

# **The Age of Crime – A Cognitive-Linguistic Critical Discourse Study of Media Representations and Semantic Framings of Youth Offenders in the Uruguayan Media.**

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## **Abstract**

The present study integrates corpus-assisted text analysis with frame semantics to study a social problem. Taking a cognitive-linguistic approach to CDS (Hart, 2011a, 2014), in this article I examine the linguistic construction of minors (viz.: people aged 13 to 18) in a corpus of 489 articles from Uruguayan newspaper “El País” in the context of the so-called “Criminal Imputability Referendum”. Throughout, I find evidence to the effect that minors and adolescents are recurrently placed within the frame of CRIME, and, within this, the frame elements they profile (as per the mappings in FrameNet –see FrameNet, 2014, n.p.) are those of Perpetrators of violent crimes rather than Victims (e.g. of abuse and domestic violence). I argue that, in the context of the referendum, these discursive strategies run the risk of facilitating the consolidation of a strong conceptual link whereby youth becomes readily associated with criminality (ignoring other aspects of children’s situation in Uruguay such as their waning access to education, child poverty, child protection laws, or health issues), and are subservient to the political views of groups supporting a lower cut-off age for criminal responsibility and more stringent punishments. The observations arrived at in this instance set the foundations for a later experimental study testing whether the discursive patterns unearthed here have an effect on how readers conceptualise minors outside the texts.

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## Introduction

This study examines the representations of minors in the Uruguayan media in the context of the “Criminal Imputability Referendum”. The aim of this study is to describe the linguistic patterns whereby minors (citizens under 18 years of age) are constructed in media texts and how these representations relate to specific discourses which may serve to fixate a conceptual association of adolescence with criminality in readers’ minds, and to reinforce the political arguments in favour of reducing the age of criminal responsibility, a key point around which said referendum (see below) revolved.

As a theoretical and analytical backdrop, I take a cognitive-oriented approach to Critical Discourse Studies (Hart, 2014; Van Dijk, 2008). In the following sections of this article, I delineate the sociopolitical backdrop of the “Criminal Imputability Referendum”, and explore some useful theoretical considerations regarding the role of cognition in social action and the formation of social attitudes. This is followed by an analysis of previous research of cognitively-oriented CDA studies exploring a host of mental operations ostensibly associated with the prevalence of discrimination and power imbalances. The text analysis that ensues consists of a broad-brush exploration of discursive macrostructures and dominant frames (observed via word frequencies and collocations) in a corpus of 489 articles (approximately 220,000 words) with youngsters as a thematic centre, followed by a fine-grained concordance analysis which focuses on semantic frame configurations in a subset of 5 texts that are to be used as input in an experimental examination of the effects of media discourse regarding young offenders on readers’ conceptualisations of events outside the texts (Julios-Costa, forthcoming). I also propose future lines of research to expand on this study.

### **Context of Analysis: The Criminal Imputability Debate – Uruguay at Odds with Human Rights**

The so-called “plebiscite on the criminal imputability of minors” was a popular vote which took place in the 2014 general elections in Uruguay following years of campaigning from center-right sectors of the opposition for more repressive measures against youth crime. As a central demand, these groups sought to lower the cutoff age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years of age. This meant that citizens from 16 years of age were to be transferred to the adult penal system, despite warnings by the UN and independent bodies that it would violate adolescents’ right to a specialised penal system<sup>1</sup> -as spelled out in the Interamerican Charter of Human Rights, of which Uruguay is a signatory (UNICEF, 2014). Besides calls to lower the minimum age of imputability, reformers demanded to keep all offenses on the criminal record of citizens after they turned 18; to make imprisonment mandatory from 16 years of age onwards (with no opportunity for alternative punishments); and to increase by an average of four times the minimum time of imprisonment for certain offenses.

To justify placing people as young as 16 within an adult penal system already marred by overpopulation and a markedly precarious observance of human rights (see report by Bureau of Human Rights, 2013 and United Nations, 2009), reformers constantly referred to purported spikes in crimes committed by young adolescents, and echoed the widespread belief that youngsters committed more violent crimes than adults (see UNICEF, 2010). Yet, while most of the public did espouse these views (69% in 2009 –see Equipos Mori, 2009), in reality, there was little statistical evidence to support them, and very little conclusive data

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<sup>1</sup>From 2004, minors in Uruguay were prosecutable under a specialized system contained in the Code of Childhood (fashioned after UNICEF’s Code of Childhood).

backing what reformers alleged were uncontrollably steep increases in youth crime (as has been proven by UNICEF, 2012, 2014).

In the years leading to the plebiscite, youngsters in Uruguay had long been in an extremely delicate socioeconomic situation. The 2002 economic crash uncovered and exacerbated a host of problems that would beleaguer Uruguayan children and adolescents for decades. Among these were high levels of infantile poverty (see CEPAL, 2010), unequal access to wealth across families from different social sectors (Paternain, 2008), school disengagement (UNICEF, 2012) and widespread exposure to domestic violence (InFamilia, 2009). Furthermore, violent crime in general and with it, youth crime, were on the increase (Paternain, 2012). Eventually, discontent with the structures of social control became commonplace (Paternain, 2012), and widespread expressions of dissatisfaction were recurrent topics of public discussion. By dint of political action, popular belief and media coverage, minors and young offenders, especially those of uneducated and underprivileged backgrounds, came to be placed at the center of public controversy -one which glaringly ignored the complexity and vulnerability of their position in Uruguayan society.

In the end, the reforms were not passed, yet, worryingly so, a large sector of the population (41%) did vote in favour of the potential human rights violations the plebiscite advocated. As a result of the pressure by political groups, media coverage and the public, a number of the more repressive measures the plebiscite called for were put in place by the government before the elections (e.g.: keeping criminal records, making imprisonment mandatory). It is from media discourses in this socio-political context that my data is extracted.

### **CDA, Cognitive Linguistics and Social Problems - Cognition at the Root of Social Action**

Cognitive-Linguistic Critical Discourse Studies (henceforth CL-CDS) posits that the role of discourse in society is mediated by cognition (Wodak, 2006). How social actors understand their context, how they construe themselves and other social groups in text and talk, is informed by both individual cognitive mechanisms and social cognitions i.e.: socially shared systems of knowledge, beliefs and values, of which ideologies are part (following van Dijk, 2008). The focal point of this approach is on the exploration of the cognitive patterns which shape and are shaped by the discursive practices of different social groups. Ultimately, as with all CDA, CL-CDS aspires to unveil how these practices serve to present ideological presumptions as objective and righteous, and (potentially or in effect) perpetuate power imbalances and discriminatory practices (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 1989).

