

EL PARAISO DEL  
TRAFICANTE:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MUSIC  
LYRICS IN NARCOCORRIDOS

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# What is a Corrido? Narcocorrido?

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- Corridos are songs which were sung in order to describe the journey to the north, or the *frontera*, in search of a better life. Corridos included themes such as bravery, death, battle, and heartbreak.
- Over time, the growth of a more specific corrido evolved now known as the narcocorrido.

# Thesis

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- This study examined the lyrics of narcocorridos to better understand the ways the image of drug traffickers have been constructed. The research study revealed unforeseen positive portrayals of drug traffickers that would not have been necessarily expected to be found in such a social phenomenon such. Positive qualities included the following: fantasy lifestyle, war-like violence, drug-trafficking persona, running the business, and reference to poor background.

# Literature Review

- Narcocorridos Mirror Society
- Lifestyle
- Language
- Family/Faith in Narcotic Community



# Theory

- Adorno theorizes about the economy and its role in the music production
- Two forms of music:
  - Disenfranchised- music that is not part of the popular mass music phenomenon because there is a class distinction
  - Standardized- Adorno argues that over time, music has become a standardized element of modern society: music is no longer unique but, rather, songs are derivative forms of art.

# Methodology

- Latent content analysis
- Sample:
  - Searched for songs using the search engine known as Google
  - Descriptive words were alternated or rearranged both in Spanish and English
  - Analyzed 31 randomly selected narcocorridos
- Coding
  - Open coding

# Findings

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- Fantasy lifestyle
- War-like violence
  - ▣ Leadership
- Drug-trafficking persona
  - ▣ Positive and negative characteristics
- Running the business
- Reference to poor background

# Fantasy Lifestyle

- ❑ Coded in 28 out of the 31 songs
- ❑ Materialistic comforts
- ❑ Personalized weapons and cars
- ❑ Dressed in black with bullet-proof vests
- ❑ The party scene
- ❑ Women
- ❑ Travel for leisure



## **La Hummer de Sonoyta by El Tigrillo Palma**

Son igual de enamorados

They are very loving

Y tienen mucho dinero

And have a lot of money

Sus gustos son las mujeres

Their tastes are women

Las armas y carros nuevos

Weapons and new cars



# War-like Violence

- Coded in 27 out of the 31 songs
- Criminal behavior
- Combative environment
- Always prepared; always armed
- Send threatening or warning messages



## Comandos del MP by Voz de Mando

Antiblindaje

Anti-armor

Expansivas las balas

The bullets expanded

Dos o tres bazookas

Two or three bazookas

Y lanzagranandas

And grenades

Obregon, Sonora deberas pensaba

Obregon, Sonora really thought

Que andaba en Irak

That they were in Iraq



# War-like Violence: Leadership

- Coded in 12 out of 31 songs
- Military type leadership
- Commander
- Obedience



# The Drug-trafficking Persona

- Negative characteristics
  - ▣ Deceptive
  - ▣ Willingness to kill
  - ▣ See violence as innate



- Positive
  - ▣ Powerful
  - ▣ Courageous
  - ▣ Proud
  - ▣ Fearless
  - ▣ Respected
  - ▣ Calm
  - ▣ Humble
  - ▣ Wise
  - ▣ Loyal

# Running the Business

- In 17 out of the 31 songs, the lyrics depict drug traffickers as having an organized and practical way of running their business
- Aware of dangers
- Cultivate and work the land
- Emphasize the importance of keeping customers satisfied
- Distribute drugs widely; crossing borders



# Reference to Poor Background

- Found in seven out of the 31 songs
- Used to be mocked and pushed aside
- Overcame their obstacles and became successful drug traffickers
- They are now able to help their family, community, and guide those who wish to join the business

## **Clave Privada by Banda el Recodo**

Ya mucho tiempo fui pobre

Mucha gente me humillaba

Y empieza a ganar dinero

Las cosas estan volteadas

Ahora me llaman patron

I was poor for a long time

Many people humiliated me

I began to earn money

The things are flipped now

Now they call me boss



Culiacán  
Sin., México.

# Discussion

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- Important to know more about because it is perpetrating fear; close proximity to the U.S.
- Adorno and his theory of the standardization of music
- Consumerist culture
- Knit-tight community, motivation to join?
- Weaknesses and Strengths

Thank you!



Questions?



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