

Restrictive Discourse  
Manufacturing Reactionary Solutions to Internal Causes  
A Qualitative Media Analysis of Immigration Policy Discourse

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the discourse surrounding proposed “solutions” to the immigration phenomenon in the United States. I conducted two qualitative media analyses on the rhetoric and conceptual frames found in mass media newscasts reporting on the immigration debate. The first analysis covered the general immigration debate and the second covered the appearance of American southwest ranchers. Specifically the analyses contrasted the media’s coverage of root economic causes to the immigration phenomenon in comparison to reactionary solutions as proposed by leading immigrant attrition organizations such as the immigration think tank, Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and Republican linguist, Frank Luntz. The main argument of this thesis is based on an analysis of how the media has used southwestern ranchers as “expert witnesses” for reactionary solutions on a national level. An acute qualitative media analysis was used to compare the rhetoric found in the media coverage of southwestern ranchers versus the rhetoric found in 12 in-depth interviews I conducted with ranchers in the American southwest. This thesis contends that the media has successfully turned southwestern ranchers into spokespersons for border security rhetoric, furthering the binary debates on border security and immigration reform and thus obscuring the conditions which force migrants to leave their home countries.

The grounding theoretical framework for this thesis is based on David Altheide’s qualitative media analysis which identifies how certain “frames” and common “narratives” ultimately construct a way of discussing the problem or the

kind of discourse that will follow. This was structured on Atheide's qualitative media analysis protocols to dissect mass media newscasts covering the immigration debate and more specifically the mass media's coverage of southwestern ranchers. The qualitative media analyses were employed to determine whether the discourse found in nightly newscasts falls in line with root causes of immigration or FAIR's concern with reactionary "solutions." To further assess the media's ability to shape discourse, and ultimately policy, these qualitative analyses were compared with in-depth interviews of the ranchers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was made possible by the millions of unknown individuals throughout human history that have fought to question, expose and dismantle unjust power structures. I have been fortunate and humbled to work with and learn from individuals that face state-sponsored economic and militaristic terror on a daily basis, but refuse to bow to the economic interests of transnational elite. These individuals have helped shape my understanding of the privilege and the responsibility that results from being born in the most powerful nation in the world. These individuals are in danger of enormous, violent blowback when working to expose the U.S. policies that affect their quality of life; something we struggle to understand in the U.S.

Therefore, this thesis is dedicated to the millions of brave individuals that face *real* consequences in their struggle against state-sponsored, economic hegemony. Their names are not mentioned in this thesis, but it is with the intention of solidarity that I seek to expose the larger power structures that affect millions at home and abroad.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Arizona has been deemed “ground zero” in the contemporary US immigration debate. If there was any doubt, the March, 2010 murder of Arizona rancher Rob Krentz along with the April 2010, passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070/HB 2132<sup>1</sup> safely secured Arizona’s title and put the international spotlight on Arizona’s southern border with Mexico. The political and media attention has focused mainly on what is considered the failure of the federal government to “secure the border,” and, consequently, on solutions aimed at directly preventing immigrants from crossing the border. This myopic focus comes at the expense of any effort to understand the root causes for the increase in immigration pressure or any intervention aimed at addressing them.

There has been a sharp increase in the amount of undocumented immigrants crossing in the Arizona deserts due to increased militarization and enforcement of historically urban points of entry. As a result, the demographics of Arizona have been steadily changing. Much like the rest of the American southwest, Arizona has always maintained a significant Latino population. By 2006, 29.1% of the population in Arizona was Latino; fifteen percent were foreign born and 11% were estimated to be undocumented (Pew Hispanic Center 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> Senate Bill 1070, sponsored by Arizona Senator Russell Pearce, forced local law enforcement to question and detain anyone who they perceived to be to be in the country illegally under the clause of “reasonable suspicion.” To review the Bill in its original form, see: Senate Bill 1070. 2010. At the time of this writing, NPR published a piece about Pearce’s collaboration with the largest private prison company in the country, *Corrections Corporation of America* while drafting SB 1070. See: Hawke. 2010.

By 2008 the percentage of Latinos/as had risen to twice the national average- 30% (U.S. Census Bureau 2009), and, in their 2009 report, the Pew Hispanic Center stated that the undocumented population comprised at least 10% of Arizona's working population. This increase in the Latino population started in the mid nineties and continues to rise (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

Over the same time period, violence along the Mexican side of the border has reached record levels and has also received increased international attention. The spike in violence has mainly been attributed to the competition amongst drug cartels to control the drug and human smuggling business into the U.S. (Staudt 2009). The resulting violence in Northern Mexico has turned Mexican border cities into some of the most violent places in the world, provoking a hard-line response from Mexican President Felipe Calderon (Foreign Policy 2010). The increased drug violence alongside the deployment of the Mexican Military, convicted of human rights violations, supplements the need to migrate and supplements the explanation for the increasing Latino population in Arizona (Human Rights Watch 2008). The violence in Mexico reported by the U.S. mass media is often associated with migrant border crossers, unjustly criminalizing migrants without an accurate examination of individual migrant criminal histories.

The combination of increased violence along the Mexican side of the border and the increasing use of the Arizona desert as a crossing point for undocumented workers has been used by politicians and news programs for gain. For instance, the November 2010 reelection of Arizona Governor, Jan Brewer was mainly due to her support for Senate Bill 1070 and her strong stance against

“illegal immigration.” Local TV stations such as Arizona’s ABC 15 dedicated entire portions of their nightly newscasts to cover what was termed, the “Border Battle.”

This thesis will look at why the immigration discourse found in the mass media (specifically rancher interviews in the media) has largely focused on border security and not on systemic root causes of extreme poverty and violence in Mexico and Central America. I chose to focus on the ranchers because of their unique situation in rural border areas of the American Southwest and the increased amount of media attention they have received over the past several years. The data and narratives compiled for this thesis will demonstrate that the discussion of U.S. interventionist and neoliberal policies have been extremely rare in national nightly newscasts on the most watched television networks. Instead, the U.S. public has been presented with what is often termed an “invasion” of immigrants from Mexico. Subsequently, the debate over how to handle the immigration phenomenon has largely focused on “border security.”

Chapter 2 will discuss how the driving forces behind immigration have largely remained in place and continue to be affected by neoliberal policies and transnational corporate interests. In this case, neoliberal policies refer to, “market deregulation, state decentralization, and reduced state intervention into economic affairs in general” (Campbell and Pederson 2001, 1). However, the rethinking and discussion of larger, more systemic problems such as U.S. neoliberal economic policies in Latin America, in this case, NAFTA, have never been significant or even thoroughly debated in the mass media. Instead, the reaction

and response to the increased immigration into Arizona has fallen in line with historical scapegoating tactics.

In order to understand current power dynamics chapter 2 will give a brief historical context to US-Mexico relations, and current manifestations of neoliberal policies which have influenced immigration. These three policies are: (1) the war on drugs; (2) the North American Free Trade Agreement and (3) the US border security policies which have shaped the geographical context of Mexican migration into the United States; specifically into Arizona. Without a national discussion of the larger US policies that play such a crucial role in the entire phenomenon, the possibility of the US government taking logical and preventative steps towards alleviating forced economic and security migration will never be implemented and the existing binary narrative of amnesty versus border security will continue to dominate the debate. This thesis contends that these larger U.S. policies must be pushed to the forefront of the immigration debate.

Chapter 3 assesses the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and its subsidiary organization, the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and highlights the ideological beliefs of FAIR's founder, John Tanton. FAIR's intense commitment to curb the number of immigrants entering the US and to deport those that are here without proper documentation has placed them at the top of the anti-immigrant movement. FAIR has revolutionized the impact of anti-immigration think tanks. Their lobbying efforts and appearances in the mass media have made them a strong force in the immigration debate. In fact, FAIR

Attorney Kris Kobach spent years consulting with Arizona Senator Russell Pearce on the constitutionality of Arizona's SB 1070 and has been the architect of numerous anti-immigrant laws across the country (Hanna 2010). It is because of FAIR's keen political involvement that their ideological foundation must be scrutinized. John Tanton's connection with leading eugenics authors and his deep concern with the physical and mental capability of Latino leadership reflect the strict attrition-through-enforcement rhetoric of the institution. Making life as miserable as possible for immigrants in the U.S. in hopes that it will deter future immigrants reflects an ideology, and through scientific research and political analysis, this ideology has been presented in the form of policy.

Chapter 4 will focus on the shaping of the conversation in the mass media. Leading media analysts, scholars and activists agree that the right wing has dominated what is called the "framing" of the immigration debate. Republican linguist Frank Luntz has played a large role in the way conservatives speak about immigration. Progressive scholars working to expose the specific frames used by both conservatives and progressives argue that the language used by all politicians and activists must be changed if we are going to see a shift from reactionary policies to a focus on root causes.

In order to further analyze the framing of the immigration debate in the mass media, chapter 4 will include two qualitative media analyses; (1) the general framing of the immigration debate and (2) a focused analysis of how ranchers have been portrayed in the immigration debate. Both analyses will focus on the nightly newscasts of the most watched television networks (NBC, ABC, and

CBS). The ranchers have become what can be considered the face of the “secure the border” movement. The framing and discourse found in rancher media appearances explain why they have earned this title. Twelve in-depth interviews that I conducted with ranchers in southern Arizona and New Mexico reinforce the recurring narrative found in the media that security has become a top priority for this population. However the narratives collected in my interviews suggest that many ranchers have a key understanding of certain US policies leading to contemporary phenomena, which have been conveniently absent in the media. The comparison between the conversations found in media interviews and my in-depth interviews with the ranchers will serve as a focused example of how the media uses certain situations (e.g. the supposed clash between ranchers and immigrants) and certain populations (e.g. the ranchers as a face for the conservative) to maintain a border security paradigm. This paradigm restricts the discourse so that any solution to the proposed problem must first deal with, “border security” and not the driving forces of immigration.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONTEMPORARY US POLICIES: FUELING MIGRATION**

#### **A Brief History**

In order to analyze the rhetoric, frames, and recurring narratives of the immigration debate found in the following chapters, this section will cover what scholars have outlined as root causes in the immigration phenomenon. The contemporary U.S. policies discussed in this chapter are not new phenomena of U.S. interventionism in Mexico. The U.S. policy of intervention was galvanized with the creation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 which warned against further European interference in the Americas. Interventionist policies in the Americas were then seen as a U.S. right, one which Europeans no longer possessed (Rodriguez 2004). The Monroe Doctrine set the stage for later acts of U.S. interventionism, such as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and the diversion of the Rio Grande. Indeed, it is crucial to understand that the American Southwest was obtained in an act of interventionism with the “forced sale of one-third of Mexico to the United States” ending the US-Mexican War between 1846 and 1848 with the signing Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Lorey 1999). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was essentially a product of “Manifest Destiny,” the belief that the United States was destined, to expand across the North American continent, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

Furthermore, Belanger (2006) points out that a historical construction of race arrived alongside historical acts of economic interventionism. “The annexation of these lands (Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) into the U.S. was part of a broader

process of economic expansion, which had significant consequences for the construction of racial identities in the nineteenth century, consequences which continue to influence the present” (7). Belanger argues that contemporary racism and nativism is largely a result of the historical legal and political barriers based on race. Colonial elites erected race-based power structures to prevent the unification of subordinated groups such as Catholics, Italians, Irish, Natives and Blacks which continues to the modern day (2006). “The planter class saw that black slaves could be more effectively controlled by state power than white servants, for they could be denied certain rights based on the color of their skin” (5). Unlike their European counterparts, native and immigrant Latinos could not fit into the dominant white power structure. Latinos, much like Asian immigrants were placed into a racial category associated with Blacks which has continued to shape the discrimination of native and foreign born Latinos (Belanger 2006, Galindo and Vigil 2006). Therefore, the historical economic, interventionist policies have subsequently created a unique racialization of Latino immigrants which will be explored further when discussing contemporary U.S. policies.

Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. has searched for gaps to fill the “anti-communist” rhetoric which was used to legitimize interventionist policy. With the death of communism as a credible fear factor, policy makers turned to the “War on Terror,” “War against Illegal Immigration,” and the “War on Drugs” (Johnson 1988, Altheide 2009). A more recent history has revealed many of the same policies of intervention carried out under the umbrella of what is considered neoliberal economic policy. “This restructuring has come to be called



“neoliberal” because it is an updated, and more extreme, version of the classical liberal economic theory developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Adam Smith and David Ricardo” (Kotz 2003, 15). Neoliberalism grew out of a complex bond between ideological, political, and economic theory.

The most influential of neoliberal movements began in 1947 with the creation of the Mont Pelerin Society made up of economists, (such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman) philosophers, business leaders and others who favored classical liberalism (Harvey 2005). The Mont Pelerin Society took the liberal principles of freedom and liberties of the 18<sup>th</sup> century very seriously and the “neo” came from their adherence to neo-classical economics and their view that liberty and freedom of the individual could “only be guaranteed by free markets, free trade and a strong system of private property rights” (Harvey 2005, 60).

Keynesian economic theory dominated the 50’s and 60’s and the neoliberal thinkers had very little power. However, during the same time period the Mont Pelerin Society started to gather financial support and create think tanks, such as the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, to lobby various organizations and media such as the *Financial Times* (Harvey 2005). It wasn’t until the 1970’s that the neoliberals began to take power. The period from 1970 to 2000 saw the emergence of a new “capitalist-imperial-hegemony” operated through the globalization of financial markets by a transnational corporate elite and associated with, “both disciplining labor movements in advanced capitalist countries and mobilization of a disorganized proletariat elsewhere through offshore production and back –office activities” (Harvey 2005, 77).

As will be presented, the three policies outlined in this chapter are a result of neoliberal theory and have been implemented over the past forty years, which scholars consider the beginning of neoliberal power. “Indeed, it was the very objective of the dominant economic strategy of the last thirty years to bring the world economy back to a pre-New Deal stage of free-market capitalism” (Midnight Notes 2009, 3). The 1960’s and 1970’s proved to be revolutionary times with workers on a global level, challenging the inequalities of labor based on race, sex, and education levels. Popular movements swept the U.S. and revolutionary wars ignited across the globe. The advancements made by the working class posed a threat to the profits of transnational corporations and to capitalism in general.

Neoliberalism took many forms in response to the different composition and intensity of workers’ power: relocation of the means of production, deterritorialization of capital, increasing the competition among workers by expanding the labor market, dissipation of the welfare state, and land expropriation (Midnight Notes 2003, 4).

It is necessary to understand the ideological and theoretical basis of neoliberal thought when analyzing the following U.S. policies. Furthermore, the strategy of the Mont Pelerin Society to create think tanks and lobby the media in favor of neoliberal ideology becomes increasingly relevant in the following chapters that outline the significance of immigrant attrition think tanks and their influence in the mass media.

The root causes as outlined below will shed light on the success of immigrant attrition think tanks, FAIR, CIS, and the structure of the mass media, that have kept the U.S. population focused on the ostensible effect (the immigrants) and not on the following neoliberal policies which increase the need to migrate.

