfortunately, the public may always be skeptical of future femicide campaign efforts because of this distrust. That means that solutions will be difficult to find and implement if Juarez is split between two sides.

While the media’s selected quotations from citizens may serve as a safe strategy for scapegoating, they also reflect the power of silencing. In cases such as these, the selected quotations from citizens will blame an abstract “government” rather than name the names of the truly guilty or even imply that the “government” is protecting those responsible. Although a government is comprised of different units, it is safer to blame the entire entity. A government does not have a face, yet it still has power to enact solutions. The media suggests that the government is not accepting responsibility for the atrocities of femicide or their failure to enact solutions. However, quotations from
government officials’ indicate that the government claims they are doing everything in their power to stop femicide. Yet femicides still continue.

**Convenient goats: Scapegoating femicide suspects.** Over the past eighteen years, thousands of women have been murdered in Juarez (Rodriguez, Montane, & Pulitzer, 2007). In the majority of cases, the authorities have not been able to determine or have chosen not to identify the responsible party (Human Rights Watch, 2006). For years, the authorities did little to address the femicide issue (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Only when the families of victims began to publically protest and the killings increased, did the authorities begin to act (Human Rights Watch, 2006). However, instead of conducting serious investigations to identify perpetrators, the authorities appear to have reverted to abusive scapegoating measures. In this section, I will discuss another femicide scapegoat commonly portrayed in the Mexican media.

Media reports suggest that the authority’s need to rid themselves of guilt for not solving the femicide crime. Doing so can lead to their redemption. One way for a government to avoid guilt is to quickly find a “convenient” suspect, even if it is possible the person may well be innocent. Despite the improbable convenience of some scapegoating suspects, the media commonly sensationalizes their arrests. This suggests that the need for victimage is very strong in this community. Routine femicides and an apparent lack of prevention and/or protection have many Juarez citizens willing to accept even the authority’s most unlikely scapegoat. Additionally, although the individual arrested is initially only a suspect, it appears common for the police reports’ cited by the media to frame these scapegoats as guilty. Clearly, the authority’s need for redemption is strong in this community.
Given their failure to solve and stop femicide crimes, Mexican authorities need someone to blame (or to shoulder their blame); this individual is to be punished to help relieve the guilt of the authorities. In this case, scapegoats appear to be chosen based on behaviors that reinforce perceptions of them as likely perpetrators. The chosen scapegoat will only be accepted if their characters fit the crime that has been committed. In short, the people of Juarez need to believe that there is a strong possibility that the arrested scapegoat is really guilty.

One scapegoat commonly noted in the press is Edgar Alvarez Cruz. In fact, Cruz is mentioned in four out of 18 articles examined for this study. Police identified Cruz in 2006 as a potential perpetrator of the “Cotton Field Murders” for several reasons. In 2001, Cruz allegedly fled for the U.S. (Alcala, 2006). Reportedly, Cruz’s absence in Juarez was noted and this led police to believe that his flight was proof that he committed the murders (Alcala, 2006). This was essentially the first step in describing Cruz as someone capable of femicide. To locate Cruz, Mexico asked for the assistance of U.S. authorities (Alcala, 2006). In response, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in Denver arrested Cruz for illegal immigration (Cardona & Sherry, 2006).

After Cruz was deported, the notion of Cruz as a scapegoat became more apparent in the media. A 2006 article titled “Pointing to Edgar as the Brain of Femicides” sensationalized Cruz’s deportation (Alcala, 2006). The article heavily framed Cruz as a “prison inmate in the neighboring country,” despite Cruz’s arrest in the U.S. being because Mexico’s pleaded for U.S. assistance in locating Cruz (Alcala, 2006). However, the article suggested that the Mexican authorities located Cruz in an American prison.
(Alcala, 2006). Cruz’s character is now further suspect because he is framed as a person with a criminal background.

Cruz further fits the role of a scapegoat because his residence is reportedly near the location of the cotton field murders (Nieto, 2008). In fact, the eight women’s bodies were located in a dessert behind Cruz’s house (Nieto, 2008). However, this is not the only fact that sets Cruz up as a convincing femicide suspect. According to a 2008 article, Cruz’s sister-in-law Maria del la Paz claimed Cruz is insane and was a heavy drug user (Nieto). Reportedly, Paz claimed that Cruz is also incoherent and “saw things” (Nieto, 2008). Although Paz later recanted her story, the damage was done. Cruz was now perceived in the media as an insane, long-term drug user who had access to dessert land in his backyard. Cruz’s became a believable suspect.

In another article, Prosecutor, Granados de la Paz claimed that Cruz constantly did drugs and pills in the time that he would have allegedly committed the murder (Nieto, 2008). Again, Cruz is depicted as an immoral drug user capable of crime. Reportedly, Paz also claims that the murder was “witnessed by a neighbor name ‘Mariquita’ (Ladybug), who lived across the Alvarez property” (Nieto, 2007). The articles used to discredit Cruz and frame him as a femicide perpetrator are plentiful.

