

SIN MIEDO:  
VIOLENCE, MOBILITY, AND IDENTITY IN EL PASO DEL NORTE

by  
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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Together, the cities El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico form the largest international border metropolis in the world. While El Paso consistently ranks among the safest cities in the U.S., Cd. Juárez's recent and extreme escalation of violence has produced one of the world's most dangerous locales. Within this starkly differentiated and transnational urban conglomeration, complex geographies of gender, culture, and identity have emerged, prompting the following question: how is mobility shifting throughout el Paso del Norte in response to the heightened violence in Juárez, and what are the implications of these negotiations of mobility for fronterizo (borderlander) identity? By focusing on gendered mobilities in the U.S./Mexico borderlands, this study engages with cultural implications of the recent drug conflict fueled exodus from Juárez into El Paso, articulating the negotiation of identities and daily geographies which characterize the divided lives of borderlanders.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

7/19/2010

*We are south of the Rio Grande, but not in Mexico. El Paso marks the transformation of the U.S. Mexico border from a physiographic boundary (the river), to a geometric line, and we are just barely on the side of geometric measure. This neighborhood is very affluent— as I approach Sonia’s address, I am struck by the grandeur of the homes, many adorned with massive white columns and manicured shrubbery. Arriving at my destination, Sonia greets me warmly although we have never met before, with a kiss, hug, and energized disposition. She guides me through a grand foyer on our way to the dining room. She prepares freshly squeezed orange juice for me, and we sit together at one corner of a large dining room table. She gets invested in the map exercises more than most, reminding me why I like to include this activity, as it turns a life into a game and a chart. She makes an argument with her marker that she is unwilling to make verbally. The black circles are huge in the southern portions of the city, where the southern Mexican transplants live, and in the west, the poor Anapra colonia. Her area of activity is shrunken.*

*-Field notes related to interview with Sonia*

A line divides the residents of el Paso del Norte (the urban area comprised by El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua). The transition marked by this line means many things to locals: the gateway between two ‘different worlds;’ the boundary between a ‘city of ghosts’ and a city of life; and the bridge increasingly full of obstacles, delays, and constraints, keeping someone from their home. Sonia lives very near to this borderline, and yet perceptually, she is a great distance away. Although she is from the ‘other side,’ it is no longer her home. Many of her friends and family have moved to this side (El Paso): the safe side, the side of promise. Those who have not crossed, she rarely sees. She tries not to go over there, fearing the hostility and insecurity of her former home. She has the ability to remain here, and so she does.

7/20/2010

*I drive to the suburb of Horizon, an hour-long eastbound trip on I-10, weaving along the border through sprawling El Paso. Ivonne has invited me to meet her at a corner store*

*by the freeway, and then follow her from there to her house, because there are few street signs. We are very close to the Zaragosa international bridge, the recent location of a devastating gunfight. Ivonne arrives at the corner store to meet me, accompanied by two of her three children. She leads me through a dusty scattering of small manufactured houses to her home, where she welcomes me with kindness and hospitality. Her father is seated in a wheelchair in the corner, hooked up to a respirator and IVs, watching television. Ivonne hands me a small card, which contains a photo of a handsome young man, along with information about funeral services. This is her nephew, and the dates indicate that this tragedy occurred very recently. Ivonne's sister joins us at the kitchen table, the mother of the boy on the card. She has one blue eye and one brown eye. Eyes brimming with sadness, Ivonne and her sister tell me their stories. Afterwards, Ivonne insists that I stay for dinner with her family. Over buckets of KFC, tears give way to laughter.*

*- Field notes related to interview with Ivonne*

Ivonne also lives on the safe side of this division, the side of prosperity and security, and yet she remains tightly bound to the 'other side.' She moves across and back regularly, as she maneuvers a family and community structure with a mix of those who can and cannot leave Juárez. She would rather not go 'over there,' but she cannot avoid it. However, as the losses mount, the urgency with which Juarenses (residents of Juárez, like her sister) strive to relocate is ever-increasing. Ivonne's life, and the lives of many others in el Paso del Norte, straddle these two worlds; the tensions and negotiations that accompany this balancing act are many and extreme.

I share these two excerpts from my field diary as a way to introduce the feeling of this place, *la frontera* (the borderland). Both of these interviews occurred in home spaces, the realm of the private, and yet the content of interviews focused on the public sphere. Situated in a familiar setting, participants expressed the discomfort that frequently accompanies their forays into the wider sphere they inhabit, particularly if that sphere encompasses Ciudad Juárez. Both of these interviews occurred at the southernmost edge of El Paso, on opposite ends of the city, mere yards away from the

Mexican border. And yet, the manner in which these two women have responded to the changes occurring in el Paso del Norte, spurred by a dramatic increase in violent crime in Juárez, is quite different.