### **NAFTA: Ensuring Obedience at Home and Abroad**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) reached on August 12, 1992 between Mexico, Canada and the United States has become the contemporary paradigm of nation state cooperation with big business. Indeed, NAFTA adheres to core, neoliberal principles:

The argument made here is that neoliberalism involved a process of institutional reconfiguration that adjusted some of the key parameters of the existing financial regime in a way that *enhanced rather than diminished* the infrastructural capacities of the American state, as well as multiplied the strategic leeway available to those who enjoy privileged access to the states mechanisms of infrastructural control (Konings 2010, 749).

NAFTA was signed by nation states, not corporations. Nonetheless, it was understood from the beginning of the negotiations that NAFTA was to be a business treaty based on market interests. NAFTA was never meant to morph into an alliance like the EU. All three nations agreed to minimal state intervention on market interests. However, as with all negotiations of unbalanced

power, the U.S.-headquartered multinational corporations held the most influence and had the most to gain from the deal.

For instance, Mexico was not signing the deal with the hopes of reversing the economic situation between Mexico and the US; to eventually set up manufacturing plants in Boston, exploiting cheap American labor. In contrast it was understood, for multiple reasons, why the most powerful U.S. multinational corporations were in favor of the free trade agreement. They are: (1) *unfettered access to larger markets* without the hindrance of taxation, (2) *access to cheap labor*, (3) *increased legal protection for patents and intellectual property*.

### **Unfettered Access to a Larger Market**

It had been predicted that an influx of U.S. subsidized corn would render many small scale Mexican farmers unable to compete with large U.S. agribusiness companies. For instance, Kirsten Appendini, a Professor at *El Colegio de Mexico*, who was writing during the NAFTA negotiations and before NAFTA had been signed, wrote:

Free access of imported corn to the Mexican market, where current domestic prices are double international prices is considered an important threat to the livelihood of about 2.4 million peasant producers plus their families.... Average yields for maize are about 2 tons per hectare (compared with 7.4 in the USA); 38.6 percent of producers do not cover costs at current support prices and only 7.9 percent would be profitable at world prices (Kiersten 1994, 80-84).

The exodus of thousands of small scale farmers was not an unpredictable phenomenon that suddenly appeared from an abstract aspect of the NAFTA agreement: *it was known*. For instance, in Mexico "...maize represents 20 percent of total value of ag. output, and accounts for 48 percent of acreage (59 percent of rain fed and 28 percent of irrigated land); it also involves a majority of peasant producers (Kiersten 1994, 60)." It was understood that these Mexican Farmers would serve a purpose: mainly cheap labor. For example, Jorge Bustamante, President of "El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, writes:

...This rationale masks the fact that the U.S. prefers to continue addressing the migration issue unilaterally as a crime issue since undocumented migration provides an inexhaustible source of cheap labor that the U.S. can regulate and has regulated, according to its economic needs (Bustamante 1994, 50).

However, Bustamante does not address the vast labor pool for the maquiladoras (factories) that was created after the effects of NAFTA began plaguing Mexico's countryside. Harvey (1999) terms this phenomenon *accumulation by dispossession*. "Existing capital assets and labor power have to be devalued through regional and local crises, after which the population is prepared to accept an alternative regime that promotes the elite's interests" (1999, 199). It is true that the mass migration serves the U.S. economy well in terms of a disposable population, but it is even more advantageous for U.S. corporations to exploit these populations in their own country where corruption often supersedes labor laws.

It is important to understand that the issue of increased immigration was debated during NAFTA's implementation (Kiersten 1994, Brown 1993). It's not a coincidence that the maquiladora employee population increased significantly during the first years of NAFTA (Gruben 2001). In fact, it is part of the neoliberal model. Referring back to Harvey, "accumulation by dispossession is therefore part of the new imperialism that achieves consent by coercion. The US has given up on hegemony through consent and resorts more and more to domination through coercion" (2005, 201). In this case, the consent of millions of Mexican farm workers to fill manufacturing plants and U.S. agricultural fields comes from the coercion of U.S. subsidized corn which devastates local Mexican prices. Therefore, NAFTA, as a neoliberal policy, was able to serve myriad corporate interests through (a) the free flow of capital and manufacturing plants and (b) a guaranteed workforce to fill the maquiladoras. The same is true for the steady flow of cheap labor that is readily available to businesses on the U.S. side.

Furthermore, the so called "illegal immigrants" fleeing rural Mexico in search of jobs in the U.S. have been labeled a "threat" to the U.S. economy and national security. This rhetoric allows for further interventionism into Mexico's sovereignty- which is a continuation of U.S. interventionist policies carried out as side projects of neoliberal trade policies. For example, Laura Carlson, the director of the Mexico City-based Americas Policy Program for the Center for International Policy points out how NAFTA was extended into the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP):

The SPP created the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) that serves as an official tri-national SPP working group. The group is composed of representatives of thirty giant North American companies, including General Electric, Ford Motors, General Motors, Wal-Mart, Lockheed-Martin, Merck, and Chevron. NACC's recommendations centered on "private sector involvement" being a key step to enhancing North America's competitive position in global markets and is the driving force behind innovation and growth (Carlson 2010).

This was an unprecedented move for a trade agreement to go into the security field. The main idea was to push the borders beyond the United States and create a North American security perimeter that would include Canada and Mexico.

The financial gains of the private defense industry will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. However, it is critical to understand that the mass exodus of millions of people is largely augmented by myriad forms of corruption amongst the Mexican Government, neoliberal, economic interventionism (NAFTA) and exploitation by U.S. corporations.

### **Access to Cheap Labor**

For multiple reasons, Mexican border towns such as Ciudad Juarez, Nogales, and Tijuana were seen as perfect locations for the manufacturing plants of large corporations such as General Electric and Ford. In 1964 the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in response to the end of the Bracero guest-worker program. The termination of the Bracero

program resulted in the unemployment and deportation of many Mexican workers who were dumped along the Mexican side of the border. The BIP was an effort to reemploy these workers, “which prodded American manufacturers to assemble their products in northern Mexico using cheap labor” (Balli 2003, 1).

The disposable labor pool created by NAFTA is utilized in the maquiladoras much like the displacement of Bracero workers. As will be discussed later, cheap labor along the border is augmented by contemporary neoliberal policy: (A) flooding the Mexican market with U.S. subsidized corn creating a mass exodus of rural farmers and (B) a militarized border which traps potential migrants in border towns and instills fear and obedience in border city communities. (C) Because NAFTA allowed corporations to build or move plants without restriction in any of the signatory countries, these corporations could then aggressively negotiate wages, a key aspect of neoliberal theory. “Neoliberalism’s overall solution to the crises of Keynesianism was to devalue labor power, reconstitute wage hierarchies, and reduce workers to the status of apolitical commodities” (Midnight Notes 2009, 3-4). If workers in U.S. plants decided they were not being compensated justly and organized, the corporations could simply move their plants to the other side of the border. This helped to keep worker wages down and corporate profits up.

### **Legal Protections**

With the increased push for the “patenting” of seeds and forced economic interventionism in the agricultural sector of Mexico, U.S. corporations



increasingly own the genetic makeup of the seeds which is to essentially “own” the food grown by traditional farmers, eventually dictating their very way of living (Leahy 2004). NAFTA *requires* patent protection for new breeds of plants and farmers are discouraged from planting saved seed. The traditional custom of selling prior years seed to other farmers is banned (Robertson 1998).

NAFTA did this by incorporating another treaty, the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). Congress brought US law into conformity in 1994 by amending the Plant Variety Protection Act, tightening the grip of IP rights on agriculture (Robertson 1998).

To make matters worse, a team of medical doctors and molecular biologists have recently published their findings in the *International Journal of Biological Sciences* to have “...found that agricultural giant Monsanto’s GM corn is linked to organ damage in rats (Goldstein 2010).” Only time will tell if the same effects reside in humans.

Although many of the *campesinos* fleeing traditional subsistence farming were forced into low paying maquiladora and servitude farm labor in the U.S., many more remained then and still remain today; unemployed. The increased levels of unemployed or “underemployed” workers and the gap between rich and poor in Mexico coincided with the explosion of the drug industry in Mexico and the switch from the Caribbean coast trafficking route to Mexican soil. “As U.S. law enforcement agencies cracked down on shipments throughout the Caribbean and South Florida in the early to mid 1980’s, Columbian Entrepreneurs-

especially leaders of the sophisticated Cali cartel turned their attention to Mexico” (Bosworth, Collins and Lustig 1994, 16). By the early 1990’s the Mexican route had galvanized into the most lucrative drug trafficking route which overlapped with the signing of NAFTA in 1994.<sup>2</sup> A large population of unemployed and destitute migrants and economic refugees was and still is perfect for exploitation in the drug industry. There is no doubt that the unemployment and poverty levels augmented by NAFTA had a significant effect on the willingness or forcing of impoverished individuals to take risks and get involved with drug trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

### **Funding Human Rights Abuses and The War on Drugs: Who Profits?**

The following section will demonstrate why the U.S. government-backed “war on drugs” has had a catastrophic impact on the situation in Mexico. First, the high grade military arms shipped to Mexico eventually end up in the hands of the drug cartels. Second, the Mexican government is a regime that has been convicted in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of failing to prevent murders and properly investigate crimes. Third, the U.S. has the highest demand for drugs and leads the world in consumption creating an insatiable and highly lucrative market for illegal substances. Fourth, history has shown us that “Plan

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<sup>2</sup> There is no presumption in this research that connects intentional efforts on behalf of the DEA to shift the drug trade into Mexico specifically during the signing of NAFTA. However, there were multiple phenomena happening in a similar time period that has created the situation along the US-Mexico border and specifically the spike in violence and drug trafficking in the Arizona region.

<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon will be substantiated in chapter 4 when analyzing the firsthand accounts of ranchers speaking with destitute immigrants that have no other choice but to bring drugs across the border to pay off coyote debts.

Columbia” has failed, so the same can be predicted for “Plan Mexico” (Petras 2000).

Plan Mexico was signed by President Bush and Calderon in May of 2008 and is funded directly by the U.S. government. Although aimed at curbing drug trafficking, the agreement also included 210 million dollars to expand Mexico’s capability to prevent Central American immigrants from crossing Mexico’s southern border (Kristin 2008). In 2009:

The House passed funding for Plan Mexico despite the fact that the U.S. government is still withholding 15% of the 2008 funds because Mexico has still not complied with Plan Mexico's human rights conditions. The other 85% of the funds are *unconditional* (2008 emphasis added).

Indeed, some sources claim that the U.S. is not only funding the human rights violations by way of the arms trade, but that the U.S. is also involved in the training of torture techniques to Mexican Police:

Under the plan (Plan Mexico) America will provide training programs and military equipment. Undoubtedly, in terms of influence it will also tie Mexico closer to Washington....Shocking videos surfaced showing Mexican police undergoing a torture training session, directed by a contractor believed to be working for a U.S. private security firm. In one video, the contractor drags an officer through his own vomit. In another, a victim receives shots of water up his nose, a common torture technique (Carlson 2008).

There is an abundance of scholarly literature summarizing the U.S. participation in terrorism throughout the globe since the end of World War II (Chomsky 2000; Zinn 2008; Kinzer 2008; Webb 2003, Caffentizes 2003; Grandin 2006). The U.S. funding and participation in Mexican State-sponsored terror is only the beginning of the problem. Plan Mexico which is essentially reflexive of Plan Columbia, does very little to address the core issues. (A) Until poverty is eradicated and police and military personnel are offered living wages there will always be corruption and temptation to get involved with the drug trade.<sup>4</sup> (B) The criminalization of drugs in the U.S. drives prices up in the U.S. creating a situation where drug cartels are willing to take big risks and carry out atrocious acts of violence to maintain control of the industry. U.S. foreign policy has taken similar, unsuccessful measures with Plan Colombia (Petras 2000). One can conclude that Plan Mexico is following the tried and failed U.S. policy on drugs.

The war on drugs represents another example of U.S. neoliberal policies: the government's willingness to appease corporate interests through large arms sales for the private "defense" industry. There was hope that some of these policies would change with the election of Barak Obama in 2008, even more so after Mr. Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize on October 9, 2009. However, the drug war

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<sup>4</sup> Some advancements have been made, but the wages still need to increase. According to the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* President Felipe Calderon implemented a 46 percent pay increase to low ranking military personnel who now make around 5,200.00 pesos or 400.00 dollars a month. See: Herrera, and Enviados 2007. The Mexican Police are paid even less. According to *El Universal* a Mexican Newspaper, police officers are paid between 2000.00 and 4000.00 pesos; an equivalent to roughly 230.00 dollars a month. See: Otero 2007.

continues and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico has become the most lucid example of the resulting violence that accompanies both U.S. and Mexican drug policies.

In 2008 there were at least 1,600 murders in Juarez including more than 70 police officers and soldiers (Overseas Security Advisory Council 2009). Some media outlets estimate a much higher number. Nonetheless, it comes out to more than four murders a day. Some reports from this year estimate the number of murders have reached 2,250 as of December 6, 2009. That is an average of more than six murders every day. Ciudad Juarez has an estimated 173 murders per 100,000 residents. In comparison, the website *Foreign Policy* rated Caracas the murder capital of the world in 2008 with 130 murders per 100,000 residents and the U.S. city of New Orleans was also amongst the “murder capitals” with 67 murders per 100,000 residents (Foreign Policy 2010). Therefore, Juarez trumps the most violent U.S. city threefold. This form of extreme violence has been pushed into the interior of Mexico as drug cartels fight over drug and human smuggling routes. Accordingly, reports at the time of this writing indicate the death toll in Mexico as a result of the drug war has exceeded more than 28,000 since Felipe Calderon took office and launched his drug war in 2006 (Brice 2010). The drug war is being carried out with a seemingly unlimited supply of high powered assault rifles and military grade arms. So where does the U.S. government fit into the larger scheme of things? According to a report by the “Narcosphere” journalist Bill Conroy:

The deadliest of the weapons now in the hands of criminal groups in Mexico, particularly along the U.S. border, by any reasonable standard of an analysis

of the facts, appear to be getting into that nation through perfectly legal private-sector arms exports, measured in the billions of dollars, and sanctioned by our own State Department (Conroy 2009).<sup>5</sup>

These weapons reach the illegal operations via corrupt government officials, police and military. The arms deals are called *Direct Commercial Sales* (hereinafter referred to as DCS) in which the State Department oversees a program that requires private companies in the U.S. to obtain an export license to sell “defense” weaponry to foreign buyers (2009). To get a better idea of the sheer quantity of arms money going to the Mexican military and ultimately the “narcoterrorists” let us analyze Bill Conroy’s report on the spending from fiscal year 2004 to 2007:

...According to an analysis of the DCS reports, some \$1 billion in defense hardware was approved for export to Mexico via private U.S. companies. In addition to the military hardware exports approved for Mexico, some \$3.8 billion in defense-related ‘service’ (technical assistance and training via private U.S. contractors) also were approved for ‘export’ to Mexico over the same four –year period, according to the DCS reports (2009).