However, some citizens became suspicious and questioned Cruz’s guilt. In other words, they began to see him simply as a “convenient” scapegoat. For example, in a 2007 article, Cruz’s father said, “he feared a ‘seeding’ of skeletons in his home to ensure there are more female bodies buried on the property” (Nieto, 2007). Cruz’s father claimed the authorities were in need of forensic evidence and would plant it if necessary (Nieto, 2007). And while Cruz’s arrest was based on witness statements (Nieto, 2007) that
information was later depicted as unreliable. Although Prosecutor Granados de la Paz claimed that the murders were witnessed by a neighbor named Mariquita, other near-by neighbors fail to recall a woman by that name living in the area (Nieto, 2007). This suggests that it is possible the witness’s statement was fabricated by the prosecution.

Cruz also claimed he is being framed by authorities for femicide crimes. After Cruz’s incarceration, Cruz claimed the commander and his officers forced him to confess to the crime (Cano, 2007). However, in 2007, Cruz released a statement denying his involvement in the femicides (Cano, 2007). In this state, Cruz claimed he was threatened with 100 years in prison along with his wife and that their child would remain under the custody of the DIF\(^{17}\) (Cano, 2007). Moreover, Cruz claimed he is “only a scapegoat” (Cano, 2007).

Whether Cruz is actually guilty or not, to be an effective scapegoat, he must bear a resemblance to the type of person who the public believe should be guilty of such a crime. According to the Mexican press, Cruz was living next to the murder location, does drugs, is insane, and was deported from a U.S. prison. In short, Cruz fits the part of a scapegoat for these crimes. Unfortunately, Cruz is not the only case of “convenient” scapegoating.

The media also scapegoated Gustavo Gonzalez Meza. The media indicated that Meza died in Mexican custody of unknown causes. A brief 2007 article reports that Meza, who was a public transportation driver, was accused of raping and killing eight women in 2003(Cano). When the femicides first started, many bus drivers were suspected

\(^{17}\) DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia) in English refers to the state system for the full development of the Family. DIF is comparable to U.S. child protective services.
of these gender crimes because they had daily access to thousands of maquiladora women (Valdez, 2006). Due to the initial speculation, Hollywood sensationalized the notion of maquiladora bus drivers in particular being responsible for femicides (Valdez, 2006). Consequently, the initial accusations against public transportation drivers have had lasting effects. The media framed Meza as a public transportation driver who had access to maquiladora women. Based on this frame, Meza’s fit the role of a scapegoat. However, the media also sensationalized the death of Meza. Strangely, Meza died in a rehabilitation center a year after being put in jail. The only explanation of Meza’s death was reported “complications” (Cano, 2007). Although Meza “fits” the crime, the media appears to be insinuating that his unexpected death in government custody is another effect of government impunity. The media report of “complications” is extremely vague and lacking in context. This type of framing ultimately presents the authorities as a deceptive and dangerous.

The media also questioned the scapegoating schemes of Garcia Uribe. In 2007, an El Diario article reported that Uribe received 50 years in prison for his role in killing seven women (Cano, 2007). The media claimed Uribe was tortured into a confession and was thus “subjected to an intervention as part of the process demonstrating that there was torture” (Cano, 2007). Missing from the mediated article was any government response for these allegations of impunity. The article concludes by reporting that Uribe’s sentence later was reversed because he was tortured into confessing to the crimes (Cano, 2007). Uribe claims, “God knows I am innocent” (Cano, 2007). This media frame suggests that the authorities tried to force Uribe to admit to femicide crimes. Although this frame
portrays scapegoating, it also blames the government for numerous scapegoating attempts.

Clearly, scapegoating is a visible strategy in the Juarez press. Suspects are still being portrayed to fit the crime. However, stories now seem to suggest that the press and citizens have become more wary of arrests and official charges. Regardless, with more foreign pressure and demands by Juarez citizens for justice, we can expect the government’s use of “convenient” scapegoating to continue in the press.

Summary

Both the U.S. and Mexican media framing of the Juarez femicides have demonstrated the features of the cycle of redemption and silencing. First, the U.S. media illustrated the amount of disorder in Juarez. Femicide death tolls showed the need for a restoration of Order. The U.S. media also illustrated the use of victimage. For example, the majority of the U.S. media articles focused on blaming the Mexican government. Due to the increase in femicides, the U.S. is being threatened with the possibility that femicide crimes will cross the border. Because of this fear, the Mexican government has been blamed, which represents victimage. Additionally, the U.S. media has depicted a new Order in Juarez that demands silence. Women who were activists in Juarez were often labeled as fallen martyrs because they would not be silent illustrate further evidence that femicide is a government issue. Not only does this demonstrate the power of silencing, but it also illustrates the need for Order in Juarez. The activists who violated that Order were threatened and forced to flee, and murdered.

The Mexican media also illustrated the cycle of redemption and silencing. Similar to the U.S press, the Mexican media often employed a “femicide inventory” that
illustrates the degree of disorder in Juarez, while consequently making the victims anonymous. Furthermore, the Mexican media illustrates scapegoating in both the themes concerning government blame and scapegoating. The need for a redeemer is visible in both of these two themes. Finally, the media’s lack of investigative reporting is a strong indication of silencing. Often the missing pieces of the media became its own theme. This theme also illustrates the new Order in Juarez, where citizens are forced to stay silent and tolerate femicides.