One major source of theoretical and descriptive import in recent CL-CDS research originates in Cognitive Linguistics. This is partly because, in line with CL-CDS, Cognitive Linguistics offers a conceptual approach to the study of language (Croft and Cruse, 2004 -see Hart, 2014 for a discussion on the synergy between CL and CDA).

CL aims to offer cognitively plausible accounts (Hart, 2014) of the way in which language, the mind, and experience interact to produce meaning. At the core of this relationship are construal operations. These are mental processes (aided by non-linguistic faculties such as visual and spatiotemporal perception, reasoning, memory and attention) which speakers perform in order to produce and understand language in different social and physical contexts. As members of a social collective, construal allows us to conceptualise and build up a certain picture of reality with the cues we get from socially shared knowledge and individual mental and emotional structures. Ideologies, being systems of beliefs and attitudes, are part and

parcel of such construals within social life. Indeed, CL theorises that “ideology is a conceptual system of a particular kind” (Lakoff, 1996: 37).

Hart (2011a, 2014) presents an account of how construal operations could function at the service of ideology in discursive action. In his taxonomy, construal processes instantiate discourse strategies, understood as “more or less intentional/institutionalised plans of practices whose realisation achieves particular cognitive, emotional and/or social effects” (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Hart, 2015: 327). These strategies serve to disseminate ideology and forward certain worldviews, with a view of influencing social action.

In the present article, the investigative focus lies on the construal operation of categorization, and the discursive strategy of framing. Categorization involves the application of a linguistic construction to a social actor or entity; e.g.: labelling a minor as “murderous”. In social action, categorization is realised discursively and contextualised through **framing** (Fillmore, 1982), i.e. the process whereby, through language use, a social actor or event is placed within a socially shared network of meanings, beliefs and/or patterns of practice used to make sense of experience, i.e.: a frame (Fillmore and Baker, 2009: 314-cf. social schema theory by Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Since such knowledge is given by our involvement in the physical world and our culture (Croft and Cruse, 2004), it can reflect attitudes and assumptions about aspects which integrate those worlds. Part of that meaning is culturally constructed and choice-oriented, and as such, it is open to negotiation and ideological struggle.

### **Studies on Language and Cognition – CDA and the Cognitive Turn**

Investigations that draw from CL to study the development and legitimization of ideologies are only starting to be considered valid and revealing ways of doing CDA. That “cognitive turn” in CDA responds to critiques about many CDA scholars being largely unconcerned with going beyond the identification and description of ideological constructions (Flowerdew, 1999) and into the realm of grounded interpretations, i.e. of the effect that those constructions actually have on the speakers’ knowledge systems used in representing the world (see Van Dijk, 2008; Chilton, 2005/2011; Hart, 2010). While descriptive CDA provides a valuable first step into the demystification of ideologies and discourse orders, approaches such as that of CCDA offer plausible explanations (grounded in psychological and cognitive sciences) as to why and how those orders form and are upheld in the first place.

Some of the most notable examples of research about the role of cognition in the making and upholding of ideology come from studies which look into the cognitive structures at work in perpetuating anti-immigration and racist discourse. Conceptual metaphors have taken the lion’s share of the attention in such CCDA studies (see El Refaie, 2001; Charteris-Black, 2006; Koller, 2004; Musolff, 2010), with mental spaces (Hart, 2008) and deixis and perspectivization (Chilton, 2004; Kaal, 2012) also being taken up as plausible construal systems set in motion in the formation and maintenance of ideologies which disparage immigrants. Such studies have normally focused on how these systems are realized by lexical items, expressions of modality and broad macrostructures of discourse. Construal operations beyond metaphor and deixis have figured much less prominently in CCDA studies, but are beginning to gain momentum. For instance, Sánchez-García (2007), and Sánchez-García and Blanco-Carrión (2007) apply FrameNet (a database of semantic frames with the core and non-core elements making up each frame, including their potential semantic and syntactic combinations -Sánchez-García and Blanco-Carrión (2007)) in elucidating the framing strategies and image schemata activated when

describing emotional responses to violence. Even if they do not define construal operations explicitly, their analysis considers the linguistic mechanisms involved in particular framings of an event as well as the attentional processes involved. In closer relation to the construal operations observed in the present dissertation, Hart (2011a, 2011b) offers an exploration of the lexicogrammatical structures employed in the setting up of ideological stance regarding the Student Riots as they are derived from the operations of force dynamics and focal attention. More recently, Hart (2014) has delved into the cognitive strategy of positioning, arguing that the construction of meaning through discourse involves visuo-spatial properties (*ibid.*, p.103) and social actors' use of grammatical constructions is done in terms of the point of view they wish to invoke in representing their interests.

The present study exploits the potential of framing as a strategy whose analysis in text can both help demystify the ideological substrates behind text producers' content decisions and linguistic expressions employed in producing said content, and explain the potential effects of such discursive representations on readers' minds. Here, I derive the input for my analysis from Uruguayan newspaper *El País*, as it is by far the most widespread print media outlet in the country (Radakovich et al., 2013). Below, I proceed by carrying out a macrostructural discursive analysis of a corpus of naturally occurring texts, and identify the most prevalent frames therein used to construe people under 18, by observing word frequency and collocations. Following that, I randomly select a sub-sample of texts from the broader corpus and carry out a fine-grained analysis of how these frames are configured at a micro level and the perceptions about minors which they facilitate. The results of the analysis carried out here provide the foundations for a later study reporting on the effects of the discourse configurations revealed via the text analysis; specifically on how a group of participants made sense of the perpetrators of a crime event in an image after being exposed to the sub-sample of texts (Julios-Costa, forthcoming).

## **Representing Youngsters in *El País*.**

### ***Text Analysis of Discursive Macrotopics***

The corpus of articles making up the dataset of the present study was constructed using the database LexisNexis. The first step entailed searching for articles containing the keywords “menor\*” (minor\*), “adolescent\*” or niño\* (child\*), either in the headline or the body of the article in more than four instances. This permitted the selection of texts where the main (or one of the main) thematic foci revolved around people under 18. Furthermore, only texts published between 2011 and 2014 (i.e. close in time to the Imputability Plebiscite) were extracted. This process yielded a body of 489 articles.

