

**El Paraiso del Traficante:
A Content Analysis of Music Lyrics
in Narcocorridos**

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Abstract

Corridos are ballads that have been sung historically for the purpose of expressing the current societal conditions in a given community. In recent years, a derivative of corridos known as narcocorridos has emerged. These songs portray the culture of drug trafficking. In this study, a latent content analysis was conducted for a total of 31 narcocorridos. The purpose of this research was to identify themes within the lyrics that may include positive or negative characteristics possessed by drug traffickers as well as other common themes that may not be automatically perceived to belong to such a community. The main themes found include the following: fantasy lifestyle, war-like violence, drug-trafficking persona, running the business, and reference to poor background.

Songs are a unique way in which people can integrate their stories, share similar views with others, and continue a particular tradition embedded in a song. *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. With time, however, there was a growth of a more specific *corrido* that was sung in order to describe the lives of drug traffickers. According to Campbell (2005), a *narcocorrido* is “a genre of Mexican folk/pop music that celebrates and chronicles the drug trade and the lives of high-level traffickers.” Research findings indicate that the drug trafficking between the U.S.- Mexico border has led to the creation of a subculture with its own distinct *narcocorridos* (Campbell 2005).

It is important to know more about the drug trafficking culture, because it is creating a culture of fear and perpetrating fear onto fellow citizens. There is a limited amount of recent studies in regards to this topic; therefore, it would be beneficial to understand more about the *narco* culture. In addition, such pervasive violence is not only affecting people in Mexico, but potentially it can harm people who live in the United States due to the close proximity between the two countries. Thus, it is important to understand the dynamics of the drug trafficking community by analyzing the lyrics of *narcocorridos*. *Narcocorridos* provide a useful way to better understand the culture of drug trafficking.

This study examined the lyrics of *narcocorridos* to better understand the ways the image of drug traffickers have been constructed. It found that *narcocorridos* construct a glamorous, affluent and violent lifestyle, yet positive qualities such as being a successful

business leader, possessing loyalty, and being humble can be observed and even admired in the drug traffickers within the song lyrics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Narcocorridos Mirror Society

Corridos have historically and simultaneously changed alongside society. For example, in the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, *corridos* were used to pass along news as events were happening at a faster rate than newspapers were published (Werner 1994). Additionally, Herrera-Sobek noticed that in many of the early ballads “the frontera appears as an actual geographic space with historical specificity, cities, and people” (Herrera-Sobek 1992). This is because a *corrido* became relevant to the immigrants experience across the border. Thus, in this era, the *corridos* consisted of what was going on in a particular place.

What makes *narcocorridos* different from traditional *corridos* is that they are written for those who are part of the drug trafficking society, or at least for those who can understand the underlying meaning behind the lyrics. As Hernandez (1999) states, “a competent listener must possess basic cultural information to decode the meaning of the narrative.” For this reason, *corridos* in general had been restricted to selective groups because at times they are misunderstood by outsiders (Hernandez 1999).

In today’s society, even though younger people who listen to *narcocorridos* might not understand what is being said, the highly popularized drug trafficking culture has gained more publicity and power. As a result, it is not surprising that drug trafficking ballads that chronicle the lives of drug traffickers have become more popular and

common since *narcocorridos* sing about the immediate social conditions (LaFranchi 2001; Alvarez 1995). In this way, *narcocorridos* portray the way life is for those who are affected by the crime rates as well as the insecurity that arises from the risk of crime. However, what *narcocorrido* ballads reflect upon is the situation that many drug traffickers find themselves being a part of (Burr, 2003).

Lifestyle

Narcocorridos were originally sung as a means of spreading news, conserving traditional stories, and commemorating important individuals by oral communication. However, Hernandez (1999) argues that *narcocorridos* have made a swift shift from a traditional culture to that of a consumerist culture. The consumerist culture can be seen by the lifestyle a drug dealer leads. It is “reflected in how people make a living and in elements of expressive culture such as music, clothing, jewellery, and consumer items like fancy trucks and flashy, expensive homes” (Campbell 2005). The songs glorify the lives of the drug traffickers as if they were rags-to-riches entrepreneurs (Campbell 2005; Burr 2003). Many drug traffickers are seen as heroes when they are able to run a successful drug business that allows them to bring in money (LaFranchi 2001). In particular, those living in poverty see them as heroes and admire them as drug traffickers. This is mainly because drug traffickers may use their acquired wealth to provide jobs and other necessities in the community (Edberg 2001).