Having established that both newspapers demonstrate the cycle of redemption and Spiral of Silence theory, the next chapter will discuss the significance of the media frames and answer the research questions posed in Chapter one. Finally, I will review my findings and conclude this essay.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of the U.S. and Mexican media framing of the Juarez femicides illustrates the cycle of redemption. It also lends insight into the type of media frames utilized by both the U.S. and Mexican media and demonstrates the implications of those frames. Furthermore, this study contributes to the framing differences between the U.S. and Mexican media. This chapter first summarizes the analysis in detail. Second, it examines the study’s strengths, weakness, and contributions. Finally, it outlines possible directions for future research.

Summary Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This study’s main research question contains three sub-questions. The first sub-question that guided this study was “What types of framing are utilized by both the U.S. and Mexican media?” To answer this question, this study examined the similarities evident in the U.S and Mexican media frames as viewed through Burke’s (1989) dramatism and Noelle-Neumann’s (1993) spiral of silencing theory.

This study’s analysis first revealed that both media outlets used death tolls to illustrate the scope of femicide crimes. In fact, the use of inconsistent numbers and figures was an overarching theme in the U.S. and Mexican media. For example, one 2011 U.S. reporter claimed the femicide toll was 420 (Bacamontes, 2011). By contrast, a 2009 Mexican article claims the total is 677.
These inconsistencies illustrate several things, the first of which is the U.S. media’s misunderstanding of the scope of the femicide phenomenon in Juarez. In addition, although the inconsistencies are callous, it also suggests that U.S. journalists do not view femicide as a hate crime worthy of accurate reporting. This misunderstanding is problematic because the media can affect a society’s attitudes and worldview toward femicide. In turn, this also would suggest that the public, who receives information from the media, misunderstands the gender violence. If the media is misunderstanding the scope of femicide, then this could affect the future of femicide prevention campaigns.

Furthermore, the media’s tendency to sensationalize the discrepancies in the number of femicide victims illustrates the chaos and disorder in Juarez specifically and Mexico in general. By sensationalizing the femicides, the media has justified the issue as relevant and prevalent only to Juarez.

By perceiving the media as a storytelling device, we can clearly see that mass gender violence has disrupted the order in Juarez. However, this form of framing has many implications. First, the constant use of figures can desensitize an audience. While the media’s narrative of femicide does shock and draw people’s attention to the violence people do not identify with numbers. Constantly referring to the victims as a numbers allows audiences to view the situation from a distance. As a result, the audience is positioned as a voyeur, instead of a potential actor working toward femicide prevention.

Secondly, by routinely using numbers to illustrate the prevalence of the femicides, both media outlets have also made femicide victims anonymous. Viewing the victims as numbers erases any personal identification associated with them and makes them anonymous. These women have already lost their lives, and now the media has taken
away their names. Unfortunately, this type of framing allows audiences to think of the femicide as a quantity. Although the quantity is relevant, the victim’s face’s and stories are more so. Media framing has a strong impact on an audience’s behavior and attitude. If the media’s frame is quantitative, such as El Paso’s view of femicide, then an audience may share this perception and view femicide as only a tragic quantity. Although perhaps unintentional, I find this strategy extremely appalling. The media has chosen to represent femicide victims as quantities. Missing from both media outlets are the living stories of these women. These women had stories, yet the media only sensationalizes their aftermath. Each new death is added to the numbers of thousands. Consequently, their stories are forgotten.

The second frame shared by the two outlets is the scapegoating of the Mexican government. Both Mexican and U.S. media outlets framed the Mexican government as solely responsible for femicide crimes. Sadly, the constant blaming of an abstract government will protect the government officials, who actually are responsible for the flawed femicide investigations. This form of scapegoating will absolve the government officials from their crimes; those same individuals can stay hidden behind a government that includes a cast of thousands. While the Mexican “government” is portrayed as a one-faced entity, but it is anything but the sort. Including the president, the Mexican government is comprised of 128 senators, 200 representatives, 200 proportional representatives, and 300 deputies per district (Retrieved from State.gov). This does not include the number Mexican ambassadors and lower government employees. Clearly, this form of scapegoating is extremely ineffective and nonsensical in terms of its ability to resolve the crisis. Sadly, the true government officials and the police who are in charge of
the investigation, who are actually responsible for addressing femicide may never have to answer for their “crimes.”

Although this form of scapegoating is ineffective, the media’s frame does illustrate the components of the cycle of redemption and silencing. However, this silencing affected the Mexican and U.S. media in different ways. For example, because the original femicide location is in Juarez, the story coverage initially comes from the Juarez media. In essence, the Juarez media is the primary storyteller, while the El Paso media is the secondary source. As a result of cultural silence that is occurring in Juarez, the El Paso media reaped the negative effects. Sadly, the U.S. media appears to have access to a limited supply of sources among Mexican journalists. In the past, Mexican journalists have paid for violating Order with their lives. Now, it would appear few Juarez journalists are willing to share information with American media; they only report surface details such as “who?”, “when?”, and “where?” However an important question goes unaddressed in the Mexican media frames: “why?” This is left out of the Mexican media frames. Consequently, the U.S. media is also limited to stories that simply explain “who, when, and where.” Nonetheless, the U.S. media’ does not attempt answer to “why” of femicides by blaming the Mexican government.