Using AntConc software, the most frequent words in the corpus were identified. In the whole word frequency list of 489 articles, items profiling the general frame of CRIME, such as “felony”, “prison” or “armed robbery”, were dominant. Words related to areas such as education, youth health or recreation were much less frequent. So much so that, within the 30 most frequent content words, 15 were instances of the CRIME frame – this can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1 – Top 30 Words by Frequency in General Corpus (489 articles)**

Rank	Raw Frequency	Word Type	Translation
1	1966	menor*	<b>minor*</b>
2	1258	niño*	<b>child*</b>
3	1227	años	<b>years</b>
4	1054	adolescente*	<b>adolescent*</b>
5	674	caso*	<b>case*</b>
6	612	INAU	<b>INAU (Uruguayan Institute of the Child and Adolescent)</b>
7	586	país	<b>country</b>
8	516	policía*	<b>police</b>
9	507	joven*	<b>youngster*</b>
10	497	juez*	<b>judge*</b>
11	427	año	<b>year</b>
12	417	delitos	<b>felony*</b>
13	397	hogar*	<b>home*</b>
14	379	centro*	<b>center* (prison)</b>
15	361	edad*	<b>age*</b>
16	335	rapiñ*	<b>armed robbery*</b>
17	319	familia*	<b>family*</b>
18	319	madre*	<b>mother*</b>
19	318	mes*	<b>month*</b>
20	273	homicidio*	<b>homicide*</b>
21	272	judicial	<b>judicial</b>
22	270	antecedentes	<b>criminal record*</b>
23	264	montevideo	<b>Montevideo</b>
24	260	justicia	<b>justice</b>
25	260	lugar*	<b>place*</b>
26	252	medida*	<b>measure* (of internment)</b>
27	242	padres	<b>parent*</b>
28	234	día*	<b>day*</b>
29	230	sistema	<b>system</b>
30	227	juzgado	<b>courthouse*</b>

The dark red color corresponds to words within the CRIME frame, while the light blue marking is for words within the frame LAW & INSTITUTIONS which in the texts are almost exclusively related to crime events (i.e. these are institutions that appear as actors in CRIME event frames). Words in dark blue profile the semantic frame FAMILY & PARENTING. These general frames are adapted from a previous content analysis by Vilela-Sánchez (2006), which provides an exploratory account of the most frequent media macrotopics in media reports about children, minors and adolescents.

Following the examination of word frequency, a collocation analysis (taking t-scores of 2 or more as significant, following Hunston, 2002) was carried out for the three keywords upon

which the main search was performed. For “minor\*” and “adolescent\*”, the strongest collocates were words within the CRIME frame. This suggests quite strongly that an overwhelming majority of articles about young adolescents in this newspaper are thematically focused on the dimension of crime and that there is a systematic association of minors with criminality. For reasons of space and focus, a more detailed description of this stage of the analysis is included in the appendix.

### ***Text Analysis at Micro-Level – Quantitative and Qualitative Patterns***

From the wider corpus of 489 articles, five texts were randomly selected<sup>2</sup> to be part of the input to be used in an experiment assessing the impact of exposures to discourses that conceptually pair minors and adolescents with violent crime on how readers judge the ages of two perpetrators in a picture of an armed robbery (Julios-Costa, forthcoming). In this random selection, unsurprisingly, the thematic focus of all five articles revolved around youngsters and their involvement in crime. In the end, the selection process yielded two types of articles: one consisted of reports of a specific instance of a robbery or murder (three of the five articles), and the other comprised articles discussing social and statistical aspects of youth crime in Uruguay (the remaining two articles).

For the text analysis of this sample, linguistic constructions of minors were identified and extracted via AntConc and then manually tagged according to the semantic frames they activated and the roles that minors fulfilled within these frames. The FrameNet frame index was consulted as a reference for the tagging process. FrameNet (Baker, Fillmore and Lowe, 1998) is a database which contains a directory of different event frames with their corresponding constitutive elements<sup>3</sup>. Event frames (EFs) are here considered to be more specific instances of general frames, in that they give “a description of a type of event, relation, or entities and participants” (FrameNet, 2014, n.p.) that can be located within general frames. For example, in the frame CRIME, EFs such as “Robbery” are contained. This EF carries more specific and contextually-dependent meanings than “CRIME”, as it refers to a specific type of crime. In turn, within each event frame there is a number of frame elements (F.ELs) that act as the constitutive pieces of an event. In “Robbery”, for instance, FrameNet lists elements such as Prisoner and Prison Institution as core F.ELs (i.e. elements that must be there for that frame to be recognized through language), and a number of non-core F.ELs, such as the Crime\_committed, Time (i.e. duration of incarceration), Authorities (ruling the incarceration), etc. The same happens for the frame AGE, another central frame in the sample, with the EF “People\_by\_Age” being ubiquitous due to the thematic focus of the articles, and with F.ELs such as “adolescent”, “child” or “minor” being dominant in the sample.

Taking FrameNet’s index of event frames as a guide, the EFs and corresponding elements within the CRIME domain that appeared in the sample texts (in relation to minors) are in the table that follows. The F.ELs in the chart are listed exactly as they appear in FrameNet’s index, yet it is to be noted that not all of the listed F.ELs appear in the sample; the meaning and functions of each will be expanded upon if and when they are activated in the texts.

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<sup>2</sup> Using the Excel random ordering function.

<sup>3</sup> While FrameNet is based on English language, the EFs related to the CRIME frame (shown in Table 1) which appear in the texts, as well as their constituting elements are virtually identical for Spanish. A Spanish version of FrameNet is still under construction.

**TABLE 1. Event Frames and Frame Elements in Sample Texts**

<b>Event Frame</b>	<b>Core Frame Elements</b>	<b>Non-core Frame Elements</b>
<b>Arrest</b>	Authorities; Charges; Offense; Suspect	Co-participant; Manner; Means; Place; Purpose; Source of legal authority; Time; Type
<b>Being_incarcerated</b>	Prison; Prisoner	Authorities; Crime; Duration; Manner; Place; Reason; Time
<b>Cause_harm</b>	Agent; Body part; Cause; Victim	Circumstances; Degree; Duration; Explanation; Frequency; Instrument; Manner; Means; Place; Purpose; Reason; Result; Time
<b>Committing_crime</b>	Perpetrator; Crime	Frequency; Instrument; Manner; Means; Place; Purpose; Reason; Time
<b>Criminal_process</b>	Charges; Court; Defendant; Defense; Judge; Jury; Offense; Prosecution	Place; Time
<b>Escaping</b>	Escapee; Undesirable location	Degree; Depictive; Distance; Explanation; Goal; Manner; Means; Path; Place; Purpose; Speed; Time; Vehicle
<b>Killing</b>	Cause; Instrument; Killer; Means; Victim	Degree; Manner; Place; Purpose; Reason; Result; Time
<b>Prison</b>	Penal institution	Inmates; Location; Name; operator; Security
<b>Robbery</b>	Perpetrator; Source; Victim	Co-participant; Frequency; Goods; Manner; Means; Place; Purpose; Reason; Time
<b>Shooting_scenario</b>	Agent; Projectile	Area; Degree; Distance; Firearm; Goal; Manner; Means; Path; Purpose; Source; Time

Of the 882 words in the sample, there is a notably high density of linguistic constructions activating the semantic frame CRIME, with almost 20% (172 lexical items) being activations of crime-related conceptual structures (e.g. “homicidal”, “firearm”, “violent”, “delinquents”). Furthermore, in every instance of the words “minor\*” and “adolescent\*” (45 occurrences) there is subsequent activation of EFs related to CRIME (e.g. in the headline “80 homicidal minors in detention centres”). This means that, in this sample, minors are being exclusively construed as frame elements in events of violence and illicit acts.