Additionally, many of the narcos are seen to possess courage, to be charismatic, and righteous (Hernandez 1999). They defend what belongs to them without fear of others, the establishment such as policemen, or even death. They would rather die a

dignified death than live a life on their knees (Stavans 2002). Furthermore, some drug traffickers are well aware of the risk they take being involved in this business to the extent that they take out large insurance policies in order to protect their families (Campbell 2005). Drug traffickers plan ahead for the safety of their families knowing that there is a high chance that a rival, running a different drug cartel, might murder them. People in the community perceive this as courageous because drug traffickers are not even scared of death (Stavans 2002).

In addition, young people perceive drug traffickers as powerful, flirtatious, and valiant (Edberg 2001). They sense a form of excitement around what the work of a drug trafficker may entail. This is because many of the narcos are seen as tricksters due to the confrontations or escapes from the authorities (Edberg 2001). However, what they fail to express are the everyday faces of drug traffickers such as parents, grandmothers, and young adults. These people quietly smuggle drugs once in a while for economic reasons, but who do not take part in shootouts or the like (Campbell 2005).

Yet, *narcocorridos* are listened to by poverty stricken individuals who look up to the drug dealers because they are perceived to have achieved monetary success (Stavans 2002). *Narcocorridos* resemble “gangsta” rap in a sense that they both glorify and give detailed accounts of the protagonists whom are often involved in criminal activities such as drug trafficking and shootouts. Both the rapper and drug trafficker resemble each other in the construction of the images that are portrayed in each music genre (Edberg 2001).

Herd (2009) conducted a content analysis study of rap music lyrics from taken from 1979 to 1997. His study revealed that the aggression and violent references within

the lyrics increased with the years. Not only did the mention of violence increase, but the association to drugs also became stronger (Herd 2009). In fact, if a particular song mentioned drugs, the likelihood of that song mentioning violence was 2.4 times more likely (Herd 2009). The author also found an increased mention of glamour, wealth, masculinity, and bragging behavior as the years went by (Herd 2009). Herd (2009) believed media to be a possible reason for this trend because the usage of violence seemed to increase the popularity of rap music. In other words, the media increased the amount of listeners exposed to this type of glamorized lifestyle. Music representatives argue that “media violence is a reflection of actual social trends” (Herd 2009). This is similar to *narcocorridos* and how their lyrics resemble society.

Language and Narcocorridos

Language is an important part of communicating with others in order to understand and be understood. It plays an important part in communication if something needs to be understood quickly and kept from making sense to others. Therefore, it is not surprising that *narcocorridos* have developed its own unique way in communicating in code words to the point that only those familiar with their work will understand. Edberg (2001) mentions that drug traffickers nickname their own personal weapons such as calling the AK-47, or the Avtomat Kalashnikova 1947, as a *cuerno de chivo*, or horn of the goat. They nicknamed this firearm *cuerno de chivo* because of its resemblance to a goat’s horn because of the weapon’s long, curved clip (Edberg 2001). The usage of a common language within this community creates a more condensed and tighter group of people because of the sharing of a self-constructed language. They are able to interact

openly with one another while those unfamiliar with their usage of words are confused and unable to understand them.

Faith/Religion in Narcotic Community

Narcocorridos are different from rap music because religion is an important part of life for those in the drug trafficking business. The narcotic community also has their own saint to whom they pray and ask for miracles that ranges from protection from the police to allowing a transaction to go smoothly (Stavans 2002). The narco-saint is named Malverde whose shrine is located in Culiacán, Sinaloa (Edberg 2001). The Malverde figure offers hope for the people to still be able to maintain faith in a higher being although their lives may indicate the contrary due to the violence and frequent loss that is a common part of their daily lives (Stavans 2002).