Even though NAFTA and the maquiladora industries have essentially created a climate ripe for femicides, perhaps the U.S. press appears to find it simpler to frame Mexico as responsible and absolve the U.S. of guilt. Furthermore, due to a lack of sources the U.S. media blamed the Mexican government because no other individuals were identified as responsible by the Mexican press. However, the Mexican media has good reason to place blame on an abstract government. People in Mexico fear impunity
and retribution. As a result of this fear, Mexican journalists rarely speculate or suggest why crimes took place. *El Diario* appears to be very cautious about reporting stories of blame, even when “blaming” the government. In these instances, the accusations placed on the government were made by citizens interviewed for stories and were framed by quotation marks. In short, this device allowed the press to suggest that citizens were blaming government, not the media. The media was merely reporting the story while assuming a “non-biased” role. In retrospect, the Mexican media was still exercising techniques of silencing by just placing blame on an abstract government. It appears that in Mexico, blaming a government that is comprised of thousands of people has little effect or consequence. By publically scapegoating a non-faced abstract government, the *El Diario* is still able to follow the rules of silencing and maintaining Order.

As stated previously, scapegoating an abstract government is not an effective means of femicide prevention. Blaming a “government” is complicated and problematic. The Mexican government consists of thousands of representatives, senators, deputies, foreign officials, and lower status employees because it is a bureaucracy. Not every section of government is responsible for femicide investigations. Despite this fact, both sets of articles clearly label “government” as the femicide perpetrator responsible for not preventing the crimes. However, blaming an abstract “government” is not going to provide solutions to femicide and ultimately its prevention because no individuals or group is forced to answer for flawed investigations. Despite years of countless attacks on the Mexican government’s response to femicide, little has been done to establish prevention programs. While officials likely have pursued flawed femicide investigations, blaming government as a whole will not stop the crimes or bring retribution. It is already
difficult to determine which government official or unit is responsible for damaging the murder investigations of thousands of women. Blanketing blame on the entire Mexican government will only further complicate femicide prevention. As a result, no one will be held responsible. This means the cycle of redemption will continue in Juarez and El Paso until citizens can expunge guilt. Nevertheless, from 2004-2011, both the Mexican and U.S. media has blamed the government for the increase of femicides. The articles frame the government as responsible for a total of seven years worth of deaths. Sadly, if this type of scapegoating continues, people in Juarez may have to wait a long time for femicide prevention.

The last similarity between the U.S. and Mexican media was the lack reference to machismo culture. It is appears that both media outlets have chosen not to link machismo culture to femicide issues. Machismo is described as a set of gender attributes that are culturally and historically relevant to Mexican culture (French & Bliss, 2007). Some of the characteristics associated with machismo are aggression, oppression, and womanizing (French & Bliss, 2007). Despite this being a popular characterization for Mexican men, neither media outlet references Mexican male behavior patterns.

There are several potential reason that both the Mexican and U.S. media outlets fail to reference Mexican masculinity. Possibly, the U.S. and Mexican media outlets have chosen not to address machismo because it does not fit with their narrative of femicide. Often both outlets rely on linear reporting which lacks discussion of those responsible for femicide. Thus, machismo may not be part of media frames because there is not “culprit” identified to which machismo can be ascribed. In addition, Mexican media may view machismo as a characteristic that is so deeply embedded into their culture that is “goes
without saying.” As such, Mexican masculinity would be implied but not referenced. I would argue it would be difficult for any individual who is a member of Mexican culture to assess the hegemonic cultural blinders of Mexican masculinity. This may be another reason why there is not reference. In addition, if the U.S. media relies on the Mexican media for femicide news, and the Mexican media who does not reference machismo, the U.S. media may lack an awareness of the behavior or just not be prepared to critique the culture that the U.S. arguably helped create. However, references to machismo may assist journalists in reporting a more accurate depiction of femicide crime.

The second sub-research question posed by this study was “What are the implication of the framing?” This analysis has found that the media’s framing of femicide has several implications. One of the most visible implications stems from the veil of anonymity laid over the victims. The routine use of numbers to explain the scope of femicide is dangerous. The femicide victims are viewed as quantities. The women’s very identities are not viewed as relevant. However, acknowledging the names and existence of these women in their living state is extremely relevant. We need to remember what we are fighting against. The lives and experiences of these women should not be dismissed so easily and turned into figures. In an effort to show the extreme scope of femicide, the media’s “body count” have allowed us to treat these women as a type of inventory. Sadly, the only public record of these women is in the form of the reported body counts.

These are horrible crimes against humanity; femicide should be treated as such. However, in an effort to be objective and accurate in the transmission of journalist information, the reports have produced a social reality that relies on linear logic. This linear logic allows the media to answer questions of “who,” “what,” and “when,” yet the
real issue stemming from men violently killing women is unaddressed. The media needs to acknowledge that femicide should not just be labeled a “murder.” A femicide is when women are killed because of their gender. The crucial aspect of femicide is rarely addressed when the media constantly uses linear logic. It seems cruel to simplify the femicide issue with numbers and statistics. Sadly, the mediated discourse goes even further and presents the issues of rape, mutilation, and murder in past tense. Given this framing, the faces of femicide will remain in past tense, forever anonymous. Few readers are likely to personally invest in an event framed as an aftermath. Media reports that sensationalize the aftermath of rape, mutilation, murder, and figures may render any solution unnecessary for an audience member using the media to understand gender violence. The media has made these women nameless and “relics” of the past. Consequently, the public also may view them as such.

