



# **Kidnapping and the Media in Mexico A Public or Private Affair?**

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## **Abstract**

The kidnapping for ransom rates in Mexico are the highest in the world. Could it be that the private treatment of the crime by both the media and the authorities set the conditions necessary for kidnapping to thrive? This document covers the evolution of kidnapping in Mexico, the definition and classification of the crime, it demonstrates the size of the kidnapping problem, and shows its potential negative impact on democratic stability and the economy. Next, it focuses on determining the current news reporting trends among Mexican media outlets and discovers a tendency for treating kidnappings as private affairs between the victims' families and the kidnapers. Then, the author addresses the role of the media in democracy. The conclusion finds that treating kidnapping as a public issue is in the best interest of the news media because reporting economically motivated kidnappings would not only serve society by reducing crime rates but would also benefit the media economically since people tend to show more interest in human tragedies than political affairs.

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## PREFACE

Mexico leads the world in reported kidnappings for ransom but there is surprisingly very little literature dealing with this issue. I discovered a few books published in Mexico City which analyzed kidnapping from a social perspective and focused on the evolution of the Mexican judicial system as it sought to deal with the problem.<sup>1</sup> But when it comes to the media's role in kidnapping cases in Mexico, I have found no written analysis. During the latter half of the twentieth century, one can find a substantial amount of literature dealing with the media's role in politically motivated kidnappings and hostage takings; however, since kidnapping for purely economic benefits plagues so few countries, the subject has not been sufficiently addressed. Police forces and justice systems in nearly all developed countries seem to deter this plague and, in turn, keep it out of the public debate. Yet this is not the case in Mexico, where the impunity is such that kidnappings are regularly performed for sums under \$10,000 USD.

The level of impunity is astonishing. It is understandable in countries ravaged by civil wars (such as Colombia), or countries that are attempting to recover from a climate of chaos inflicted by the toppling of a government (as in Iraq). It is less understandable in a country like Mexico which has enjoyed political stability since the 1920's. However, it can be understood in the light of the impact of organized crime. The drug cartels within Mexico act as sovereign countries within a country. No one is beyond their reach and the legitimate government has difficulty monopolizing the use

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<sup>1</sup> The three books, recently published in Mexico City approach the kidnapping problem from a legal standpoint:

Góngora Pimental, Genaro David. Evolución del SECUESTRO en México y las decisiones del Poder Judicial de la Federación en la materia. Editorial Porrúa: México, 2004.

Besares, Escobar, Marco Antonio y Gómez Torres, Israel de Jesús. El secuestro: Análisis Dogmático y Criminológico. 3<sup>er</sup> Ed. Porrúa: México, 2003.

Jiménez Ornelas, René A. e Islas de González Mariscal, Olga. El secuestro: Problemas sociales y jurídicos. UNAM: México 2002.

of force. Italy, in fact, led the world in kidnappings until 1987, when the mafias finally began losing their power relative to that of the government. Although not all kidnappings in Mexico are directly linked to the drug cartels, the cartels' eroding influence on the judicial system has facilitated the perpetration of this crime. The same corruption that was fomented by drug trafficking money during the past two decades is now fueling human trafficking. When the government chose to turn a blind eye towards the drug trade in the 1980s, civil society and the media followed suit. Now this "blind-eye" syndrome affects more than just the drug trade.

A significant problem exists in the way kidnapping is reported in Mexico. Soon after the first few high-profile kidnapping cases in the 1970s, the press became overly concerned with the possibility of endangering the victims or somehow interfering in a negative way with kidnap negotiations. The media in Mexico tend to view kidnapping as a private matter between the kidnappers and the victims' families instead of a public problem that has a huge impact on Mexican society. Since the governments at all levels have preferred to minimize the problem rather than confront it, the media should take the responsibility of educating the public about the kidnapping epidemic causing the public to demand action from the government. This, in turn, may lead the kidnapping gangs to target the journalists and unfortunately the government does not have a good track record of protecting them. Although initially I had hoped to recommend a policy for kidnap reporting, I soon began to realize that the data needed for such an ambitious project is still not available to the public in Mexico. I have discovered over the course of my research that reliable kidnapping information either does not exist or is strictly controlled by the government authorities.<sup>2</sup> I therefore focused my effort on defining the problem associated with kidnap reporting, from the 1970s to the present, in hopes of sparking a much needed public debate that may eventually lead to a course of action from the news media. Since most of the research was conducted in the Spanish language, the final product has a bi-lingual flair to it. I have attempted to translate citations, leaving original remarks in the Spanish language as a footnote.

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<sup>2</sup> I will further address this issue in Chapter 3.

## INTRODUCTION

*Democracy is finding proximate solutions to insoluble problems.*

-Reinhold Niebuhr

There is an inherent problem in making any recommendation for the media in a democratic regime – the recommendation will always be met with extreme skepticism if not outright resistance. The profession of journalism is different from others in that its basic creed is freedom of expression.

Medicine and law serve individual clients, journalism serves publics, which is why it chooses to publish information in the public interest even though it may not be in the subject's private interest. While other professions tend to control the information that is the base of their power, the journalist's *raison d'être* is to spread information to the lay public.<sup>3</sup>

Criticism of the media by outside sources is often perceived as an attempt at censure and because freedom of expression bars any outside authority from regulating responsible reporting, the decision to act responsibly must come from within. The other problem with the attempt to form new media policy with regards to kidnapping was best summed up by Edmond Cahn, "*Every case is like every other case, and no two cases are alike.*" Whatever the recommendations end up being when discussing the media's role in kidnapping, they will by no means provide a "cookie cutter" solution. Each kidnapping case will have its own nuances and editors will always have to make reporting decisions based on the unique conditions of the moment. What this project hopes to accomplish is to better equip the reporter or editor who ends up making the difficult decision of broadcasting another human's ordeal. After all, wisdom is not only learning from another's mistakes, but also from one's own.

It is important for the reader to understand that freedom is always balanced with security and what is known as the *Tragedy of the Commons*. The issue of

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<sup>3</sup> Rivers, William L. and Cleve Matthews. Ethics for the Media. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1988, p.5

security is a familiar one, and was addressed extensively by the liberal thinkers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In his book *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill theorized:

That principle is that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.<sup>4</sup>

As a society we have the obligation of determining which behaviors are considered dangerous enough to warrant a loss of freedom. In Colombia there has been an ongoing debate about how to manage the tension between democratic ideals and security, for it seems that in certain circumstances the two have a difficult time coexisting simultaneously. The director of the Fundación de Seguridad y Democracia (Foundation of Security and Democracy) of Colombia remarked that the struggle between the values of liberty and security is a struggle between the political and the ethical. The political is dominated by the possible while the ethical by the ideal. At times, unfortunately, the ideal is not achievable. During those times, it is the mission of the political to strike a balance between the means and the ends – even if it requires temporarily sacrificing desirable values in order to preserve them in the long term.<sup>5</sup>

The second point is not as well-known and more easily overlooked. The tragedy of the commons is based on the principle that the pursuit of individual needs can, at times, be detrimental to the community's needs. The classic example of this was popularized by Garrett Hardin who described a scenario where herdsmen shared a large field (a commons) and were free to pursue their "happiness."

As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, "What is the utility *to me* of adding one more animal to my herd?" This utility has one negative and one positive component.

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<sup>4</sup> Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. eBook. Raleigh, N.C. Alex Catalogue, 1859. p.8

<sup>5</sup> Rangel, Alfredo. "Libertad o Seguridad: Un dilema contemporáneo." *Fundación Seguridad y Democracia*. Bogota, Colombia.

<http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org/docs/pdf/ensayos/prologoLibertadoSeguridad.pdf>

1) The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly +1.

2) The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1.

Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another; and another.... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit--in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.<sup>6</sup>

The media, which wields great power in an open and democratic society, must constantly weigh its freedom of speech with its responsibility to protect the public interest. At times, pursuing the public's interest may conflict with the private interest of the kidnap victim's family. What needs to be defined is the media's responsibility to the public with regards to the reporting of kidnapping.

My research has led me to conclude that a failure to understand how kidnapping has evolved over the last thirty years in Mexico has left the media unsure of how to respond to the crime. This confusion is compounded by the fact that the Mexican media experienced state control until the mid 1990's and is still in the process of modifying old habits it incurred during this long period of government influence.

*This investigation seeks to answer the following question: Should the media view and report kidnapping for profit as a public issue or show solidarity with the*

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<sup>6</sup> Hardin, Garrett. The Tragedy of the Commons. (1968)  
[http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art\\_tragedy\\_of\\_the\\_commons.html](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_tragedy_of_the_commons.html)

*victim by following the wishes for privacy requested by his/her family? It is possible that media silence, although possibly helpful for the victims in some cases, does not serve the interests of the community in the long run (as in the case of the Tragedy of the Commons).*

If a kidnapping is performed for purely economic reasons, and not to further a political agenda, then the press can serve to both condemn the crime and stimulate the actions of the justice system. When the people, empowered by information, demand action from the politicians who serve them, the politicians will in turn demand action from the authorities – especially if the cases are specific. The silent march against crime conducted in July of 2004 in Mexico City stirred up many emotions, but led to few results due to its generic approach to crime. Protesting specific crimes against specific people whose pictures can be seen and names known sends a more powerful message and gives the authorities a concrete objective. This protest against the current impunity of kidnappers can be effectively waged through the news medium. Making kidnapping more of a public issue directly attacks the climate of impunity that fosters it. It also forces the public officials and candidates into action, especially in today's current competitive party system which requires the politicians, at least during election periods, to be more responsive to the demands of the people.

To answer the hypothesis, I have organized this work in the following manner:

a) In Chapter 1, I present the evolution of kidnapping in Mexico to give the reader a historical background of the crime. I also stress the importance of reporting policies evolving at the same pace as kidnapping, since policies which may have been helpful in the past could very well be harmful in the present.

b) In Chapter 2, I define kidnapping and familiarize the reader with the different types focusing on those that plague Mexico specifically. Furthermore, I propose a classification system that is useful for media reporting purposes.

c) In Chapter 3, I discuss the reasons for the high kidnapping rates in Mexico and how its private treatment has only assisted the current climate of impunity. I end the chapter showing how exposing and combating kidnapping will also curb the rates of other crimes as well.



d) In Chapter 4, I discuss the importance of addressing the kidnapping problem immediately by demonstrating its negative impact on Mexico's fragile political and economic systems.

e) In Chapter 5, I present my research on current media reporting trends in Mexico by presenting the results of personal interviews with three news organizations. The interviews were conducted with the following editors: Edmundo Crespo Ruiz, Vice-Director of the National Section of *El Norte/Grupo Reforma*; Javier Sepúlveda Martínez, Editor of the Monterrey Metropolitan Section of *Diario Milenio*; and Rodolfo Díaz Fonseca, Editorial Director of *Noroeste Culiacán*.<sup>7</sup> Unable to perform a comprehensive study of Mexico's major media outlets, my goal was to demonstrate that at least a few large and respected news organizations continue to treat kidnapping as a private issue between the victim's families and the kidnappers, therefore proving that the trend does indeed exist.

f) In Chapter 6, I present the accepted views of the media's responsibility in a democracy. The purpose is to demonstrate that the public treatment of kidnapping serves both the democratic ideals of reporting as well as the business ideals of captivating readers, listeners and viewers.

g) In the conclusion I summarize the findings of my research.

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<sup>7</sup> The notes from these interviews are available in Annex A, B, and C respectively.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Evolution of Kidnapping in Mexico

Although some intellectuals try to portray kidnapping as a postmodern problem stemming from social injustice the truth is that kidnapping has been around since the beginning of history. The first documented case can be found in the Bible. In Genesis chapter 14, Abraham's nephew Lot is kidnapped after the city he was living in was attacked. Abraham assembles 318 men and goes after the kidnapers, thus saving his nephew. In ancient history, kidnappings were primarily performed as a means of procuring labor (slavery). For most of the world's history, trafficking humans has been a lucrative business. The Romans called the crime *plagium*, a term which is still current in today's Spanish language: *plagio*. In fact as an adolescent, even Julius Caesar was kidnapped for ransom by pirates at sea; legend has it that he returned years later with the Roman navy to exact vengeance on his assailants. In Mexico, kidnapping was not well-documented during the Colonial Period and not until the reign of Porfirio Díaz was it prosecuted.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, during this time it was not uncommon for the poor and the defenseless to be taken against their wills and shipped off to spend their lifetimes working for a Hacienda.

In Mexico's more recent history, the first documented kidnapping gang was called "la Banda del Automóvil Gris" (or the Grey Automobile Gang), and was responsible for the kidnapping of Alicia Thomas, the daughter of a wealthy businessman, in 1913.<sup>9</sup> The crime, however, continued to be a rare occurrence until after the Cuban Revolution. During the 1960's and 1970's, revolutionary youths influenced by Marxist or Communist ideas, formed guerrilla groups throughout Latin

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<sup>8</sup> Góngora Pimental, Genaro David. Evolución del secuestro en México y las decisiones del Poder Judicial de la Federación en la materia. Porrúa: México, 2004, p.6

Se ha legislado sobre el secuestro desde 1871, en el Código Penal de esa fecha que en su artículo 626 establecía: "El delito de plagio se comete, apoderándose de otro, por medio de la violencia, de amigos, de amenazas, de la seducción y el engaño", alcanzando su castigo hasta la pena capital.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.3

America and used kidnapping not only as a financial tool to fund their movements, but also as a political tool to undermine the legitimacy of their governments.<sup>10</sup> The kidnapping of Julio Hirshfield Almada, director of airports, in 1971 is considered Mexico's first political kidnapping.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1980's, the rise of organized drug cartels further spread the use of kidnapping. This time, it was used to censor journalists or politicians or anyone (including members of competing cartels) who made life difficult for the *Capo* (druglord). In this manner, both extremist groups and criminals used kidnapping for its psychological and political impact, as well as to finance their causes.

During the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), another wave of kidnapping commenced. But instead of focusing on wealthy businessmen, the kidnapers began selecting victims from the families of famous actors, singers, athletes, and politicians. The ransoms paid during this time period were stratospheric – it became the golden age of kidnapping. One such ransom was upwards of \$30 million, paid for the release of the banker Alfredo Harp Helú.<sup>12</sup> In the last ten years however, kidnapping has again been mutating into what has been dubbed the *democratization of kidnapping*. Although probably a result of the impunity which kidnapers enjoyed in Mexico, today's perpetrators are no longer restricted to drug cartels or political extremist groups. The small-time criminal gangs in Mexico who used to rustle cattle, steal cars, rob banks and ATM machines have now found a lucrative business with very little risk.<sup>13</sup> Today, kidnapping victims are no longer just wealthy businessmen and entertainers – who now hire private security, ride in bulletproof cars, and build well-fortified homes – they can be anyone. All classes of people are now at risk, from the poor to the middle class to even the clergy and school teachers.<sup>14</sup> One can truly say that there is no longer any prejudice in the

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<sup>10</sup> Jiménez Ornelas, René A. y Olga Islas de González Mariscal. El secuestro: Problemas sociales y jurídicos. UNAM: México, 2002, p.18

<sup>11</sup> Morales, Max. Expositor sobre el secuestro en México. II Congreso Federación Panamericana de Seguridad Privada (FEPASEP) del Caribe. Cancún, Junio 28, 2004

<sup>12</sup> Góngora, p.7

<sup>13</sup> Jiménez, p.19

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.28

kidnapping business – even domestic pets have been targets of kidnappings in Mexico City.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, the dominant motives of kidnapping have mutated over time even though none of the previous kidnapping styles have altogether disappeared. Politically motivated kidnappings continue to occur (especially in the state of Guerrero), and high-profile or narcotic-related kidnappings (such as the sisters of the famous actress and singer Thalía or the narco-run kidnapping ranch in Nuevo Laredo)<sup>16</sup> have not disappeared either. These kidnappings have only been eclipsed by the current wave of more violent and more random kidnappings for ransom that are plaguing Mexican society.

Government action could help, but analysts insist that to bring kidnapping under control, government action alone isn't enough. The society itself will need to change. The purpose of the Anti-Crime March of 2004 in Mexico City was to pressure the government into handling the problem. However, fighting corruption and diverting resources to professionalize the police and judiciary require society's participation. More importantly, the society itself needs to condemn crimes by reporting it instead of keeping silent.