This report does not take into account the 700 million in assistance already authorized under Plan Mexico (2009).

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<sup>5</sup> A recent study based on data from the U.S. Government Accountability Office states that 90% of guns recovered and traced from Mexican crime scenes originated from gun dealers in the United States. See: *Mayors Against Illegal Guns*, 2010. However, the purpose of this research is to focus on the U.S. state-sponsored arming of the Mexican government.

According to personal accounts we can see exactly where the funding for these arms ultimately ends up. According to Tosh Plumlee (a former CIA contract pilot during the Iran Contra Scandal who recently made a trip down to Juarez with confidential sources) there exist large stockpiles of U.S. military weaponry controlled by Mexican organized crime groups. Mr. Plumlee visited a warehouse which was not under the guard of a the Mexican military, but was filled with U.S. military weapons- including grenades, grenade launchers, LAW anti-tank weapons M16 rifles and night vision equipment (Conroy 2009). There seems to be a consensus with current and formal American DEA agents as well as Mexican government officials including current president Felipe Calderon that the vast corruption in Mexico throughout all levels of government and the private sector allows for a very lucrative business of illegal arms sales within Mexico. There has been no question about the corruption levels in Mexico for decades. In fact, in a report by the Los Angeles Times, Mexican President Felipe Calderon himself is quoted as saying, “his government was making strides against corruption but warned that graft remained a threat to the nation’s efforts against crime (2009).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the shipment of arms to the Mexican Government and the Mexican military is essentially arming the drug cartels. However, acknowledging the financial aid and armament of human rights violators and terrorist organizations would go against the paradigm of U.S. foreign policy and rhetoric. Furthermore, the continued escalation of the “drug

war” and the hard-line military response of the Mexican government to combat the problem equates to billions of dollars in arms sales by U.S. companies.

Similar to the side effects of NAFTA, the increasing violence in Mexico as a result of drug policies and the arms trade, serves the cycling interests of the neoliberal agenda. The weaponry the U.S. sends to combat the problems turns into more firepower for the drug gangs, which, in turn, means U.S. companies are guaranteed future arms contracts to combat a self inflicted problem. In an interview on *Face the Nation* President Obama stated that the U.S. needs to do a better job “regulating” the U.S. flow of arms to Mexico (Obama 2009). By this, Mr. Obama is referring to the illegal flow of arms from U.S. gun dealers, not from the billion dollar contracts approved by the State Department and “legally” shipped to Mexico. The failure of the U.S. government to recognize that multibillion dollar arms deals play a significant role, alongside private gun shops, just furthers the problem and keeps the focus of the media and policy makers on smaller issues.

The U.S. armament and backing of Mexican troop deployment in Mexican border cities is problematic to say the least. There has been a long history of corruption among the Mexican Military and it continues today. According to a 2009 report by Human Rights Watch, the Mexican Military is essentially operating with complete impunity. The report outlines various human rights violations committed by the Mexican Military including forced disappearances, illegal detentions, torture, rape and murder (Taraciuk and Vega 2009). However, when civilians seek justice for the abuses carried out by the military, they are sent



to military tribunals where judges fearfully rule in favor of military personnel due to the fact that they do not have a set tenure and their boss, the “Secretary of Defense” also directs the military justice system. Specifically, the report outlines eleven human rights violations carried out by the Mexican Military against civilians during “Counternarcotics and Public Security Operations.” The report also finds that Mexico is in violation of international law, violating several international treaties which impose an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights listed in the treaties (Human Rights Watch 2008).

In a case heard by the Costa Rica based Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) involving three women killed and dumped next to the headquarters of the Maquiladora Association in Juarez in November of 2001 the court found the Mexican Government responsible.

...the justices found the government incurred in violations of the American Convention of Human Rights and the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem Do Para Convention) by failing to prevent the slayings and properly investigate the crimes. “States are obligated to establish general policies of public order that protect the population from criminal violence” wrote court Justice Diego Garcia-Sayan (Frontera NorteSur 2009).

This is the government that the U.S. is funding to fight the “War on Drugs.” The same military funded by the U.S. that is carrying out human rights abuses with almost complete domestic impunity and the same government that

has now been found guilty of violating international human rights law in the IACHR. The drug war on both sides of the border has created a miserable situation throughout northern Mexico and especially in Mexican border cities. The next section will explore the U.S. response to undocumented entry from many of the Mexican cities heavily-hit by drug violence. As we will be presented, the U.S. response is similar to that of Mexico's: that is, a military response.

### **Border Militarization: Deterrence or Strategy?**

This section seeks to explore the role a militarized border plays in the mass migration currently found in Arizona/New Mexico ranching property. Not only is the U.S. providing the financial support and arming the Mexican military occupation of the Mexican border cities such as Juarez, Nogales and Tijuana, but they are also contributing directly to the occupation with a militarized U.S. border zone. This section will outline the benefits and byproducts a militarized border creates for corporations and policymakers.

Harvey writes, “unfortunately as Arendt so astutely remarks, the coupling of nationalism with imperialism cannot be accomplished without resort to racism” (2003, 197). The militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border serves as an important reminder that the U.S. public must be protected from a particular ethnic group that is “flooding” across the U.S. border.<sup>6</sup> First, militarizing the border allows U.S. policymakers and corporations to utilize historical prejudices against Latinos. The

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 4 for detailed examples of how the media has framed the immigration issue as one of invasion.

historical racialization helps legitimize the battle against undocumented immigration, thus stimulating private defense company profits.

Second, the militarized border creates an obedient population that faces dire consequences in response to dissent. That is, the militarized border keeps maquiladora workers obedient and dehumanizes migrant workers on both sides of the border. The occupation of military and federal police, violent drug gangs, the horror of raped, mutilated and murdered young women in Juarez, the hanging bodies of executed drug rivals, and the deaths of innocent bystanders have become commonplace in Mexico.

Border Security policies such as Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line launched in 1994 under the Clinton Administration have served to legitimize the current war zone that exists on the U.S. Mexican border (Nevins 2001). Furthermore, these two policies militarized the historically urban points of entry for migrants. To make the situation worse, migrant women now faced the danger of being alone with a “coyote” in the desert where rape is unfortunately a common practice, and must then face the consequences of a Federal Border Patrol agency operating under partial impunity to human rights abuses (Falcon 2007). The stories of destitute migrants will become more lucid with firsthand accounts given by ranchers in chapter 4.

Policymakers would not be able to implement such strategies without the historical construction of race-based nativism (Galindo and Vigil 2006, Belanger, 2006). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the media also plays an important role to keep the U.S. public fearful of the “War on Terror,” “War against Illegal

Immigration,” and the “War on Drugs (Johnson 1988, Altheide 2009). This is not a new phenomenon. For instance, Timothy J. Dunn writes:

This practice was initiated during the 1920-1922 U.S. recession, when –after being recruited to work by the Cotton Growers Association during World War I-Mexican immigrant workers on cotton farms in the Southwest were scapegoated for allegedly causing unemployment among U.S. workers.

...During the Great Depression of 1929 Mexican workers, with a growing reputation as labor organizers and agitators, proved to be useful scapegoats for the economic crisis. An estimated 500,000 to one million Mexican-many of them children born in the United States and thus U.S. citizens-were either deported outright or intimidated into returning to Mexico (Dunn 1995 93).

It has been established that the U.S. refuses to see the migration issue as a labor issue and an international cooperation issue. For instance, Jorge Bustamante outlines three main arguments that Mexican presidents and government officials have been pleading for years:

- (a) That Mexico wants to export products, not people; (b) that undocumented migration is an economic issue and a human rights issue;
- (c) that these issues should be negotiated bilaterally in depth and over the long-term ...the U.S. continues to hold that migration is a domestic national security issue or a law enforcement issue (Bustamante 1994).

The U.S. support of the devastating situation in Mexican border towns has played an important role in the disciplining of foreign workers. U.S. militarization policies on the U.S. side of the border have had similar affects. In

fact current border security policies reflect the U.S. Army's definition of low-intensity conflict:

Low intensity conflict is a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, and psycho-social pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence (Dunn 1995, 175).

Although termed "low intensity" the militarization of the U.S. border is certainly apparent, and alive. According to Dunn, many of the tactics used by the U.S. on the border include the following:

- A variety of helicopters (e.g., AH-1S Cobra gunships, UH-60 Black Hawks for transport, and OH-58Cs for reconnaissance).
- Small pilotless remote-controlled airplanes or "drones."
- Seismic, acoustic, magnetic and infrared electronic sensors, most of which were originally developed for use in the Vietnam War, to detect vibration, sound and heat.
- Night Vision goggles and infrared weapons sights
- Closed circuit television systems
- The construction of chain link fences to increase the effectiveness of guards and intrusion sensors.

Not only has the U.S. implemented war-like strategies via military equipment, but the militarized zone has led to documented cases of Border Patrol agents raping women immigrants trying to enter the U.S. (Falcon 2007). According to Sylvanna M. Falcon, the militarized border has created myriad problems amongst multiple U.S. agencies which create a warlike situation and the raping of immigrant women is a direct result of these policies.

(1) The INS complaint process is ineffective, inadequate, and cumbersome, leading to the failure to properly investigate the vast majority of allegations of human rights abuses. (2) Border enforcement agents have wide discretionary power while on the job. (3) Ineffective and misguided hiring process leads to the employment of questionable staff. (4) The failure to enforce and abide by law-enforcement standards places human rights in jeopardy. (5) The level of militarization produces warlike characteristics that make rape and other human rights violations an inevitable consequence of border militarization efforts (2007, 205).

The militarization of both sides of the border has maintained the paradigm of disciplining human capital that fulfill low-wage jobs. U.S. interventionist policy has forced thousands of rural farmers off of their land, flooding the border cities with cheap labor for multiple corporate enterprises from manufacturing plants on the border, to the agricultural fields and service industries across the United States. This population of disposable workers is controlled through

militarization of the U.S. border and the warlike tactics forced upon potential migrants fleeing extreme poverty.

## **Summary**

Just as the U.S. government treats the immigration phenomenon to be a law enforcement issue, the “war on drugs” has also been addressed as an interventionist issue rather than a domestic drug problem due to the insatiable demand for drugs in the U.S. To do so would force policymakers and government officials to acknowledge the failing education system, high unemployment rates, decreased standards of living, and a failed “just say no” drug policy; all of which has been greatly affected by neoliberal policies implemented over the past 40 years (Harvey 2005, 2006; Kotz 2003; Konings 2010; Midnight Notes 2009; Chomsky 1993). For that reason, scapegoats such as “illegal immigrants” and “narcoterrorists” are blamed for stealing American jobs, resources, and flooding our cities with drugs. The Obama administration has provided a small acknowledgement of the U.S. role when he admitted that consumption is part of the problem. In an interview on *Face the Nation*, Obama states, “that we (the U.S.) have to reduce the demand for drugs” (Obama 2009). In contrast, when asked about possibly reinstating a ban on assault weapons Mr. Obama simply replied that we need to provide assistance to the Mexican Government (2009). That assistance (Plan Mexico) however, does nothing to solve the problem and actually increases the violence in Mexico.

While U.S. economic intervention and military aid terrorizes the Mexican population, the immigrants that try to escape such oppression and seek work in

the U.S. are met at the border with military surveillance systems, Border Patrol and armed militias such as the “Minutemen.” This disenfranchised sector of the Mexican population often gets trapped in the border cities, impoverished and destitute. The corruption of their own government has failed them, and if they try to escape the poverty and enter the U.S. they are confronted with a real war zone that is now the U.S. Mexico Border.

Mexico has become the poster child for extreme violence, corruption, drugs, and impunity amongst governmental agencies. The U.S. plays a critical role in almost every aspect of the volatile situation. U.S. officials consciously arm human rights violators (the Mexican military) and “narcoterrorist” organizations. The U.S. is the largest consumer of drugs, U.S. domestic laws criminalizing drug use drive prices and risk factors up, and NAFTA has forced millions of farmers off of their land and into the U.S. via the Arizona desert. U.S. policy makers must take a critical look at the neoliberal policies which augment the current situation on the border and address alternative policies which would advance the interests of the both nations’ working class populations. Moreover, there must be cogent recognition that U.S. neoliberal policy plays a key role in the forced migration of millions of people, many of whom are forced to cross through the Arizona desert and into rancher property.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **FAIR AND CIS: AGENDA SETTING THINK TANKS**

#### **Immigration and Eugenics**

The previous chapter outlined key US policies that fuel Mexican migration to the U.S. This chapter will focus on the successful circulation of scapegoat rhetoric by immigrant attrition think tanks with questionable ideological motivations. In order to understand the restricted framing of the immigration debate, it is important to analyze the ideological framework of the institutions working to funnel the debate around certain policies. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (more commonly referred to as FAIR) has been a leading agenda setting institution in the U.S. immigration debate for the past three decades. Founded in 1979, FAIR has grown into one of the most influential and powerful immigration think tanks in the U.S. This section will look at (1) the history and politics of FAIR's founder John Tanton; (2) The main goals of the organization and (3) FAIR's media influence and success in shaping of the immigration debate; including the creation of the Center for Immigration Studies.

Retired Michigan ophthalmologist John Tanton founded FAIR and has been the architect of the anti-immigrant movement for the past three decades (Southern Poverty Law Center 2008). Tanton raised his family and practiced medicine in the small town of Petoskey, Michigan and in the 1960's and 1970's Tanton was a leading figure in the environmental movement, actively participating in organizations such as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002). As an environmentalist, Tanton

became extremely concerned with population control and its eventual effects on environmental degradation. Tanton's personal politics led him to believe that the protection of the environment equaled the protection of a European leadership in the United States and that an influx of immigrants, especially from Latin America would not only bring about the destruction of the environment, but also of democracy. In an article describing this shift, the Washington Post reports:

In 1964, while he was interning in a Denver hospital, his young wife, Mary Lou, provided family planning information to low-income women who had wanted two children but were leaving the maternity ward with their fifth or sixth. In this, Tanton saw a looming apocalypse, living evidence of the theory postulated in Paul Ehrlich's 1968 book, "The Population Bomb" -- left unchecked, the world's population would double every 35 years, occupying the remaining habitable open space and overrunning cities and towns (Huslin 2006).

Tanton went on to connect the phenomena of overpopulation and south-north immigration to form a rhetoric of invasion. The collusion of Tanton's environmentalism and ethnocentrism created a justification in his own mind for the anti-immigrant comments and policies found throughout his work and that of FAIR. Eventually Tanton began to make connections with various leading figures in the eugenics movement, prompting his troubling associations between environmental degradation, dropping "indigenous" birthrates in the United States, immigration and race (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002, 2008). To be certain, Mr. Tanton's focus was on the growing birthrates of the global south and its threat

to the environment and to “western civilization.” A key connection that sparked Tanton’s obsession with an “invasion” of immigrants from the south was his infatuation with the novel *The Camp of the Saints* written by the French writer, Jean Raspail; “a darkly prophetic allegory of a million destitute people fleeing Kolkata and landing in Europe, where they loot, rape and pillage” (Huslin 2006). Tanton had the novel translated into English and used his small publishing house, *Social Contract Press*, to print and distribute the novel. His concern with an apocalyptic outcome as a result of immigration is important to remember when analyzing the strategic policy planning of FAIR and its’ subsidiary organizations. Furthermore, the invasion narrative found in *The Camp of the Saints* falls right in line with strategists from the right wing who understand that successful propaganda must reiterate existing fears amongst the general public (Altheide 2002). The “invasion” of an immigrant population has been historically prevalent in the United States and there was no need to reinvent such a strong cultural tradition of “othering” an immigrant population.