Another implication of the media relates to the “tensing” of femicide. Through the use of scapegoats, body counts, and stories of failed activists, the media has essentially reported the femicide in past tense. Although I acknowledge a journalist’s job is to report on events after their occurrence, it is still the media’s job as the narrative storyteller to emphasize the existing need for femicide prevention and invite the audience to view this as a current issue that implicates all women, no matter the culture. In essence, labeling the femicide as an aftermath dismisses this tragedy. The media has the power to influence societal attitudes and limit public policy (Halim & Meyers, 2010). If the media continues to reinforce the notion that femicide is past tense, then that may become the accepted public perspective. In turn, this may undoubtedly prolong femicide prevention. Those
who read the media are less likely to fight for prevention if they feel this problem is in past tense.

Unfortunately, as the analysis revealed, activists and heroes needed to address this cause are sorely lacking. Many activists risked their lives and paid the ultimate price. Despite stories that chronicled the femicides, people simply stood by as countless activists fled or were murdered for their cause. Clearly, the price for challenging those responsible for femicide is high, yet thousands of united voices could make a difference. If the media framed the femicide as an issue that needs Mexican and U.S. attention, then femicide prevention could become a relevant part of both countries’ agendas. Framing the femicide as a current issue may increase activist efforts and more importantly increase resources needed to prevent femicide. I would argue the U.S. definitely has these resources.

Another implication evident from the study was the media’s failure to report on the root of the problem. Although the media acknowledges the phenomenon as femicide, it fails to report on the larger issue, which is widespread gender violence. The media’s journalistic approach is to always report the agents, victims, causes, motives, and time of the murders. But this simplified the issues. Both media outlets failed to recognize and address the causes of femicide, including the systems of patriarchy and privilege, the role of authorities, the wielding of political power, and the economic uncertainty. Juarez has a unique hierarchy which was created after years of woman lacking social, political, or economic power. The media fails to acknowledge the potential connections between a gender backlash and the country’s economic crisis. In addition, the media fails to recognize the role privilege plays in the society. Despite woman being the majority of
maquiladora workers, they still hold little privilege in society. The maquiladora owners, who hold political power, granted women these jobs because the owners perceived them as weak. Yet the media never asks why the majority of maquiladora workers are women, never questions the ill effects of NAFTA, and fails to discuss the effects of economic uncertainty. The maquiladora industries and NAFTA heavily influence the cultural climate in Juarez and I would argue contributed to femicide. The media needs to acknowledge these structures as responsible for the contributing to the climate that spurred femicide. By getting to the root of the issue the media may be able to play a role in femicide prevention.

Instead of fragmenting the public’s understanding of femicide with incomplete reports, inconsistent death tolls, and failed scapegoat attempts, the media should promote the importance of preventing femicide. This is not an issue that should be sensationalized to garner media ratings. This is a human rights issue that demands attention and is in need of prevention. By refusing to address the root of femicide, the media has downplayed and simplified the issue. In dealing with femicides, the media has damaged the public understanding of femicide by simplifying the issue. In retrospect, we know there is absolutely nothing simple about femicide. Questions like, “Who may have committed the crime?,” “What is the newest femicide statistic?,” “Where was the location, and the time of death?” are not relevant. The real question the media should ask is “Why does femicide exist?” These are the questions that get to the root of femicide issues. These are the types of questions I want my only source of public information to ask because the media’s representation of violence is key to understanding its implications and eventually its prevention. This is the type of journalistic investigation that could lead to solutions.
The third and final sub-question examined in the study was “Are framing strategies different in the U.S and Mexico?” My analysis revealed that the U.S. and Mexican media did have different framing strategies. Although both media outlets are similar in their excessive reports of death tolls and government blame, there are definite framing differences.

First, the U.S. media framed the femicides as a solely Mexican issue. The *El Paso Times* was quick to frame its sister city, Juarez, as responsible for the crime increase and as the central location of the crimes. There were no attempts to recognize the culpability of any other entities or to suggest that the crimes might be connected to the U.S. Instead the U.S. media was quick to establish that El Paso is safe. Although border chaos is only two miles away, the El Paso press needed to reinforce the impression that El Paso citizens will remain unharmed. Essentially, this was the U.S. press’s attempt to maintain Order. In contrast, the Mexican media does not dispute the existence of femicide violence, perhaps because Juarez already is recognized as the most dangerous city in the world. Similar to U.S. media, *El Diario* was quick to establish the “government” as responsible. The government, who has the power to maintain Order, is viewed as the entity that destroyed it. Unlike the U.S., the reputation of Juarez appears to be of little concern because the “government” has the resources to repair the city’s status.