The quest of determine how the Malverde saint came to exist is difficult due to the various accounts that are present. However, scholars “claim he is a fusion of Catholic iconography and the biographical leftovers of Sinaloan outlaw” (Stavans 2002). Some claim the outlaw’s name was Heraclio Bernal while others say it was Jesus Juarez Maso. The outlaw acquired his nickname of Malverde because of the green leaves he hid under in order to avoid the police (Stavans 2002). He became known as a saint when, shortly before his death due to an injury, he asked a friend to turn him in to the police in order for the friend to collect the large reward being offered for information about his whereabouts. Additionally, he asked his friend to distribute the money among those in need (Stavans, 2002). As a result, those in the drug trafficking business often turn to Malverde for guidance and protection due to his generosity and thoughtfulness of others.

Ultimately, previous research shows that *corridos* and *narcocorridos* have changed over time in regards to the content that they provide. There are many research studies done about drug trafficking in general, which is a positive thing, but there are not as many done about the lyrics of drug trafficking ballads. It is important to understand this phenomenon because of the drug war that is taking control of the daily lives of innocent people. There are plenty of studies about rap music and its lyrics, which is why *narcocorridos* were compared to them due to their resemblance. More content analysis research needs to be conducted using *narcocorridos* because the studies are limited.

THEORY

Music can be observed and analyzed in a sociological manner. In *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Adorno introduces the reader to various aspects of music culture. He uses musical sociology as a way to interpret the surroundings that exist within a given society. Adorno argues that music is simply being used as a way to satisfy a highly consumerist culture through the standardization of music. Adorno theorizes about the economy and its role in music. Adorno's sociology of music theory helps explain why music lyrics may glorify drug traffickers or promote a consumerist culture.

Adorno describes two forms of music which include music of the disenfranchised and standardized music. Adorno (1976:21) talks about the music produced by those who are "kept out of the cultural establishment by economic... pressures, the ones whose discontent with civilization is always an expanded reproduction of the raw state of nature." In essence, music may be produced by people who believe their place in society or social class is not where they should be. Their music is not part of the popular mass

music phenomenon because there is a class distinction. Class and strata division exist within the music culture. Adorno sees the separation of the social classes by looking at the type of music people listen to and what they could potentially afford to spend on musical items (Adorno 1976). For example, being able to constantly afford concert tickets is associated with those who belong to the higher social class. Historically, this distinction was more evident because people had to attend musical performances live in order to listen and witness songs and musical plays (Adorno 1976). However, that is different from today because music can be attained fairly easily.

Adorno also discusses a standardized form of music that may intertwine with a consumerist society thus producing a hegemonic form of music. 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. For example, they may be based on a previously hit song. Adorno argues that music no longer requires active listening or offers intellectual knowledge, but rather mass music repeats common themes in society. According to Adorno, music has lost its value and uniqueness once music began to be composed in a similar manner. In essence, “nothing really new is allowed to intrude, nothing but calculated effects that add some spice to the ever-sameness” (Adorno 1976:26). Music is standardized because the form is preferred over the content of the music. In other words, Adorno believes that people no longer listen to music to appreciate the complexity of the songs, but rather they listen to music simply because it is there.

The familiarity of a song to a listener is important to a commercial producer because hit songs increase the listeners and the profits. If listeners identify with a song,

then they are likely to identify with the lyrics. Adorno believes that people are attracted to forms of music that are most familiar to who they are or to what they have been previously exposed. Thus, music can be manipulated to make its listeners relate to the lyrics, whether the lyrics are true or not. According to Adorno (1976:27) music “either channels emotions... or vicariously fulfill[s] the longing for emotions.” Adorno claims that music has become a commodity for profit. However, the audience is not aware of this reality. The music industry is falsely satisfying customers because the audience believes they are receiving a true story when, in fact, they are simply identifying “with that fictitious subject” (Adorno 1976:27). Music is a powerful socializing agent, manipulating the emotions of listeners to keep them satiated with false emotions in order to generate profit.