Because of Tanton’s strong connections with leading eugenics and racist writers the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has labeled FAIR as a hate group. This label has been derived from the investigative reporting of the SPLC’s magazine, *The Intelligence Report*, which tracks the activity of right wing hate groups. There have been several issues dedicated to the personal letters and memo’s written between John Tanton, FAIR staff, and board of directors. For instance, in a memo written to FAIR staff in 1986, Tanton outlines 11 key U.S. societal categories that have been or will be affected by immigration. When

talking about the political consequences of immigration in the U.S., Tanton writes, “In this society where the majority rules, does this hold? Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile?” (Southern Poverty Law Center 2008). In this passage, we can see Tanton’s real concern with the possibility of a paradigm shift in U.S. political and economic power relations. Tanton goes on to make predictions of the eventual Apartheid landscape of California by the year 2030.

In California of 2030, the non-Hispanics and Asians will own the property, have the good jobs and education, speak one language and be mostly Protestant and “other.” The Blacks and Hispanics will have the poor jobs, will lack education, own little property, speak another language and will be mainly catholic. Will there be strength in this diversity? Or will this prove a social and political San Andreas Fault? (2008).

When discussing the cultural affects of immigration, Tanton fears that Latin Americans will bring with them, the culture of bribing and corruption. He goes on to ponder how Blacks will deal with the “onslaught” of Hispanics and fears that whites will be directly threatened by the increasing Latino population. We will see that FAIR does its part to inform African Americans that immigrants are “stealing their jobs,” encouraging internal fighting amongst the “inferior races.”

As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? Why don’t non-Hispanic Whites have a group identity, as do Blacks, Jews, Hispanics? ...Can homo contraceptives compete with homo progeneriva if

borders aren't controlled? Or is advice to limit ones family simply advice to move over and let someone else with greater reproductive powers occupy the space? (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002).

Here we see some historically common tactics take shape. Tanton's connection with authors such as Charley Murphy who believe that blacks are genetically more inclined to act aggressively (Kenny 2002) and Jared Taylor who writes, "When blacks are left entirely to their own devices, Western civilization- any kind of civilization disappears;" contradicts Tanton's supposed concern with the effects that Latino immigrants have on the African American population (Southern Poverty Law Center 2008). His association with blatant racists who demonize African Americans suggests that Tanton is equally concerned with the well being of the African American population as he is with the supposed invading Latino populations. However, framing undocumented immigration as a threat to African Americans is a very smart move on behalf of FAIR. It pits two largely subordinated groups against one another on a social and political level. Furthermore, it helps FAIR reiterate their argument that immigrants are stealing jobs from the hard working blue-collar Americans-furthering the "victim" discourse.

Ethnocentric comments and memos have been commonplace throughout Tanton's career. In a 1993 letter to a controversial ecology professor named Garret Hardein, Tanton wrote "I've come to the point of view that for European – American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority and a clear one at that" (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002). He goes on to

question whether or not Latinos as a whole will be capable of running California or if they will bring with them the “same degree of success with governmental and social institutions that we have seen in Latin America” (2002). The Pioneer Fund, a non-profit organization that studies behavioral genetics, intelligence, social demography, and group differences, such as sex, social class, and race, funded grants for FAIR between 1979 and 1994 thus solidifying the undeniable link between FAIR and eugenics thinkers. FAIR’s severing of financial ties from the Pioneer Fund was a public effort to denounce any connection between FAIR and eugenics (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002).

FAIR’s strategic denunciation of the eugenics movement resulted from the Pioneer Fund’s role in publishing Richard Herrnstein’s and Charles Murray’s book *The Bell Curve*, “which explored the relation between intelligence, class, race, crime, immigration, and economic success” (Kenny 2002). *The Bell Curve* attempts to provide an evolutionary explanation based on race for statistical differences in IQ, brain size, sexual behavior crime rates, and measures of family stability to ultimately create a hierarchy of races based on IQ or intelligence levels. Tanton’s personal comments about the fertility of Latinos and its ultimate danger to the democratic ruling of the United States fits right into the thesis of the Bell Curve. In fact, right after FAIR chose to publicly separate itself from the Pioneer fund, “Tanton wrote to German academic Wolfgang Bosswick to defend the Pioneer Fund, saying its critics were the ‘hard (Marxist) left in the United States” (Southern Poverty Law Center 2008).

Tanton, and ultimately FAIR's association with organizations such as the Pioneer Fund serve as important reminders when analyzing FAIR's past and current policy agenda as well as their underlining agenda when working to frame the immigration debate. Tanton's connection with eugenics thinkers and hegemonic power preservation expose the foundation of FAIR's anti-immigration agenda. More pointedly, this hidden agenda is framed within a legitimate immigration framework in the U.S. political arena and in the mass media. On their website, FAIR boasts of their bipartisan supporters working towards a "sensible" and "effective" immigration policy that "works for America's best interest." FAIR's acceptance in the mass media has gained them access to all organs of the U.S. immigration debate. According to FAIR's website, the organization testifies regularly before congress on all immigration related legislation. FAIR activities include research, public education, media outreach, grassroots organizing, government relations, litigation and advocacy at the national, state and local levels. An interesting aspect of Tanton's vision to preserve ethnic power structures in the U.S. comes to light in FAIR's website under the bullet points of "FAIR advocate:"

The United States should make greater efforts to encourage population stabilization, economic development, and alleviation of poverty worldwide and especially in countries of great migration; that the era of mass international migration to the United States as a solution to international problems must come to an end; problems of poverty and

overpopulation must be vigorously confronted where people live, rather than postponing their solution by either the export or the importation of masses of people (FAIR 2010).

If Tanton, and FAIR as an organization were truly interested in the economic development of the world's poorer nations it would be harder to discredit FAIR's true intentions and concrete political activism. Indeed, the scholars quoted in the earlier section focus on what is considered forced economic and safety migration. Nothing can be found on FAIR's website posing solutions or advocating on behalf of the US government to place more importance on international development or to rethink current neoliberal policies which force millions from their home countries. In contrast, FAIR's message in the mass media takes a strict stance on attrition by enforcement. FAIR's media message coalesces with its listed goals:

...to end illegal immigration through enforcement of existing immigration laws as well as the application of new technology; to set legal immigration at the lowest feasible levels consistent with the national security, economic, demographic, environmental and socio-cultural interests of the present and future (FAIR 2010).

Under the umbrella of "America's best interests," FAIR seeks to make immigration to the U.S. as hard and miserable as possible for those without proper documentation.



In response to the Southern Poverty Law Center's efforts to expose the ideology behind FAIR's policies, Tanton and FAIR understood that maintaining legitimacy within the political forum was crucial to FAIR's success. The creation of the Center for Immigration Studies in 1985 proved a huge success for FAIR and brought them newly found power and legitimacy in the immigration debate. As mentioned earlier, FAIR still had access to almost all social and political organs in the immigration debate, despite Tanton's proven connections to racist organizations. In a memo written to the board of directors from Roger Conner, (former FAIR executive director, who also served on CIS's board of directors) CIS is praised for its ability to gain more funding:

I said earlier that information is the source of our power. To expand our fund-raising market, we created the Center for Immigration Studies last year. We need to get CIS fully funded and entrenched as a major Washington think tank; one that can venture into issues which FAIR is not yet ready to raise (Southern Poverty Law Center 2002).

Because CIS is a subsidiary organization of FAIR, they have not been labeled as a hate group by organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). However, FAIR has had its fair share of problems with SPLC because of its connection with the Pioneer Fund, the Council of Concerned Citizens, Numbers USA, and white nationalist columnists such as Lawrence Austser. This has gained them access to new forums and markets as FAIR employee Roger Conner described above. CIS afforded FAIR plausible political distance from identified

hate groups and provided a modicum of research credibility, and while they still hold a strong political base, it has been tainted by organizations such as the SPLC. CIS has even surpassed FAIR in media exposure because of its legitimacy as a “balanced” research think tank. In fact, CIS wavers with the Pew Hispanic Center as the most cited organization in the media’s coverage of the immigration debate. According to CIS, from 2003-2008 The Pew Hispanic center was cited in the media 9,247 times while CIS was cited 8,549 times and FAIR was cited 5,436 times.

Table 1. FAIR and CIS in the Media

<b>Organization</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
Pew Hispanic Center	570	621	1,489	3,136	1,854	1,577	9,247
<b>Center for Immigration Studies</b>	1,190	966	1,281	2,237	1,756	1,119	8,549
National Council of La Raza	509	872	735	1,256	1,314	1,200	5,886
FAIR	654	835	710	1,197	1,209	831	5,436
AILA	579	535	509	750	806	586	3,765
National Immigration Forum	233	283	415	671	643	187	2,432

Urban Institute	346	486	335	370	512	263	2,312
Migration Policy Institute	207	267	297	529	578	441	2,319

Therefore, while FAIR may present similar statistics and focus on numbers in an immigration debate, they still hold the tainted reputation within some circles as a racist organization. CIS can present this same information, with no such label. They are widely considered a legitimate, conservative think tank with access to more progressive media sources that further entrench its flawed ideology into the minds of citizens.

Although the internal, ideological motives of FAIR's founder John Stanton are highly ethnocentric, its external message has remained fairly neutral; there are too many immigrants in the U.S., it costs Americans a lot of money, and there needs to be strict enforcement in U.S. cities and on the border. In sum, they follow the rhetoric of attrition through enforcement, as does their offspring organization CIS. Interestingly, but not accidentally, the media's coverage of the debate has followed the same logic. Indeed, the influence of FAIR and CIS as principal informants on solutions to the immigration issue have largely shaped the discourse found in the mass media. The next chapter will give an outline of the media's focus on stories related to fear and personal attack which explains why the fear-ridden message of FAIR and CIS has been so successful in the mass

media. Also, the next chapter will look at the impact of a restricted discourse in the mass media. Assuredly, a debate focused around border security and reactionary local immigration laws leaves little room to discuss root causes of immigration and the U.S. policies discussed in chapter 2 that prompt the necessity to leave one's country.

## CHAPTER 4

### FRAMES AND DISCOURSE

#### Strategic Framing

The second chapter discussed what scholars outline as macro level, core causes in the forced migration of millions of Mexicans and Central Americans to the United States. More pointedly, the second chapter covered U.S. policies that sustain the systemic poverty, violence and strife that force millions to flee their home countries. The third chapter focused on the ideological background of the leading immigrant attrition think tanks in the U.S. and their successful distribution of opinion to government and media institutions. This chapter will center on the mass media and their focus on common narratives endorsed by FAIR and CIS and enhanced by conservative, strategic linguists. Largely resulting from what is considered *media logic*, (the strategic packaging and sensationalizing of stories to compete with other television stations) the mass media chooses to frame the immigration phenomenon in a way that will sustain television ratings, but not necessarily produce substantive debate (Altheide 1996). In turn, the main function of this chapter is to analyze how often the media focuses on root causes of migration versus the reactionary policies to stop the immigrants.

First, I will give an overview of the importance of framing and the contemporary strategies used on both sides of the debate to frame the immigration issue in a certain way. Next I will assess the general structure of the mass media as background information for the more focused qualitative media analyses that I conducted for the purpose of this study. The mass media background information

will serve to highlight the overarching paradigms that must remain in place in order for specific media outlets such as NBC, ABC, and CBS to remain competitive and sustain their ratings which ultimately decides their financial success. As we will see, the competitive nature, or capitalist structure of the media industry greatly influences common discourse in the national nightly newscasts. To conclude, I will cover two qualitative media analyses that I conducted on (1) the general immigration debate found in the most watched nightly newscasts and (2) an acute analysis of the extant southwest rancher appearances on the most watched national nightly newscasts.

These analyses will serve to answer certain questions; how often does the mass media discuss NAFTA, the war on drugs, and border militarization policies versus reactionary policies? How have the ranchers become expert witnesses for immigration, border security and the war on drugs? That is, how is the unique geographic and social situation of American southwest ranchers applied to the overall debate? What role have the ranchers played in the overall system of “media logic,” and have they been utilized to preserve a conservative agenda? My findings show that the situation of the ranchers has been used as a central trope within an overall narrative of the entire United States. To conclude, these media analyses will then be compared to 12 in-depth interviews I conducted with southwest ranchers in the Arizona and New Mexico region.

In the spring of 2010, a colleague of mine connected me with a well respected southwest rancher. We will call this rancher “Frank.” Frank and I began emailing back and forth about the purpose of my research and the data I

was trying to collect in my interviews. Frank was blunt with me when saying, “you shouldn’t go and try to interview ranchers by yourself, they are fiercely independent people and don’t trust folks they don’t know.” Slowly, Frank and I began to develop a rapport and he agreed to take me to a board meeting with southwest ranchers working on a land preservation project. In the early summer months of 2010 I went with Frank to a board meeting with local southwest ranchers where he introduced me to his colleagues and allowed me to speak about my research. After the board meeting I interviewed four, local ranchers and met the majority of the people at the meeting. One month later, I traveled down by myself to the same region to follow up with three ranchers that had promised to speak with me once they had some free time. The remaining five ranchers were interviewed over the phone.<sup>7</sup>

I used what social researchers call the “snowball effect” to find new interviews. Once I had met with a group of well-respected ranchers in the area, I was able to use their names to build trust with potential interviewees (May 2001). My interviews were based on what May (2001) considers *semi-structured interviews*. According to May, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to seek both clarification and elaboration which enables the interviewer to probe

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<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that Frank was aware of my “liberal” views on the immigration issue and wanted to connect me with ranchers that shared similar political beliefs. However, as a researcher I wanted to get a feel for the general opinions amongst all ranchers in the area. Consequently, I consciously sought out ranchers apart from any recommendations given to me by Frank in order to collect a less biased sample of ranchers.

beyond the answers given and thus enter a more comprehensive dialogue with the interviewee (2001).

The 12 in-depth interviews will serve as key documents to assess if and how much the media has skewed the opinions of what, in this case can be considered, the voice on immigration for conservative America. Furthermore, these in-depth interviews with ranchers in the same region will shine light on the phenomenon known as “media logic.” What does the media choose to ask? What does the media focus on and what is actually presented in the actual newscasts?