The media, being a major part of civil society, needs to conduct sporadic self-evaluations in order to ensure that its reporting styles are evolving with the kidnapping environment, thus making sure that the public good continues to be served. It is possible that the media continues to take a conservative posture developed during the era of political kidnappings, but which may no longer serve the public good. At the same time, stories about kidnapping are stories that interest the public. Studies have shown that the general public pays more attention to stories dealing with personal crises and natural disasters than political events. A study of the three major U.S. television networks demonstrated that in 1994 networks featured

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<sup>15</sup> Besares, Escobar, Marco Antonio y Gómez Torres, Israel de Jesús. El secuestro: Análisis Dogmático y Criminológico. 3<sup>er</sup> Ed. Porrúa: México, 2003. p.23

“Una camioneta blanca con el logotipo Perrera Delegacional escruta las calles de un barrio de la ciudad de México a la caza de perros con dueño: enlazados con el menor cuidado, son cargados en el vehículo y devueltos previo rescate de 10 dólares, se trata del secuestro express de perros, funcionarios corruptos estafan un promedio de 3,300 dólares al mes con el secuestro de mascotas.”

<sup>16</sup> Eaton, Tracy. “Mexican authorities search ranch for human remains.” *Dallas Morning News*. July 1, 2005.

more stories about O.J. Simpson's murder case (431) than about major developments in Russia (412) or the extraordinary congressional mid-term elections in which the Republicans gained the majority in the House of Representatives for the first time in over forty years (409). News stories about crime, disasters, and President Clinton's sex scandals accounted for thirty-four percent of the stories on the early evening national news.<sup>17</sup> Kidnap reporting is a win-win situation for both the media and its public.

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<sup>17</sup> Graber, Doris A. "Media as Opinion Resources: Are the 1990s a New Ball Game?" in Understanding Public Opinion. Eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Congressional Quarterly: Washington D.C., 1997, p.73 citing a study conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs in 1995.

## CHAPTER 2

### Definition and Classification System

#### Definitions:

In U.S. criminal law, kidnapping is defined as the taking away of a person against their will, usually to hold the person in false imprisonment (confinement without legal authority) for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. In Mexico, Genaro David Góngora Pimental, a minister of the Supreme Court and honorary professor of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México's Law School, defines kidnapping as a crime which deprives a person of their liberty for the purpose of obtaining a ransom, usually money, in exchange for their freedom.<sup>18</sup> However, after studying the media's relationship to the crime, I propose the following definition for the purpose of this thesis:

*Kidnapping is the act of seizing and depriving someone of his/her freedom to obtain an economic or political benefit or some other form of personal satisfaction.*

Another important aspect of the crime is its impact on the victim's family and friends. Although nearly all crimes affect the family and friends of their victims to a certain degree, the effect caused by kidnapping is many times worse. Psychologists in Latin America have developed a new term, "muerte suspendida" (hanging death), to denote the condition of worry and anxiety which characterize the emotions experienced by the victim and his or her loved ones.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Góngora Pimental, p.12.

...basta definirlo [el secuestro] como, "el delito mediante el cual se priva la libertad a una persona con la finalidad de obtener un rescate generalmente en dinero a cambio de su liberación".

<sup>19</sup> Besares, p.107

### Types of kidnappings:

In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) classifies kidnappings based on the relation between the perpetrator and the victim:

- 1) kidnapping by a relative of the victim or "family kidnapping" (49% of cases)
- 2) kidnapping by an acquaintance of the victim or "acquaintance kidnapping" (27% of cases)
- 3) kidnapping by a stranger to the victim or "stranger kidnapping" (24% of cases)

These classifications are based on the evolution of kidnapping in the United States, which has experienced relatively few kidnappings for ransom. As one can observe from the statistics, more than three-quarters of all kidnappings in the United States involve family members and acquaintances, and are often perpetrated by parents in custody disputes. The United States also suffers from numerous kidnappings which end in sexual assault – in other words, the kidnapers tend to commit the crime for sexual satisfaction in lieu of economic or political motives.

Classification systems, therefore, are as numerous as the different kidnapping climates. After all, classification systems are developed for the purpose of being useful and may even differ with the role of the organization that uses them. Mexican authorities, for instance, base their classification system on the type of kidnapers involved in the crime instead of on their relation to the victim. The three groups commonly used are:

- 1) the common kidnapers (*los comunes*)
- 2) the ideological kidnapers (*los ideológicos*)
- 3) the paramilitary or former police kidnapers (*los paramilitares o ex policías*).<sup>20</sup>

The common kidnapers include those looking for easy money without exposing themselves to too much risk. They usually select victims between the upper-middle and lower classes or at random, and demand ransoms under \$100,000 USD. The ideological groups, on the other hand, are politically motivated and will target high-visibility victims in order to cause the greatest possible impact on the

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<sup>20</sup> Almazan, Alejandro. "Coincide tipo de secuestros." *Reforma*. Mexico City: Jan 12, 1996. p.4

society. Their mission is to influence political decisions, attack the legitimacy of the standing government, and/or finance their political movement. Like the common kidnapper, the paramilitary and ex-policemen kidnappers are motivated by financial gain, but because of their past training and networks, they can usually afford to take greater risks and carefully select victims who can afford large ransoms.

Additionally, the current literature on kidnapping offers a menu of kidnapping types and variations. Some examples include:

1. **Kidnapping for ransom**, with the clear intention of obtaining an economic benefit. It is sometimes further broken down into two other subsets based on time:

a. Extended kidnapping which last several days, weeks, months or even years. Time permits the kidnappers to negotiate higher ransoms. An example of this type of kidnapping happened to Roberto Garcia, a systems analyst in Mexico City who still winces as he remembers the phone calls. The commands were simple. "Pick up the receiver by the second ring or we will beat your nephew until he bleeds. Fail to make the ransom demand and we will send him back to you in pieces."

Scooped off the streets of the Mexican capital as he went out for a hamburger near his home in the modest Iztapalapa neighborhood, the youngster was held bound and blindfolded for five weeks. Threatened, abused and alone as his family scabbled to pull together 1m peso (around \$100,000 USD) ransom, the middle-class Garcia family were thrown into a terrifying new world - but one that is becoming ever-more familiar to Mexicans. "We thought that we wouldn't be vulnerable to kidnapping because we don't have the kind of money they ask for," says the soft-spoken 64-year-old as he recalls the ordeal. "Now the poor, the middle-income and the rich are all being targeted. Kidnapping has become an industry."<sup>21</sup>

b. The second type of kidnapping for ransom is called express kidnapping, which typically last less than 24 hours. Due to the short duration, the

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<sup>21</sup> "Welcome to Mexico City the New Kidnap Capital of the World." *The Independent*. London, Sunday Edition, Sep. 5, 2004.



kidnappers settle for much smaller ransoms. An example of this type was related by Maria Jose Cuevas, a 32-year-old graphic designer, who after parking her VW in front of her home in the fashionable La Condesa neighborhood of Mexico City suddenly felt the presence of a man nearby.

I turned and saw that he had a pistol. He told me to get in the back of the car, then two more men got in: one up front accompanying the driver, and one in the back with me. All three were about 20 years old and had guns.

The situation was desperate. I had a pistol pressed into my ankle and another stuck into my ribs. You are in your own space, your car, but you don't have control over it or anything else. Outside, you see life going on as if nothing was happening, and you can't call for help.

My father is one of the most famous painters in Mexico - Jose Luis Cuevas - and at first I didn't know whether it was a kidnap that would last several days and end in a ransom demand, or if it was a so-called express kidnapping that would last just a couple of hours. But when they asked who my family was, I started to calm down a little as it looked like it was just random.

They asked for my bank card, and they drove to three or four ATMs to withdraw cash. By sheer luck I only had 10,000 pesos (around \$1000 USD). I told them to check the balance, and they believed I didn't come from a rich family.

After they got the money, they carried on driving around and I got very anxious about where they were taking me. They hurl every kind of cliché at you to frighten you. They tell you that you are going to sleep in a cellar - like a proper kidnap. They say they are going to take you out on to the highway, implying that they are going to kill or rape you.

Inside I was dying of fright, but I was chatting to them and outwardly very calm. I was telling them how the situation in Mexico was very difficult, and that I didn't agree with robbery or hold-ups but I understood why they did it. I was becoming their accomplice.

After about three hours, they decided to let me go. They parked up in a dark street. When everyone else had got out of the car, the driver reached out and squeezed my shoulder. He stayed

looking right into my eyes for a few seconds. It was a little moment in which I felt like he was both trying to ask me to forgive him and thanking me.<sup>22</sup>

2. The second motive for kidnapping is as a way **to exert political pressure**. There are many subsets of this type, such as obtaining information, or trying to change government policy (which occurred in Colombia when the drug lord, Pablo Escobar, had several media personalities kidnapped in order to overrule the extradition law that was approved by the Colombian government)<sup>23</sup>. Another interesting story comes from Terry Anderson, a reporter who was kidnapped in Beirut in 1985 after the bombing of the U.S. Marine Barracks. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for his abduction and demanded the release of 17 prisoners in Kuwait who were arrested for their involvement in the bombings of the U.S. and French embassies. During his almost seven years in captivity, he witnessed first hand the incestuous relationship between the media and the terrorists, as political kidnappers are often called.

In my opinion, the very reporting of political kidnapping and assassination or a deadly bombing is a first victory for the terrorists. Furthermore, unless the terrorist can attach his political message to the headlines he has caused, he has failed.<sup>24</sup>

Political kidnapping was a problem the government and the media in Mexico had to address during the “Dirty War” in the 1960’s and 1970’s when urban terrorists and rural guerrillas conducted bombings, armed attacks, and kidnappings. The media labeled these groups as “bandits” or “radicals” and downplayed their achievements in an attempt to prevent them from achieving popular support. Possibly the habits of downplaying the kidnappers actions still permeates the thinking of many editors in the handling of kidnapping cases.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> García Márquez, Gabriel. Noticia de un secuestro. Editorial Diana: México, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, Terry. “Terrorism and Censorship: The Media in Chains.” *Journal of International Affairs*. Summer 1993,; 47:1; ABI/INFORM Global, p.127

3. Kidnapping in order to **"sell" the victim to another group** is also becoming more common as kidnapping gangs democratize. The part-timers and novices conduct the abduction phase and contract out the negotiation phase to the experts who have security houses and the know-how. Miguel Castillo, a 35-year-old marketing director underwent such an ordeal.

Castillo was leaving the bakery he worked at in the capital's Barranca del Muerto district at around 9.30pm on a spring evening when he found the path to his Volkswagen GTI blocked by a federal police squad car.

The police forced me to get out of my car, saying that it was stolen. Three or four officers then threw me face down into the back of the car and put their feet on top of me. They drove off with the radio turned on loud so that I couldn't figure out where I was going. I still don't know which route they followed.

They handed me over to some civilians who held me captive in a safe house. I was stripped naked and placed in a completely dark room with a cement floor. They tied my left hand to a concrete post with wire, and left me there for five nights and six days.

Their mistreatment was systematic. They didn't feed me. They beat me frequently, and they told me they were going to kill me. It was a psychological game. When they came for me, they always shoved a torch right in my face so that I couldn't identify them. You feel complete impotence as your life depends entirely on your kidnapers' attitude and moods.

I had to identify my family and give them their details. It wasn't until the fifth day that they finally got in touch with them. My family was going frantic with worry as they had no idea where I was. They paid a ransom he declines to say how much and I was put back into the boot of my car and taken for a drive.

They left me in the countryside in Morelos state - adjacent to Mexico City. After the sound of voices had receded, I began to call for help. A farmer heard me and helped me to climb out through the back seats. I went to a nearby house and used the phone to call my mother.

It has left me with a lot of anger because of the situation they

put my family in. If I lost a family member or a friend in a kidnapping, I would want to take revenge.<sup>25</sup>

4. Still another variety is labeled as **group kidnapping**, in which many people are kidnapped at the same time (for instance, children on a school bus, worshippers in a religious ceremony, or people attending a party). José Cohen, a 34-year-old television producer tells of his ordeal in such a scenario. Relaxing in his home with his wife and three children on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor apartment in the Polanco district of Mexico City, he decided to go down to his car to fetch his laptop.

When I pushed the elevator door open, a 9mm pistol was pointing in my face. I was told to close my eyes and look down at the floor, and I just remember seeing a bunch of feet walking into the elevator, at least four or five people. They took me back up to my apartment. It was a kidnap in my own home.

They took us all into the bedroom where the shower was still on, and they tied my wife and me up. They just said to us, 'Keep cool and nothing is going to happen.' The kids were with us and the little one was crying for his bottle, so that was a little difficult.

At first it was very frightening as they were very threatening. They said things like 'You son of a bitch' and 'If you open your eyes, I'll kill you.' But we were lucky because that particular day I had gone to change a check as I had to make some payments at the office the following day. I had around \$ 3,000 USD in my pocket and I gave it to them immediately.

We are not a Rolex family, so they took my wallet, my wife's jewelry, some antique watches inherited from my grandfather and my DVD player and our mobile phones. They were constantly talking on mobile phones, and only later did we realize they had taken over the whole building and were talking to accomplices in other apartments.

After a couple of hours, they left, telling us not to do anything for 45 minutes. I put a chair against the elevator door, which was

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<sup>25</sup> "Welcome to Mexico City the New Kidnap Capital of the World." *The Independent*. London, Sunday Edition, Sep. 5, 2004.

silly, and turned off the shower. At the end of the day they told me that if we took it easy and played along with their game, they wouldn't hurt us, and that was the most important thing for me, obviously, as I just wanted to protect my family.

Only later when I checked the call log of my wife's mobile phone did I discover that the kidnappers had used it to call one particular number 17 times. I started to do my own investigation, but then decided to drop it. If you live in a place where there is no rule of law, then it's pretty damn scary to go ahead and do something on your own.<sup>26</sup>

5. **Virtual Kidnapping** (*el secuestro virtual*), is one of the latest developments in Mexico. The two most common varieties of this type are a) to demand a ransom from the family for a member who has not been kidnapped but is temporarily absent and out of communication with the said family or b) to threaten kidnapping of family if a ransom is not paid by a certain date. An example of the first has been conducted in such settings as a night club, where a member of the opposite sex succeeds in obtaining a phone number early on in the night from one of the clubbers. Instead of being a romantic, the person leaves the club, calls the phone number and advises the answering family member that "so and so has been kidnapped. If you want to see him or her again, deliver X amount of money in the next hour at this location." The other type occurred to my wife's Spanish tutor while we were living in Monterrey, Mexico. Her father received a phone call on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2005 in which a menacing voice demanded \$100, 000 pesos or one of his daughters would be kidnapped. "Have you not seen a suspicious car passing frequently in front of your house lately?" the voice continued. "We know the name of your wife. We know what time you go to work and when you come home at night." My wife received a phone call that same day from Claudia, who said in a distressed voice, "I can't come today and I can't explain over the phone." For the next week, the father kept all his children inside his home and guarded them throughout the night. They had to call the neighbors to ask them to pick up

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

tortillas and other basic necessities. No one left the house, even the small children who wanted to go out and play. During Children's Day on April 30<sup>th</sup>, Claudia recalled, "I couldn't even get my son a gift." Fortunately, nothing more ever occurred, but the fear was real. Even after their week of "captivity" the family continued to feel vulnerable and their routines changed forever. Almost a year after the event, Claudia confessed to me, "The fear never ends."<sup>27</sup> Since the kidnappings never actually occur in virtual kidnappings, this crime legally falls under extortion.

6. A final type is called **Self-kidnappings** (*el auto-secuestro*). This type is related to virtual kidnapping but different in that the victim is one of the conspirators. These kidnappings are usually performed by disgruntled family members or teenagers who wish to extort money from their parents or relatives by feigning their kidnapping. They often use a friend or acquaintance to negotiate the ransom from their family.

For the purpose of the mass media, though, *it is more practical to classify kidnappings according to the motivation of the kidnappers* instead of using an ever-growing number of methods. I believe we can simplify this phenomenon into three types of kidnappings:

1. **Political kidnappings**: conducted primarily to influence policy. For example: policies of governments (indigenous or land rights, prisoner release, etc.), policies of commercial companies (anti-globalization or environmental movements), and policies of religious movements or even rival drug cartels.