The role of a consumer society is evident in the music industry’s emphasis on material goods and the lack of creativity of lyrics. Adorno believes that music is being created in order to yield economic gain for a company, and results in the creation of a consumerist culture. Adorno (1976: 119) states, “to participate in musical life depends essentially on material conditions.” The music industry is now replicating various forms of music for the purpose of creating new hit songs that will ultimately result in profit. Adorno states that “profit takes the functionless into its service and thereby degrades it to meaninglessness and irrelevancy” (1976:41). People are increasingly accepting the standardized form of music that is being offered to them without questioning its meaning or other relevant information.

Adorno's sociology of music theory is useful in the attempt to understand the underlying meanings in drug trafficking songs. Thus, looking into whether *narcocorridos* contain music of the disenfranchised or of the standardized form is helpful to understand more about this culture. Therefore, this research will analyze *narcocorridos* based upon Adorno's identification of themes found in music. This research seeks to find out whether *narcocorridos* contain themes of consumerist society or disenfranchised. Adorno identifies the impact of a consumerist society on music where their citizens emphasize the importance of obtaining material goods.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a latent content analysis of the messages and underlying meanings of *narcocorridos*. Latent coding is a coding style in which, "the researcher looks for the underlying, implicit meaning in the content of a text" (Neuman 2007:229). This style is very dependent on a researcher's current knowledge of the topic. Therefore, possessing knowledge about a topic is important in order to code for the correct themes in a particular sample.

Sample

The sample was drawn from different Internet sites. First, Google was used to search for *narcocorrido* songs. Descriptive words were alternated or rearranged in order to find all possible songs. Typing into the Google search engine phrases such as "narcocorridos" or "narcocorridos songs/list" was done. The songs were placed in a sampling frame if they were ballads that have "a poetic medium of expression that

combines metrics, rhythm, and melody to convey issues of significant importance to the audience” consistent with the genre of *narcocorridos* (Hernandez 1999).

After this, the names of *narcocorridos* were typed in a word document in no particular order. The total number of *narcocorridos* found was 143. Out of the total amount, there were 94 songs with lyrics available online. The sample was then determined by randomly selecting every third song on the list beginning with song number one. Doing this method, the sample came out to a total of 31 *narcocorridos*. All songs, except one, were sung by men.

Coding

The music lyrics will be analyzed using an open coding form that will allow unforeseen themes to be discovered. A code “ is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2009:3). Level one codes included subthemes that summarized a specific line or stanza within a song. The level one, descriptive codes were then categorized into groups. The open coding form allowed level one codes to be placed within a bigger, more encompassing theme that represented all of them.

Although open coding was used, a review of prior literature sensitized the searcher to some themes that are highly likely to appear such as family, lifestyle, guns, bravery, religion, power, language, and geographic region. The previously mentioned themes will aid in deciphering more of the underlying meanings that are present in the. The researcher is also looking for repeated words or quotes that might lead to a series of

subthemes. This can be helpful in finding unforeseen themes that might have otherwise been overlooked.

FINDINGS

Various different themes emerged from the analysis of the lyrics used. The themes are organized from the most prevalent to the least. In addition, subthemes that have a connection with a major theme are discussed within that same section. The themes vary in content or meaning. Some themes are purely about leading a certain fantasy lifestyle, while others depict positive traits that can be observed in loyal leaders. The number of songs that contained that respective topic is included as a reference.

Themes	Number of Times Coded
Fantasy Lifestyle	28
War-like Violence	27
The Drug-Trafficking Persona	19
Running the Business	17
Leadership	12
Reference to Poor Background	7

Fantasy Lifestyle

Living a fantasy lifestyle was coded in 28 out of the 31 songs making it the most common theme. Leading a fantasy lifestyle refers to obtaining various materialistic comforts such as expensive cars and homes as well as having personalized weapons. The songs often named the model of the cars and described any additional personalization that was done, such as having tinted windows or bullet-proof windows. The mention of being

dressed in black with bullet-proof vests and cars are often sung within the same verse. In addition with having personalized guns, the lyrics mention how such weapons are tailored to the owner by engraving their initials in gold. In the following song called La Hummer de Sonoyta by El Tigrillo Palma, the lyrics talk about two good friends and what their lifestyles are like.