### **The Myth of the Liberal Media Bias and the Art of Framing**

This chapter will only be focusing on what is considered the mainstream mass media (NBC, ABC, and CBS). Conservative politicians and television pundits often refer to what they consider a liberal media bias. My qualitative media analyses will actually suggest the contrary. In fact, many conservatives themselves admit that they observe no bias:

Patrick Buchanan, among the most conservative pundits and presidential candidates in Republican history, found that he could not identify an allegedly liberal bias against him during his presidential candidacies.

‘I’ve gotten balanced coverage, and broad coverage—all we could have asked. For heaven sakes, we kid about the liberal media, but every Republican on earth does that’ (Alterman 2003).

In contrast, there isn’t much of a debate about the existence of a conservative media, (i.e. Fox News, Rush Limbaugh etc.), but the existence of a liberal bias is



hard to conclude when many conservative columnists and reporters staff supposed “liberal” media outlets (2003).

The Rockridge Institute (2003-2008), founded by the cognitive linguist George Lakoff (which has since morphed into the offshoot Cognitive Policy Works), is a progressive think tank leading the effort to expose such myths as the supposed liberal media bias. The Rockridge Institute “goes behind the language (the surface words and slogans) to reveal the deep frames- the moral values, political principles, and fundamental ideas, both progressive and conservative- that are implicit in political discourse” (Lakoff and Ferguson 2006). As a linguist, Lakoff seeks to expose the ability of “frames” or key words used in the media and amongst political pundits to affect the opinions and values of those that are watching mass media newscasts. According to Altheide, frames entail but are not limited to, “a way of discussing the problem or the kind of discourse that will follow” (1996). Frames create the capacity to define the situation for self and others which Altheide considers “a key dimension of social power.” Although the Rockridge Institute covers all aspects of framing within multiple issues, they have taken a special interest in the framing of the immigration debate.

Framing the situation in terms of “illegal immigrants” skews the discourse. It characterizes people who are almost all honest and hardworking as criminals, thereby ignoring their contributions to American lifestyles and the American economy. And it ignores systemic causes and problems: our cheap-labor economy that drives down the cost of labor and the many political and economic causes that contribute to

pushing so many people to leave their home countries (Lakoff and Ferguson 2006).

Therefore, Lakoff, along with Altheide, Ferguson, Spielvogel and other media scholars seek to expose the strategy of conservative media sources that many times go overlooked. The word “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien” is expressed every day on the news and amongst the American public with little thought as to how they shape the way we think about immigrants and the larger issues which bring them to the U.S. The work of progressive media and language analysts also seeks to expose efforts to distribute the specific usage of frames to conservative politicians and pundits that will be utilized either at public events or on the media. When it comes to conservative framing, a man named Frank Luntz is king. Luntz, an influential Republican linguist and pollster, leads several think tanks, namely Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research; The Luntz Research and Strategic Services; The Public Opinion Company; Luntz Corporate; and Luntz Worldwide. He is also the author of *The Principles and Language of Immigration Reform*. Luntz not only leads the Republican Party in their efforts to push an overall conservative agenda, but he is also very active in the conservative framing of the immigration debate. All sides of the political spectrum seem to agree that the conservatives have mastered the art of framing and that their progressive counterparts have fallen far behind (Altheide 2004, Alterman 2003, Luntz 2005). Spielvogel states, “when used in political discourse, frames rooted in moral values invite audiences to interpret political issues and programs based on their own deeply rooted cultural standards of what is considered right or wrong

in human conduct, action and character” (2005, 551). Luntz has a deep understanding for the moral emphasis and uses his skills as a pollster to test out his theories before they are passed along to Republican strategists. “According to Luntz, politics remain an emotional arena and television has made fear a very salable commodity” (Lynch 2008). Although unknown in non-political circles, there is very little effort to hide the framing agenda of the conservative right. For instance, on the Luntz-Maslansky Strategic Research Website, Luntz promises potential clients:

We get your issue to the forefront – or the backburner. It’s easy for large issues to be ignored by the media and for small ones to be blown completely out of proportion. The amount of media coverage and public political support for any issue is directly related to how it is framed (Lynch 2008).

In a leaked memo Frank Luntz described exactly how Republicans should address the immigration issue depending on poll data and the population being addressed (Luntz 2005). The memo addresses exact wording that should be used when addressing the immigration issue, specifically frames that should be used when addressing a crowd of Hispanics versus that of Whites. His strategy is essentially fourfold: prevention (i.e., keeping the immigrants out), protection (i.e., keeping the immigrants from hurting the U.S. public), accountability (i.e., harsh anti-immigrant legislation) and compassion (i.e., we feel bad for the immigrant’s children, but we must look out for children of citizens first). Following the problematic trend exposed by progressive linguists, Luntz emphasizes that

conservatives must “always differentiate LEGAL from illegal immigration.” This divide is crucial when debating any sort of immigration policy because if someone is illegal, they have no rights. Luntz understands that any message must galvanize existing fears among the American public, namely unemployment, an invasion of an “other,” national security, a threat to our education and health care systems etc. For instance, Luntz constantly stresses the language of who the “real victims” are as a result of so called illegal immigration:

Always focus on those who are hurt most by illegal immigration – American citizens and immigrants who came here legally and played by the rules...illegal aliens should never deprive legal immigrants of the American Dream. We must not penalize or burden legal immigrants in any effort to end illegal immigration (2005).

Luntz’ strategy successfully frames the debate to (1) restrict any chance of discussing larger U.S. policies that force immigrants to leave their home countries; (2) place all of the blame on the “illegal aliens” that are breaking the law and our national sovereignty and (3) reinforce existing fears such as unemployment which leads him to explain that the real victims are U.S. citizens that suffer from the law-breaking, “illegal alien.”

The Luntz camp also understands that crime is closely associated with undocumented immigrants. While Americans are most concerned about the economic impact of illegal immigration, crime is a close second. “Particularly in border and industrial states with heavy illegal populations, the perception of illegal immigration and increased fear of crime are closely related” (2005). The

association of crime and fear with immigration will be highlighted in both media analyses later on in this chapter. However, it is important to note just how deep the culture of fear penetrates the American public. Altheide writes:

According to numerous opinion polls, American society is a very fearful society; some believe “the most anxious, frightened society in history.” Indeed 78% of Americans think they are subject to more risk today than their parents were 20 years ago and a large source of this perception is crime news coverage...In an LA Times poll showed early this year, people say their feelings about crime are based 65% on what they read and see in the media and 21% on experience (2002, 78-79).

Again, the deep-seeded culture of fear within the American public is critical when analyzing the focused media coverage of certain groups that are highly affected by U.S. policies and immigration such as the southwest ranchers. The comparison of immigrants with crime is not only a result of placing immigrants next to certain crime statistics, but in the overall scheme of their very title; “illegal immigrants.” For instance, Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) argue that the acceptance of the current framing impoverishes the discussion and ultimately frames the discourse. Lakoff and Ferguson argue that both progressives and conservatives frame the issue in a way that (1) pushes their agenda, but more importantly (2) hinders the possibility of discussing the root causes and core issues as outlined in chapter 2. Therefore, they argue that alternative frames must be adopted by progressive pundits and advocates if any sort of rethinking and restructuring of U.S. foreign policy is ever going to take place.

For example, Lakoff and Ferguson outline what can be considered the general problem with the usage of the word “reform.” If something needs to be reformed it implies that something is wrong. In the case of “immigration reform” immigration then becomes the problem and the fault lies on behalf of the immigrants and the bureaucracies who regulate U.S. immigration. Furthermore, any type of “comprehensive” immigration reform can only deal with the problems inside the confined discourse of immigration and immigrants, not on foreign policy, trade policies, neoliberal policies and corporate hegemony. Therefore, Lakoff and Ferguson call for alternative frames such as, “foreign policy reform,” which would force the debate to address economic policies such as NAFTA and other root causes. Lakoff and Ferguson point out that even the most progressive minded scholars and politicians may actually be hindering any sort of dialogue on larger issues by reinforcing existing frames such as “comprehensive immigration reform.”

As a distinction, the strategic framing that exists on a conceptual level (e.g., comprehensive immigration reform) exists on the surface as well. As discussed earlier, framing immigrants as “illegal immigrants,” “illegal aliens,” and “invaders,” forces a unique title – illegal – onto immigrants that is not forced onto any other group that has broken the law. The employers that knowingly hire these immigrants are not labeled “illegal businessmen,” and drivers with multiple speeding tickets are not labeled “illegal drivers.” However, the immigrants that come to the U.S. to work and better their families with no intention of hurting anyone or their property are automatically given the title illegal, which evokes -

criminal. And criminals evoke fear. The title “illegal” is unique and it is strategic in the game of framing and scapegoating. For instance, we don’t have an “illegal employer problem” in the U.S. we have an “illegal immigration problem” (2006). Following the narrative, an immigration problem starts with the immigrants and their “illegal” entry into the U.S. so the logical response is shut down their “illegal” entry into the country.

Lakoff and Ferguson go on to discuss the association of immigrants with border security, offering the following rhetorical question. “But how could this be a ‘security’ issue? Security implies that there is a threat, and a threatened, and that the threatened needs protection” (2006, 4). This is a valid point, and should be analyzed thoroughly. For instance, Lakoff and Ferguson are looking at the fear mongering presented on a macro scale. They argue that the sweeping portrayal of immigrants as criminals leads to unwarranted foci of security. However, my discussion of the media’s focus on the ranchers will attempt to answer this question because the ranchers do provide an example of a vulnerable population “threatened,” by crime and violence. My media analysis of the ranchers will explore how the threat to the ranchers has been applied on a macro scale which Lakoff and Ferguson strongly oppose. The threat faced by these ranchers is not a result of the general immigrant looking for work, but by drug and human smuggling gangs. Nevertheless, the threat is real, although geographically and numerically minute, only applying to the few ranchers living in isolated border regions. The framing of the issue and the usage of key informants such as the ranchers allows the media to reinforce a fear on an already terrified U.S. public.

Lakoff and Ferguson go on to suggest that progressives use the alternative frame “economic refugee” to open dialogue and invoke empathy for those that are seeking economic stability. As outlined above, framing matters, and frames are powerful.

The significance of frames, themes, and discourse for document analysis cannot be overemphasized. These are the most powerful features of public information and the study of their origins, how they change over time, and their taken for granted use in everyday life is essential to understanding the relevance of communication media for our lives (Altheide 1996, 34).

Conservative think tanks have dominated the framing of the immigration debate and it has restricted the discourse found amongst U.S. policymakers, politicians, and the general public. Progressives argue that if there is to be a paradigm shift, it must start with a framing of the issue that will allow discourse to explore larger, root causes of global inequality and economic hegemony. The following section will explore how certain frames have dominated mass media discourse and ultimately the opinions of millions of Americans.

### **Framing in the Media**

The mass media plays a crucial role in the immigration debate by presenting a specific discourse. What are the root causes, and who is to blame? What exactly is the damage being brought upon U.S. society and what can and should be done about it? The answer given to these questions by an average American will be influenced by the information provided by the mass media via nightly newscasts (Altheide 1996). In the case of undocumented immigration, the



media has created multiple frames that evoke a singular message: there is an ever-increasing number of “illegal’s” *streaming* into the U.S. More importantly, the media, much like FAIR, CIS and Frank Luntz, has reinforced the reoccurring narrative of “border security,” as the only legitimate first-step to a comprehensive solution. Results from my qualitative media analysis of the immigration debate in the mass media show that the information disseminated to the American public by the three most watched news networks, NBC, ABC, and CBS do not address the “root causes” as outlined by scholars in the field. In contrast, “media logic” has been utilized to reinforce an existing paradigm that has done little if anything to address the core issues surrounding undocumented immigration.

Media logic refers to the assumptions and processes for constructing messages within a particular medium.... Political culture is also affected by these expanding evocative formats. Journalists and news sources now routinely package events for media attention, including visuals, urgency, language, and drama, that will appeal to audiences cast in various ways as “patriots,” “victims,” “beneficiaries,” and so forth (Altheide 2004, 294).

The capitalist structure of the mass media does not allow for television stations to stray from such a format. For instance, if ABC wanted to take the “high road,” and decide to focus less on packaging violent acts or some sort of immediate danger; focusing on in-depth conversations with scholars about the root causes of immigration, their ratings would plummet. The U.S. public has been trained to view the news in a certain way that is quick, snappy, exciting and adventurous. Therefore, whichever channel can present the most exciting news

will earn the most viewers and ultimately the most sponsors. As long as the news is based on competition, and not on substantive information, we can assume that “media logic,” will continue to mold the discourse that is presented to the U.S. public, regardless of the issue. The next sections will explore two qualitative media analyses that will highlight the framing of the immigration debate.

### **Analysis 1: A General Assessment of the Immigration Debate**

This qualitative media analysis seeks to assess the mass media’s role in the creation of: (1) the culture of fear; (2) the framing of the immigration issue; (3) reinforced narratives and (4) hindering possible paradigm shifts in U.S. policy and political rhetoric. I have chosen to employ a qualitative media analysis (Altheide 1996) of the most watched news networks for nightly news; NBC, ABC and CBS (USA Today 2010). These networks were chosen strategically to assess the information and “narratives” presented to the majority of Americans who watch the evening news. The searches mainly focused on the media’s portrayal of root economic causes versus so called solutions to the immigration problem. This study focuses on pre and post NAFTA news transcripts and the attention given to the root causes of migration (i.e. economic policies: NAFTA, poverty and violence) and also the solutions as seen in contemporary political and media discourses (i.e. further militarization of the border). I chose to look at pre and post NAFTA newscasts to see if the mass media would highlight the devastating affects NAFTA had on rural Mexican farmers and ultimately, immigration to the U.S. My hypothesis was that the media would focus on existing narratives (i.e., border security versus a focus on root causes), strengthening the dominant

discourses surrounding proposed solutions to the *symptoms* rather than the actual illness of poverty, corruption and violence, enhanced by U.S. policies. This would reflect the rhetoric and framing presented by FAIR, CIS and Frank Luntz and also the current immigration policies and laws that are being implemented in Arizona at the time of this writing. However, the results of my analyses show the lack of attention given by the mass media to the root causes is more drastic than expected (see figure 1). This section will explore the data found in news transcripts on so called “illegal immigration” and dissect the meanings and overall significance of the media’s focus on fear and reactionary solutions. Next, I will explore the data found in the news transcripts to compare and contrast this information to the writings of scholars in the field.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data collected was an attempt to understand the outlining information given on the immigration debate that is disseminated to the largest number of Americans watching the main stream media nightly newscasts. Furthermore, the “main stream media” is considered less biased than other networks that align themselves with political parties such as Fox News. This analysis will deal mainly with the media’s coverage of NAFTA versus that of the U.S. led war on drugs and the militarization of the U.S./Mexico border as previously discusses as root causes in the background information section. Specifically, the study aims to capture the amount of coverage in the nighttime newscasts given to critical (economic) root causes of immigration before and after NAFTA was signed. Next, the research looks at the coverage of the dominant discourses surrounding

immediate solutions (e.g. militarization of the border) before and after NAFTA was signed. I used LexisNexis to search for key word combinations of illegal immigrants/immigration with: *NAFTA, national security, drug trafficking, fear, drug war, state of emergency, state of exception, and poverty*. This resulted in 34 relevant news transcripts; fifteen from CBS, seven from NBC, and twelve from ABC. After briefly scanning some of the articles, I drafted my protocol based on the recurring themes, persons interviewed and common foci of interest (See Appendix A). The transcripts range in time from March 1, 1988 to April 23, 2010.