It seems insignificant to worry about a community’s reputation among visitors while thousands of women slowly die five minutes away. The notion of El Paso’s reputation being at risk seems irrelevant. Still, the U.S. media needed to reduce community guilt because Juarez is its sister city and many may view El Paso as also flawed. El Paso is threatened by an increased femicide event. Although I would argue the
U.S. is partially responsible for the continuation of femicide due to NAFTA’s creations of a gender-violence climate, U.S. media refuses to recognize this as a cross-cultural issue. However, by refusing to assume any culpability for the rash of femicides, the U.S. could be seen as promoting tolerance of this horrendous crime. Unfortunately, Mexican and U.S. women may continue to die because of this dismissal.

Another difference between the two media accounts of femicide was the U.S. media’s framing of female activists. To illustrate the degree of silencing and disorder that exists in Juarez, the U.S. was quick to narrate the stories of activists that were left unprotected by the Mexican government. In addition, the stories of these activists represent the new Order in Juarez. Due to the powers of silencing, speaking out against the injustices of femicide is not tolerated in Juarez. As a result, many women activists lost their lives or were forced to seek refuge in the U.S. for challenging the new Order. In comparison, the Mexican media never mentions the activist murders. Despite these activists being Mexican citizens, their stories are missing from El Diario. It is not surprising that very few Mexican articles that I examined mention the activist’s narratives. Clearly, hegemonic factors encourage the media not to sensationalize the stories of those who disrupted Order by presenting these women activists as heroic. Many Mexican journalists have lost their lives for failing to follow the newly instilled Order. In a sense, Mexican journalists are conditioned to follow hierarchy, which means fallen activists will rarely ever be painted as heroes. Unfortunately, the Mexican media appears afraid to exercise a journalistic opinion without fear of death. Despite the media’s having public access to investigate these crimes, there appears to be little if any investigative
journalism visible. This contrasts with *El Diario*’s previous reputation. Sadly, the *El Diario* fails to frame these women as the heroes they truly are.

Another distinction between the two mediated accounts was the Mexican media’s reports concerning underprivileged scapegoats. In Mexican press, scapegoating is prevalent. For example, the media is quick to blame lower class individuals or those without privilege as responsible for femicide crimes. However, Juarez citizens are easy targets because it is uniquely comprised of immigrants who migrated from northern, central, and southern Mexico, and South America (Fragosa, Bejarano, & Rios, 2010; Buchenau, 2005). The increased migration has also led to a larger division between upper and lower class (Buchenau, 2005). Essentially, Juarez no longer possesses a middle class.

In addition, the media often correlates increased migration with elevated crime. Because of this, those of lower economic status are easily targeted as scapegoats, including Edgar Alvarez Cruz, Gustavo Gonzalez Meza, and Garcia Uribe. Historically, people of privilege often attack those without; Juarez is no different in that sense (Storey, 2003). Therefore, it is difficult for lower class citizens to combat scapegoating accusations directed towards them.

In part, this is because the Mexican media customarily cite the police reports when reporting on crime. In these reports, the scapegoats usually “fit” the crime. Typically this means they are of a lower class. Often, the mediated reports frame the scapegoats as immoral drug addicts who always have access to women. However, the Mexican public is beginning to become suspicious of this routine scapegoating practice. In the past decade, multiple scapegoating accusations and arrests have been made, but the suspects are almost always immediately released. As of now, I would argue that the
Mexican media is more careful when reporting femicide suspects cases. The media appears hesitant to speculate about femicide suspects, unless the police do so first. In fact, in the sample of articles I examined, the Mexican media does not comment upon reports of “suspects” without using direct quotes from the police reports or other sources. For example, if a quotation is used, it comes directly from police officials, the scapegoat, or the scapegoat’s relatives. This approach suggests the presence of silencing. Clearly, Mexican journalists do not want to be on the receiving end of retribution for violating Order in Juarez—- they would rather shift blame to others.

Uniquely, the Mexican media’s lack of speculation is a framing difference. Unlike U.S. reporters, the Mexican journalists rarely speculated or incorporated a citizen’s opinion of who is responsible for femicide into their stories. Although the Mexican articles contained much of the same information as the U.S. reports, Mexican press was less likely to speculate about issues of culpability. It is common in the U.S. media to read speculations such as “gang violence is alleged;” however, this was never stated in the Mexican media articles I analyzed. For example, unless voiced by the authorities first, the Mexican media never speculate who might be responsible for femicide crime, unless those citizens are blaming the Mexican government. The notion of gang violence or drug trafficking is never referenced in the Mexican media. However, this thought is expressed in some of the *El Paso Times* articles in which authors speculated that border violence should be blamed on the Mexican government, increased drug trafficking, and/or gang violence. Although Juarez is notorious for drug violence, few if any journalists would dare speculate about the organizations responsible. Vocal journalists before them have paid the price for these claims and taught future journalists a lesson. As result, Mexican
journalists only report secondary information: police reports, quotations, and femicide figures. They never editorialize or offer further comments on quotations. Sadly, Juarez’s new Order makes it impossible to be an investigative journalist to assist in femicide prevention. *El Diario* reporters have to censure their writing and never speculate about gang violence, human trafficking, or police impunity. Clearly, the media is not the most powerful entity in Juarez.

Unfortunately, the lack of speculative reporting has major effects on the attitudes towards femicide. The lack of media coverage could translate into femicides being viewed as insignificant and thus all gender violence being viewed the same. In addition, this type of framing could suggest that culpability is not relevant to femicide cases. Unfortunately, if the media continues to perpetuate this frame, then positive social change may never occur. It appears femicide is not a part of the U.S. or Mexican agenda and this will drastically affect the resources for future femicide prevention campaigns.