However, the sole presence of AGE-related and CRIME-related lexical items in the frequency and collocations lists does not tell us anything, qualitatively speaking, about their actual



semantic combinations and the role that minors are construed as having played in those event frames. For example, references to minors could be occurring within crime events in which minors figure as victims or witnesses. It is by taking a closer look at each case that we find that minors are exclusively constructed as the Perpetrators in these EFs.

In extracting and tagging every concordance of “minor\*”, “adolescent\*” and “children\*” according to their frame configurations, and examining its semantic import qualitatively, we find that minors appear within two predominant frames: the nonspecific “Committing\_Crime” (35% frame events related minors to crime perpetration) and “Robbery” (31% construed them as robbers); and in them, minors always profile the F.EL Perpetrator.

The very frequent appearance of the first EF (“Committing\_Crime”) is quite revealing in that the lexical items that activate it are usually quite hyperonymic and generic. The very nature of the EF “Committing\_crime” is that of a nonspecific crime event (compare that to “Robbery” or “Killing”, which are specific kinds of crimes). In the activation of this EF, minors often appear next to the words “delincuentes” (delinquents) or “bandas” (gangs), or are construed as committers of unspecified “felonies”. Take the following examples (bolds are mine):

Original	Translation
1) Menores <b>cometen</b> tres <b>delitos</b> por día. Estadísticas del Poder Judicial señalan que la participación de los menores en <b>delitos en general</b> ha ido en aumento en los últimos años.	Minors <b>commit</b> three <b>felonies</b> a day. Statistics from the Judicial Power point out that the involvement of minors in <b>crime in general</b> has been on the rise in the past years.
2) Los <b>precoces delincuentes</b> ingresaron a la policlínica Colón del Círculo Católico, próximo a las tres de la tarde. Los menores fueron directamente a la caja.	The <b>precocious delinquents</b> entered the Círculo Católico clinic at Colón, around three in the afternoon. The minors went straight to the cash register).
3) <b>Banda</b> de menores azota el barrio Colón.	<b>Gang</b> of minors scourge neighborhood of Colón.
4) Tras una persecución, dos <b>delincuentes</b> fueron capturados.	After a chase, two <b>delinquents</b> were captured.

In all of these cases, the links to criminality that these minors have are construed as static and long-lasting, as an existential characteristic that these (largely undifferentiated) groups of youngsters exhibit. Examples of this are nouns such as “delinquent”, “gang” or “felonies”. In these framings, minors are being simply represented by virtue of their role as crime committers, and contextual factors, such as, e.g., the reasons these crimes happen (listed on FrameNet as frame element Explanation), and more specific sociocultural characteristics of this bulk of minors construed as obscure perpetrators, are backgrounded or simply not mentioned -even when articles reflect on the overall situation of youngsters in relation to crime in Uruguay. As hinted at above, the frames that are activated by these construals of minors are for nonspecific “crimes”, and the absence of any frame elements that specify the types of crimes these are is arguably more conducive to entrenchment (Hart, 2008, p. 110; see Divjak, 2015) of a stereotyped association of young age with crime in the mind (we examine whether there is evidence for this in the experimental test in Julios-Costa,

forthcoming). Still, the background of the victims is often discussed (see text 3 in the appendix).

In example 1, saying that “minors commit three felonies a day” puts forward the view that this is a permanent habit that they *all* have, i.e. that their everyday activities consist of committing (three) crimes each day. In this manner, such a characterization brings to mind the notion of a repetitive, routine action. Moreover, the lack of any modifier for “minors” that could potentially narrow down or specify who these minors are gives the idea that it is *all* minors who commit three crimes a day, and undercuts the possibility to reflect upon why this trend may apply to some youngsters in Uruguay. The fact that details that could better contextualize the information are omitted from the headline, which is the most prominent element in a hard news article (White, 2005), means that the focal attention is on a generic, negatively charged characterization which exacerbates the dimension of danger that minors seem to embody as a product of their very nature; they are “felons” in general. This is most clear when minors are construed in terms of their participation in “crime in general”, quoting unspecified statistics by the Judicial Power and presenting the idea that minors have been increasingly involved in all kinds of crimes in the years the imputability debate went on with no further details (see example 7). In example 4, an attitudinal modifier (“precocious”) is appended to the noun “delinquents”. This means that the construal which is privileged for these offenders is within the remit of general criminals, i.e. “delinquents”, who also are felons at an earlier age than expected (a claim which most supporters of the plebiscite openly espoused). By placing such general categorizations in the context of describing an actual robbery, it becomes ostensibly easier and more normalised to append a hyperonymic term such as “delinquent” to minors –a word which, in Spanish, is used mostly to describe adult offenders.

For the second most common EF in the sample (i.e.: “Robbery”), minors and adolescents are also without exception activators of the F.EL “Perpetrator”. Some examples are:

<b>Original</b>	<b>Translation</b>
6) Armados hasta los dientes, cuatro delincuentes menores <b>robaron</b> un restaurant en Pocitos.	Armed up to their teeth, four minor delinquents <b>robbed</b> a restaurant in Pocitos
7) Los adolescentes cometen más <b>rapiñas</b> que los adultos, sin importar que el número de menores delinquiendo sea más pequeño.	Adolescents commit more <b>armed robberies</b> than adults, no matter that the number of minors committing crimes is smaller”
8) Mientras comerciantes y vecinos preparaban una marcha para reclamar seguridad, la policlínica era <b>asaltada</b> por tres menores de 8, 10 y 14 años	While traders and neighbours prepared for a march to demand safety, the health clinic was <b>robbed</b> by three minors aged 8, 10 and 14 years
9) Los menores actúan con cada vez más violencia en sus <b>rapiñas</b> a comerciantes o transeúntes.	Minors act with more and more violence each time in their <b>armed robberies</b> of merchants or pedestrians.