Son igual de enamorados	They are equally in love
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

Furthermore, parties are often depicted within the music lyrics. Such descriptions include hosting parties, playing music, and drinking alcoholic beverages. The mention of women and having them by the men's side is also prevalent in the lyrics. The lyrics also mention traveling to different geographic regions for pleasure. In doing so, the songs state the names of various states located in the United States of American and in Mexico. Being able to lead such a lifestyle requires an abundance of money, which is repeatedly mentioned in the lyrics.

War-like Violence

War-like violence was mentioned in 27 out of the 31 songs, which was the second most common theme. This topic referred to everything involved with criminal behavior, including the mention of weapons and delivery of threatening messages. Criminal behavior consisted of trafficking drugs, possessing illegal weapons, and murdering other people. Throughout the lyrics, the words killing, eliminating, and executing were

constantly used although they all have the same meaning. Also, the lyrics mentioned the murder of other people within the business.

Furthermore, war-like violence included a combative environment that was created among the fighting cartels. All the cartels want to control as much space of a region as possible since it will facilitate the trafficking of drugs. This fight over land creates a deadly environment, and, as the following lyrics portray, a similarity to a war zone. The following lyrics come from a song called Comandos del MP by Voz de Mando describing some sort of battle.

Antiblandaje	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

In addition, the lyrics made reference to the drug trafficking leaders and their men as always being prepared for anything. They were always armed with weapons such as *el cuerno de chivo*, or the Ak-47, knives, and grenades. The songs described battles between drug traffickers and their enemies or with government officials. During such battles, the description of gunshots and eliminating enemies were explicit. For example, in the following excerpt from a song called Movimiento Alterado by Sanguinarios del M1, the lyrics described the usage of guns to murder others.

Con cuerno de chivo	With a horn of goat (AK-47)
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y bazooka en la nuca	& bazooka in the neck
Volando cabezas al que se atraviesa	Flying the heads of those who cross
Somos sanguinarios locos bien ondeados	We are bloodthirsty, crazy and cool
Nos gusta matar	We like to kill

Finally, the songs were used to send threatening or warning messages. Nine out of the 31 songs sent out messages to their enemies. They varied from a warning to stay away to a farewell. The messages referred to the drug traffickers as invincible and willing to kill anyone that may pose a threat to his business. In doing so, many songs described the confrontation between the drug trafficker and the government official. Although the government may be aware of such criminal behavior, the lyrics communicated to listeners that the drug traffickers were not afraid to confront the police. Therefore, if a negotiation is not established among both parties and the officer does not let the trafficker go freely, a battle will ensue. If the drug trafficker is not murdered and reaches his destination, then the operation is considered successful. In addition, a few of the songs mention the existence of a black list in which people who owe them money are sought after and killed for the failure to pay.

The Drug Trafficking Persona

The drug trafficking persona refers to the drug traffickers in 19 out of the 31 songs. They possess characteristics that are negative and positive. The negative characteristics include being deceptive, a willingness to kill, and seeing violence as something innate. A total of 14 of the songs mentioned negative characteristics. They construct such behavior as something that is within and cannot be controlled. In the

following lyrics that come from a song called Las Monjitas, The Nuns, by Exterminador, the drug dealers try to get past inspector officers by being deceitful and pretending to be nuns. The drug dealers tell the officers that they have milk and tea for orphan children, but in reality they had drugs.

Los retenes de la carretera	The inspectors of the road
A las monjas no las revisaban	Did not search the nuns
Tal vez era respeto al Convento	Maybe out of respect to the convent
Pero nunca se lo imaginaban	But they never imagined
Que eran dos grandes contrabandistas	That they were big smugglers
Que en sus barbas las drogras pasaban	That carried drugs in their beards

On the other hand, drug traffickers were described as powerful, courageous, proud, fearless, respectful, calm, wise, and humble. These characteristics, found in 18 of the songs, are traits that would be admired from any type of leader. In this community, drug traffickers who have been in the business for a while are greatly respected, not only for their positive traits, but also for the knowledge that they have gained. A few of the songs mention how experienced drug traffickers become mentors for those who recently joined the business.