Following Altheide's (1996) qualitative media analysis to break down the 34 news transcripts, I chose to identify certain "frames" and common "narratives" that dealt with, in some way or another, the construction of fear (Altheide 2002). It was assumed that I would have to carefully scan the news transcripts to find "hidden" frames, but it turned out that the "frames" and "narratives" were blatantly obvious. This was mainly due to first person interviews with conservative and liberal politicians and advocates. A clear discrepancy existed between the data collected from the news transcripts and the arguments of current scholars as outlined in the root causes section. Table 2 outlines some of the recurring "frames," found in the illegal immigration newscasts. For instance, Elizabeth Vargas from ABC reports, "No one knows what that might mean [illegal immigration] *to national security or public safety*" (emphasis added).

Table 2. Framing Immigration

Source	Frame	Date	Pre/Post NAFTA	Author
CBS	...”the problem of Mexicans <i>flooding U.S. border towns.</i> ”	11-25-1990	PRE	Harry Smith, Anchor
ABC	“No one knows what that might mean [illegal immigration] <i>to national security or public safety.</i> ”	11-28-2005	Post	Elizabeth Vargas,
CBS	...is life on a <i>border battleground</i> ...The <i>daily invasion</i> of illegal aliens...has <i>gotten personal.</i> ”	2-17-2000	Post	Bob McNamara,
CBS	“...Texas rancher Dub Cunningham can drive right to the front line of the <i>immigration war.</i> ”	2-28-2007	Post	Kelly Cobiella,
ABC	“ <i>States of emergency</i> ...Arizona and New Mexico say they are coping with a manmade disaster a <i>flood of illegal immigrants.</i> ”	8-21-2005	Post	Judy Miller,
CBS	“As <i>illegal immigrants stream across</i> , smugglers and hijackers are battling with increasing violence.”	10-15-2007	Post	Katie Couric,
NBC	...Arizona is being <i>overrun</i> by illegal immigration <i>terrorizing the citizens</i> ”	4-23-2010	Post	Jan Brewer, Governor

The media has chosen certain buzz words that evoke human emotions, create a one-sided picture, and present an immediate threat. For instance, the usage of the frames, “flood,” “stream across,” and “overrun” evoke certain images of a human tsunami crashing across an imaginary line separating nation states. The use of the frames, “terrorizing the citizens,” “immigration war,” and “has gotten personal,” bring about a sense of personal attack. The media informs viewers that illegal immigration is an issue that extends beyond governmental

bureaucracies; it has “gotten personal.” From the above examples we can see how the issue of “illegal immigration” is being presented. According to Lakoff and Ferguson’s argument, alternative frames such as “desperate poverty,” or “driven off of their land,” or “unable to compete with the *flood* of U.S. corn subsidies” would force new themes to emerge in the debate.

The individual “frames” of an issue in the media set up the larger “narrative” or discourse within the existing paradigm (Altheide 1996). Furthermore, “frames are the focus, a parameter or boundary, for discussing a particular event. Frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed and above all, *how it will not be discussed*” (31 emphasize added). In this case, what will not be discussed (in all of the post NAFTA articles I analyzed) are *root causes*, and trade policies that have forced millions of farmers off of their land. The above framing leaves no other choice but to conclude that the problem is with national security, a porous border and a need for increased security and militarization. Therefore, we see an emergence of more general “themes” arise from the more specific, “framing” of the issue. According to Altheide, “Themes are general definitions or interpretive frames [e.g. cities are more dangerous than ever, the most corrupt administration in history or modern life is sick]” (30). This research found similar *themes* of immediate danger. For example, Dan Rather reports, “The result: something very like war raging in southern Arizona” (Rather 2003).

### **Reinforcing the Paradigm and Continuing Narratives**

The previous section covered the framing of the immigration debate in the mass media. The U.S. public is presented with a binary debate over border security and immigration reform. So the logical thing for each American viewer to do is to react to the narrative as presented in nightly newscasts. The results of my qualitative media analysis of the immigration debate found in national newscasts suggest that the vast majority of Americans will never hear a substantive debate on the root causes of immigration, but will be engulfed with solutions to what is often referred to as the “flood” of illegal immigrants. The overarching narrative presented in the media is that there is an “invasion” of “illegals,” who “steal our jobs,” “drain our resources” and “commit crime.” Or as John Kavanagh, a Republican State Representative from Arizona puts it, “They [illegal immigrants] drain far more in social services and education costs than they contribute in taxes” (Gibson 2006). The overall paradigm frames the illegal immigration issue as one of national security and border security. Furthermore, as outlined by Lakoff and Ferguson, the focus falls on the immigrants themselves. The discourse is so restricted that any logical response must deal with the “immigration problem” or the “illegal immigrants themselves.”

Some of the most interesting findings of this study came from the analysis of the reinforced paradigm by what may be considered, “liberal,” and “conservative” politicians. According to the data collected, the overall paradigm states that the “key issue” is border security, but neither side takes into account that “securing the border” doesn’t solve the problems of violence and extreme poverty in Mexico. The differing solutions, which create the distinction between

“liberal” and “conservative” are based on what should be done with the “illegals” that are already in this country. For instance, it is understood within the U.S. that the Republican Party tends to focus on what has been termed *hard* issues such as, “national security,” and “the war on drugs,” whereas the Democratic Party focuses on what has been termed “soft” issues such as, health care, and social support programs. In this study, the clear divide between the two parties lies in the solution to the “illegal immigrants” in this country. Because both parties are focused on the symptoms and not the illness, a discussion on root causes never enters the debate. Democrats tend to focus on “comprehensive” immigration reform. The Republicans would refer to this as a “soft” stance. For instance, Bill Richardson a Democrat and governor of New Mexico states:

“It’s an issue of safety. We need much tougher law enforcement of the border. That is critical. Border Security. We need to tighten enforcement at the workplace so that individuals, businesses, do not hire illegal aliens. At the same time, what we need is to have the immigrants, 11 million that are in the United States already, come out of the shadows. ...Find a way that you give the 11 million that are here a realistic way to come out of the shadows, earn their legalization (Richardson 2005).

Although Bill Richardson advocates for reform, he does not stray from the overall paradigm of border security. Of course, such a restricted discourse does not allow him to. Republican Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona has similar concerns about the border, “They [U.S. Federal Government] simply turned a blind eye to the issues that Arizona is being overrun by illegal immigration



terrorizing the citizens of the state of Arizona.” However, Brewer, who recently signed Arizona Senate Bill SB1070 into law, which obviously doesn’t take into consideration a “path to citizenship” is considered “conservative” for her stance on what to do with the “illegals” already in this country. Following the political rhetoric, she takes a “hard” stance. We can see the division between “liberal” and “conservative” constructed between the dichotomy of “comprehensive” immigration reform that deals with a “path to legalization” and a policy of “tough love”-or attrition through enforcement as advocated by FAIR and CIS. However, the overall paradigm remains the same; it is the federal government’s fault for not “securing” our southern border. Former Democratic governor of Arizona and current Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano states, “Arizona taxpayers are being made to pay for what should be a Federal government responsibility. We pay Federal taxes for certain things, and one of them is the protection of the border, and we’re not getting it” (Napolitano 2005). Again, the focus lies on the immigrants and the bureaucracies which fail to stop them from entering this country. Gail Hano former deputy mayor of Encinitas, CA states in a CBS newscast, “the Federal government causes the problem to escalate, and I think they have to take some responsibility” (Hano 1990).

The distinction between liberal and conservative essentially dissolves within the highly restrictive framing of the immigration and border debate and the same message is presented to the viewers. That is, we need to increase the military presence on the U.S./Mexico border to stop illegal immigration. Even the key figures leading the “immigration reform” campaign such as Rep. Luis

Gutierrez a Democrat from Illinois stay within the bounds of the current narrative: “I agree enforcement is key and security is key, but let’s do it comprehensively, let’s do –let’s have a holistic approach to this situation” (Gutierrez 2006). Of course, a “holistic” approach in this case implies a path to citizenship for the undocumented immigrants already in this country, not to re-think NAFTA, the war on drugs and focus on development and anti-corruption measures in Mexico.

Across the board, liberal and conservative, Republican and Democrat, “illegal immigration” is associated with two narratives; (1) a porous border with Mexico has led to the “stream” of illegal immigration; and (2) it is the federal government’s fault for not “securing the border.” What is missing from this narrative? What does the overall paradigm not address? The data from this study suggest that the narrative does not deal with “root causes” as explained in the rich literature and studies by political scientists, borderland scholars, agronomists, and geographers. Of the 34 news transcripts analyzed, three articles dealt with one of the main (economic) root causes: NAFTA. Figure 1 refers to the number of newscasts that presented information on reactionary solutions versus that of a cause: NAFTA.

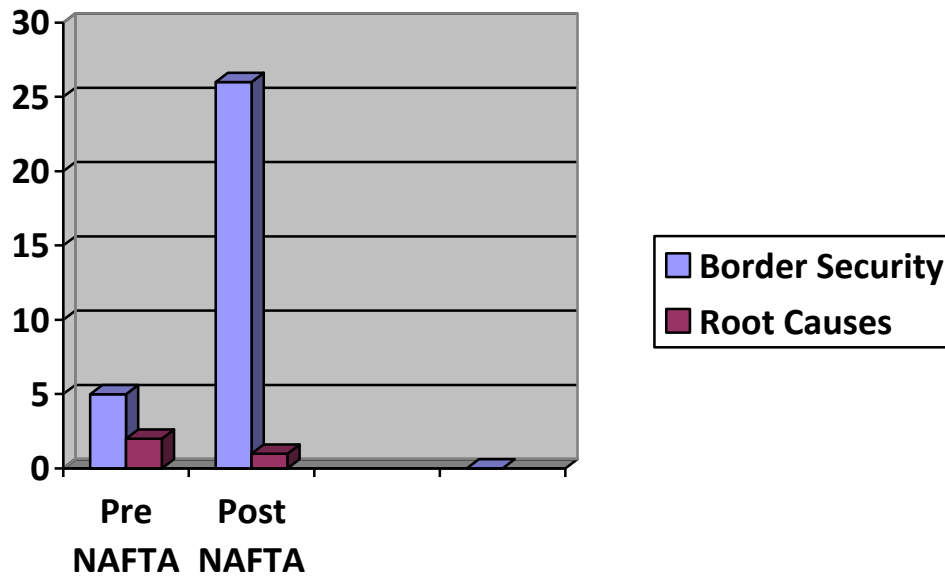


Figure 1. Media's Focus on Border Security

The results are extremely one sided and fit directly into Altheide's argument that framing an issue a certain way will shape what is and *is not* discussed.

Two of the three newscasts that explored the effects NAFTA would have on immigration were broadcasted during the pre-NAFTA period while there were still rigorous debates on whether or not NAFTA would be beneficial to U.S. corporations and workers. Only one of the articles that were analyzed during the post NAFTA period dealt with the economic blowback of U.S. subsidized corn on rural Mexico and its subsequent effect on immigration. This was my hypothesis from the beginning, but the results were more drastic than expected. The one post- NAFTA newscast that dealt with NAFTA's effect on immigration was broadcasted in November of 1994, eleven months after the implementation of NAFTA. From that point on in my data analysis there were no further discussions

of NAFTA's role in the immigration phenomenon. In a November 1994 newscast on CBS, Isabel Garcia (Human Rights Coalition of Arizona) states:

I think NAFTA has to be re-looked at. One of the ground rules for the discussions of NAFTA was the elimination of any labor mobility issues from the discussion. And until we can enter into dialogue with Mexico, with the Mexican government, regarding the important issue of immigration, I don't think that we can really solve it. NAFTA...I think there have to be changes in the NAFTA agreement. I think if we don't change some of the provisions, that in fact, NAFTA may be only unilaterally beneficial to U.S. corporations. And I think it has to be beneficial to both countries and not just the 24 billionaires in Mexico. I think it has to be good for the greater population of Mexico (Garcia 1994).

Garcia hits on some key points in the above quote, mainly regarding who will benefit from NAFTA. She mentions the "24 billionaires" in Mexico and the U.S. corporations which more than likely will be paying a lot of money for advertisements on the most watched networks. Perhaps, this explains the lack of attention given to NAFTA from this point forward in the study. In November of 1993 ABC's *Nightline* hosted a NAFTA debate with former California Governor Jerry Brown and Senator Phil Gramm a Republican from Texas. During the debate Mr. Brown, hit on many "core issues" that are found in the scholarly literature. With regards to NAFTA, Brown stated:

So you can't expect a treaty that is going to increase the flow of goods and money and services to stop with other important factors in any production

and that is people....in addition to that, of course, as the more efficient American agribusiness and multinational companies go into Mexico, you're going to have what they call a short-term effect on the less efficient Mexican business and farmers that will then dislodge and disrupt the economy, such that about a million people a year are going to be cut loose to go to the cities and then move northward" (Brown 1993).

The above is the "exception to the rule" in what is considered "media logic." (Altheide and Snow 1979, Altheide 2004). The *Nightline* newscast with Jerry Brown was in-depth and focused less on an "entertainment format." Mr. Brown was able to get his point across about the logical effects of dumping subsidized corn on a traditional farming population. However, the overall media logic was in place so to limit Mr. Brown from going into a deep conversation about the History between Mexico and the U.S. and the history of U.S. corporate interventionism in all of Latin America. Furthermore, he was not able to present his arguments as "heroic" or "patriotic," since they dealt with critically analyzing U.S. policies. Nonetheless, Mr. Brown was allowed to make a clear case of the possible immigration effects of NAFTA. Interestingly, the exception to the "media logic" rule was also the exception to the data collected on "core causes" versus "immediate solutions." Perhaps this is a statement on the power of media logic when it comes to exploring and explaining complex issues that require in-depth, critical discussions to explain their history, economic interests, and contemporary manifestations.

The implications of this condensed analysis seem to represent the general arguments and sentiments of many “concerned Americans,” that that are commenting on online articles, writing editorials, and calling into comment on nightly newscasts. The findings suggest ABC, CBS and NBC’s refuse to address U.S. policies which fuel the immigration phenomenon thus suffocating any chance of a detailed discourse. The data collected throughout this study suggest that the framing in the mass media is systematic, and imperative if television stations want to compete with their counterparts. Not only has the media fashioned a fearful population, but they have successfully maintained a narrative that does not allow for alternative issues to be addressed within the immigration paradigm. The data collected clearly outlined the “options,” on the table for U.S. politicians and policymakers. In other words, the media is in some ways, a further manifestation of the U.S. political system, or what some call, “the fourth branch of the government.” This analysis highlights the construction of binary, black and white “solutions” to issues within the political system of the U.S. Realistically, to address such questions would inevitably bring up a critique of capitalism and a critique of “free markets,” which has been proven unmistakably taboo within the American political system and the mass media. It becomes clear why so many Americans advocate for more border security and do not question the effects of a militarized border. This is especially concerning after reviewing what Dunn (1995) has outlined as “low intensity conflict” on the U.S./Mexico border. The next section of this chapter will take a more focused look at the

media's attention to southwest ranchers. The following qualitative media analysis will lead to more focused results.