In example 6, two core F.ELs are employed in the construal of the robbery. The noun phrase “four minor delinquents” activates the FE “Perpetrator” and “a restaurant in Pocitos” constitutes the Source, i.e. “the initial location of the [stolen] goods, before they change location” (FrameNet, 2014, n.p). Besides these central F.ELs, non-core F.ELs related to crime are also activated to complete the representation of events. These are utilized to describe the

manner in which these crimes were carried out –especially to indicate the violent, seemingly uncompromising nature of the perpetrators – and to offer other circumstantial details. These

**TABLE 2. Configurations of Main Event Frames and Supporting Frames in Example 1**

<b>Propositional Content of Clause Complex</b>	Armados hasta los dientes	cuatro delincuentes menores	robaron	un restaurant en Pocitos
	Armed up to their teeth	four minor delinquents	robbed	a restaurant in Pocitos
<b>Configuration of Main EFs and Supporting EFs</b>	<b>Action:</b> “armed” & <b>Non-core FE:</b> Degree (up to their teeth)	<b>Core FE:</b> Perpetrator <b>Supporting EF:</b> Committing_Crime <b>Core FE:</b> Agents	<b>Action</b>	<b>Core FE:</b> Source
	<b>Supporting EF:</b> Shooting_Scenario			
	<b>Non-core FE:</b> Manner	<b>Core FE:</b> Perpetrators		
<b>Main EF: Robbery</b>				

are “Manner”, realized by the participial clause “Armed to the teeth”. Additionally, there are two supporting CRIME EFs at work here, within the one clause complex, adding to the construal of minors as robbers with a clearly negative attitudinal disposition. The visual rendition of these event frame interactions is shown in table 2, followed by the corresponding explanation.

Apart from the main EF, which is Robbery, one of the supporting frames is “Committing\_Crime”. This is because the noun group “four minors”, besides activating the Perpetrators of the Robbery, has the modifier “delinquents” in it, and this means that the noun phrase it forms will also activate the more general EF “Committing\_crime”. Again, we see an example of the hyperonymical adjective “delinquent”, more normally used for adults, being used to categorize minors. As mentioned before, using such a construal traditionally reserved for adult offenders constitutes one possible strategy whereby minors begin to be brought conceptually closer to adults when they are involved in a crime (arguably making it conceptually easier to transfer them to a frame of adult criminal law).

The other supporting EF corresponds to Shooting\_Scenario, since it is reported in the example that the perpetrators of the robbery were “armed up to their teeth”. The participle “armed” triggers in the mind a scenario of weapon wielding (most probably firearms, seeing the modus operandi of these crime events across the corpus), and so of a shooting scenario (even if the weapons were not actually discharged). The addition of this EF helps to construe the view that not only are minors robbing, but they are doing so with an excessively violent and dangerous disposition. Hence we also get the intensifier “up to their teeth”, which in Spanish is highly colloquial and conforms to a notably negative attitudinal construction of the way these minors go about the robbery. Such a construal could play very noticeably in the emotional schemata of readers who, besides possibly having a negative emotional response triggered by the narration of four youngsters committing a robbery, will be impacted even more by the strategic addition of this linguistic construction.

In a sense, the EFs identified in this example can be said to constitute a set of Chinese boxes. By choosing to use such linguistic constructions, it could be argued (as is indeed the case in CL-CDS) that the writer has a certain amount of control over (his/her choices of) the portions of the reality being selected and profiled and over the kinds of cognitive structures and semantic frames that the reader (as a member of the same culture) will need to activate in order to make sense of the utterance. Adding these additional EFs to the example above seems to work to amplify the sense of threat created by the youngsters being reported here since, at the same time, they are involved in a Robbery, a Shooting\_Scenario and exhibit what is constructed as their inherent link to Committing\_Crimes. Additional cases of this can be found in the texts, e.g.: “Minors stone [drivers] (EF Attack), rob them (EF Robbery) and return home (EF Escaping) to their “responsible” guardians”, or “Eighty homicidal minors (EF Killing) are interned (EF Imprisonment) in Colonia Berro”

Example 7 puts adolescents and adults into direct contrast by construing adolescents as more likely to be perpetrators of an armed robbery than adults. This example is located within an article which purports to offer a statistical report of the commission of crimes by minors, and resorts to a comparison of criminal levels between the under 18 population and adults. The phrase “Adolescents commit more armed robberies than adults” is followed by “no matter that the number of minors committing crimes is smaller” (“sin importar que el número de menores delinquiendo sea más pequeño”). While it mentions that adults in general do commit more crimes than youngsters (as both independent and government statistics indicate), this is removed from the focus of attention by explicitly construing this as a fact not to be noted (by “no matter that...”). Moreover, there is no mention of the actual number of armed robberies that either of these two groups commits, nor of the true proportion of these within the total number of crimes. It is only mentioned that adolescents commit *more* armed robberies with no further numbers given that could clarify and contextualize the situation, such as what the total number of robberies and other crimes in both populations is, how this number has increased, what is the total population of adolescents and adults, by what socioeconomic factors this increase might have occurred, etc. The one-dimensional construal that is forwarded in the example helps to link adolescents more strongly with armed robberies, by making a claim based on (unclear) statistics, and presenting violent robberies as if these constituted a type of crime belonging to adolescents themselves. Furthermore, such constructions only serve to replay and perpetuate widespread misapprehensions that minors were somehow responsible for the larger number of crimes in Uruguay.

Example 8 also brings youngsters into the universe of crime, by reporting on a group of three minors robbing a health clinic. What is interesting about this example is the contextual information about the Robbery EF being construed here. The circumstantial clause “While traders and neighbours prepared for a march to demand safety” specifies the time that the robbery took place, and this makes this crime even more impactful because of the contrast (and even irony) posed by the fact that a robbery was happening while groups of people were marching demanding better security measures. The emotional impact of such a portrayal helps to set up a contrast between two social groups, minors and traders and neighbours, the former being construed as victimizers and a different “other”, the latter being represented as closer to the readership (who may be workers themselves) and vulnerable to the onslaught of minors.