In addition, drug traffickers are not only depicted as greedy and having a will to kill, but they are also described as loyal. The theme of having loyalty for faith/religion, family, and friends was mentioned in 17 out of the 31 songs. The songs talk about the drug trafficker's willingness to support others in similar situations. In addition to maintaining loyal relationships with friends, the songs describe the loyalty that is felt for

the parents of the drug traffickers. They mention how they are thankful and fond of their parents for the hard work they did in striving to make a better life for them. Also, the loyalty of parents is described when the family grieves the death of a loved one. Death is a common aspect of the drug trafficking life since many loyal traffickers sacrifice their lives for the business. Yet, even though they are involved in a deadly and gruesome business, some traffickers still maintain their religious faith possibly as a result of being part of a dangerous business.

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. They employ characteristics that any ordinary, successful business leader would possess. Drug traffickers are aware that it is a dangerous business, yet they carry out their duties in order to succeed. As described in the lyrics, this business requires people to cultivate and work the land in order to yield the desired drug. The lyrics also emphasize the importance of satisfying the customer and meeting their demands, not only in Mexico, but also in the United States and beyond. In order to distribute their drugs to their clients, the lyrics depict how the drug trafficker crosses borders. This is important because the drug traffickers are able to reach a broader array of customers which, in turn, helps their business yield a larger profit. The process of maintaining satisfied customers and having the means to do so is the way the drug traffickers run their business. The following passage from the song *Clave Privada* by Banda el Recodo talks about keeping the business open as long as the customers are present.

Voy a seguir trabajando	I will continue working
Mientras tenga compradores	As long as I have buyers
En los Estados Unidos	In the United States
Allí existen los mejores	There exist the best
Compran cien kilos de polvo	They buy 100 kilos of drugs
Como comprar unas flores	As if buying flowers

Leadership. Leadership was the least common theme with only 12 songs out of 31 mentioning it. However, this theme is interrelated with the larger topic of this section, which is that of running the business. This theme consisted of a military type of leadership that had a commander and followers. The leader has the authority and ability to demand any type of instructions knowing that the followers are obedient. The leader can have his people carry out any task that he asks for. As a result, the lyrics describe the followers as people who never give up and who follow orders that are given to them. They are obedient and do not question the instructions. In addition, the lyrics emphasize the importance of having an effective way of communicating with one another. This open communication and obedience allows the business aspect of drug trafficking to run as smoothly as possible and with minimal problems.

Reference to Poor Background

The mention of drug traffickers coming from deprived backgrounds was found in seven out of the 31 songs. While this was not a common theme, it does suggest a motive for joining the The lyrics describe men who were mocked and pushed aside throughout their childhood. Yet, they overcame their obstacles by joining the drug trafficking

business out of necessity. They are now depicted as men who have gained respect and money through their hard work. In joining such a business, they are now able to lead the type of lifestyle that they wish with the usage of money gained from drug trafficking. As this excerpt from the song Clave Privada by Banda el Recodo says:

Ya mucho tiempo fui pobre	I was poor for a long time
Mucha gente me humillaba	Many people humiliated me
Y empieza a ganar dinero	I began to earn money
Las cosas estan volteadas	The things are flipped now
Ahora me llaman patron	Now they call me boss

This passage depicts an individual who overcame poverty by joining the drug trafficking business. It talks about coming from a poor background filled with humiliation, but now he is considered a leader and boss.

Additionally, two of the songs reference a historical figure, Pancho Villa, in their lyrics. Drug traffickers compare their combat tactics and ferocity to that of Pancho Villa, a former bandit and later a Mexican revolutionary. Pancho Villa's history of stealing from the rich and aiding the poor is in a way reflecting what some of the drug traffickers currently do.