### **Ranchers in the Media**

The previous qualitative media analysis highlighted the overall debate on immigration and border security issues found in the mass media. This section will take a closer look at how certain groups such as southwest ranchers have been utilized by the media to reinforce much of the same fear that was presented in the prior media analysis. I used LexisNexis to search for key terms such as “ranchers and immigration,” “ranchers and the border/security,” “ranchers and illegal aliens,” etc. LexisNexis produced 16 national newscasts ranging from July 9, 1996 to April 24, 2010. More newscasts were available on local nightly newscasts, especially in Arizona, but for the purpose of analyzing the presentation of the rancher's situation to a national audience, I only chose national newscasts. Ironically, I could not find any interviews with southwest ranchers prior to the implementation of NAFTA and Operations Gatekeeper and Hold the Line. I followed the same guidelines with the ranchers; only accepting newscasts from the most watched television networks in the U.S., that supposedly do not carry a bias or political agenda, (ABC, NBC, CBS). Again, a more general search including local newscasts, alternative sources such as FOX and MSNBC would yield far more results, but the goal of this study is to analyze the data presented in what is considered the mainstream media. The LexisNexis search resulted in sixteen relevant news transcripts: five appearances on ABC, seven on CBS and four on NBC. Because the sample of data was relatively small, I was able to read

through the newscasts entirely and pull out general themes in order to draft and revise my protocol (see Appendix B).

Altheide’s (1996) qualitative media analysis was used to analysis the data. All of the sixteen newscasts that interviewed ranchers dealt with the topic of illegal immigration while six covered drug smuggling and seven dealt with border security. Seven newscasts utilized ranchers as their sole source of information. That is, seven newscasts focused solely on what can be considered the “expert testimony” of the ranchers for their information. The remaining nine newscasts utilized both a rancher and some other institutional source ranging from DEA agents to a representative from Humane Borders (a humanitarian group which provides water for migrants in the desert). Two of the newscasts had institutional sources explaining how ranchers viewed the issue. In other words, the institutional source was citing the ranchers as the true voice of what was happening on the border. All sixteen newscasts circulated the theme of fear in some shape or form. Examples of the emphasis on fear can be found in Table 3.

For instance, “Rancher Bud Natus and his neighbors are fed up and frightened. He carries an assault rifle on his property for protection from bands of heavily armed smugglers.” Table 3 outlines the frames presented by the Ranchers which overwhelmingly deal with fear.

Table 3. Framing Ranchers

CBS	“A flood of illegal immigrants overwhelming, sometimes threatening the	8-5 1997	Post	Cynthia Bowers
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	Tisdales (ranchers) and their neighbors.”			
ABC	“Ranchers Along Southeastern AZ Border Taking Illegal Immigrant Mattes into Their Own Hands.” “Barnett chases through mesquite to catch illegal immigrants himself.”	5-14 2000	Post	Carole Simpson, ABC News
CBS	“Rancher Bud Natus and his neighbors are fed up and frightened. He carries an assault rifle on his property for protection from bands of heavily armed smugglers”	10-3- 1997	Post	Dan Rather
ABC	“You can come up here and you think, ‘well I’ll stem the flow here for a little bit,’ and then as soon as you come back the next morning, and it is (fence) all torn back up again.”... “You’ll be out fixing the fence or something and look around and there is 30 or 40 people laying around you.”	6-29- 1999	Post	Peter Jennings
ABC	“That’s right, yes. Yes I am. If I got to shoot somebody, I will try to save my own life.”	9-20- 1999	Post	Chris Wallace
CBS	“Some of them, you want to cry when you see them; and others; you want to cut their throats.”	2007	Post	Kate Couric

However, only one of the sixteen newscasts dealt directly with what scholars outline as root causes (Bowers 1997), while six of the newscasts mentioned a root cause or covered it’s affect without directly citing the actual cause of the problem. For instance, in a 1999 ABC newscast, an immigrant is

interviewed. “We live in cardboard homes because we do not have money. That’s why we come here. A package of corn in the city cost 45 pesos and the pay in only 35 a day. ...I think that we all need money and we all have to struggle to get there to work” (Wallace 1993). This is a perfect example of framing the issue. Because there is an “immigration” problem, or an “immigrant” problem, the question must also be directed to “the problem” or the “immigrant.” However, in this case, the immigrant even goes as far as mentioning corn prices, the ideal situation to bring up NAFTA and the effect it has had on Mexican corn prices, but there is no follow up question. There is no further discussion as to *why* they live in cardboard boxes and *why* their wages are so low in the city. The immigrant is just seen as the problem, while the media discusses the propositions to stop it. In another newscast with Dan Rather, reporter Sandra Hughes states,

Because other sections of the U.S.-Mexican border are blocked by miles and miles of fencing—they’re adding a half a mile to the existing fence here in Douglas, AZ—it’s pushing illegal immigration into the remote desert areas where the ranchers live and the conflict between the ranchers and the migrants has escalated into an international controversy (Rather 2000).

This is another interesting example of a brief mentioning of policies that create a problem, but the focus remains on the controversy, not the cause. Hughes states that the international controversy is the conflict between the ranchers and the immigrants, not on the policies which pushed them there in the first place. The

*policy* is not as exciting as the conflict between ranchers and immigrants, which is important for television ratings.

Eight of the newscasts used the word “flood,” “tide,” or “pouring” of immigrants into the U.S. In these newscasts, “flood,” “tide” or “stream” was used 15 times and “invasion” was used 8 times (See Table 3 for more detailed examples). Four of the newscasts used another metaphor invoking fear and comparing the situation to some sort of disaster. The most interesting data to result from this study was the focus on the extreme opinions and situations of the ranchers, especially compared to the 12 in-depth interviews I conducted. For example, in Chris Wallace’s 1999 newscast he questions rancher Roger Barnett if he is “prepared to fire on one of these people?” The rancher responds, “That’s right, yes. Yes I am. If I got to shoot somebody, I will try to save my own life” (Table 3). In this same newscast Wallace goes on to interview individuals from the group *Concerned Citizens*, a radical cohort of ranchers.

We don’t have no protection. The only protection’s there’s going to be is if we protect ourselves. This is my country and I’m not going to take it in my back yard and have somebody whip on me. And if I’ve got a gun, by golly, you know, that’s where we’ll stop it, right there...If this situation worsens and the friction increases between citizens and invaders, violence and bloodshed will result (Wallace 1999).

Wallace’s choice to focus on a radical section of ranchers follows “media logic.” It is entertaining; it is, “on the edge.” By no means was this radical section common in the interviews I conducted. In total, only two newscasts presented a

rancher speaking with empathy for the strife of the immigrants. Another interesting aspect of the portrayal of ranchers is the overall discourse of invasion and protection. Ranchers are viewed to be, “on the front line,” so viewers can predict that what the ranchers are experiencing will eventually be experienced by everyone in Middle America. Consequently, the response to the narrative, as framed by the media, states that the U.S. must stop the “invasion,” or “flood,” of immigrants before it reaches the front door of Middle America. It is not just the ranchers that are used for these specific frames. The reporters themselves have adopted an apocalyptic view of the situation on the border.

Illegal aliens and drugs are pouring across this border area, double the narcotics seizures since last November. And increasingly, ranchers along the Rio Grande are now facing violent Mexican gangs who brazenly cross their property, litter the riverfront with the debris of their smuggling efforts and bully land owners, shooting livestock in some cases as a way to ensure a safe passage for their trade (Jennings 1999).

The wording of Jennings transcripts reflects John Tanton’s fear that the U.S. will soon mirror the novel *The Camp of the Saints*, where “a million destitute people fleeing Calcutta and landing in Europe, loot, rape and pillage” (Huslin 2006).

The themes and narratives found in every media newscast that interviewed ranchers presented absolute chaos and ever-increasing levels of “illegal immigrants,” crime, drug smuggling, armed bandits and invasion. Furthermore, the ranchers are portrayed as highly reactionary, provocative agents of a “border war.” In the data collected from these newscasts the ranchers metaphorically

represent patriotism, the right to bear arms, the right to protect ones property and are victims of the federal government’s failure to “secure the border.” They embody the core principles of conservative America and in such, have been highly utilized by the mass media. The next section presents an analysis based on 12 in-depth interviews with the ranchers as a comparison to what is portrayed in the mass media.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

Contrary to what is portrayed in the mass media, my interviews and time spent with ranchers in the American southwest revealed a breadth of opinion and knowledge on immigration and border politics. In the summer of 2010, I interviewed 12 ranchers in regions highly affected by immigration and spent 2 days visiting their ranches and homes. One thing is clear; there has been a significant increase in the amount of immigrants passing through their property, and the presence of armed drug smugglers makes them nervous. However, the main difference between the media newscasts and my interviews and conversations with southwest ranchers, fish and game officials, and sheriffs, is that while the media only focused on the excitement of the conflict between the two groups, my interviews yielded a more comprehensive understanding of the entire situation.

To see an entire list of the questions I asked in these interviews see Appendix G. In all twelve interviews, the ranchers stated that there had been an increase in immigration in the area within the last thirty years, but mainly within the last 15 years. The degree of increase depended on their geographic location

and how long they had been in the area. However the majority of the respondents noted an increase in the nineties while some stated that it started in the eighties. When asking about why there was an increase in Arizona there was a wide-variety of responses. Some claimed it was a result of the construction of the Highway 2 that runs parallel to the border on the Mexican side. Others claimed it was a result of past amnesty programs, specifically under the Reagan administration.

The question of how increased immigration has affected the ranchers resulted in a fairly uniform response. (1) Immigrants leave trash on their ranches, which is a burden on the land and also their cattle (a couple of ranchers reported that their cattle had died from eating the trash). (2) The immigrant trails disrupt the landscape and trample the shrubbery in ways that are not conducive to natural growth and also scare the cattle. (3) Because the coyotes (human smuggler) must constantly change their routes in fear of the border patrol following their patterns it creates an abundance of trails disrupting the landscape. (4) Immigrants drink and bath in their water troughs. (5) Immigrants cut their fences and water lines.<sup>8</sup> These all seemed to be the minor concerns. The main concerns revolved around the “type” of immigrant that is now coming across the desert. Their main concerns centered on; (1) increased robberies and break-ins; (2) the increase in

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<sup>8</sup> When referring to “immigrants” I am using the language given to me by the ranchers. Therefore, it could be the coyotes that cut the water lines and cut the fences and not the immigrants that follow, but it must be noted that it is not my assumption that the blame lies directly on the immigrants.

group sizes; (3) the armed drug and human smugglers and (4) the presence of drug cartels.

Almost every rancher responded that there had been a change in the “type” of immigrant coming across their properties from the early eighties to the time of this writing. For instance one rancher states,

It has, in fact, changed from when I was a kid here in the '50s, '60s, where all of the guys coming across were just looking for work. They came here, if anything, to make a living, have a little money to take back home or send back home. It has just gradually evolved, and it just really increased in a hurry in the last ten, fifteen years (Personal Interview 2010).

Every rancher stated that over the last 30 years there had been drastic change in the amount of burglaries crime and sightings of drug smugglers and heavily armed coyotes. Resulting, of course, has been increased fear amongst the ranchers, especially with the 2010 murder of Arizona rancher Rob Krentz.<sup>9</sup> Groups of up to 200 people led by coyotes armed with M16's represent an understandable concern, especially with the amount of violence in northern Mexico. Therefore, the reactions seen by ranchers on the media are easily predictable and unfortunately an “exciting story.” However, compared to only two newscasts that highlighted rancher sympathy for the immigrants, eleven of

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<sup>9</sup> The suspect in the killing has been largely debated and mirrors much of the discussion of this thesis. The initial reports stated that Krentz was murdered by an “illegal immigrant” and law enforcement felt the suspect fled to Mexico. See: La Jeunesse 2010. However, later reports stated that the suspect's citizenship was unknown and their search was focused in the U.S. See: McCombs 2010. Information gathered from my conversations with ranchers in the Arizona and New Mexico regions differed from both media accounts.

the twelve ranchers that I interviewed went in-depth about how sorry they felt for the immigrants coming across the desert and furthermore, for having to be under control of the ruthless drug cartels and human smuggling gangs.

The human smuggling is just terrible for the Mexican people that get involved. If they get tied to the coyotes or the cartels to bring their drugs across or the cartels that pay them to bring their drugs across. Once they get tied to them they're in for a bad ride (personal interview 2010).

Every rancher had a story to tell me about the strife and suffering of the immigrant. A recurring narrative was the lie that is told to immigrants by the coyotes that drop off immigrants in the middle of the desert and tell them that the glow of lights from a local industrial complex is their destination city. Others had found women raped on the side of the road, families who had sold everything they owned in southern Mexico only to be robbed by coyotes of every personal belonging they had and left to die. One particular rancher had a detailed understanding of the struggle to get to the U.S.

And as I'm sure you well know a lot of these guys are forced into carrying drugs across the border in the form of a debt. I'm sure you've heard, but apparently those poor guys those immigrants in Mexico that were shot, refused to do it. I mean I feel so sorry for anyone that runs into these drug people because they have no conscience whatsoever and not only will they murder you they'll kill your whole family. And so you've got good people doing things they don't want to do because they fear for their lives.



There is no doubt the ranchers understand the human rights violations taking place along the U.S.-Mexico border. However, this was not presented by any of the ranchers interviewed in the newscasts. This doesn't fit into the roles specified by the media. It breaks out of media logic and would allow for serious dialogue. In contrast, the media only asks for sympathy from organizations like *Coalicion de Derechos Humanos* and *Humane Borders*: humanitarian organizations that are known for their efforts to curb the number of deaths of migrants in the desert. These organizations are then pitted up against the angry ranchers for a good debate and good ratings.

Another interesting contrast between the media coverage and my interviews was the differing opinions on border security. Surprisingly, a good number of ranchers felt that it was not possible, others, entirely possible. For instance,

It's not possible, you cannot secure that border. I don't care if you put a soldier every five feet with a machine gun; you're not going to secure that border. They're going to come around somehow, get through. I think a secure border's an oxymoron, and I think we ought to realize that. I think it's very important that the American public be aware that this border between us and Mexico, two thousand and some miles, starting in the Pacific and going to the Gulf, cannot be secured, period (Personal Interview 2010).

The above response was one of three ranchers that felt securing the border was not possible. Another three felt that it could be possible, but it would come in the

form of a worker program and not militarization or fences. The remaining seven (just over 50%) believed it is possible. Not all of the ranchers who believed “securing” the border was possible agreed that the U.S. should extend the border wall or send the military to the border. Two ranchers believed that the only way to secure the border was to reform the visa process and increase border patrol.