Cross-border mobility has characterized the region el Paso del Norte for the entirety of its history as a settled urban area. The cities El Paso and Juárez are now, and have always been, hugely interconnected in terms of economy and culture (Staudt, 2003, p. 3). And yet, this capacity for mobility in the borderlands is fundamentally linked to national and transnational political shifts and stances. In this way, the daily geographies of El Pasoans and Juarenses are deeply imbued with international power geometries. As transnational actors, the residents of the borderlands demonstrate the mundane practices and negotiations that accompany shifts commonly associated with broader policy-makers and governmental structures.

As this borderland metropolis has grown, particularly over the past sixty years, the interconnections and cross-border movement that have characterized el Paso del Norte have been constantly re-shaped and altered by changing border policies, initiated at the national level, but implemented locally (Ortíz-González, 2004, p. xv). The lived realities of residents are, in this way, closely tied to changing national discourse, political agendas, and transnational economic strategies. However, it was not until more recently that the ability of residents to conveniently access the opposite side of the border has been dramatically limited. Increasing levels of militarism and strife along the border, beginning with the temporary closing of the border during 9/11, and now experienced on a continual basis in response to the violence in Juárez, has radically altered this

fundamental element of borderland livelihoods: the ability to cross with relative ease, and maintain cross-border connections.

It was this upheaval that I observed in the day-to-day reality of living in el Paso del Norte that inspired the following thesis. Residents maneuvering through an increasingly divided cityscape interpret these transnational shifts in dynamic and varied ways, and yet, are there broader changes occurring in the nature of being a *fronterizo* (borderlander)? For the people who navigate among El Paso and Juárez, how do increasingly constrained patterns of movement affect a sense of self and sense of place? There is much at stake for borderlanders as the nature of el Paso del Norte changes and is increasingly bisected. Concerned with the way that these changes are affecting local communities and identities, I composed the following work centered upon these questions: *how is mobility shifting throughout el Paso del Norte in response to the heightened violence in Juárez, and what are the implications of these negotiations of mobility for fronterizo (borderlander) identity?* As will be further articulated in later sections, the first component to the question is not asking *to what extent* has mobility changed or been confined, but rather, *how* has it changed. What is the substance of these changes—the understandings, decisions, and constraints that are embedded in present performances of mobility?

Posing these questions is a worthwhile pursuit for many reasons. In the past four years, Ciudad Juárez has swiftly and horrifyingly emerged as the most violent city in the world, with an intentional homicide rate of 229 per 100 thousand residents, and nearly 10,000 dead since 2008 in this city of less than 1.2 million (Molloy, 2011; Ortega, 2011; Corcoran, 2011). This increase in violence is largely connected to the region's strategic

role as a key entry point to the U.S. drug market, and the conditions within which this violence has been fostered are closely tied to modifications to the area based on neoliberal modes of economic globalization (Campbell, 2009, p. 32), most evident through the pronounced dependency of el Paso del Norte on the U.S. markets. Although this subject will be addressed at greater depth in the second chapter of this thesis focusing on frontera mobility, it bears mention here, as el Paso del Norte is truly the local stage wherein transnational forces play out, in often destructive and volatile ways.

The current strife in Ciudad Juárez offers an extreme example of the myriad ways that livelihoods are reconfigured and strained in a climate of deregulation, free movement of capital, political impunity, and economic depression. And yet, the focus of this inquiry is not on the power structures and policy orientations that contribute to this scenario; rather, the study investigates local actors, giving them voice as they negotiate an evolving cityscape, one that is shaped and recreated just as much through the bodies of its inhabitants as it is through dominant discourse and transnational forces. As this region has received increasing media scrutiny, much outside attention has been directed toward a simplified victim/narco narrative that is used to frame local residents who are coping with escalating violence (Carroll, 2010; Hayward, 2010; Althaus, 2010).<sup>1</sup> Drawing from feminist geographic scholarship and utilizing qualitative methods centered upon in-depth interviews, this thesis disrupts simplified and disempowering narratives of the border,

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<sup>1</sup> References here are newspaper articles from sources including the Houston Chronicle, the Guardian, and the Texas Observer. These articles merely serve as examples of this predominant narrative; I am unaware of any academic studies which analyze this specific aspect of media representations of the violence in Juárez, but this manner of characterizing the conflict is readily apparent throughout much of popular media, particularly journalism based outside of the el Paso del Norte region.

giving voice to local residents and offering a more nuanced picture of the ways that *fronterizos*<sup>2</sup> (borderlanders) are maneuvering through this turbulent cityscape.