DISCUSSION

Adorno theorizes that a consumerist culture ultimately leads to the standardization of music. The emphasis of gaining monetary success through drug trafficking occurs so frequently that listeners may begin to accept this lifestyle as normal. Adorno's view on a consumer society explains the of the drug trafficking community as themes become more

repetitive in the ballads. The repetitive content of the ballads creates the standardization of this type of music. Overall, the *narcocorridos* can be better understood when Adorno's theory is applied. Although the mention of material goods is evident, consistent with Adorno's work, the findings also resulted in other themes are not solely based on a materialistic view. The differing themes were those that focused on a reference to a poor background, drug trafficker characteristics, language and religion, and running a business.

In the songs analyzed, having an affluent lifestyle was the most frequent theme coded among all the songs. This may be the result of a consumerist culture in which music is created solely to produce a profit. This theme is relevant to the culture of the *narcocorrido* ballads because the songs often portray the lifestyle of drug traffickers as one of money and power. The idea of leading a wealthy lifestyle found in the articles of Campbell (2005) and Burr (2003) is reinforced in the findings of the research. This theme was evident in 28 out of the 31 songs suggesting that the ideology of this fantasy lifestyle is a major component of the *narcocorridos*. The possession of material goods, women, and power tend to be the key components of the constructed fantasy lifestyle of drug traffickers. Such a lifestyle may be perceived as the glamorized life to lead by the way that singers of *narcocorridos* perform their music videos. The videos often depict women, luxurious jewelry, and cars simultaneously. This fantasy lifestyle would be fantasized by mostly men since they are the ones that are often depicted as the drug traffickers.

There were at least seven songs that made reference to a poor childhood, so it may mean that those who grew up in such circumstances are in search of the materialistic goods that they never had. Drug trafficking may be a means of acquiring wealth for those who are in search of it. The literature review and findings both emphasize poverty and the drug trafficker's role in helping others with their money. Such helping behavior towards others and to their community leads people to view drug traffickers as heroes. This idea may be interpreted as the drug dealers helping people who are in a similar position that they were in before becoming drug traffickers. It also suggests a motive for becoming a drug trafficker. The desire of becoming a drug trafficker may be because of a poor background that deprived them from opportunities for advancement. Thus, drug trafficking may be the only practical and successful way in which drug traffickers are able to earn money without educational degrees or the like.

It seems like the great emphasis on a knit-tight community is due to the close bonds that are formed among the members. The songs portray individuals that are willing to kill and die for their group, which may suggest that they have close relationships. This willingness to protect and fight for others resembles that of a family structure. So, it may be that people join such drug cartels for the longing of a sense of belonging. They may be in search of something that resembles family relationships or a place to belong. However, it may also be that this family develops as the members are forced to trust one another in order to be successful in the business. Either way, they seem to form role models amongst one another that understand them.

Previous literature such as Edberg (2001) described the importance of language and the way in which a newly constructed code language was used by drug traffickers. However, the theme of language was not very apparent in the research findings. There were few mentions of sharing particular code words for certain items. The exceptions were the nickname for the AK-47 gun was continuously repeated throughout the lyrics. Additionally, the usage of different words for the same type of drugs was observed. But this usage of a code word was not as widespread as suggested by Edberg (2001).

Surprisingly, the mention of the narco-saint Malverde was not mentioned in any of the songs. In fact, very few of the songs mentioned faith/religion. There were mentions of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the possession of faith, yet the Malverde saint was not specifically identified or mentioned in the lyrics contrary to Stavans (2002) and Edberg's (2001) research articles. This may be due to the transition that *corridos* are undergoing. If the songs are becoming more standardized, as Adorno theorizes, then some of the songs are created for the sole purpose of making a profit. Thus, this helps explain the lack of faith/religion in current *narcocorridos*.

Overall, there is overlap between the previous research literature on lifestyle, language, and faith with that of the research findings. Such overlaps are evident in the lifestyle that drug traffickers lead as well as the existence of a coded language and religion. There are differences, however, that predominantly deal with what is now more apparent in the lyrics. The shift of *narcocorridos* from coded language and faith/religion lifestyle, criminal behavior, loyalty, and running a business is observed within the findings. It may be the result of a more consumerist culture as Adorno theorizes.