**Contributions of this Study**

This study contributes to the academy in several ways. It provides insight into the cultural codes in communities where violence against women is prevalent, offers what may be the first comparative academic analysis of U.S. and Mexican media framing strategies, and adds to our understanding of a cross-cultural femicide.

First, this study provides insight into the cultural codes in communities where violence against women is prevalent, more specifically gender violence in Juarez, Mexico. The study of media framing of femicide in Juarez is an important and but underdeveloped field. Although gender violence in Juarez dates back to 1994, studies examining the media’s portrayal of femicides are just emerging. Although, Fregoso,
Bejarano, and Rios (2010) examined the Darfur femicide, their work does not account for the differences in comparative difference or cross-cultural codes in Juarez. In this study, the combined framework of Burke’s (1989) dramatism theory and Noelle-Neumann’s (1971) spiral of silencing theory provides more insight into the prevalence of gender violence in cultures similar to Juarez. Besides the work of Vega (2010), who analyzed the framing of Mexican radio in regards to violence against women, very few analyses of femicide media framing have been performed. However, because of this analysis of the comparative media framing of violence against women, others will be able to build on its findings and further understand the particular type of framing of violence. The increase of global violence against women indicates the crucial importance of continued work in this area.

Additionally, this study offers what may be the first comparative academic analysis of U.S. and Mexican media framing strategies. The Mexican and U.S. media’s depiction of violence against women is key in illustrating the attitude towards violence against women. Moreover, despite the Juarez femicides affecting both Mexico and the U.S., little if any academic research has been performed to compare the mediated attitudes of gender violence in sister cities. Similar to Vega’s (2010) study, most femicide studies examine news coverage in the areas where gender violence began and focus little on its effects on surrounding regions. This study was able to examine cross-cultural attitudes regarding femicide violence. This study was able to illustrate the dangers of framing a tragedy such as femicide. Furthermore, this study of femicide is fairly recent which suggests that this comparative analysis is perhaps the first of its kind.
This study also adds to our understanding of cross-cultural femicide. The Juarez femicide deserves examination because it deals with violence against women that is not culturally bound. Although Guatemalan, Bosnian, Rwandan, and Vietnamese femicides are just as worth of examination, the Juarez femicide is unique because it allowed me to examine a femicide that is progressively crossing cultural borders. This study is unique because the news articles illustrate what happens in communities where violence against women is not culturally bound. Although femicide crimes have yet to infiltrate the El Paso region, El Pasoans are beginning to psychologically fear incoming femicide violence. It appears in the press that El Pasoans were secure behind their reputation of “safe” before the violence spread closer to El Paso’s border region. Although in my article sample, none of the crimes have occurred in El Paso specifically, there is a psychological fear evident in the media that suggests the stories have captured the imagination of U.S. readers and raised their concern. However, the U.S. media claimed that El Pasoans have nothing to fear. In retrospect, the fact that the U.S. media continuously sensationalizes El Paso as a “safe” community indicates that U.S. citizens fear that an El Paso femicide is probable. Although the media suggests a physical femicide has yet to occur in El Paso, the citizens concern for the future is evident.

Lastly, this study is extremely relevant because femicide can spread as far as it is culturally condoned. The increased prevalence of femicide violence makes this analysis academically relevant and needed. To live in a world where femicide violence is increasing suggests why this type of study should continue to be conducted.

Limitations of the Study
There are several limitations to this study that made the media impact of the Juarez femicides more difficult to ascertain. First, there is little research based on mediated responses to femicide. With the exception of Vega’s (2010) work, it was difficult to locate other scholarship that focused on media framing of the Juarez femicide. Because of this, I was not able to build work on the foundation of scholarship created by others. This made it more difficult to build arguments and understand of femicide media framing. This suggests that our academic understanding of mediated depictions of mass gender violence media needs to be expanded in the academic community to build a large body of literature upon femicide portrayals and perceptions in the media.

Second, *El Diario* articles were extremely difficult to access, which limited my article selection process. The retrieval process took a little over two months because I had to rely on the assistance of others. For example, *El Diario’s* archive assistant was responsible for selecting and sending fourteen out of eighteen articles. This means I had little control over which articles were selected. This not only limited my sample pool, but may have greatly influenced the results of my analysis. The articles selected by the assistant may not have been randomly chosen. They might have been guided by the assistant’s own motives. In addition, it would have been beneficial to locate the entire newspapers to also understand how the tragedy is being framed through article placement. I have a suspicion that femicide stories do not make headline news. But without access to an entire issue, I could not determine whether an article was placed on the front page or buried in the fourth section. Having access to the entire issue of the newspaper would have allowed this study to examine the importance placed on the story’s placement as well its framing strategies. However, the only way to resolve this
and some of the other difficulties associated with article selection would have been to travel to the *El Diario* archive myself. Needless to say, it is not wise for a female scholar from the U.S. to travel to a notorious femicide location to investigate those crimes.