2. **Economic kidnappings**: conducted primarily for financial gain. Most experts agree that 95% of kidnappings in Mexico are performed purely for the money.<sup>28</sup>

3. **Personal kidnappings**: conducted primarily to satisfy a personal need such as the need to exact vengeance. For example: organized crime against government authorities, organized crime against organized crime, and even between

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<sup>27</sup> Pérez Ayala, Claudia. Personal Interview. Apr. 5, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> "Welcome to Mexico City the New Kidnap Capital of the World." *The Independent*. London, Sunday Edition, Sep. 5, 2004.

family members in custody battles. Other motives include the desire to satisfy such emotional needs as love, protection, or more debase needs such as sexual gratification, etc.

The importance of classifying kidnappings by motivation is because motivation is a trait that can be affected by the media. The written or spoken word gives birth and legitimacy to political movements. Images fuel financial and sexual desires. Silence can fuel impunity and corruption. Scathing words and accusations can incite vengeance. People are motivated by what they see and hear. Out of the three types of kidnapping, however, one can be considered less rationally motivated than the others. Personal kidnappings, due to their more personal nature are more difficult, if not impossible, for a free press to influence. Political and economic kidnappings, on the other hand, tend to be more rationally motivated. For someone to perform a political kidnapping, he or she must be convinced of a cause or of an injustice that must be fought while someone conducting an economically motivated kidnapping necessarily performs a cost-benefit analysis. Most of the cost is related to the possible punishment and its likelihood, while the benefit or ransom will rise with the risks the kidnappers are willing to take.

The media's role surrounding political kidnappings is a hotly debated issue today since its motives and methods make it resemble terrorism.<sup>29</sup> The rise of terrorism and its use of media as its amplifier creates a dilemma for the modern journalist. Kidnappers in Iraq, for instance, are not so concerned with ransom as they are with the effects they generate in the living rooms of the "infidels" across the world as they watch a video of their fellow countrymen pleading for their lives. The goal of the kidnapper is to affect the political will of democratic nations and is achieved through the free publicity the perpetrator is guaranteed for his most barbaric acts: suicide bombings, kidnappings, beheadings, etc. One can find many good debates among intellectuals, journalists, and politicians as they try to strike a balance between adding fuel to the fire and the exercise of free speech. One such discussion was instigated by Judith Matloff, who teaches a class on war reporting at the Columbia

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<sup>29</sup> Kegley, Charles W. Jr. Editor. International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls. Martin's Press: New York, 1990.

Graduate School of Journalism. She questions why journalists ask each other to temporarily withhold publishing news on the kidnapping of a fellow colleague fallen into the hands of insurgents in Iraq but seem to have no problem reporting similar ordeals involving non-journalists.

We should by no means suppress reporting on troubling stories such as the beheadings in Iraq. But we must give equal treatment to civilians from other professions who have been taken hostage, something that hasn't been addressed adequately so far.<sup>30</sup>

Another such debate is being conducted in Colombia which faces guerilla movements funded by drug lords. In Colombia, the guerilla movements sometimes kidnap as a show of strength or to censure journalists who have criticized their methods and/or objectives. Although Matloff acknowledges that the reporting of kidnappings motivated only by money usually do not further endanger the victim, publicity can worsen the victim's situation when the captors are using them for propaganda purposes.<sup>31</sup>

When it comes to economically motivated kidnappings, on the other hand, the academic debate is scarce. The dominance of economic kidnappings is more a symptom of a weak judicial system and inept police force. It is an extremely difficult crime to commit in a country with a competent police force and relatively efficient justice system. The reason kidnapping is such a complicated crime to conduct successfully is due to the fact that there are so many variables that the criminals have no control over. The kidnapper is never sure how the victim will react and controlling the victim incorrectly can lead to their death on the one hand or their escape on the other. The response of the family is also unpredictable. Will they notify the authorities or will they remain silent? Will they pay or refuse to pay? And of course the most difficult part is the money exchange coupled with the victim's release. At any point during the course of this ordeal, a simple error could lead to the death of the victim or the capture of the kidnappers. Only in a state of almost complete impunity

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<sup>30</sup> Matloff, Judith. "Covering Kidnap Victims. The case for restraint." *Columbia Journalism Review*. New York, Jan/Feb 2005, p.10.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.11



can it become a common crime. It is understandable that kidnappings occur in war-torn countries such as Iraq and Colombia where the monopoly of force is still contested, however, it is less understandable how a more stable country like Mexico can be plagued by this crime.

Due to Mexico's unique situation, there has been very little published internationally concerning a role for the media in economic kidnappings. In cases that have been studied, the focus has been primarily on the negative aspects of media coverage in these situations. The most common problem has been the habit of the media to interfere with the investigation or the negotiations, exposing both the victims and authorities to greater risks. The problems most often stem from eager journalists desiring to produce sensational live news coverage rather than focusing on the public good. In other cases, it is the authorities who use the media as a private tool to facilitate the rescue of the victim. These negative incidents have made many in the media hesitant to even cover kidnappings for fear of either exposing the victim to increased peril or of becoming a pawn in a personal investigation. These common scenarios have created distrust even among the families of victims and police forces who routinely ask the media not to interfere. As an editor from *Grupo Reforma* said, "We usually just report the who, what, when and where of the kidnapping after it occurred and then nothing until the release of the victim."<sup>32</sup> The question is: does this behavior benefit the public good, or the individuals? Because Mexico is plagued with such a unique condition, a debate over the role of the media in economically motivated kidnapping is needed.

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<sup>32</sup> Crespo Ruiz, Edmundo, Vice-Director of the National Section. *El Norte – Grupo Reforma*. Personal Interview. Monterrey, México. Feb. 16, 2006.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Perfect Climate for Kidnapping

Latin America accounts for 75% of the world's abductions, according to London-based business risk consultants Control Risks Group. The insurance industry estimates more than 7,500 kidnappings a year occur in Latin America, but analysts say those statistics and government counts aren't reliable because so few kidnappings are reported – only 1 in 10 by some estimates. In Latin America, three countries suffer from extremely large numbers of kidnappings: Colombia, Mexico and Brazil. Historically, Italy was the country most affected by ransom kidnappings until 1987, with 600-800 registered cases a year.<sup>33</sup> As the mafia's power dwindled, so did the number of kidnappings. Meanwhile, during the 1990's Mexico moved from 5<sup>th</sup> place to 2<sup>nd</sup> place and in 2005 was even in 1<sup>st</sup> place for the first half of the year.<sup>34</sup> In the 2005 National Survey on Insecurity conducted by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information, nearly 40,000 Mexicans over 18 years old claimed to have been victims of a kidnapping.<sup>35</sup>

“Kidnapping is a blight that Mexicans do not like to acknowledge. Its victims hope that is about to change.”<sup>36</sup> Mexico leads the world when it comes to kidnappings. International statistics often show Colombia as the world leader but Colombia's numbers are bloated due to a civil war in which guerrilla groups will sometimes take groups of 30 hostages at a time from rural towns and highways in order to use them more or less as slaves. These kidnapped victims will work in coca

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<sup>33</sup> U. Santino. “Law enforcement in Italy and Europe against mafia and organized crime” in W.F. McDonald (ed.), *Crime and law enforcement in the global village*. Cincinnati, 1997. pp.151-166. The chapter is also available at: <http://www.centroimpastato.it/publ/online/mcdonald.htm/>

<sup>34</sup> COPARMEX. <http://www.jovenescoparmex.com/noticias/n0013.html>  
During the first semester of 2005, Colombia reported 172 kidnappings, Brazil 169, and Mexico 194.

<sup>35</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, Geografía e Información. “Tipo de delito ocurrido a la población de 18 años y más según sexo, 2004.” *Encuesta Nacional Sobre Inseguridad, 2005*. Exact figure was 39,954.

<sup>36</sup> “Mexico Politics: Fear of Captivity.” *The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited*. June 21, 2004.

plantations, process and refine cocaine, and ultimately act as human shields to protect the guerrilla groups from a drastic government response. The other leading reason for kidnappings in Colombia is for its political impact. In these cases, the guerrilla groups use hostages to improve their negotiating position with the Colombian government or to censure journalists whom they find too critical. When it comes to the traditional kidnapping for ransom though, Mexico by far leads the pack. It is estimated that only 10% of kidnappings in Colombia are exclusively economically motivated.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, while kidnappings in Colombia are following a downward trend, cases in Mexico have been on the rise since the 1990's. The daily number of kidnappings in Mexico is currently estimated at 12 with an average of 80 to 85 express kidnappings a day in Mexico City.<sup>38</sup> Express kidnappings, however, are not currently counted in government statistics.

Other alarming statistics that demonstrate Mexico's place in the world of kidnapping include:

- 1<sup>st</sup> place in executions of kidnap victims<sup>39</sup> (In 1995, 3 Mexicans died at the hands of their captors. During the first half of 2005, that figure was 42, compared with 17 in Colombia)
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in number of express kidnappings
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in highest ransom ever paid for a single victim (30 million dollars for Alfredo Harp Helú)
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in highest earnings for a single kidnapper
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in police and ex-police involvement in kidnappings
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in the participation of professionally educated members in kidnapping gangs (each gang usually is assisted by a doctor/surgeon)
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in variety of methods used (originality)
- 1<sup>st</sup> place in corrupt judicial protection of kidnappers<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios sobre la Inseguridad A.C. <http://www.icesi.org.mx>

<sup>38</sup> Morales, Max. "Qué desgracia para México", GcD La Revista de la Seguridad, Federación Panamericana de Seguridad, año 5, t. 5, núm 57, México, 2003, pp. 20,21

<sup>39</sup> Vincenteno, David. "Lidera México en asesinatos de secuestrados." *El Norte*. Dec 20, 2005. p.2  
In 2005 in Colombia, 13 kidnap victims were executed (1 in 26 victims); in Mexico 42 were executed (1 in 7 victims)

<sup>40</sup> Morales, Max.

Surprisingly, despite the seriousness of the kidnapping epidemic, it is nearly impossible to find any agreement on kidnapping statistics in Mexico. Even federal *diputados*, or congressmen, during deliberations over whether or not to adopt an anti-kidnapping law similar to the one recently approved in the state of Veracruz, stated that there are no reliable kidnapping statistics at the national level.<sup>41</sup> The Veracruz law authorized the authorities, for the first time in Mexico, to freeze the bank accounts of the victims' families in order to discourage kidnapers from expecting ransom payments. Additionally, there is a proposition on the Senate's web page by two legislators requesting that the Federal Secretary of Public Security make available the statistics and incidences of kidnappings in Mexico to the Senate.<sup>42</sup>

The following tables show some of the figures that have been cited in news articles or posted on websites. If Mexico's own legislative branch lacks access to accurate data, it is not surprising that the rest of the country produces conflicting statistics. The problem is further compounded by the lack of agreement on what constitutes a kidnapping. Some organizations count only reported kidnappings, others the kidnapping cases that were acted upon by a government agency and still others try to estimate how many kidnappings occurred but were not reported. Almost none account for express kidnappings.

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<sup>41</sup> Rodríguez Córdoba, Alfonso. *Noticieros Televisa*. Jan. 29, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Federal Government of Mexico. Senate Web Page.  
<http://www.senado.gob.mx/sgsp/gaceta/?sesion=2004/06/09/1&documento=68>

**Top ten countries ranked by kidnapping rates.**

Total reported: 2002 (Source: Coparmex)

Colombia.....	2,896
Mexico.....	437
Brazil.....	417
Argentina.....	300
El Salvador.....	114
Russia.....	105
Ecuador.....	88
Venezuela.....	56
Philippines.....	39
Honduras.....	33

**Annual kidnapping rates at the national level:**

Organization	2000	2001	2002	2003
Procuraduría General de Justicia (Justice Dept.) <sup>43</sup>	531	568	535	531
Kroll Inc. ( <i>Reforma</i> interview with consultant 2/6/2004)	3000	3000	3000	3000
Mexico's Deputy Attorney General (José Luis Santiago) <sup>44</sup>	2165			
COPARMEX	548	422	437	532
RAND Corporation	550	550	550	550

<sup>43</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Issue paper: MEX100642.E. Oct. 20, 2005.  
<http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/?action=view&doc=mex100642e>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.mexidata.info/id217.html>

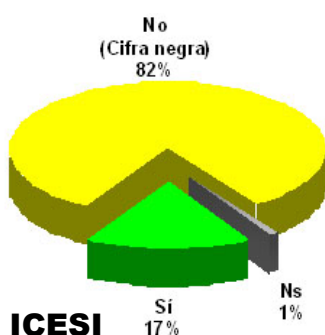
**Kidnappings reported by state  
(2000-2003):**

Federal District	775
Mexico State	422
Guerrero	124
Michoacan	118
Baja California	113
Morelos	87
Chiapas	87
Sinaloa	81
Jalisco	65
Sonora	61
Puebla	60
Veracruz	48
Guanajuato	36
Chihuahua	32
Nayarit	28
Hidalgo	24
Oaxaca	22
Durango	22
Tamaulipas	less than 20
Nuevo Leon	less than 20
Quintana Roo	less than 20
Zacatecas	less than 20
San Luis Potosi	less than 20
Aguascalientes	from 4 to 8
Baja Cal Sur	from 4 to 8
Campeche	from 4 to 8
Colima	from 4 to 8
Coahuila	from 4 to 8
Queretaro	from 4 to 8
Tlaxcala	from 4 to 8

Despite the conflicting numbers, the general consensus is that a large number of kidnappings are never reported. In Mexico, that number is referred to as *la cifra negra*, or the black number. According to the private organization, México Unido

Contra la Delincuencia (Mexico United Against Crime) and other sources, the reasons so few kidnappings are reported are as follows:

1. The fear of angering the kidnapers.
2. The belief that police ineptitude increases the risk to the kidnap victim.
3. The possibility that the police are involved in the crime.<sup>45</sup>
4. The minute probability that reporting the crime will lead to an arrest and conviction makes it seem like an exercise in futility.



México Unido Contra la Delincuencia claims that for every reported kidnapping, there are at least two that go unreported. The newspaper *El Universal* reported that the ratio is 1 to 3 (11/06/1996), whereas another non-governmental organization which manages crime statistics, the Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios sobre la Inseguridad A.C. (ICESI), believes that only 2 out of every

10 are reported. As Human Rights Watch summarized the problem in Mexico:

The criminal justice system routinely fails to provide justice to victims of violent crime and human rights abuses. The causes of this failure are varied and include corruption, inadequate training and resources, and a lack of political will.<sup>46</sup>

This statement is reinforced by the few Mexicans who study kidnapping. The experts agree that although high kidnapping levels are related to high levels of unemployment and a lack of educational and other opportunities, the problem is primarily fueled by the impunity the criminals enjoy. The other important link is organized crime's relationship to kidnapping (as in Italy during the 1980's). Narco-traffickers have found kidnapping to be a quick and easy way to make some cash

<sup>45</sup> Besares, Escobar, Marco Antonio y Gómez Torres, Israel de Jesús. El secuestro: Análisis Dogmático y Criminológico. 3<sup>er</sup> Ed. Porrúa: México, 2003.

En la mayoría de los secuestros en México que no son de fines políticos ni ideológicos, siempre existe algún miembro de la policía activo o retirado, quien conoce el funcionamiento de las actividades de las corporaciones policíacas y quienes participan como cómplices que informan sobre el avance de las investigaciones. (p.23)

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Mexico" <http://www.hrw.org>

when they are not busy moving drugs or are low on money.<sup>47</sup> The lack of reliable information and statistics on kidnappings reflect the lack of political interest and the incompetence of the police and judicial officials. The problem is not in the law, one Mexican author writes, but in the deterioration of the justice system – a justice system characterized by the abuse of power and run by personnel with insufficient preparation and training.<sup>48</sup> This climate of impunity created by the incompetence or outright complicity of the authorities is only worsened by the willingness of the victims' families to acquiesce so easily to the demands of the kidnapers.<sup>49</sup> It is further compounded by the willingness of both the authorities and the media to permit the private treatment of the crime. Mexico has developed the perfect environment for one of the hardest crimes to commit: kidnapping for ransom.