From the previous cases and the observations made from the macro-level analysis it becomes clearer that the concept of “minor”, which in Uruguay used to be employed to refer to a more neutral legal status (i.e. of people under the legal age of adulthood and sexual consent) or to youngsters under the care of the State and their parents (see UNICEF, 2006), is now stained

with a negative tint and very strongly associated with delinquency. Beyond the use of lexical items related to crime when nominating minors in these reports, minors are represented as perpetrators of violent crimes indirectly, via quotes of what they purportedly remark while committing these crimes. For example, within the sample we find:

<b>Original</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<p>10) En ámbitos judiciales y policiales trascendió que los menores actúan con cada vez más violencia en sus rapiñas a comerciantes o a transeúntes. <b>"Los 'fierros' son para utilizarlos", declaró un menor homicida</b> en un Juzgado de Adolescentes.</p>	<p>In courts and police contexts it was revealed that minors act with increasing violence in their armed robberies to traders or passerbyes. <b>"'Gats' are meant to be used"</b>, declared a homicidal minor in a Juvenile Court.</p>
<p>11) <b>"No nos importa nada, somos menores de edad"</b>, dijo otro de los delinquentes, al tiempo que amenazaba hacer volar el local con la granada que tenía en la mano.</p>	<p><b>"We don't give a damn, we are minors"</b> said one of the other delinquents, while he threatened to blow up the store with the grenade in his hand.</p>

Adding these quotes means it is minors who are representing themselves as violent, although the sources of these words are never explicitly identified. This is the only way in which the voice of minors is brought forth in these reports, i.e. in their role of Perpetrators, where they display a dismissive and violent tone. Example 11 is particularly interesting as it comes from a report which achieved a great deal of media coverage for the offenders' use of assault weapons (grenades and rifles) and for what was considered by many to be a display of outrageous indifference on their part towards their actions. What is most interesting in the context of the debate is the fact that many advocates of the reform claimed that minors were not prosecutable under the present laws and that they were knowingly using this to get away with their crimes. Actually quoting one minor exhibiting the very same behaviour that reformers sustained was true for all of them was taken as evidence in support of this claim and arguably served to reinforce the construal of minors as callous criminals. More importantly, the report seems to play into the fears of the social collective, potentially making the argument of reformers harder to counteract.

## **Closing Remarks**

Throughout this study I have attempted to show that the most widespread Uruguayan media outlet is involved in a systematic disparagement of young adolescents by choosing to report on their involvement crime (even without statistical support to make such reporting reliable and proportionate). When brought down to the realm of everyday social action, the relevance of this lies on the fact that, if these conceptualisations are to figure long and saliently enough in the public's sphere of attention and remain unquestioned, associations such as the ones uncovered in this study run the risk of becoming entrenched and of fuelling dangerous assumptions about one of the most vulnerable and hotly debated social collectives in Uruguay. Reinforcing the semantic links of delinquency and minority facilitates the dissociation of the concept "minor" from its more traditional conceptual domains (in Uruguay, the word minor used to be employed to refer to citizens under the legal age of sexual consent and adulthood or to people under the care of the State and/or parents or guardians), and from the position of these social actors as victims of violence themselves. In other words, it serves to conceptualise minors as inherently conflictive, and makes it ostensibly easier to conceptualise certain people under 18 as adults and thus to introduce them in a legal framework applied to adults.

Of course, in such a brief study, there were many lines of enquiry that could not be explored to their full extent. This leaves open numerous avenues through which investigations like the present one could be advanced and improved upon. In this instance, I have tried to integrate a range of theoretically compatible methods for the analysis of discourse and cognitive construals. Incursions into experimental methods for integration with CL-CDS can provide studies on the interplay of cognition, discourse and sociopolitical action with augmented explanatory power.

Especially for CL-CDS, insights from psychology, sociology and even neurosciences should at least be consulted, as these are areas of enquiry with long-lived traditions of studying human representations and behaviour in social collectives. Indeed, such studies have already made valuable incursions into the relationship between language, cognition and the formation of impressions towards other social actors (e.g. Higgins, Roles and Jones, 1977; Hernandez & Preston, 2013), and some have even probed the effects of media texts on decision-making (e.g. in the granting of refugee status to asylum seekers in Lido, 2006) and evaluative judgments (e.g. towards mental health patients in Dietrich et al., 2006). The lines of enquiry of these investigations and the results obtained seem to lend some credibility to the notion, widespread throughout CDA methodologies, and argued for in this study, that linguistic constructions have a constitutive role in the construction of perceptions and judgements of other social actors. It should be borne in mind, however, that despite their marked interest in uncovering the impact of language and media texts on perception, no systematic linguistic analysis is performed of the input texts to which participants are exposed, to the effect that there is little clarity as to which linguistic structures can be considered as having an impact on subsequent social judgments (and to what extent they do). This is where CL-CDS can make a methodological contribution. Future studies which seek to further uncover the mental structures behind the formation of ideologies and social behaviour within CL-CDS can lend their range of methods for the analysis of discourse, while benefitting from experimental approaches to test some of its foundational claims. In other words, future lines of research could work to bring the theoretical and methodological body of CL-CDS to the proximity of contemporary empirical research on cognition and social behaviours. Explorations of the neural embodiment of ideology, discrimination and stereotyping discourses, for example, constitute a newly forming research trend in CL-CDS, one which could provide interesting and grounded revelations in the study of social problematics, and the demystification of ideology.

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**APPENDIX 2 – Collocates of “minor\*”, “adolescent\*” and “child\*”.**

**40 Strongest Collocates of “Minor\*” by t-score.**

Rank	Total Frequency	Freq. Left	Freq. Right	t-score	Word Type	Translation
1	149	17	132	11.96059	años	years
2	106	4	102	10.25737	infractores	offenders
3	106	3	103	10.2134	edad	age
4	74	68	6	8.53178	antecedentes	criminal records
5	50	13	37	6.98974	delitos	felonies
6	43	37	6	6.51714	penas	sentences
7	41	17	24	6.16925	inau	INAU
8	33	26	7	5.6402	juez	judge
9	31	2	29	5.53085	internados	interned
10	31	26	5	5.49305	fiscal	district attorney
11	31	25	6	5.4535	justicia	justice
12	23	23	0	4.72746	internación	internment
16	23	20	3	4.71624	juzgado	courthouse
14	22	20	2	4.61477	jueza	judge (fem.)
15	22	15	7	4.59181	libertad	freedom
16	20	14	6	4.41359	jueces	judges
17	19	1	18	4.34093	fugado	escaped
18	19	2	17	4.3168	detenidos	arrested
19	19	18	1	4.29995	judiciales	judicial (pl.)
20	18	17	1	4.09845	madre	mother
21	16	14	2	3.95657	juzgados	courthouses
22	16	5	11	3.86419	hogar	home
23	15	10	5	3.75926	contra	against
24	14	0	14	3.72073	cometen	commit (crimes)
25	14	3	11	3.68476	zubía	Zubía (surname)
26	14	11	3	3.58339	padres	parents
27	13	1	12	3.58316	cometieron	committed (crimes)
28	13	1	12	3.58044	barreto	Barreto (surname)
29	15	11	4	3.57982	policía	police
30	12	0	12	3.44644	infractor	offender
31	12	1	11	3.44574	homicida	murderer
32	12	11	1	3.44008	cometidos	committed (pl.)
33	12	0	12	3.43726	vera	Vera (surname)
34	12	2	10	3.43161	sayagués	Sayagués (surname)
35	13	4	9	3.42638	montevideo	Montevideo
36	12	12	0	3.41607	sexual	sexual
37	14	10	4	3.3218	adolescentes	adolescents
38	11	2	9	3.30187	fugados	escaped (pl.)
39	12	7	5	3.30163	sistema	system
40	11	8	3	3.29006	cometido	committed (sing.)