Third, I lack understanding of Mexican culture and law. For example, all of the Mexican articles had to be translated using a translator and translation software. However, my translator lacked understanding of Mexican cultural norms and law, which may have led to generalizations with cultural laws. After coding and locating Mexican themes, I would have to research Mexican cultural norms and media law to understand if my findings were justified by these two components. Hopefully, this additional research prevented any form of cultural generalizations. However, my inability to speak Spanish and my lack of cultural understanding may have impacted my findings.

**Directions for Further Research**

There are many possible directions for further research related to femicides, not all of which are listed here. First, there is a lack of understanding behind the cause of femicide. Scholars claim femicides happen wherever they are culturally condoned. However, as this study suggests femicides are a result of preceding historical events, such as economic uncertainty, machismo patriarchy, and societal shifts in gender-roles. In the case of the Juarez femicides the event has continued for eighteen years. This means the culture’s femicide history is complex and extensive. Rhetorical scholars would be wise to investigate other artifacts that detail femicide issues, such as prevention campaigns. Perhaps, we would learn more about the femicides by investigating further into these cultural events.
Additionally, scholarship concerning the media’s treatment of femicide is sadly underdeveloped. Despite an increase in femicide violence, there is little communication research on media and femicide. This recurring human rights violation and press coverage of it is extremely worthy of examination. To help prevent violence against women, we need more rhetorical scholars who are willing to tackle this tragic issue. We need more rhetorical scholars like Vega (2010) to help academia understand the media’s framing of femicides and its implication. Future scholars need to examine how our only source of public information is defining and framing femicide tragedy.

Furthermore, the media framing of other cultural femicides should be examined. My finding only account for the Mexican and U.S. framing of femicide. However, femicides are ever increasing and prevalent in every country. It would be beneficial to compare my media findings with those of other femicide examinations. This would help scholars understand if the media treats femicides similarly in other cultures. From this, scholars could learn how the media’s treatment of femicides could be linked to attitudes toward gender violence and the lack of successful prevention campaigns. Preferably, scholars should examine communities that are experiencing cross-cultural femicide situations. This developing area of inquiry could assist in finding and funding femicide prevention and eventually its elimination.

Conclusion

In February 2012, Juarez authorities uncovered the remains of two teenage girls (Cardenas). Two years ago, 15-year-old Andrea Guerrero Venzor and 17-year-old Lizbeth Garcia Avilis went missing (Cardenas, 2012). Both of the girls remains were located in valley of Juarez; this is also known as the Juarez dessert. In the press, the
Police report stated that “there will likely be more victims.” Sadly, this suggests that those responsible for brutally murdering Venzor and Avilis may go unpunished.

Clearly this tragedy attracts an audience’s attention. However, the real concern is what the media plans to do once they have the audience’s attention. Sadly, the U.S. media appears to focus on issues of border violence. For example, the media indicates that the actual act of femicide has not yet crossed the border. This U.S. news coverage indicates that the fear of femicide violence is evident in El Paso. Yet the border area is the primary focus, not the murdered women at Juarez.

Women are tragically dying for being women. Despite these prevalent murders, femicide prevention seems far away. At the current rate, femicide will continue to spread for years. Sadly, the Mexican and U.S media treatment of femicide may shape the public’s perception of violence against women, which is highly distorted. Countries like Guatemala and Darfur are still experiencing growing femicide trends. This is an international problem, yet many individuals, who are not residents of the border region, do not even know of the term “femicide.” Sadly, there is a general lack of public awareness that needs to be acknowledged. Ignorance of this social issue serves no one and is frankly dangerous because femicide is most prevalent when it is culturally tolerated. To work towards femicide elimination, the media needs to recognize gender violence as part of the societal agenda. If the media frames femicide as in need of prevention now, then it could potentially create a social movement that strives towards the elimination of femicide.

As a main source for public information, the media’s current treatment of gender-violence is detrimental. After reviewing the articles from the Mexican and U.S. media, it
is evident that the media’s framing of femicide and gender violence has major implications. Anonymity, dismissal, and over simplification of the issue are prevalent; this needs to be addressed and corrected by the media. Linear and vague reporting does not help with femicide prevention. The media needs to frame this issue as a prevalent and ongoing tragic event that needs immediate attention, and invite citizens to be a part of that solution. We need to remember these women are not just numbers. They were real and they are real. Remember their stories; remember the cause. Ni Una Mas! Not One More!
REFERENCES


Cattan, N. (2011, March 8). International women's day shines fresh light on Mexico's 'femicides'; ahead of international women's day, the United Nations chapter in Mexico called for the government to define 'femicide' as a 'particularly intolerable' crime. Female homicides have shot up in recent years. *The Christian Science Monitor*.


Cano, K. (2011, October 02). Her daughter was months in the morgue for 9 months, just last Tuesday she was told. *El Diario*, p. A1.


*El Diario.*


Lozano, M. O. (2011, August 24). 130 women killed in Juarez this year; Chihuahua AG says fight for women's rights painful and slow. *El Paso Times.*


Nieto, S. (2011, October 01). Families don't know how to protect themselves from violence. *El Diario*.


Uribe, M. O. (2009, March 06). Fear descends on Ciudad Juarez as girls go missing. *NPR*.


Webster, M. (2005, March 5). Americans being kidnapped, held and killed in Mexico. *American Chronicle*.


*abcnews*. Retrieved from