So how does one begin to fix this mess? The first step is to expose it – a role the media is equipped to undertake since governments seldom disclose their failures voluntarily. More exposure will allow kidnapping to receive the political attention it

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<sup>47</sup> Cearly, Anna. "Kidnap fears causing some to leave Tijuana." *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. May 21, 2005. p.A1

Victor Clark Alfaro, director of the Tijuana-based Binacional Center of Human Rights, said more kidnappings have occurred over the past few years, mainly because drug trafficking groups are finding kidnapping to be a relatively easy way to earn quick cash. "It's a way to finance their activities," Alfaro said.

<sup>48</sup> Jiménez Ornelas, René A. e Islas de González Mariscal, Olga. El secuestro: Problemas sociales y jurídicos. UNAM: México 2002.

- No queda duda que los altos índices de desempleo, la pobreza en la que se encuentra gran parte de la población, la falta de oportunidades, de educación, salud, etcétera, dan cuenta sólo de una parte del fenómeno al que nos referimos. En el otro extremo se encuentra la impunidad con la que se han manejado los secuestros, la falta de interés e incapacidad de las autoridades y sobre todo, la falta de información y cifras confiables. (p.47)
- El problema –debe subrayarse—no es de leyes. El problema radica en el deteriorado sistema de justicia en que se ha caído. En él tienen su asiento el abuso de poder, la deficiente preparación del personal (policía y Ministerio Público) y, sobre todo, la impunidad. (p.54)
- La impunidad ha alcanzado índices desmedidos que fomentan la actividad delictiva y, lo más grave: cancelan la justicia. Los delincuentes son capturados en muy escaso número y, cuando por excepción se les captura, el Ministerio Público no aporta las pruebas adecuadas. Esta situación es de todas conocidas. (p.54)

<sup>49</sup> Besares. [El secuestro] se ha incrementado a raíz de que los delincuentes lo consideran poco riesgoso y los familiares de las víctimas acceden fácilmente a las peticiones. Esto ocasiona que este delito, lejos de ser erradicado, se fomente, ya que permite a la delincuencia apoderarse de grandes sumas de dinero. (pp.18-19)

- Muchas entidades oficiales no quieren reconocer las verdaderas cifras sobre ese fenómeno, ya que resulta sumamente difícil aceptar estos niveles de inseguridad que en nuestro país prevalecen, lo que determina y evidencia un alto nivel de impunidad. (p.22)



deserves, and erode the current favorable climate. More exposure will also provide the data needed to develop viable solutions to cure Mexico's kidnapping ailment. There are plenty of ideas being traded; unfortunately, the data with which to test these hypotheses is scarce:

1) Some believe that kidnapping has to be actively fought. The current passive policy of not acting until the crime is reported by the family gives the kidnapers too much freedom, since families rarely report the crime due to the perceived dangers.<sup>50</sup>

2) Some believe a revamped and better publicized witness protection system is needed.

3) Some believe that the prison system needs to be overhauled since it is the university where the art of kidnapping is learned and perfected.<sup>51</sup>

4) Some believe that police corruption is the main obstacle.

5) Some believe that tougher punishments need to be imposed.

Although every self-proclaimed expert has a theory, one of the most interesting statements, and one that should motivate those who want to actively fight this crime, is that to attack the kidnapping industry is to attack the roots of Mexico's security problems.

To attack the "kidnapping industry" due to its implications and because it is a limitless source of resources for criminals and their associates is to attack the foundation itself of crime and corruption. Now is the time to go after this industry, if we do not wish to succumb to Colombia's present condition.<sup>52</sup>

As kidnappings disappear, so will many other crimes. After all, corruption and impunity allow more than just kidnappings to flourish. The following crime pyramid, published by the Secretario de Seguridad Público Federal (the Federal Office of Public Security) demonstrates that kidnapping is the most evolved crime in Mexico.

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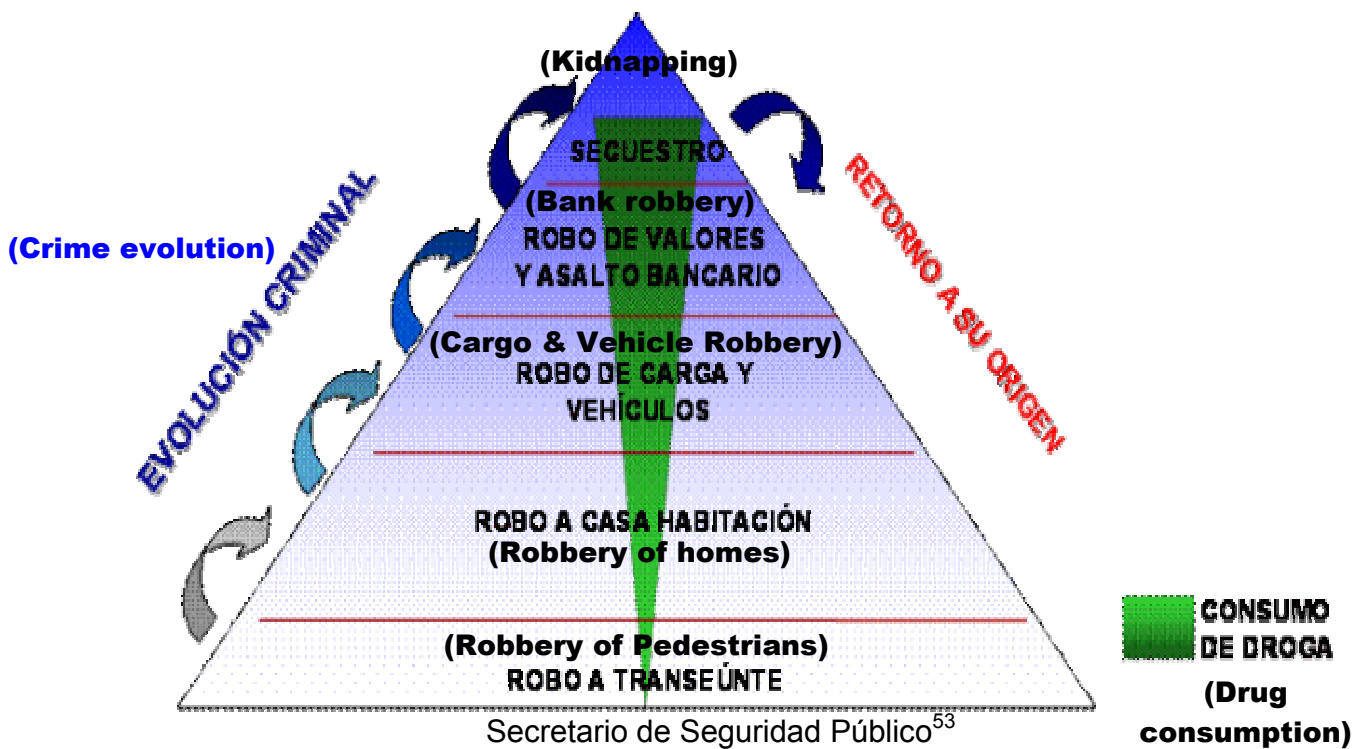
<sup>50</sup> Almazan, Alejandro. "Coincide tipo de secuestros." Reforma. Mexico City, 12 Jan, 1996. p.4

<sup>51</sup> Besares, p.22. "Este incremento en las cifras se debe en gran parte a que las prisiones mexicanas se están convirtiendo en escuelas del secuestro."

<sup>52</sup> Jiménez, pp.47-48

Atacar a la "industria del secuestro" por las implicaciones y por ser una fuente inagotable de recursos para los criminales y socios es atacar la base misma de la inseguridad y corrupción. Es momento de detener esta industria, si no queremos caer en las realidades colombianas.

Changing the climate of silence that engenders kidnapping will help the country rid itself of its most talented and violent criminals. These are the crime experts; nearly all kidnapers have served jail time and are past the point of rehabilitation. The diagram also shows a correlation between crime and drug use: the more violent the crime, the higher levels of drug addiction can be found among the criminals.



<sup>53</sup> Medina-Mora, Eduardo. "Ejes de la Política Contra la Inseguridad 2005-2006." *Conferencia de Prensa de Secretario de Seguridad Pública*. Los Pinos, Nov. 28, 2005. [http://www.ssp.gob.mx/application?pageid=pfp\\_sub\\_2&docId=4957](http://www.ssp.gob.mx/application?pageid=pfp_sub_2&docId=4957)

## CHAPTER 4

### Economic and Political Impact of Kidnapping

Democracy is more than elections; it is also a relationship between the State and the citizens guaranteed by the rule of law.<sup>54</sup> Security is the foundation of the rule of law; insecurity therefore erodes the quality of a democracy and prohibits prosperity. Insecurity will eventually lead to political instability. Society's need for security should encourage the media to place kidnapping on the public agenda. In a country that has a large segment of its population living on less than two dollars a day, it is surprising to see surveys and polls that place insecurity as the number one concern for the general population. A national survey conducted in October of 2005, placed "lack of security" as the number one issue for 29% of the population, whereas poverty only concerned 12% and unemployment 13%. In the Mexico City sample the numbers were even more drastic - 42% considered lack of security the nation's number one issue.<sup>55</sup> *Consulta Mitofsky*, a well respected polling firm based in Mexico City reported in November of 2005 that, "For the first time in 6 years, the country's principal problem, as perceived by Mexicans, is not the economy; in this occasion it is lack of security."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> O'Donnell, Guillermo, 1997-2002, "Las poliarquías y la (in)efectividad de la ley en América latina", en La (in)efectividad de la ley y la exclusión en América Latina, Méndez, Juan, Guillermo O'Donnell y Paulo Pinheiro (Editores), Paidós, Buenos Aires, p.331

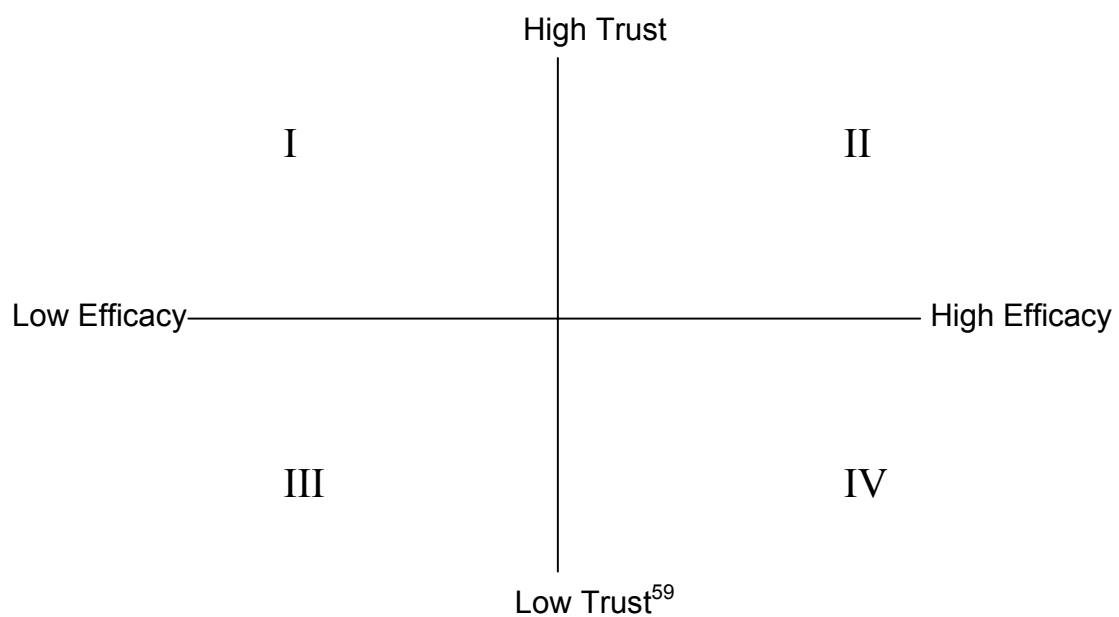
La democracia no es sólo un régimen político (poliárquico) sino también un modo particular de relación entre el Estado y los ciudadanos y entre los ciudadanos mismos, *bajo una forma de imperio de la ley* que, junto con la ciudadanía política, sostiene la ciudadanía civil y una red completa de contralores.

<sup>55</sup> Encuesta Panel México 2006, conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with *Grupo Reforma* conducted October 2005. <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/mexico06>

<sup>56</sup> Consulta Mitofsky. "Estudio de Opinión: ¿Cómo se siente el Mexicano?" México, D.F., Nov. 2005. [http://www.consulta.com.mx/interiores/99\\_pdfs/12\\_mexicanos\\_pdf/mxc\\_NA051120\\_ComoSeSienteMexicano.pdf](http://www.consulta.com.mx/interiores/99_pdfs/12_mexicanos_pdf/mxc_NA051120_ComoSeSienteMexicano.pdf)

Por primera vez en 6 años, el principal problema que los mexicanos perciben no es la economía, en esta ocasión es la inseguridad.

Stability in a free country depends on a relationship between the governors and the governed. The two most important variables of this relationship are trust and efficacy. “Trust relates to an assessment of government output, and efficacy relates to the consequences of one’s input.”<sup>57</sup> Citizens with high trust are satisfied with the government’s handling of the issues while those with low trust experience political cynicism. As trust goes down, researchers have found that citizens become less willing to pay their taxes, less willing to go into government, and less willing to voluntarily comply with the law.<sup>58</sup> Efficacy, in contrast, is a belief in the citizen’s ability to influence governmental decisions. Low efficacy is associated with political apathy whereas high efficacy is associated with political activism. The key to political stability is how both of these variables interact with each other.



<sup>57</sup> Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. American Public Opinion. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Longman: NY, 2003. p.155

<sup>58</sup> Nye, Joseph S. “The Decline of Confidence in Government.” In Why People Don’t Trust Government, eds. Joseph S. Nye, Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997.

<sup>59</sup> Erikson, p.161-162.

I: Citizens in this quadrant are characterized by high trust and low efficacy. They are loyal subjects who rarely participate but believe that government will act responsibly and look out for their personal interests.

II: Citizens in this quadrant are characterized by high trust and high efficacy. These are the ideal democratic citizens; they combine a positive outlook of the government with political attentiveness and involvement – but always within the limits of accepted social convention.

III: Citizens in this quadrant are characterized by low trust and low efficacy. They represent the awful combination of cynicism and hopelessness. They are hostile, suspicious, and mistrustful of government but lack the self-confidence to take action.

IV: Citizens in this quadrant are characterized by low trust and high efficacy. This is the most explosive group because they can be mobilized for political activity and are willing to resort to violence. They do not feel the need to operate within the established “rules of the game” since they do not believe that the system is just.

This chart is relevant to the topic of kidnapping because kidnapping is a crime that has a high impact on the community. It is one thing to have a fear of having your hubcaps or car stereo stolen, it is altogether different to live fearing that a loved one may be whisked away, held for ransom, and dismembered in order to pressure you to empty your savings accounts. The fear of out of control kidnapping rates, added to an already cynical society could easily push a number of citizens into category IV. Mexico, historically, has struggled to maintain democratic stability; simply defined as regular elections coupled with allowing the elected official to complete their term. After its independence from Spain, it experienced a century of chaos only seeing order restored by strong-men or caudillos.

Then, after a revolution to free Mexicans from the authoritarian rule of Porfirio Díaz, a political system emerged that was even more centralized and authoritarian. While the government claimed to be democratic and indoctrinated its people to rejoice in the freedoms the Revolution had achieved for them, the ruling party acted anything but democratically. Here are some quotes from the works of a few renowned

Mexican political writers which demonstrate how the previous regime (1929-2000) did not foster an environment of trust between itself and the citizens of Mexico:

- In this manner, the [Mexican] Revolution which began as a movement rejecting authoritarian rule and anti-democratic behavior led to a State even more powerful than the one it overthrew.<sup>60</sup>
- The ideology of the Party [the PRI which emerged after the Mexican Revolution and ruled the country until the year 2000] was marked by an important number of contradictions...Neither the thesis of the Party nor the discourses of its leaders ever corresponded with the actual actions taken by the organization.<sup>61</sup>
- Presidentialism “a la Mexicana” was sustained by an authoritarian and unrepresentative leader that subordinated all the other powers of the Union [the legislative and judicial powers], making nonexistent the autonomy of the States of the Federation and even the municipalities, and more importantly, making the rule of law impossible. The Mexican presidential system developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century with great pragmatism, in such a manner that the unwritten rules superseded the written laws derived from the constitution.<sup>62</sup>

Mexican society, during the last seventy years, has experienced a different reality than the one it had been promised after the Revolution. This continued even into the 1990s when President Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) proclaimed that Mexico had entered into the First World; its Third World status was a thing of past. The euphoria

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<sup>60</sup> Loaeza, Soledad. El Partido Acción Nacional: la larga macha, 1939-1994, Oposición leal y partido de protesta. Fondo de Cultura Económica: México, 1999, p.59

De esta manera, la Revolución que se inició como un movimiento de rechazo al autoritarismo y la antidemocracia condujo a un Estado mucho más poderoso que el que había destruido.