**40 Strongest Collocates of “Adolescent\*” by t-score.**

Rank	Total Frequency	Freq. Left	Freq. Right	t-score	Word Type	Translation
1	91	90	1	9.40085	niños	children
2	68	68	0	8.20142	penal	penal
3	70	8	62	8.11811	años	years
4	39	2	37	6.21434	sirpa	SIRPA (system of adolescent penal responsibility)
5	40	38	2	6.1965	niño	child
6	37	3	34	6.03012	uruguay	Uruguay
7	36	0	36	5.95453	infractores	offenders
8	34	4	30	5.65311	inau	INAU
9	29	22	7	5.15894	dos	two
10	26	22	4	5.07609	madres	mothers
11	23	23	0	4.70821	antecedentes	criminal records
12	20	14	6	4.33726	uno	one
13	20	13	7	4.32021	tres	three
14	18	17	1	4.18034	juzgado	courthouse
15	16	0	16	3.97247	villaverde	Villaverde (surname)
16	16	7	9	3.90046	delitos	felonies
17	15	15	0	3.85505	embarazo	pregnancy
18	15	2	13	3.83623	internados	interned
19	15	14	1	3.83317	niñas	girls
20	14	6	8	3.65607	libertad	freedom
21	13	12	1	3.48337	justicia	justice
22	12	11	1	3.44747	cometidos	committed (crimes)
23	16	7	9	3.41925	menores	minors
24	13	3	10	3.30056	dijo	said
25	11	4	7	3.25379	rapiñas	armed robberies
26	11	4	7	3.20219	situación	situation (of homelessness)
27	10	10	0	3.13334	porcentaje	percentage
28	10	9	1	3.03261	padres	parents
29	10	6	4	3.031	juez	judge
30	9	6	3	2.9599	juzgados	courthouses
31	9	9	0	2.92432	internación	internment
32	8	4	4	2.77272	mayoría	majority
33	9	8	1	2.75883	año	year
34	8	5	3	2.72539	mayor	adult
35	8	4	4	2.72479	trabajo	labor (illegal)
36	8	8	0	2.70502	cuatro	four
37	8	1	7	2.68346	jóvenes	youngsters
38	7	2	5	2.62654	embarazadas	pregnant

39	7	0	7	2.62462	cometieron	committed (3 <sup>rd</sup> p. pl.)
40	7	2	5	2.60348	detenido	arrested

#### 40 Strongest Collocates of “Child\*” by t-score.

Rank	Total Frequency	Freq. Left	Freq. Right.	t-score	Word Type	Translation
1	182	13	169	13.19898	años	years
2	109	5	104	10.24305	adolescentes	adolescents
3	64	43	21	7.7117	dos	two
4	40	1	39	6.11559	adolescente	adolescent
5	35	34	1	5.86132	derechos	rights
6	34	34	0	5.76274	instituto	institute (INAU)
7	31	27	4	5.42373	madre	mother
8	27	16	11	4.9486	tres	three
9	20	9	11	4.28995	familia	family
10	19	17	2	4.05423	caso	case (medical)
11	15	14	1	3.74378	día	day
12	16	8	8	3.65757	año	year
13	16	7	9	3.50921	inau	INAU
14	12	6	6	3.37057	seis	six
15	11	6	5	3.26246	falleció	died
16	11	10	1	3.22668	muerte	death
17	12	7	5	3.16222	ayer	yesterday
18	12	2	10	3.1437	edad	age
19	11	4	7	3.09997	situación	situation
20	10	10	0	3.09026	atención	attention (to children)
21	11	10	1	3.08256	padres	parents
22	11	9	2	3.06516	casos	cases (medical)
23	10	7	3	3.03041	vida	life
24	9	0	9	2.97327	uruguayos	Uruguayan
25	9	7	2	2.96151	adopción	adoption
26	9	9	0	2.92729	sexual	sexual
27	9	7	2	2.90484	cargo	in charge of
28	9	7	2	2.87062	padre	father
29	9	1	8	2.82357	hoy	today
30	9	6	3	2.80753	contra	against
31	8	1	7	2.77626	presentó	presented
32	8	4	4	2.77399	Mercedes	Mercedes (town)
33	8	8	0	2.75131	Rossell	Rossell (hospital)
34	8	2	6	2.74677	siete	seven

35	8	6	2	2.72295	familiares	relatives
36	8	7	1	2.70708	infantil	infantile (abuse)
37	8	3	5	2.64697	cinco	five
38	7	0	7	2.63484	estudiados	studied (participle pl.)
39	8	7	1	2.63336	mayor	adult
40	8	3	5	2.5948	cuatro	four

**NOTE:** As with word frequencies, in the collocate lists, the dark red color corresponds to words within the CRIME frame, while the light blue marking is for words within the frame LAW & INSTITUTIONS. It should be noted that in the texts these institutions are almost exclusively related to crime events (i.e. these are institutions that appear as frame elements in CRIME event frames). The light red color marks words activating the frame of ABUSE & VULNERABILITY; dark blue corresponds to words within the frame PARENTING & GUARDIANSHIP; yellow is for words profiling HEALTH, and green for words related to PROTECTING & RESCUING.

Almost all of the collocates of “minor\*” belong to the frames CRIME and LAW & INSTITUTIONS. In the texts, minors are agents of crime or recipients of punishment by the law. Similarly, adolescents in this corpus are constructed in relation to criminality (in their role of perpetrators) and to the penal law being applied to them (note the frequent appearance of words in the frame of LAW & INSTITUTIONS and CRIME). Thus, adolescents are frequent agents in felonies and their situation is dictated by institutions of social control. Issues where they are involved in teen pregnancy and substance abuse are also present (as indicated by words in yellow –from the HEALTH frame), and this, it could be argued, contributes to an altogether negative valuation of adolescents across the discourses of this newspaper. In the case of “children”, this node word is reserved for cases where youngsters are victims of negligence and abuse (light red), and they are also conceptualised in relation to their bonds of kinship with adults -who are the main agents in the mistreatment of children (dark blue). In a similar proportion, issues around health and diseases are strongly associated with children, and it is only very seldom that children are associated with more positive and empowering concepts. They thus seem to be disempowered social actors who are systematically involved as sufferers in negatively perceived events.