The majority of those who believed in a secure border, argued that the border patrol needs to be directly on the line, and not thirty or forty miles north in an attempt to funnel immigrants. One particular rancher told me he had heard that the reason the border patrol did not put their agents on the line was because it might work, and if the border patrol was preventing immigrants from coming into the U.S. they would not be able to produce large “apprehension” statistics and it wouldn’t appear they were doing their job (Personal Interview 2010). Another rancher felt that the corruption had infiltrated U.S. officials.

The deployment of the border patrol is questionable about how they do that which makes you wonder how far the fingers and the cartel’s money gets into the system in the U.S. If the border remains unmanned, how fast can the drugs get through? You give a Mexican a mile head start into the interior here and through the draws and canyons and mountains and stuff here I’ll tell you what it’s a contest to catch them. I get stirred up about this. I’ve seen groups of people with drug backpacks led by a guy with an automatic weapon and when you call it in, nobody comes which also makes you wonder about ICE. Why aren’t they there? I mean how far does that cartel money extend into our government?

There was a sweeping agreement that the Border Patrol is highly inefficient and that they could be efficient if they would (1) keep agents in their positions for long periods of time instead of rotating them out and (2) increase the amount of agents and technology and put them on the line.

When asking about US policies that have forced immigrants into rural areas the majority of ranchers were aware of the clamping down of historical urban points of entry.

I mean the thing that really aggravated me is that the government, the people that were paying attention, if there even was, had to know that their policies were going to funnel all this traffic right through us and yet they changed nothing. They did absolutely nothing, they just went on like they had been and we had to raise hell to get anything done (Personal Interview 2010)

In fact a general anger at the federal government was common in the responses. However, this anger was hardly ever directly aimed at government policies. Rather it was centered on the federal government's lack of attention given to their situation, much like the narrative presented in the media newscasts. However, one cannot blame the ranchers for focusing on security more so than policies. They see the coyotes and drug smugglers on a daily basis; heavily armed. This however, is not the same for the majority of Americans, it is the exception. Although it is understandable for ranchers to preach security first, it does not make sense for the mass media and the rest of the American public to do the same.

Surprisingly, during a conversation I had with one rancher, it became obvious he was in favor of the legalization of Marijuana in the U.S. because he had seen the forced involvement of migrants and also the violence that comes along with its underground trade. Thereafter, I started asking ranchers how they felt about drug legalization. Of the seven ranchers that I asked, three were in favor. Their response mainly dealt with alleviating the violence. If the media would focus more so on policies we would have a more enlightened public, a more enlightened vote.

Three of the twelve ranchers that I interviewed had an understanding of the affects NAFTA had on Mexican Migration.

I've bought cattle from a lot of those people, in Chihuahua, Sonora over the years. We would buy steers and bring them across. These people were devastated. They really- the price of corn, it drove it down. I think that NAFTA had a very negative effect on particularly small, local farmers, cattle raisers in central and north Mexico. And I think those people got desperate and started coming across. They certainly knew a lot about farming and cattle because that's what they did down there. I think there was a real issue there, and I think it was administered wrong, and I really thank NAFTA for a lot of the problems of Mexico (Personal Interview 2010).

The ranchers who did not understand the effects of NAFTA had a wide variety of responses. Some just said they didn't know enough to comment and others felt that it had greatly helped Mexico by providing maquiladora jobs. It was

interesting to hear what policies people were aware of and which policies were unknown. Every rancher I spoke with had an understanding of the broken Visa system. This was mainly due to the ranchers' historical relationship with Mexican ranchers and cowboys. Almost every rancher had a story about trying to help a friend get a visa or U.S. citizenship and the ludicrous amount of time it takes to get U.S. papers. Some even reminisced about the "good ol days" when Mexican and American cowboys would both casually go across the border and look for work.

### **Summary**

My in-depth interviews with the ranchers led me to conclude that the media has highly sensationalized the rancher's viewpoints and strategically asked questions that they know will provide extreme examples. There was a clear understanding and anger over the increase of immigration (i.e. disturbance of their ranches, burglaries and violence) which has led to some extreme viewpoints. However, the media's choice to embrace the conflict and not the root causes has created a situation where the ranchers are seen as the face of the radical right. This has created an open invitation to various white nationalist, anti-immigrant, and vigilante groups to flock to the American southwest and join the "border war." Eleven out of the twelve ranchers I interviewed wanted nothing to do with vigilante groups such as the minutemen and expressed anger at the media for misquoting them. From my understanding, the uniform "ask" of the ranchers was to return to their old way of life and to be left alone. I'm sure many rural Mexican farmers share the same sentiments and do not want to leave their

homelands and their families. Therefore, scholars and activists must work to expose the media and the U.S. policies which have a huge hand in the entire phenomenon. One rancher explained it well:

The results of our current policies are that you have very very bad people making lots and lots of money on both sides of the border. You have this really weird situation where people have to put their lives at risk and go across the desert in very extreme conditions. They have to jump through all kinds of hoops, give up their life savings and...and it's a dirty shame I mean we see the tip of the iceberg in terms of the amount of suffering that goes on (personal interview 2010).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Advocacy Opportunities**

Immigration from Latin America to the United States is not a new phenomenon, nor are the U.S. foreign policies which fuel many of the problems forcing immigrants to leave their homelands. The historical racialization of Latino immigrants is not a new phenomenon either. The nativist comments found amongst many politicians and television pundits reflect a larger phenomenon of nativist attitudes amplified by historically constructed systems of racial bias. Ironically, U.S. colonial, imperial and contemporary neoliberal policies have augmented the “push” for migrants to leave their homelands, and the “pull” to draw them to low wage jobs on the border and in the U.S. In other words, U.S. imperial and neoliberal policies have a mutually beneficial relationship with historical foundations of race-based nativism.

To combat such an interwoven, complex phenomenon scholars and activists must take a two-tiered approach. (1) U.S. colonial and neoliberal policies must be addressed as destructive to the entire working class of the U.S. and Latin America. The exposure of the effects of neoliberal policies on working class Anglo Americans will open dialogue to the issue of immigration and the resulting race-based nativism that targets working class Latino immigrants. (2) A nationwide effort amongst all politicians, T.V pundits and scholars must be implemented to change the language used in everyday conversation that galvanizes historical systems of race-based nativism and hinders the possibility of

dialogue. In other words, we need to re-frame “illegal immigrants” and “aliens” as economic refugees and fellow members of the working class. We need to address neoliberal policies as systems of oppression to Anglo, Black, Asian and Latino classes alike. A comprehensive dialogue about the phenomenon will not take place as long as racist nativism is legitimate in the main stream mass media and in the everyday conversations of working class Americans.

To combat the race-based nativism found amongst politicians and television pundits, we must first address the structure of the mainstream mass media based on a competitive environment that flourishes on controversy. The combination of strategic framing along with a mass media that relies on sensationalism to compete financially with fellow TV stations creates a dangerous situation. The national newscasts have manufactured certain illusions that seem to make perfect sense. My focused analysis on rancher appearances in the media highlights the ability of television newscasts to present a complex phenomenon in a simplified, reactionary way that hinders any comprehensive response. This study should not be considered empirical. It should be considered exploratory rather than explanatory. However, future research that takes into account a larger data sample of rancher interviews and their treatment as a face for conservative and anti-immigrant groups could lead to some interesting empirical findings.

While visiting and conducting interviews with the ranchers it became evident that I was one of the first persons that had spoken to them about policies such as NAFTA and Operations Gatekeeper and Hold the Line that have helped funnel immigrants into Arizona. By no means were my questions or opinions



frowned upon. In contrast many ranchers thanked me for sharing my thoughts and went on to talk to their neighbors about policies such as NAFTA. While I was visiting the ranchers, several far right wing interests groups were also in the same area looking to make documentary films, interview ranchers and experience life “on the line.” It was at this time that I realized academics need to reach beyond their comfort zone and start engaging with what are considered “right wing” circles. The ranchers have proven to be a highly useful population for conservative groups exactly because of their unique situation and it will be a shame if their views are manufactured and framed even more so than they already have.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on macro-level, root causes of immigration. But, who is reading the scholarly work? Scholars were nearly non-existent in both media analyses. However, FAIR and CIS representatives are in the media and testifying before Congress on a regular basis. As a research outfit, CIS has been fundamental in the framing of the immigration debate. There is no doubt that CIS and FAIR have played an integral role in the media’s focus on band-aid solutions to a larger systemic problem of poverty, corruption and violence. Furthermore, while interviewing the ranchers, I ran into several extreme right filmmakers and vigilantes, who used much of the same rhetoric as FAIR, but no immigration scholars.

Chapter four covered what is termed “media logic,” and the media’s focus on the *conflict* and not the root causes. It makes no sense for progressive academics to do the same. Demonizing the ranchers for being reactionary racists

from news reports does nothing to alleviate the problem. It just fuels the problem. We need dialogue about the overall policies which create the reactionary social phenomena that so many people, progressive or conservative, like to argue about.

If academics and activists are able to successfully reach out to “key informants” such as the ranchers, it would be a huge blow for anti-immigration think tanks such as FAIR and CIS. The ranchers are their token example of the “invasion.” If the most affected population speaks out against reactionary measures and calls for an overhaul on larger, foreign and economic policies, groups such as FAIR will have a much harder time legitimizing their claims.

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APPENDIX A  
PROTOCOL FOR IMMIGRATION ANALYSIS

“Illegal Immigration” A qualitative media analysis of NBC, ABC, and CBS nightly news. The media’s focus on “core causes” vs. immediate “solutions,” pre and post NAFTA.

1. Media: (NBC ,ABC, CBS)
2. Which One: (“ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, etc.)
3. Date:
4. Author:
5. Type of article (e.g., news report, analysis, editorial/opinion, i.e., op ed)
6. Length (or time):
7. Sources Used in Report:
  - a. Institutional/Organization (if so, conservative or liberal)
  - b. Individual (if so conservative or liberal)
8. Topic: (e.g., politics, opinion polls, legislation, crime, control, terrorism, narcoterrorism, war on drugs, illegal immigration, drug decriminalization, NAFTA, other?)
9. How is the person used:
  - a. Interviewed on camera?
  - b. Film/visual/recording/photo from another occasion/source is used?
  - c. Is the person a primary or supportive source for another, e.g., a voice for the “conservative” or “right-wing?” Primary supportive source?
  - d. Is the person or one of his/her recent statements the focus/topic of the report? I.e. we must stop the tide of drugs.
  - d. Other?
10. How is the institutional source used:
  - a. Is the institution governmental or private?
  - b. Is the institution quoting “crime statistics, number of immigrants etc?”
  - c. Is the institution progressive/conservative?
  - d. Does the institution have political ties?
11. Emphasis:
  - A. E.g., Was this connected with “fear” in any way? I.e. kidnappings reaching “epidemic proportions,” Drugs taking over our youth,” “A flood of illegals” etc. Was fear associated with “immediate solution” i.e. border militarization.
12. Did the article address “core issues” or “immediate solutions” i.e. rewrite NAFTA, Decriminalize Drugs, Address immigration as an economic issue not a criminal issue, increase visa limit for Mexico etc.?

13. Theme:
14. Metaphors: i.e. invasion, “illegal’s terrorizing local population”
15. Photographs: were there depictions of the “illegal Mexican?” War on illegal immigration? “Invasion?” Guns? Other?
16. Summarize the news transcript:
17. Research Notes:

APPENDIX B  
PROTOCOL FOR RANCHER ANALYSIS



“Ranchers” A qualitative media analysis of NBC, ABC, and CBS nightly news. The media’s focus on “core causes” vs. immediate “solutions.”

1. Media: (NBC ,ABC, CBS)
2. Date:
3. Author:
4. Type of article (e.g., news report, analysis, editorial/opinion, i.e., op ed)
5. Length (or time):
6. Sources Used in Report:
  - a. Institutional/Organization (if so, conservative or liberal)
  - b. Individual Rancher or other (if so conservative or liberal)
7. Topic: (e.g., politics, opinion polls, legislation, crime, control, border security, terrorism, narcoterrorism, war on drugs, illegal immigration, drug decriminalization, NAFTA, other?)
8. How is the person used:
  - a. Interviewed on camera?
  - b. Film/visual/recording/photo from another occasion/source is used?
  - c. Is the person a primary or supportive source for another, e.g., a voice for the “conservative” or “right-wing?” Does the Rancher talk about the “right to bear arms or protect his country?” Is the rancher a voice for the conservative or is a conservative institution speaking for “the rancher?”
  - d. Is the person or one of his/her recent statements the focus/topic of the report? I.e. we must stop the tide of drugs or illegal immigrants.
  - d. Other?
9. How is the institutional source used:
  - a. Is the institution governmental or private?
  - b. Is the institution quoting “crime statistics, number of immigrants etc?”
  - c. Is the institution progressive/conservative?
  - d. Does the institution have political ties?
10. Emphasis:
  - A. E.g., Was this connected with “fear” in any way? Flood of illegals reaching “epidemic proportions,” Drugs taking over our youth,” etc. Was fear associated with “immediate solution” i.e. border militarization.
11. Did the article address “core issues” or “immediate solutions” i.e. address and re-think neoliberal trade policies like NAFTA, Decriminalize Drugs, Address immigration as an economic issue not a criminal issue, increase visa limit for Mexico etc.?

12. Theme:
13. Metaphors: i.e. invasion, flood, or tide of immigrants. “Border Battleground,” “State of emergency.”
14. Photographs: were there depictions of the “illegal immigrant?” War on illegal immigration? “Invasion?” Guns? Drugs? Other?
15. Summarize the news transcript:
16. Research Notes:

APPENCIX C  
RANCHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do I have permission to audio record/videotape this interview?
2. How long have you been in this area and what do you do here?
3. When did you notice an increase in undocumented immigration in this area?
4. Why do you think there was an increase here in this area or how did we get to the point where we are today in Arizona?
5. How do you feel about undocumented immigration or what are your issues with undocumented immigration and how does it affect you?
6. Why do you think such a large number of immigrants come into the country via the desert and not the legal way? Why do they leave in the first place?
7. In your opinion what needs to be done about the situation and who needs to do it? Is there a solution?
8. What does a secure border mean to you? Do you think it is possible? How will it happen?
9. Are you aware of Operation Gatekeeper and Hold the Line administered under the Clinton Administration in the early 90's?
10. What do you think about these policies? What effects have they had?
11. Are you aware of the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA? Do you think NAFTA has had an effect on undocumented immigration?
12. What are your views on drug use in the US?
13. What are your views on drug violence in Mexico? What do you think should be done?

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL



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Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

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**To:** Michelle Tellez  
FACULTY/AD

*for* **From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *SM*  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 06/04/2010

**Committee Action:** Exemption Granted

**IRB Action Date:** 06/04/2010

**IRB Protocol #:** 1006005220

**Study Title:** Tracking Discourse: From Washington to Arizona

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

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