<sup>61</sup> Garrido, Luis Javier. El Partido de la Revolución Institucionalizada (Medio Siglo de Poder Político en México). Siglo XXI: México, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., 1984, p.299

La ideología del Partido fue marcada por un número importante de contradicciones...Ni las tesis del Partido ni los discursos de sus dirigentes correspondieron jamás a la acción real de la organización.

<sup>62</sup> Borjas Benavente, Adriana. Partido de la Revolución Democrática. Estructura, organización interna y desempeño público: 1989-2003. Tomo I. Editorial Del Valle: México, 2003, p.91

El presidencialismo <a la mexicana> se sustentó en un poder autoritario y no representativo que subordinó a los otros dos poderes de la Unión, tornando inexistentes de hecho la autonomía de los Estados de la Federación y de los Municipios y, lo que fue más grave, haciendo inviable el Estado de Derecho. El <sistema> presidencialista mexicano se desarrolló a lo largo del siglo XX con un gran pragmatismo, de tal manera que sus reglas <no escritas> se fueron anteponiendo a las leyes escritas derivadas del régimen constitucional.

from the announcement remained high until the peso crash of 1994. Mexican wages tell the story when compared to those of the United States.

In 1980 the average hourly compensation of a Mexican manufacturing worker was 22% of a comparable American worker – by 1996 it dropped to 8%. The average hourly wage for a US production worker was \$17.74 while a similar Mexican worker earned \$1.50.<sup>63</sup>

This reduction of wages made the President's claim ludicrous and once again gave the Mexicans another reason to be cynical towards their government. If so few Mexicans can trust their rulers, how does one explain the stability that Mexico has enjoyed since 1929? It can be argued that culturally, the Aztec and the Spanish influence created an expectation for authoritarianism.

Rule by the people for the people had been notably absent in Mexico. Instead, from the age of the Aztec emperors to the Spanish conquest of 1521, through three centuries of colonial rule, to the nineteenth-century era of civil strife and foreign intervention, through the thirty-year dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz and its overthrow in the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the country's political life has been dominated by gyrations between anarchy and authoritarianism, between the rise of local diversity and the imposition of central power, between revolutionaries and dictators. Mexicans had too often advanced their aspirations, whether for economic enfranchisement or political rights, only when they resorted to armed resistance and rebellion. Their progress was curbed time and again by mighty leaders who arose amid disarray to reinstate oppressive order.<sup>64</sup>

Although the ruling PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) was coercive it was less repressive when compared to other authoritarian regimes of the last century. It cannot be forgotten, though, that many Mexicans did perish struggling against the PRI's authoritarianism – such cases include the 1968 student massacre, the “Dirty War” of the 1970's, and more than a hundred members of the opposition party (PRD) during the presidency of Salinas de Gortari. The PRI, like Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship, did provide the country with a long period of stability, allowing Mexico to modernize.

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<sup>63</sup> Preston, Julia y Samuel Dillon. Opening Mexico. Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, p.474

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, pp.38-39

At the same time, it also suppressed many of the freedoms needed for the civil society to fully mature. In fact, Mexican civil society was suffocated and discouraged from organizing itself while the economy never developed the competitiveness required for the global economy due to the protectionism fueled by the ideology of nationalism which the PRI used to maintain control. The media did not escape the influence of authoritarian rule either. It continues to carry habits developed during decades of government manipulation even after its recent emancipation. In my assessment, some of these old habits continue to influence the current reporting attitudes surrounding kidnapping.

Further proof of a strained relationship between the government and the governed can be found in recent examples of large segments of the population moving into category IV. One of these examples is the rebel group, EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de la Liberación Nacional). This indigenous group from the southern state of Chiapas, took up arms in 1994 to create an independent territory for themselves. Feeling abandoned by the central government, the local indigenous groups felt that there was no other means to improve their condition than by resorting to armed conflict in order for their plight to gain international recognition. International pressure on Mexico, they knew, would force the government to address their deplorable situation. Another ongoing and important category IV population is the migrants who flee to the United States. They risk their lives to seek opportunities they feel their own inefficient government will never be capable of providing. Both of the above mentioned groups not only show their distrust caused by the government's failure to improve their sordid condition, but also a willingness to cross the boundary of legality.

*Latinobarometer* surveys also point to a citizenry with low trust and efficacy. Mexicans, the survey noted, have been losing confidence in their democratic institutions over the past few years. Only 52% of Mexicans surveyed in 2004 believed that their vote could influence the future of the country. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 signifying that the government can't even make the society obey one law and 10 signifying that the government ensures all laws are followed, Mexicans rated their government a 4.78. Only 28% felt the government was winning the war against crime. The most troubling statistics relate to the low trust Mexicans have in the

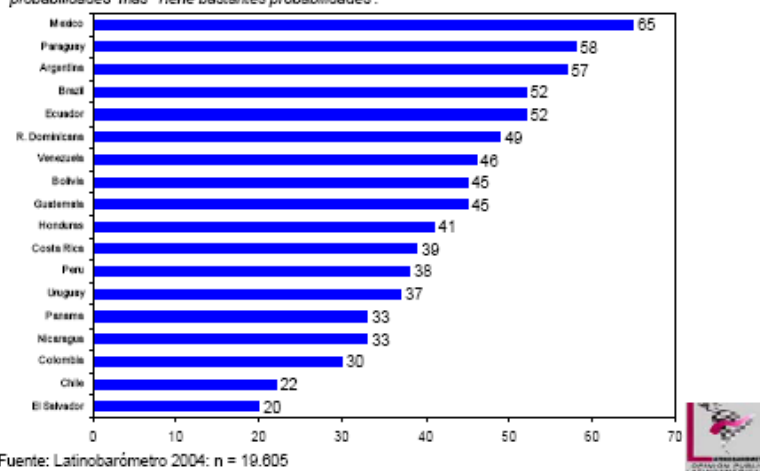


integrity of their government officials. Sixty-five percent believe it is easy to bribe the police in order to escape detention and 58% believe it is possible to bribe a judge to ensure a favorable sentence. In the following diagrams, one can observe that the Mexican judicial system is perceived as the most corrupt in Latin America.

### PROBABILIDAD DE SOBORNAR A UN POLICÍA

TOTALES POR PAÍS 2004

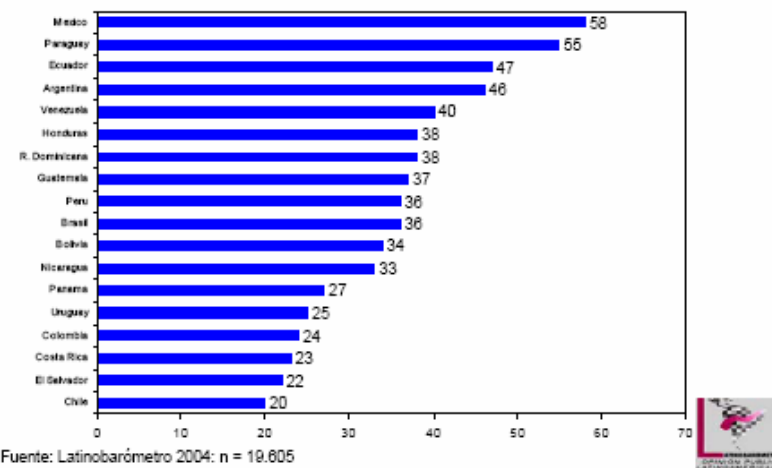
P. Imagine que un amigo suyo extranjero, que no conoce nuestro país, le preguntara qué probabilidades hay aquí de poder sobornar a Policías para evitar una detención ¿Qué le diría Ud.? \*Aquí sólo Tiene muchas probabilidades\* más Tiene bastantes probabilidades\*.



### PROBABILIDAD DE SOBORNAR A UN JUEZ

TOTALES POR PAÍS 2004

P. Imagine que un amigo suyo extranjero, que no conoce nuestro país, le preguntara qué probabilidades hay aquí de poder sobornar a un juez para conseguir una sentencia favorable? ¿Qué le diría Ud.? \*Aquí sólo Tiene muchas probabilidades\* más Tiene bastantes probabilidades\*.



It is no wonder that organizations such as the Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios Sobre la Inseguridad (ICESI) believe that 90% of crimes go unreported.<sup>65</sup> However, a graver danger caused by the perceived failure of the government to establish law and order is the weakening of democratic ideals. In the same *Latinobarometer* survey, analysts claim that Latin Americans crave order so much that they are willing to trade part of their liberties to obtain it, and if need be, trade a democratic regime for a more authoritarian one – a situation fertile for the rise of the ever returning caudillo (dictator).<sup>66</sup> Forty-eight percent of Mexicans would forfeit some of their freedoms to live in a more orderly society while only 46% think it is more important to respect everyone's rights and liberties instead. Fifty-four percent agree with the statement that a more authoritarian government, when it comes to establishing order, would be welcome.

Another indicator of a lack of trust in the government, and possibly a predictor of things to come, was the lynching which occurred in Tláhuac on November 23, 2004. A borough of Mexico City, Tláhuac was the scene of mob violence as the citizens took the responsibility of securing the neighborhood themselves after hearing a rumor that child kidnapers were suspiciously roaming about their neighborhood. Unlike other lynchings, which are not rare occurrences in Mexico according to the renowned author Carlos Monsivaís,<sup>67</sup> this one was aired on the major television networks. Somehow the media arrived well before the police. Undercover federal agents, who were casing an elementary school (Popol Vuh de San Juan Ixtayopan) for suspected

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<sup>65</sup> Instituto Ciudadano de Estudios Sobre la Inseguridad. <http://www.icesi.org.mx>  
En casi la mitad de las entidades del país los delitos no reconocidos en la estadística oficial superan el 90%.

<sup>66</sup> Latinobarómetro 2004. Informe – Resumen. <http://www.purochile.org/inf2004l.pdf>  
La base del autoritarismo político en América Latina esta sin duda en esta demanda de orden o autoritarismo social, donde la población prefiere orden en vez de libertades. No hay que olvidarse de ello al analizar las contradicciones de la región y al analizar la demanda de mano dura, que no es otra cosa que la expresión política de esa demanda de orden que va mucho más allá de la política. Se refiere a la jerarquía piramidal, a las estructuras sociales, a la aceptación de los cambios, a la velocidad de evolución que están influenciadas por esta importante presencia del orden en las sociedades latinoamericanas. p.13

<sup>67</sup> Monsivaís, Carlos. “Que esta vez sí detengan a Fuenteovejuna.” *Proceso*. No. 1465, 28 Nov. 2004, p.6-11. “Los linchamientos de ese tiempo no son escasos. Según Francisco Vidal (*Reforma*, 12 de septiembre), entre septiembre de 1995 y agosto de 1996 hay 26 personas rescatadas de los intentos de linchamiento y 21 asesinatos, 8 en Oaxaca y el resto en Chiapas, Tlaxcala, Morelos, Nayarit, Puebla, Estado de México, Durango y el Distrito Federal. Según diputados del PAN y del PRD, se registran más de 30 linchamientos en 1996 (*Excélsior*, 10 de septiembre). Pero la diferencia entre los demás y el de Tlaxcala es, como en otros casos, la presencia de video.”

drug dealers, were suddenly wrenched from their vehicle, beaten to near-death, doused with gasoline, and set on fire by the residents of the community who felt threatened by their suspicious behavior. The residents, it seems, came to believe that these suspicious fellows snooping around the local school and taking pictures were kidnapers, not undercover agents. This massacre is a classic example of citizens moving from Category III to IV because of low trust in the judicial system. Unlike the rich who can purchase armored cars, high-tech security systems and armed escorts (or as a last resort move outside the country), the poorer classes feel a greater sense of helplessness when the government no longer provides adequate security. With the democratization of economic kidnappings and the increase in violence associated with kidnapping (rise in deaths, rapes, and dismembered body parts), all classes are now beginning to feel vulnerable. The middle and lower classes, which do not have an alternative means to compensate for the lack of security, will begin to release their frustrations by other means - if the elite cannot improve the system, how much less the common citizen.

Mexican society has expressed its preoccupation with the rising lack of public security. Crimes which disturb the public peace and social tranquility are committed daily. When these crimes go unresolved and the criminals continue to roam freely, the rule of law is shattered and the society loses its trust in the institutions responsible for making justice prevail.<sup>68</sup>

Today, Mexican society is losing its trust in the government, partly due to the government's failure to modernize the economy but mostly due to its failure to adequately protect its citizens. An article in *Proceso*<sup>69</sup> magazine cited a survey which demonstrates that the poorer classes experience more fear than the rich in México. Ninety-five percent believe it is more urgent to construct security booths than health centers, schools or street lights; 70% have a fear of gangs; and 50% have a fear of

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<sup>68</sup> Besares, p.109.

La sociedad mexicana ha expresado su preocupación por la creciente inseguridad pública. A diario se cometen ilícitos que perturban la paz pública y la tranquilidad social. Cuando estos delitos no se resuelven y los agravios quedan impunes, se quebranta el estado de derecho y la sociedad pierde confianza en las instituciones encargadas de hacer prevalecer la justicia.

<sup>69</sup> Mejía Madrid, Fabrizio. "México Violento: El miedo considerado como una de las bellas artes." *Proceso*. No.1469. 26 Dic. 2004, pp.6-8

being robbed while walking down the street. Poor neighborhoods are controlled by thugs, who monopolize the violence in their “territory” like a state within a state. The same article also reveals a striking chain of impunity: of every 100 crimes in the country, only 34 are reported to some type of authority. Of these, only 64% are ever brought before a magistrate (Ministerio Público who has the power to initiate an investigation). Only 76% are recorded by the magistrate in order to allow further action. Forty-five percent of the few remaining “officially reported” crimes result in no action. In 23% of these cases the judge decides to drop the case, another 17% are stuck in the bureaucratic paper shuffle, and only 11% result in the apprehension of a suspect. Doing the math, one can ascertain that only 3% of crimes in Mexico ever result in the apprehension of a suspect. The justice system does not work, claims the article, it only serves the rich, the powerful, and the influential. The common citizen is condemned to live in a community ruled by the most powerful thug. Fifty percent of those surveyed agreed that reporting a crime is useless because the police will be bribed anyways – 70% opined the same of judges. The evidence, unfortunately, doesn’t disagree with the perceptions.

According to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, security and a certain level of economic well-being are some of the most basic human needs.<sup>70</sup> Unsatisfied basic needs leads people to throw legality aside, crossing into Category IV, and thus endangering the fabric of Mexico’s democratic form of government. Not surprisingly, almost one third of the Mexicans polled by *Consulta Mitofsky* in 2005 agreed that citizens taking justice into their own

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<sup>70</sup> In Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the Basic needs are located at the bottom of the pyramid. The need for security is the closest to the survival needs. It is no wonder the poor demand security over better schools, clinics, and infrastructure.



### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

hands is a viable solution for combating the security problem facing the country. Eighty-five percent wanted more police roadblocks in order to search vehicles, and 74% wanted to incorporate more military units into the police force. Ninety four percent thought tougher punishments should help, and 68% would like to see Mexico re-instate the death penalty.<sup>71</sup>

A further analysis of the 2005 National Survey on Insecurity conducted by INEGI (the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information) reveals that twelve out of thirty-two states have a majority of citizens over 18 years of age who feel unprotected. Instead of the majority of the adult citizens having a perception of relative safety, these twelve states have a majority who feel they live in a perpetual state of danger. Not surprisingly, the three states that have the highest perceptions of insecurity (Distrito Federal, Mexico, and Sinaloa) are notorious for kidnappings. The most shocking statistic comes from the nation's capitol, where only 13% of those surveyed enjoy a feeling of security while 86% feel they are in danger. Sinaloa,

<sup>71</sup> Consulta Mitofsky. "Estudio de Opinión: Delincuencia en México." México, D.F., Nov. 2005. [http://www.consulta.com.mx/interiores/99\\_pdfs/12\\_mexicanos\\_pdf/20051016\\_Delincuencia%20en%20Mexico.pdf](http://www.consulta.com.mx/interiores/99_pdfs/12_mexicanos_pdf/20051016_Delincuencia%20en%20Mexico.pdf)

which boasts rural towns that thrive on the kidnapping industry, also has a large population which feels unprotected (73%). It is only logical that a correlation exists between high incidences of kidnapping and high feelings of vulnerability in the citizenry. How can a government foster trust and efficacy when it cannot meet its citizen's basic human needs?

<b>STATE</b>	<b>% feel safe</b>	<b>% feel in danger</b>
Baja California	37	62
Chihuahua	39	57
Jalisco	45	53
México	27	71
Michoacán	47	49
Morelos	43	56
Puebla	43	56
Quintana Roo	38	58
Sinaloa	24	73
Tabasco	43	56
Tamaulipas	41	56
Distrito Federal	13	86

Analysis of the INEGI. *Encuesta Nacional Sobre Inseguridad, 2005.*

The other threat to stability briefly worth mentioning is the effect high crime rates have on Mexico's fragile economy. Leaders of two important Mexican business groups (Coparmex and Consejo Coordinador Empresarial) recently warned that the high incidence of violent crime is scaring away investment and impedes economic growth. Alberto Nuñez, president of Coparmex affirmed that while China and other countries have advanced in these matters, Mexico continues to lose investors due to its inability to provide a reasonable level of security. José Luis Barraza, leader of the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial added, "The application of the rule of law is a topic that directly affects investment, economic growth, and consequently job creation."<sup>72</sup> As the political scientist Joseph Raz points out, stability and the rule of law are

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<sup>72</sup> Meré, Dayna. "Exige IP acciones contra el narco." *El Norte*. 16 Feb 2006, p.1

essential for allowing people to make long term decisions.<sup>73</sup> Investors need to trust that their investments will be secure in the long term for them to take financial risks in the short term. Guillermo O'Donnell, an Argentinean political scientist, even goes so far as to claim that a weak legal system which fails to protect basic civil rights prohibits the society's ability to act.<sup>74</sup> Without action, there is no vibrant democracy or economy.

The high incidence of kidnappings and other crimes not only damage Mexico's image internationally, but also affect tourism - one of the country's most important industries. Wealthy tourists visiting Mexico City with intentions to invest are forced to hire private security during their stay. In 2002, 8 million tourists visited the capital, of which 2 million were foreigners (75% from the U.S.A.), a number much inferior to previous years. Additionally, the high crime rates have led to the practical disappearance of highway tourism.<sup>75</sup>

The demand for armored cars continues to grow in Mexico, even though it is already a 28 million dollar a year industry. The number of top-flight vehicle armor companies in Mexico City is around 50, almost double the number five years ago.<sup>76</sup> Insurance companies, whose policy premiums soared during the 1990's, now require the use of private security companies. In fact, 345 different security companies can be found in the Mexico City phone books and the industry is projected to grow.<sup>77</sup>

*El Norte* recently broke the story of how the current mayor of Monterrey, Ricardo Canavati, used funds from the public treasury to hire private security for himself and his family for a price of 1.4 million pesos even though he has at his disposal the city's police forces.<sup>78</sup> It would be interesting to know how many other

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<sup>73</sup> Raz, Joseph. "El Estado de Derecho y su virtud", en Estado de Derecho. Concepto, fundamento y democratización en América Latina. Miguel Carbonell, Wistano Orozco y Rodolfo Vázquez (eds.) UNAM/ITAM/Siglo XXI: México, 1977-2002. p.20

<sup>74</sup> O'Donnell, p.334

<sup>75</sup> Góngora Pimental, p.388

<sup>76</sup> "Welcome to Mexico City the new kidnap capital of the World." *The Independent on Sunday*. Sep. 5, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Grillo, Ioan. "Crime exacts toll on nation's firms." *Novedades Editores*. July 8, 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Cepeda, Cesar. "Defienden gasto 'extra': Es más seguro y barato." *El Norte*. Monterrey, Mexico: Feb 21, 2006. pg.1

public officials prefer not to rely on the public security forces they oversee. The general public certainly cannot afford the extra protection offered to the elites. Armoring a sport utility vehicle costs about \$70,000 USD and the cost of providing armed security guards for a family of four is estimated at \$50,000 USD a year.

While certain social classes with resources are assuming the basic role of government – protection – other less fortunate classes seem to have been forgotten. Allowing kidnapping to continue to be treated as a private affair only adds to the collective amnesia. Kidnapping for ransom no longer affects only a small minority of wealthy businessmen and entertainers. It has evolved into a public problem, and must be dealt with, each and every time, as a public issue. This may be the only deterrent for the majority of Mexicans who do not have an abundance of resources from surging towards category IV – where individuals take the law into their own hands.



## CHAPTER 5

### Current News Reporting Policies in Mexico

The following anecdotes demonstrate a wide variety of ways the news media has dealt with kidnapping in the past. The more difficult job is to sort out which example is the norm and which are the exceptions. The difficulty of this task is further compounded by the fact that as news consumers we are only privy to published events. It is difficult to even estimate how many kidnapping stories were silenced for each one published.

On one extreme we have the events of the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 2005 when the two main TV companies (Televisa and Televisión Azteca) televised a staged kidnap rescue and portrayed it as live news coverage. In the raid, special agents rescued three kidnap victims and arrested four kidnappers. Unfortunately, it was a case of the media misleading the public to create a sensational report while the government went along so as to present proof that it was winning the battle against organized crime.<sup>79</sup> The kidnapping of Julio Hirschfield Almada in 1971, often considered the first politically motivated kidnapping, provoked around the clock, minute by minute radio and television coverage. Journalists camped at the front of Hirschfield's residence for the entire 60 hours and 10 minutes of his captivity so that they could be the first to report his safe return.<sup>80</sup> In a lesser known case which occurred in 1992, the kidnappers used two newspapers, *Uno más Uno* and *La Prensa*, to pressure the victim's family into paying a ransom. In this case, the kidnappers delivered letters written by the victim, Jorge Espinosa Mireles, asking his family why they had not yet paid the ransom on the 60<sup>th</sup> day of his captivity. "It saddens me to know that you have abandoned me, that you have decided to sacrifice me, that you are more concerned

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<sup>79</sup> Tuckman, Joe. "Mexico admits hostage rescue was staged for TV: Government says media asked for replant of arrests: Revelation casts doubt on other 'live' events." *The Guardian - International Pages*. London, Feb 16, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Góngora, pp.171-178

about money than my life,” he allegedly wrote.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the letters, the newspapers also published a photograph delivered by the kidnappers, a proof of life, showing the victim holding a recent copy of the newspaper.

On the other extreme, there exists a tendency to mute press coverage of kidnappings. When the father of well-known soccer player Jorge Campo was kidnapped in 1999, the vice-president of his soccer team asked the press to keep quiet. “The best way to help the Campos Navarette family is to keep quiet on this matter; the news media should quit publishing any further stories [reference the kidnapping].”<sup>82</sup> In the kidnapping of the actress Thalia’s sisters, Laura Zapata and Ernestina Sodi in 2002, the family not only asked the media to stay quiet but also asked the investigating government authorities to stay clear of the matter. Thalia’s husband contracted negotiating experts to secure the release of her relatives.<sup>83</sup>

Another interesting anecdote provided by a high-ranking diplomat who wishes to remain anonymous relates to the Mexican writer, Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, who was kidnapped after writing a book exposing the “protectors” of a child prostitution ring. José Kamel Nacif Borge, a rich textile industrialist, was named in the book for having offered protection to a known pedophile, Jean Succar Kuri.<sup>84</sup> Claiming defamation, Nacif Borge used his influence with the governor of Puebla, Mario Marín, to punish Lydia Cacho. However, this extra-legal arrest resembled more a kidnapping and quickly turned into a nightmare for the writer. The victim was taken from a clinic in Cancun where she worked, never permitted to contact a lawyer, nor allowed to take

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.252-254

<sup>82</sup> Benitez, Alejandra. “Piden discreción por el secuestro.” *Reforma*. México, Feb. 20, 1999, p.6  
 Javier Jiménez Espriu, vicepresidente de Pumas, pidió ayer a los medios de comunicación que ya no se hable mas en torno al secuestro del padre de Jorge Campos, ya que comento que la mejor ayuda que se le puede brindar a esta familia, que esta atravesando por momento difícil, es mantener la discreción en todo lo referente al tema. "La mejor forma de ayudar a la familia Campos Navarrete es mantener una enorme tranquilidad en el tema, que ya no se hable mas del asunto en los medios de comunicación", dijo al momento de ingresar a la sala donde se efectúan las conferencias de prensa al termino de cada partido de los Pumas.

<sup>83</sup> Garza, Gabriel. “Anuario, Es el secuestro del año.” *El Norte*. Monterrey, México, Jan. 6, 2003 p.50  
 Al siguiente día la Procuraduría General de Justicia inicio las investigaciones, pero la familia de la cantante pidió a la institución mantenerse al margen. Fuentes de la PGJ revelaron el 29 de septiembre que el esposo de Thalia, el magnate de la música Tommy Mottola, había contratado a expertos para negociar el rescate de sus cunadas.

<sup>84</sup> Sarmiento, Sergio. “Lydia Cacho.” *El Norte*. Monterrey, México: Dec. 19, 2005. p.8

her medicines or use a jacket to protect herself from the cold. Furthermore, she was submitted to what she describes as “psychological torture” during a 20-hour road trip from Cancun to Puebla. The writer claims that the agents led her to believe that the kidnapping could turn into something worse. They alluded to the deaths of other prisoners who had been in their custody, asked her if she knew how to swim because they wanted to “see the ocean by night,” and told her that in prison she would be raped.<sup>85</sup>

In response to a request for help, the diplomat gave the following advice to Lydia Cacho’s friends. “I have no connections or power in that part of Mexico but call the radio stations. Have them continuously broadcast reports of her kidnapping and publicize that the federal authorities, as well as international organizations, have been contacted and are monitoring her situation.” Cacho’s friends followed the diplomat’s advice and Lydia herself gave part of the credit for her survival and eventual release to the broadcasts which she believes made her captors feel more vulnerable. While at first they enjoyed a perception of impunity, after the broadcasts the climate changed.

Which stories best represent the current journalistic trends in Mexico?

To answer this question, I interviewed various news organizations from around Mexico. A more serious study would have to include interviews with more media outlets than the three I had access to. However, interviews may not be the best way to measure current journalistic trends. What editors claim to do may not always reflect reality. After all, no editor would ever admit to passing off a staged rescue as real. Studying all kidnapping stories would not accurately measure journalistic trends either since we are not privy to the reasons editors chose not to publish certain kidnappings (self-censure). What interested me was whether news organizations view kidnapping as a public or private issue.

For the purposes of this work, it is assumed that a newspaper who respects the wishes of the victim’s family to not report the kidnap, views kidnapping as a private issue and tends to underreport this crime. While one which reports the crime

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<sup>85</sup> “Lydia Cacho se declara víctima de un arresto “fabricado.” *El Universal*. Mexico City: Dec 20, 2005.

despite the victim's families wishes, views it as a public issue and tends to be more aggressive in reporting kidnappings.

#### Summary of reporting trends:

News Agency	Has formal kidnap reporting policy	Respect families wishes to not report	Generally feel that reporting endangers victims vs. helps
<i>El Norte</i> Grupo Reforma		X	X
<i>Milenio</i>		X	X
<i>Noroeste</i>	X		

At the entrance of the *El Norte* building in Monterrey, Mexico, is a quote from Grupo Reforma's founder, Alejandro Junco de la Vega. Junco de la Vega founded the first modern independent newspaper in Mexico. The paper has grown since its beginning in 1995 and now consists of *Reforma* in Mexico City, *El Norte* in Monterrey, *El Mural* in Guadalajara, and *Palabra* in Saltillo. In the quote, the founder says:

In the modern world there is no such thing as an isolated journalist. The mission of informing is so great and the interaction of the community so complex, that journalism can only be understood in the light of a systematic process, where the community and the professional journalist form a team.<sup>86</sup>

In light of the kidnapping situation, the best interests of the individual can often be confused with the best interests of the community. Sometimes the needs of the individual represent the needs of the majority, but not always, as we have seen in the *Tragedy of the Commons*. Although a community consists of individuals, at times it is more than the sum of individual interests. Similar to the posture of Mexico's Attorney General, *El Norte* and *Diario Milenio* view kidnapping at the individual level instead of

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<sup>86</sup> En el mundo moderno no hay tal cosa como el periodista aislado. Es tan grande la tarea informativa y compleja la interacción de la comunidad, que el periodismo puede entenderse sólo a la luz de un trabajo organizado, donde la comunidad y el periodista profesional hacen equipo.

the community level. The victim's safety is of the utmost concern to the newspapers and they will follow the wishes of the family if their desire is to keep the matter private. Exceptions include kidnapping cases involving public figures or occurring in public situations. In these cases, the news organization treats the kidnapping as a public event.<sup>87</sup>

*Noroeste*, a newspaper from Sinaloa which is often considered the second major kidnapping center in Mexico after the Federal District, views kidnapping as a public matter and considers it a duty to report the event once confirmed. Aware of the sensitivity of the situation, they have a written code to ensure the journalist does not unnecessarily worsen the ordeal by using adjectives such as "wealthy", by publishing any of the victim's financial information, or by publishing information about the investigation which could somehow benefit the kidnappers. The newspaper firmly believes that reporting kidnapping cases pressures the authorities into action while silence only foments impunity and passiveness on the part of those responsible for the public's security.<sup>88</sup>

As Rodolfo Díaz Fonseca, Editorial Director of the newspaper, explained during an interview,

Foreigners are rarely victims of kidnapping in Mexico because of the difficulty of negotiating with their families, as well as the difficulty foreigners incur trying to import large sums of money into this country. But also, because kidnapping a foreigner raises the impact of the crime and puts international pressure on Mexican security officials hampering the criminal's ability to corrupt the system.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Crespo Ruiz, Edmundo, National Vice-Director. *El Norte – Grupo Reforma*. Personal Interview. Monterrey, México. Feb. 16, 2006 and Sepúlveda Martínez, Javier. Editor of the Metropolitan Section. *Diario Milenio*. Personal Interview. Apr. 6, 2006.

<sup>88</sup> *Noroeste*. "Código Ética." [www.noroeste.com.mx](http://www.noroeste.com.mx)  
Creemos que al hacerse de interés público un secuestro, se genera presión hacia la autoridad a fin de que cumpla con sus obligaciones. De otro modo, **el silencio fomenta la impunidad de los delincuentes y la pasividad de las autoridades responsables de la seguridad ciudadana**. Además, sostenemos que el publicar la noticia de un secuestro no pone en riesgo al secuestrado, pues éste ya está en riesgo desde que ha caído en manos de delincuentes.

<sup>89</sup> Díaz Fonseca, Rodolfo. Editorial Director, *Noroeste* de Culiacán. Personal Interview. Culiacán, México, Mar. 27, 2006.

Los extranjeros son pocas veces víctimas de secuestro en México por la dificultad que tienen los plagiarios para negociar con los familiares, así como la disposición de dinero de la víctima en este país. También porque

Media coverage, especially from influential outlets, hampers acts of corruption and passivity on the part of public security forces. This theory is seconded by Jon French, Mexican director of IPSA – an international security consulting firm - who claims that only about one expatriate, or foreign executive, is kidnapped annually because “kidnapping foreigners attracts more media attention and more police response.”<sup>90</sup> The “old media” tendency for discretion applies to a by-gone era, when kidnappings in Mexico were perpetrated by members of political movements attempting to generate publicity for their cause. Today’s kidnapper seeks no attention, for only then can he operate with ease. Discretion in today’s kidnapping environment is tantamount to aiding and abetting the criminal and the corrupt officials he or she depends on.