Additionally, it may also be due to the greater coverage of the drug trafficking war that is currently taking place in Mexico. Not only has the media increased its coverage of *narcocorridos*, but the news channels have also been following such stories. This coverage gives the drug traffickers more fame and opportunity to use the media as a tool to expand their revenues and to make their business more well-known among listeners and viewers. They are able to yield more money by selling albums of their *narcocorridos* to those who are fans.

While this study has identified important themes, a weakness in this content analysis study is that the likelihood that every single *narcocorrido* ballad ever written was included in the original sampling frame is very low. The likelihood that the search engine used yielded all *narcocorridos* ever composed is low since not all *narcocorridos* may have been recorded. In addition, the Google search may not have picked up other songs that might have been significant. Either way, there is a possibility that not all drug trafficking ballads had a fair and random chance of being included in the study. Out of the original 143 songs found, only 94 had available lyrics online from which 31 songs were selected. Furthermore, there was only one coder for the songs meaning that interpretations are based on one perspective.

A content analysis was a good way to gather more data on drug trafficking, the people, and the culture that revolves around it. It allowed the researcher to analyze main themes as well as potential subthemes within the lyrics. Since it is very dangerous to conduct studies with actual drug traffickers a content analysis was a way to study this issue without the researcher being placed at a high risk for their safety. Most importantly,

there is a lack of content analysis studies of *narcocorridos*. That is why rap music content analysis research studies were used as a comparison since no studies were found in regards *narcocorridos*.

In conclusion, 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. The idea that drug traffickers are not simply cold murderers who are willing to kill innocent people is constantly brought to the surface within the lyrics. In the song lyrics, drug traffickers see themselves as courageous, loyal, and fearless people who are willing to fight back if they are threatened or if they need to protect their possessions or property. Otherwise, they aim to continue to run their business with as little trouble as possible, although they are always prepared for a fight. Ultimately, the songs paint a fantasy lifestyle of wealth and affluence while at the same time seeing themselves as being involved in a war-like battle whose sole purpose is to run their drug trafficking business next to honorable, loyal, and fearless individuals.

Appendix

Narcocorridos Analyzed

1. Lista Negra by Larry Hernandez
2. Las Monjitas by Exterminador
3. Los Dos Plebes by Los Tigres del Norte
4. El Corrido del Pepo by La Nueva Rebellion
5. El Zacatecano by Banda Jerez
6. Rey Midas by Larry Hernandez
7. El Ejecutor by El Komander
8. Movimiento Alterado by Sanguinarios Del M1
9. La Hummer De Sonoyta by El Tigrillo Palma
10. Operacion Pesada by Los Tucanes de Tijuana
11. La Ley 57 by Los Tucanes de Tijuana
12. Estrategias De Escape by El Komander
13. El Manos Verdes by Los Tucanes de Tijuana
14. Clave Privada by Banda el Recodo
15. En Preparacion by Gerardo Ortiz
16. Cuerno de Chivo by Los Huracanes del Norte
17. Ajustes Inzunza by Colmillo Norteño
18. Chuy y Mauricio by Los Canelos de Durango
19. Comandos del MP by Voz de Mando

20. Hembra Moderna by Vanessa Garcia
21. El Judicial y el Traficante by Grupo Exterminador
22. Contrabando en Los Huevos by Grupo Exterminador
23. El Bazukaso by Trigillo Plama
24. Caravana de Alto Rango by Lazaro Ramirez
25. Leyes del Negocio by El Compa Chuy
26. El Chapo Guzman by Los Alegres del Barranco
27. Aguila Blanca by Los Tucanes de Tijuana
28. Alfonso Cano by Los Invasores de Nuevo Leon
29. Al Nuevo Altata by El Compa Chuy
30. A mis Enemigos by Valentin Elizalde
31. El Nino de Oro by EL Compa Chuy

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