### **APPENDIX 3 – Input articles from broader corpus**

#### **Menores cometen tres delitos por día**

Accessed: 10 May 2014 - [http://historico.elpais.com.uy/12/12/16/pnacio\\_682232.asp](http://historico.elpais.com.uy/12/12/16/pnacio_682232.asp)

#### **Estadísticas. Este año los casos en los juzgados de adolescentes superarán los 1.000**

Tres delitos por día cometieron menores de edad en el correr de 2012 en Montevideo, según datos relevados en los cuatro juzgados de Adolescentes. La gran mayoría de ellos fueron robos violentos.

Estadísticas del Poder Judicial señalan que la participación de los menores en delitos en general ha ido en aumento en los últimos años.

En 2008, los adolescentes enfrentaron 760 procesos. En tanto los adultos, 4.521. Eso significa que los menores cometieron el 14% de los delitos.

Las cifras del Poder Judicial muestran que, al año siguiente, subió la participación de los menores en el universo de ilícitos. En 2010 se mantienen los guarismos aunque hay una pequeña caída de los delitos protagonizados por menores. La Justicia procesó a 4.057 adultos (83%) y a 842 menores (17%).

El año pasado volvió a incrementarse la participación de adolescentes en la comisión de delitos. Las cifras de los juzgados señalan que en 2011 fueron procesados 3.979 adultos (82%) y 873 adolescentes (18%).

Las sentencias de los jueces de adultos y de menores tipifican el delito cometido por los mismos. Las cifras del Poder Judicial muestran que los adolescentes comenten más robos violentos que los adultos sin importar que el número de menores delinquiendo sea más pequeño.

La Policía estima que los menores infractores son unos 1.000 y que los delincuentes adultos en libertad son unos 10.000. Según operadores judiciales, la explicación de este fenómeno se debe que los menores reinciden en un período de tiempo menor que el de los adultos, ya que un delincuente mayor procesado por robo violento pasará cinco años tras las rejas, mientras que un adolescente estará internado en un hogar entre tres y cuatro meses por cometer el mismo delito.

### **"Somos menores, no nos importa nada"**

Accessed: 10 May 2014 - [http://historico.elpais.com.uy/12/06/05/pciuda\\_644758.asp](http://historico.elpais.com.uy/12/06/05/pciuda_644758.asp)

#### **Asalto. Armados hasta los dientes, cuatro delincuentes menores robaron un restaurante en Pocitos.**

Cuatro delincuentes, armados con escopetas, revólveres y hasta una granada, concretaron un robo violento contra un restaurante de Pocitos Nuevo. Tras una persecución dos delincuentes fueron capturados.

"Dame toda la guita o hacemos explotar todo", gritó uno de los delincuentes al ingresar al local de Iturriaga y Luis Alberto de Herrera, mostrando una granada en su mano.

"No nos importa nada, somos menores de edad", dijo otro de los delincuentes, durante el robo violento, al tiempo que amenazaba hacer volar el local con la granada que tenía en la mano.

### **Ochenta menores asesinos internados**

Accessed: 10 May 2014 - <http://www.elpais.com.uy/informacion/ochenta-menores-asesinos-internados.html>

#### **Ochenta menores homicidas se encuentran internados en la Colonia Berro y en los hogares de Montevideo. Nueve de ellos, de entre 13 y 17 años, tienen múltiples asesinatos, según datos estadísticos del Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal Adolescente (Sirpa).**

Esos adolescentes derivados por hechos de sangre representan el 14% de los 577 internos alojados con medidas privativas de libertad.

El presidente del SIRPA, Rubén Villaverde, dijo a El País que, salvo pocas excepciones, los internos homicidas no generan disturbios durante sus internaciones. Indicó que en casos como los de "El Ricky" y "El Pelón" son continuamente cambiados de hogares por razones de seguridad.

El Sirpa cuenta con cuatro hogares de alta seguridad.

En ámbitos judiciales y policiales trascendió que los menores actúan con cada vez más violencia en sus rapiñas a comerciantes o a transeúntes. "Los 'fierros' son para utilizarlos", declaró un menor homicida en un Juzgado de Adolescentes.

Ante los comerciantes, los adolescentes optan por disparar primero para poder generar temor y llevarse el botín, según declararon.

### **Banda de menores azota el barrio Colón**

Accessed: 10 May 2014 - <http://historico.elpais.com.uy/120117/pnacio-619089/nacional/banda-de-menores-azota-el-barrio-colon/>

**Delincuencia. Tres menores de 8, 10 y 14 años, robaron una policlínica del Círculo Católico. Los vecinos de la zona se movilizaron en reclamo de mayor patrullaje y seguridad.**

Mientras comerciantes y vecinos de Colón preparaban una marcha para reclamar seguridad, la policlínica del Círculo Católico de ese barrio era asaltada por tres menores de 8, 10 y 14 años.

Los precoces delincuentes ingresaron a la policlínica Colón del Círculo Católico, próximo a las tres de la tarde. Los menores fueron directamente a la caja. Se acercaron a la encargada a quien le mostraron un arma de fuego y le dijeron "abrí o te mato". La encargada les abrió, y ni bien los menores traspasaron la puerta, tomaron de rehén a una auxiliar de enfermería que estaba en el lugar, poniéndole un arma en la cabeza.

"Estaban muy nerviosos, pero igualmente fueron violentos", contó la auxiliar. A su vez sostuvo que los menores "no tenían pinta de delincuentes". Uno de ellos tenía una mochila, donde guardaron el dinero que se llevaron.

El más chico traía puesta una camiseta de fútbol y los tres traían puesto gorros, "tipo cani", según el testimonio de la propia trabajadora.

También sostuvo que es la segunda vez que asaltan esta misma policlínica en seis meses. "La vez pasada también fueron menores, pero no tanto", contó. La auxiliar de enfermería, luego de ser tomada como rehén, sufrió una crisis nerviosa de la cual, dos horas después del atraco, no había podido salir.

## **Menores apedrean, asaltan, y vuelven a sus casas**

Accessed: 10 May 2014 - <http://www.elpais.com.uy/informacion/menores-asaltan-justicia-devuelve.html>

Al menos 12 menores de entre 13 y 17 años fueron detenidos en diez días por apedrear y robar a automovilistas en los accesos a Montevideo. Los envían a los juzgados y vuelven a casa, con sus "responsables". La Ruta 1 es una trampa para los conductores.