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secuestrar a un extranjero eleva el nivel de impacto de delito y mete presión internacional a las autoridades de seguridad mexicanas, lo que les dificulta a los delincuentes sus acciones de corrupción.

<sup>90</sup> Grillo, Ioan. “Crime exacts toll on nation’s firms.” *The News Staff*. July 8, 2002.

## CHAPTER 6

### Responsibility of the Media in Democracy

*The news media are a primary source of the picture in our heads about the vast external world of public affairs that is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind.*

*Walter Lippmann (1922)*

*Although they may not tell us what to think, the media are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.*

*Bernard Cohen (1963)*

During the authoritarian rule of the PRI, the government dictated public opinion by manipulating the press. In fact, its manipulation of public opinion was so skillful that it ensured the people's agenda conformed itself to the president's agenda. Unlike a totalitarian state, the PRI did not eliminate all voices of dissonance, but it did control the limits and the timing of criticism – ensuring that it would never gain popular support.<sup>91</sup> Obviously this is not the democratic way. In a democracy, the media has a greater role to play than being the government's mouth-piece.

In a democracy, the media is referred to as “the fourth power” or as a “watch-dog.” Since politics is associated with the quest for power and thus serves sectarian convictions instead of truth, the press is viewed as fulfilling the role of the impartial referee only concerned with truth and always seeking the good of the whole. Ideally,

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<sup>91</sup> Escobedo, Juan Francisco. “Movilización de opinión pública en México: El caso del Grupo Oaxaca y de La Ley Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública.” I Congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencia Política. Salamanca, España, Julio 2002.

El régimen administró la opinión pública y colonizó de opiniones oficiales el espacio público; sin caer en la tentación de liquidar todas las voces disonantes, pero desplegando selectivamente acciones represivas hacia los interlocutores críticos.

El autoritarismo mexicano desarrolló una extraordinaria capacidad para administrar las vertientes de la opinión pública agregada y para fijar la agenda política del país que fue réplica de la agenda del presidente.

El régimen no toleraba las voces y opiniones que desbordaban los mecanismos y mediaciones adoptadas y reconocidas; pero terminaba admitiéndolas bajo sus propias reglas y tiempo, cuando la movilización social y de opinión pública que lo exigía estaba en reflujó.

truth is the sole pursuit of the journalistic profession, but in reality the profession is constrained by market forces and pressured by interest groups, similar to the politician.

In order for the democratic ideal to be fulfilled, rule by the people for the people, the press has to also serve as a two-way communication link between the people and the government. If the government is to be guided by public opinion, the mass media is the most able conduit. Mass media has three essential functions to execute in a democracy:

- Assist in creating an informed community
- Represent the said community in the public sphere, and
- Assist in setting the political agenda.<sup>92</sup>

Creating an informed community is the most daunting task of a democratic press. News stories are the basic and most widely-used way for the public to learn about current political events.<sup>93</sup> Quality information requires not only the repetition of speeches and the regurgitation of statistics issued by government officials and other leaders, but also analysis and investigation. Low-quality information, generated by one-sided, biased, superficial, or rhetorical reporting, results in low-quality public opinion. “For democratic citizens to be properly informed about public affairs requires that the news media provide a broad balance of information and viewpoints.”<sup>94</sup> The mass-media has the tremendous responsibility of cultivating the relationship between the government and the governed, for a well informed public is equipped to participate and influence government decisions for the better. Each politician, business leader, or interest group in a democracy tries to paint a reality that suits their purposes; a free press, on the other hand, has the responsibility of presenting other viewpoints to enable the citizens to make rational decisions in lieu of emotional ones.

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<sup>92</sup> Joaquín Brunner, José. “Comunicación y Política en la Sociedad Democrática.” Seminario: Políticos y Comunicadores: Interacción y Compromisos. Dic. 14, 1994.

<sup>93</sup> Graber, Doris A. “Media and Opinion Resources: Are the 1990s a New Ball Game?” in Understanding Public Opinion. Eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Congressional Quarterly, Washington D.C., 1997, p.69

<sup>94</sup> Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. American Public Opinion. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Longman: NY 2003.



It has been said that the quality of a democracy depends on the quality of the communication produced within the democracy.<sup>95</sup>

The function of representing the community in the public sphere ensures that the government is not run like a private business. The media not only shapes public opinion by the information they send downward. "Audience members are supposed to send their signals back upward, influencing government behavior with their votes and other actions."<sup>96</sup> Although surveys and polls printed in the media allow politicians to gauge public opinion, politicians are also influenced by the public's actions and investigations published by the press. Furthermore, the mass media represents the community in the public sphere by reporting on the government's actions and decisions. Transparency Laws permit the media to broadcast the conduct of elected officials with the purpose of making them more responsible representatives.

The final function to be discussed in this chapter is the media's role in agenda setting. Simply in its description of the external reality, the news media presents the public with a list of issues it should discuss and develop opinions about.<sup>97</sup> The issues that receive the most attention from the society should, in turn, generate a reaction from the political sphere. For instance, when the press reports on the brutal crime wave in Nuevo Laredo, it leads to public outrage which results in the issue rising to the top of the government agenda. The government is forced into action, it fires corrupt policemen, mobilizes the military, etc. The immigration issue in the United States may be an even better example. The federal government would rather not act due to the divisiveness of the issue, but groups of citizens such as the *Minutemen* and border-state governors, shape public opinion by describing the crisis in the mass media.

When applied to kidnapping, the responsibility of the media is to provide society with quality information. The public is unable to have a coherent opinion

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<sup>95</sup> Klein, Dario. "El papel del periodismo de investigación en la sociedad democrática." *Razón y Palabra*. Núm.22, mayo-julio 2001.

<sup>96</sup> Erikson and Tedin, p.236

<sup>97</sup> Joaquín Brunner.

reference the issue when the cases are treated privately. In fact, the public sphere cannot act when kidnapping is treated privately. The private treatment of kidnapping leads to the current low-quality information we have on kidnapping rates in Mexico. Not only does it prevent a thorough analysis of the subject, it also prevents the issue from reaching the top of the political agenda.

Two recent examples of well-documented cases in which the news media played a key role in affecting political events in Mexico are the passage of the Ley Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública (2002), the equivalent of the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, and the lynching in Tláhuac (2004). The Ley Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública originated with a group of journalists, academics, and members of non-governmental organizations known as the *Grupo Oaxaca*. Three national newspapers played an important role in informing the public about the need for such a law: *La Jornada*, *El Universal*, and *Reforma* (later on more than 50 other newspapers joined the cause). To compete with a flawed version of the law created in the Congress, *El Universal*, and *Reforma* even published the ten most important principles this law should contain on their front pages. This communication link between the *Grupo Oaxaca* and the media created the public support necessary not only for their proposal to get on the national agenda but also to become enacted law.<sup>98</sup> The lynching in Tláhuac, which was discussed in Chapter 4, demonstrates how live coverage of an event produced a chain of reactions inside the government. It is quite obvious that if Tláhuac had been just another un-televised lynching, the Federal Police Commissioner, José Luis Figueroa Cuevas and Mexico City's Security Czar, Marcelo Ebrard, would never have been fired for their mishandling of the situation.

Although there are times when the press feels its responsibility lies in keeping quiet on certain aspects of specific crimes, I would argue that kidnapping does not fall into the same category. Some examples of self-censorship include:

- 1) The media will generally not report the name of rape victims because it

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<sup>98</sup> Escobedo, Juan Francisco. "Movilización de opinión pública en México: El caso del Grupo Oaxaca y de La Ley Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública." *I Congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencia Política*. Salamanca, España, Julio 2002.

and

Villamil, Jenaro. "El proyecto de Grupo Oaxaca, base para el quehacer de los legisladores." *La Jornada*. Apr. 26, 2002. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/04/26/012n2pol.php?origen=politica.html>

makes the decision to report the crime more difficult.

- 2) The media will generally not report the identity of minors implicated in criminal activities in order to provide them a clean slate as adults.
- 3) The media will generally not report incidents that could potentially spark riots against minority groups.
- 4) After the Columbine school shootings in the United States, many media outlets decided not to give front page stories to such incidents because of the “copycat” crimes it provoked in other schools.

It is important to note that the reason behind these self-censorship examples is always the public good – in kidnapping this is not the case. For example, the purpose of not naming rape victims is to make the crime easier to report. The public good is served when it becomes easier for rape victims to come forward and denounce their aggressors. Withholding information on kidnapping cases does absolutely nothing for the public good. It helps the kidnapers remain anonymous and may or may not preserve the victim’s life; meanwhile it only harms the common good by fueling the climate of impunity.

A final implied responsibility of a democratic press is to remain financially independent. It is natural for any organization to be influenced by money, as the proverb goes, “you shouldn’t bite the hand that feeds you.” That is why a press that depends financially on the government or on the donations of a few businesses cannot remain objective. The ideal, of course, is for news media to depend financially on the public. Unfortunately, the ideal, as in most cases, is difficult to achieve. However, the truth is that reporting on ordeals such as kidnappings attract public attention and increases the consumption of news. Because of this, the news does have a tendency to spectacularize events but in kidnapping all the juicy details are already present. By publishing kidnapping stories the news media not only serves the common good, but serves their financial interest. At the time of this writing, a search of the top-ten most visited stories in the *El Norte* website confirms this argument. All ten deal with the Diego Santoy murder case - a teenager in Monterrey who recently

attempted to murder his girlfriend, Erika Peña, after murdering her two younger siblings.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The top-ten most visited stories in [elnorte.com](http://elnorte.com) as of Apr. 28, 2006 were all related to the Santoy case. The stories are: 1) Relata Érika tragedia 2) Doble crimen en Cumbres (fotogalería) 3) Admite Santoy matarlos 4) 'Le dije que Diego iba a matarla' 5) Lloro en comparecencia hermano de Santoy 6) Entre amor, locura...y fotos de Érika 7) Cae Santoy en Oaxaca 8) Sugieren investigar a Érika y a su familia 9) 'Sabe mi hijo lo que le espera' 10) Llega Santoy a NL (fotogalería)

## Conclusion

Can we therefore conclude that there is a public role for the media when it comes to kidnapping in Mexico? Before we answer this question, it is important to recall the uniqueness of the journalistic profession. Unlike most other professions, the journalist serves the public interest instead of the private. It is the media's responsibility to objectively inform the public of those events that affect society. The journalistic profession has no client but the public. Neither the kidnappers nor their victims are its clients. Neither the specialized anti-kidnapping units nor the private negotiators hired by the families are its clients. Journalistic ethics demand that Mexican society as a whole must be the ultimate beneficiary of the media's decisions when it comes to reporting – kidnappings included.

Based on interviews with the editors of two national newspapers (*Diario Milenio* and *El Norte/Grupo Reforma*) we can conclude that there exists a tendency to be overly concerned with the possibility of endangering the victims of kidnappings or somehow interfering in a negative way with the negotiations. Surprisingly, instead of being a “watch-dog” the press often reacts in the same fashion as the authorities when it comes to kidnapping. Both, to the detriment of the public good, too often treat the crime as a private affair. The Mexican authorities will not act on a kidnapping case unless specifically authorized by the family of the victim. For instance, when Rubén Omar Romano, the soccer coach of Cruz Azul, was kidnapped in July of 2005, the authorities refused to act without the explicit authorization of the coach's family.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> McKinley, James C. Jr, “Anger in Mexico as famous coach is kidnapped.” *The New York Times*. July 22, 2005.

Federal agents have given the Romano family advice on how to deal with the ransom demands but are not investigating the case because the family, which lives in Guadalajara, has not lodged a formal complaint, said José Luis Manjarrez Nava, a spokesman for the federal attorney general.

and

Zamora, Ricardo. “Aguarda PGJDF aval de los Romano.” *Reforma*. México, Jul 24, 2005, p.2

La Procuraduría General de Justicia del DF esta lista para investigar sobre el secuestro del director técnico del Cruz Azul, Rubén Omar Romano, pero esperara a que la familia solicite su intervención, informo ayer su titular,

Possibly when kidnapping was only a problem for the elite and executed by professionals it was converted into a private issue. Today kidnapers are taking maximum advantage of this situation. Does treating kidnapping as a private family issue benefit the public? It is true that the family benefits when their loved one is returned safely, but unfortunately that type of behavior only encourages kidnapers to prey on another and another Mexican family. The present climate of impunity depends on the private handling of this crime by the victim's families, the government, and the mass media. This private treatment also allows the government to continually postpone the badly needed police and judicial reforms. Maybe a role for the press could be to make kidnapping a public issue instead of a private one. Similar to *the Tragedy of the Commons* mentioned in the introduction, when it comes to kidnapping, the pursuit of personal interests can adversely affect the interests of society.

If this is the case, the skeptic would reply, how can an editor justify endangering the victim by reporting a kidnapping? Is the loss of one victim's life worth the benefit of reporting it? It has yet to be proven that a link does indeed exist between reporting the crime and endangering the victim. It appears that those who have studied kidnapping the most find that the already high state of peril the victim is experiencing is not worsened by the reporting of the crime. As one Mexican author who studied the evolution of kidnapping in Mexico states, "the number of executions, mutilations or even subsequent intimidations after the kidnapping event are practically equal whether or not the kidnapping was reported to the authorities or not."<sup>101</sup> If anything, the kidnapers may be more careful with the victim now that they have an audience.

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Bernardo Batiz. El procurador capitalino dijo entender la preocupación de la familia del director técnico y por ello no van a realizar ninguna acción específica, hasta no tener la autorización expresa

<sup>101</sup> Góngora, p.387

La causa central por la cual los familiares de las víctimas no denuncian los secuestros es la presunción de que denunciar pone en riesgo la integridad física de los plagiados y que correr semejante riesgo no vale la pena en virtud de la impunidad. Sin embargo, el hecho es que el número de ejecuciones, mutilaciones o bien intimidaciones posteriores al evento del secuestro es prácticamente igual si se denuncia el plagio como si no se denunciara.

The reason this is the case is because economic kidnappings are a business – the kidnapers have to be rational actors if they want to continue their operations. During Laura Zapata’s captivity (the sister of the famous Mexican actress Thalia) one of her captors attempted to comfort her by saying, “Don’t worry. We’ll take care of you. This is just business.”<sup>102</sup> If Mexican society, through media reporting, is also paying close attention to the treatment of the victim by the kidnapers, the kidnapers’ actions become even more restricted. If their victims die, less people will be likely to pay ransoms in the future and more victims will likely fight to the death attempting to escape – and murder carries larger costs with zero benefits for the kidnapers. Although some analysts may disagree, claiming that the emerging kidnapping gangs are “less business oriented and more emotional than their predecessors and, as a result, more violent,”<sup>103</sup> there is no evidence to suggest that the victim’s fate is worse if their case appears in the news. There are plenty of cases where the family has followed all the directions set forth by the kidnapers, delivered the requested ransom promptly, and still could not prevent the brutal slaying of their loved one.

As this thesis is being written, in Mexico City, Miranda Wallace, a mother of a now dead kidnapped victim is offering a reward for any information leading to the arrest of her son’s kidnapers. Although too late for her own son, she is leading a campaign against the environment of impunity that will only allow the same misfortune to affect more and more Mexican mothers. While her reward is an attempt to foster a climate of reporting criminals instead of looking the other way, she can only succeed if the media covers her story properly.<sup>104</sup> Yet media viewers would be even

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<sup>102</sup> Lloyd, Marion. “Mexican actress portrays own kidnapping; Laura Zapata says she hopes to educate as well as entertain audience.” *Houston Chronicle*. Jan. 22, 2006.

<sup>103</sup> “Welcome to Mexico City the new kidnap capital of the World.” *The Independent on Sunday*. Sep. 5, 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Bolaños, Angel y Agustin Salgado. “Defiende Encinas derecho de madre a dar recompensa.” *La Jornada*. México, Feb. 24, 2006.

“Lo que ella hace es llamar la atención de los medios de comunicación, lo está logrando con bastante eficacia, entonces, será en la medida en la que los medios de comunicación saquen ese cartel, ya sea en la televisión o en los periódicos, para que mucha gente pueda ubicar a esta persona y se le pueda detener”. Encinas y Ortega coincidieron en señalar que es necesario establecer caminos de colaboración y coordinación con la sociedad que ayuden a fomentar la denuncia de los delitos, al tiempo que se trabaja en coordinación con las autoridades federales para dismantelar a las bandas del crimen organizado dedicadas a cometer delitos como el secuestro, lo

more attentive to the issues if the victim's fate was still hanging in the balance. The right time for the media to gain the attention of the public is during the event itself. Bringing attention to kidnapping through the media is not a new idea, the Nobel Prize winning Colombian author, Gabriel García Márquez wrote a book about a famous kidnapping incident in order that the heinous event may not be forgotten. For only when condemned publicly, the author realized, the events of the book have a chance of never being repeated.<sup>105</sup> In Mexico, the kidnapping problem will continue until a proper communication link is created between society and those responsible for protecting it. The media can help create that link. The success of the government with regards to the problem of kidnapping hinges on its communication with the society it serves. In the same manner, impunity reigns as long as these communication lines are severed.

While political kidnapers benefit from ample news coverage, the opposite is true for economic kidnapers. When a kidnapping group becomes too notorious (as in the case of the Arizmendi gang [1996-1998] or the Caltri gang [2000]) they get to the top of the criminal agenda for the Mexican government. The Mexican experience clearly demonstrates that when a kidnapping gang gets to the top of the agenda, they end up behind bars. There is absolutely no advantage to being a famous kidnapper – one cannot end up a martyr if one has no higher cause than money. Anonymity is what Mexican kidnapers thrive on. Returning to the kidnapping case of Rubén Omar Romano, a search in Pro-Quest of only three Mexican newspapers, *Reforma*, *El Universal*, and *El Economista* reveals that his case was mentioned 239 times during his 64 days of captivity. The result: the Agencia Federal de Investigaciones (AFI) rescued him and arrested seven of the kidnapers.<sup>106</sup> Why should this type of reporting and attention only be used for the rich and famous?

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cual, aclaró el jefe de Gobierno, no se trata de "pasarle la bolita a nadie", sino de reconocer la necesidad de la concurrencia de los distintos niveles de gobierno.

<sup>105</sup> García Márquez, Gabriel. *Noticia de un secuestro*. Editorial Diana: México, 1996, p.8  
 ...que no quedara en el olvido este drama bestial, que por desgracia es sólo un episodio del holocausto bíblico en que Colombia se consume desde hace más de veinte años. A todos ellos lo dedico, y con ellos a todos los colombianos – inocentes y culpables – con la esperanza de que nunca más no suceda este libro.

<sup>106</sup> Anónimo. "El desafío de los reclusorios." *El Universal*. Mexico City, Mexico: Sep 23,2005.



The other role that the press can assume is the education of the public. Many Mexicans continue to believe that going to the authorities and the press only further endangers the victim – they continue to believe the threats of the kidnappers who tell them that “we will kill your loved one if you tell anyone.” This debate should be a public one – the press being the perfect forum for such a debate. We have seen that the evolution of kidnapping in Mexico has produced many unprofessional kidnapping gangs while the creation of the AFI has produced more professional anti-kidnapping units. The AFI claims that on average, families of kidnap victims now only pay 6% of the initially demanded ransom – a lower average than previous years. The likelihood of the victim being returned alive is increasing. The amount of time the victim is being detained is decreasing. The occurrence of the same family being victimized more than once is diminishing. In 2003, the AFI disbanded 19 kidnapping gangs and arrested 114 suspected kidnappers – its success rates are rising.<sup>107</sup> However, once again, it is hard to verify success when there are no accurate national statistics to measure the size of the problem.

At the local and municipal level, however, few police forces have the capacity to intervene in kidnapping cases – and when they attempt to, the results are often disastrous. As one frustrated citizen exclaimed to *Reforma*, “We are asked to report kidnappings, but when we do, the police don’t know what to do. This results in the criminals discovering that the police are after them and therefore provokes them into killing our family members.”<sup>108</sup> This is another issue that must be addressed. Perhaps, as the Fox government has tried to legislate, the crime of kidnapping needs to be elevated to a federal crime until state and local police forces have the capacity to effectively resolve these cases.

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<sup>107</sup> Innovación y Calidad Gubernamental. “Agencia Federal de Investigación de la Procuraduría General de la República, PGR. Premio Innova 2003. Nov. 5, 2004

<sup>108</sup> Sierra, Arturo; Leticia Fernández y Luís Ocampo. “Critican marco legal de lucha al secuestro.” *Reforma*. México, May 3, 2005. p.3

Esta versión fue fortalecida por ciudadanos al manifestar que algunas corporaciones policíacas no tienen la capacitación suficiente para atender denuncias sobre secuestros, y cuando intervienen solo provocan que los secuestrados pierdan al vida.

“Nos piden que denunciemos los secuestros, pero cuando así lo hacemos los policías no saben que hacer y resulta que los criminales se enteran que la Policía está tras de ellos y provocan que maten a nuestros familiares”, dijo Enriqueta Ramos.

Other advantages to reporting kidnapping is to inform the public about the kidnapers' latest tactics so that perhaps they can counter them or at least modify some current habits that needlessly expose them to the criminal act. If anything, being aware of the behaviors that attract kidnapers could be beneficial. Additionally, information can be used by the public to call in tips to the authorities or the media themselves. Broadcasting photographs of the victims as well as the suspects has played a significant role in catching criminals and rescuing kidnap victims in the United States. The present policy of under-reporting kidnapping can be reversed as the media publishes the circumstances surrounding the crimes and the contributions of concerned citizens in the capture of kidnapers and the recovery of their victims. Obviously, the name of the brave citizen need not be released, but the fact that a citizen helped lead to an arrest or a rescue could encourage others towards similar behavior. There are plenty of Mexicans who are willing to contribute. "*Ya basta!*" is their motto – thousands marched through the capitol in the summer of 2004. Finally, we should also keep in mind that the threat to journalists of reporting on kidnapping cases is low when compared to the threat of reporting on the drug trade.

Unfortunately, a genuine analysis of the issue cannot be completed until the government releases reliable statistics on kidnappings. As we have seen, nearly every organization releasing kidnapping statistics publishes different figures. There is not even an agreement as to which types of kidnappings should be counted and which should not. Perhaps another mission for the media is to pressure the government to be more transparent about kidnappings.

In summary, at the root of the problem of kidnapping for ransom in Mexico is the private treatment it receives, instead of the public treatment it deserves. This privacy involves more than just allowing the victim's family to settle the ordeal privately. The government itself treats the issue privately when it fails to release even minor data such as reliable statistics related to the crime. Even the justice system tries to keep private the results of the trials or the release of the criminals brought before them.

Defining the problem in such a light, therefore, encourages solutions that lead to a more public treatment of kidnapping. After all, kidnapping is no longer a crime

that affects solely a wealthy elite minority. Its tentacles have now spread across class divisions and have made it an issue for all Mexicans. The goal of the public treatment of the problem is a public solution to the problem. This is too complex an issue to be solved by a government agency or a media campaign. It is an issue that requires maximum participation from the society as well as the government. Additionally, it is not a divisive issue. All actors can agree on the need to eliminate the impunity kidnappers currently enjoy, they just need to be informed as to what causes this impunity. One of the first steps against the climate of impunity, which the mass media can take, is to make public that which has been kept private for too long.

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## **ANNEX A**

### ***EL NORTE/GRUPO REFORMA INTERVIEW***

Interview with Edmundo Crespo Ruíz, Vice-Director of the National Section,  
Feb. 16, 2006

Reasons for the high level of economic kidnappings in Mexico:

- 1) Organized crime (especially narco-traffickers) have diversified their operations/market.
- 2) Guerrillas to finance their groups.
- 3) Impunity

Kidnappings are on the rise, especially low \$ ransom kidnappings.

More law enforcement personnel only lower certain types of crime, but do not prevent organized crime. In Nuevo Laredo, Mexico Seguro has reduced street crime and robberies, but has not stopped murder and kidnappings by organized crime.

El Norte does not have a formal or written policy when it comes to reporting kidnappings although the general consensus is:

- 1) Follow the families desires/wishes (will not publish without consent)
- 2) The victim's safety is the utmost concern
- 3) Reporting can endanger the victim, hamper the negotiations, give the kidnappers valuable information and it is therefore best to report after the victim is released.
- 4) Public officials / figures and their families are exceptions – will usually be reported extensively.
- 5) Generally Grupo Reforma will report the kidnapping occurred in order to alert the public and then only upon the victim's release – not during negotiations.
- 6) Grupo Reforma does not believe so much in cooperating with the families and authorities as with showing solidarity with the family and the victim.

Benefits of reporting:

- 1) Getting out the information (alerting the public to the danger)
- 2) Can make it harder for corrupt officials to not act
- 3) Does not put journalists at risk like reporting on Narco-crimes
- 4) Danger to journalists only occur if journalist somehow has extra-official information (not public info) ---- unlike Colombia in this regard

“Más que la palabra coordinación [con la familia de la víctima], yo creo que la palabra correcta es solidaridad.” - Edmundo Crespo

## **ANNEX B**

### ***DIARIO MILENIO* INTERVIEW**

Interview with Javier Sepúlveda Martínez, Editor of the Monterrey Metropolitan Section, Apr. 6, 2006.

Reasons for the high level of economic kidnappings in Mexico:

- 1) 1970's was because of poverty coupled with political frustrations. The kidnappings had a political and economic purpose.
- 2) 1980's political ideology was no longer a motivation, but corruption increased and the police and other government officials started to get involved.
- 3) Impunity is what made the terrain fertile.

Not sure if kidnappings are increasing or decreasing. The government keeps a close lid on the statistics. After all, it doesn't want to freely offer bad publicity.

*Milenio* does not have a formal or written policy when it comes to reporting kidnappings although the general consensus is:

- 4) Follow the families desires/wishes (will not publish without consent)  
This occurred during the case of Javier Alvarado who was missing for 2 months, the family was worried that Javier was kidnapped and asked the media not to report the event – *Milenio* honored the families wishes and did not publish. Javier's body was eventually found and the case turned out to be a homicide and not a kidnapping.)  
En el caso del secuestro: "Atendemos las peticiones de la familia."
- 5) In many cases, the kidnappers specifically tell the family not to alert the police or the media. If they do, they threaten to end the victim's life. *Milenio* honors the right to life of the victim.
- 6) Public officials / figures and their families are exceptions – will usually be reported due to the nature of their social positions.

There are neither benefits nor disadvantages to reporting kidnappings.

## **ANNEX C**

### **NOROESTE DE CULIACÁN INTERVIEW**

Interview with Rodolfo Díaz Fonseca, Director Editorial de Noroeste Culiacán,  
Mar. 27, 2006.

- 1) ¿Está usted de acuerdo que uno de los objetivos fundamentales de los medios de comunicación es informar al público para servir el bien común?

Sí.

- 2) ¿Cuál(es) piensa que es(son) la causa(s) del secuestro económico en México? (Pobreza, mala distribución de la riqueza, desempleo, deficiencias en la educación, corrupción, sistema judicial, cárceles, impunidad, cuerpos policiales con poca preparación, etc.)

Las causas principales del secuestro son las mismas que en el caso de los otros delitos de alto impacto: la corrupción y la impunidad. Por supuesto que factores como la pobreza y el desempleo inciden en el fenómeno delincriminal, sin embargo, no determinan necesariamente que una persona se convierta en delincuente, porque de ser así la mayoría de los mexicanos o de las habitantes del mundo lo sería.

- 3) ¿Cree que el nivel de secuestros en México está aumentando, bajando, o se queda igual?

El nivel de secuestros se mantiene en México en el segundo lugar a nivel mundial, después de Colombia.

- 4) ¿Piensa que la sociedad Mexicana puede aguantar el actual nivel de secuestros?  
¿Piensa que este nivel (al menos segundo lugar al nivel mundial) daña las instituciones democráticas y la economía?

La sociedad sí puede aguantar el nivel actual de secuestros, de hecho lo está haciendo, pero no debe tolerarlo. Todo delito fuera de control, sobre todo los de alto impacto, dañan las instituciones democráticas y la economía.

5) ¿Su medio tiene una política formal o informal sobre el tratamiento que se brinda a los secuestros?

No: ¿Por qué no?

Sí: ¿Por qué sí?

Sí, Noroeste tiene una política formal sobre el tratamiento de los secuestros, asentada en nuestro Código de Ética:

Manejo periodístico de los secuestros.

Para Noroeste, la publicación de una nota informativa sobre algún secuestro, así como su respectivo seguimiento, es considerada una situación ética y periodística sumamente delicada y difícil. Por esta razón le dedicamos un apartado especial en el Código de Ética.

En principio, las noticias sobre secuestros de personas serán publicadas en todos los casos, siempre y cuando se tenga la certeza del hecho. En estos casos, el reportero debe observar las siguientes acciones:

- Evitar dar a conocer en la nota datos sobre el patrimonio de la víctima

- No incluir términos como "acaudalado" u otro sinónimo que podrían despertar aún más la codicia de los secuestradores

- No publicar información acerca del curso de las investigaciones, para no propiciar la fuga de los delincuentes, alertarlos o predisponerlos en contra de su víctima.

- Buscar la solidaridad social hacia las víctimas y sus familias.

Creemos que al hacerse de interés público un secuestro, se genera presión hacia la autoridad a fin de que cumpla con sus obligaciones. De otro modo, el silencio fomenta la impunidad de los delincuentes y la pasividad de las autoridades responsables de la seguridad ciudadana.

Además, sostenemos que el publicar la noticia de un secuestro no se pone en riesgo al secuestrado, pues éste ya está en riesgo desde que ha caído en manos de delincuentes.

- 6) ¿Por qué piensa que los extranjeros son pocas veces víctimas del secuestro en México? (promedio = 2 por año)

Los extranjeros son pocas veces víctimas de secuestro en México por la dificultad que tienen los plagiarios para negociar con los familiares, así como la disposición de dinero de la víctima en este país. También porque secuestrar a un extranjero eleva el nivel de impacto de delito y mete presión internacional a las autoridades de seguridad mexicanas, lo que les dificulta a los delincuentes sus acciones de corrupción.

- 7) ¿Cuáles son los riesgos de informar sobre los secuestros? (para el secuestrado, los familiares del secuestrado, los negociadores, el periodista, la policía)

La información de un secuestro no pone en riesgo al secuestrado necesariamente, pues éste ya está en riesgo desde que cae en manos de los plagiarios.

- 8) ¿Cuáles son las ventajas de reportar un secuestro?

La ventaja de reportar un secuestro es que probablemente las autoridades actúen contra los delincuentes, los detengan y se rescate al secuestrado, de lo contrario se propicia la impunidad.

- 9) ¿Cuáles aspectos del secuestro piensa que no se deben reportar?

No se debe reportar información sobre el patrimonio de la víctima, ni incluir términos, como "acaudalado", que puedan aumentar la codicia de los plagiarios. Tampoco debe publicarse información sobre el curso de las investigaciones.

- 10) ¿Cuál es el momento oportuno para informar sobre un secuestro? ¿Por qué?

El momento oportuno para informar sobre un secuestro es en cuanto se tenga toda la información confirmada. De esa forma, probablemente las autoridades de seguridad actuarán inmediatamente.

- 11) ¿Piensa que debe haber coordinación entre las distintas partes (familiares de la víctima, negociadores, autoridades, medios) sobre la información que se difunde sobre un secuestro?  
Sí ¿Con quiénes? ¿Qué coordinación debe darse?  
No ¿Por qué?

Sí. Debe darse la coordinación necesaria para que no haya un desorden tanto en la negociación, en la que están vinculados los familiares, negociadores y autoridades, como en la información que publican con los medios, que derive en un mayor daño para la víctima.

- 12) ¿Qué ha hecho su medio en la cobertura de secuestros (publicarlos durante el mismo, esperar a la liberación del secuestrado para hacerlo, qué tipo de cobertura ha dado, etc.)? ¿Por qué?

Proceder de acuerdo con nuestro Código de Ética, ya expuesto en la respuesta 5.

- 13) ¿En la actualidad, diría que los medios de información informan demasiado, suficiente, insuficientes sobre los secuestros?

Depende del medio, algunos informan suficiente, pero otros no publican absolutamente nada sobre casos particulares de secuestro.