The organization of this thesis is as follows. Chapter II, ‘A History of Frontera Mobility in el Paso del Norte,’ discusses changing patterns of movement in the region throughout its history. Looking specifically at different aspects of borderland life, considering the beginnings of its urban growth and early notoriety, the role of factory labor in shaping livelihoods on the border, and the changing gender dynamics that *fronterizos* encountered, this chapter explores the growth and evolution of this metropolis. Discussing the implementation of dynamic border policies, and finally delving into the current status of this border metropolis as it is reconfigured in the face of violence— this chapter offers a partial and fragmented history of this region, organized around major shifts in mobility that have characterized the region.

The next chapter, ‘Methods and Meaning,’ is divided into two sections, the first discussing the methodological structure of this thesis, and the second articulating significant theoretical works that have influenced both the form this thesis has taken, and the ethical aims with which it is aligned. The methodological component to this chapter not only articulates the mechanics of this project’s implementation, but also touches upon different scholarly influences reflected in this methodological form, and includes commentary on some of the key considerations which were involved in research design. The meanings section of this chapter does not exhaustively cover theoretical influences

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<sup>2</sup> I opt not to italicize certain terms with a Spanish language origin, such as ‘*fronterizo*’ and ‘*maquiladora*,’ because of the distinctness of their meaning from their English language translation. For instance, when speaking of *fronterizo* identity, this term geographically specifies the borderlanders to whom I refer—indicating that the focus is not placed on all border residents internationally, but on a particular borderland identity of the U.S./Mexico border region.



and references addressed in this work; instead, it offers broad theoretical materials, which serve to demonstrate the way that this project is situated in a number of philosophical dialogues. Later empirical chapters continue to grapple with theoretical considerations, as terms and scholars are referenced throughout the thesis, positioned adjacent to corresponding empirical materials.

The fourth chapter, 'The Changing Dynamics of Borderland Mobility,' considers three notable facets of borderland mobility in the present context: embodiment, time, and control. Using these three descriptors as ways to consider the negotiation of mobility in the region, this chapter engages with interview materials in order to address the first question of the thesis, the *substance* of mobility changes linked to the violence in Juárez. The first section, Embodiment, considers the attention that participants pay to their corporeal form when navigating throughout el Paso del Norte, noting how this attentivity to one's corporeality shifts while crossing the international bridge. Drawing from feminist scholarship on bodies and space, this section emphasizes the changing ways that *fronterizos* understand their material presence in public spaces. Next, the focus shifts to the temporal role in *fronterizo* mobility patterns. Considering the time investment involved in crossing the border, preconceptions of night in Juárez, and the increasing obstacles present in the Juarenses urban form, this section considers how participants negotiate a constrained schedule as they seek to perform everyday activities. The final section, examining control, draws from the two prior sections as it considers how participants must discern what aspects of their surroundings they can and cannot control, in an effort to avoid risk. This section considers changing dynamics between neighbors, and constrained pathways of movement as they define the limits to personal control.

The fifth chapter, ‘Fronterizo Identity: Crossing the River Styx,’ considers the implications of these alterations of mobility patterns (linked to the violence in Juárez), for fronterizo identity. The identity of place, the frontera (borderland) in this case, and the social identities of fronterizos (borderlanders), are considered as mutually reconstitutive and dynamic performances, reflecting and responding to local understandings, dominant discourse, and a changing urban form. This chapter is organized into two sections, the first focusing on the theoretical interpretation of key terms utilized throughout the chapter, namely identity, performance, place, and fear. The second section of the chapter then applies these theoretical understandings to interview material, organized around a series of questions concerning fronterizidad (borderlanderhood). In this way, the understanding and performance of fronterizo identity is considered as it may simultaneously maintain and subvert competing visions of the future, the performance of place (and of self) remaking that place in unintended ways.

Throughout these chapters, a dynamic picture is composed of the multiplicity of experiences that constitute fronterizidad, drawing attention to the decisions and negotiations that residents of this border region make in an effort to avoid risk, while considering the longer term implications of these shifting performances and perceptions. The way that patterns of mobility are understood and maneuvered are drawn into a discussion of changing perceptions of self and place, and the voices of local residents are amplified. Shifting from sensational narratives of archetypal conflict, this story is firmly situated in mundane practices and everyday spaces— and yet, the everyday spaces of the fronterizo are transnational and volatile.

## CHAPTER II

### A HISTORY OF FRONTERA MOBILITY IN EL PASO DEL NORTE

*“A boundary is not that at which something stops, but... that from which something begins its presenting.” Martin Heidegger*

If you were to stand at the midpoint of the Paso del Norte International Bridge, the visual onslaught would be profound. Affixed to either side of this point, you would observe a metallic plaque, making explicit the political significance of this line (see Figure 1). About the bridge, you would detect graffiti strewn at various levels of legibility, terms falling somewhere between the English and Spanish languages. You would see trash and automobiles, signage and concrete, azure sky and the murky Rio Grande/Bravo. You would see many people. Tired folks sitting in steaming vehicles, trying to determine the fastest lane, vendors selling roses and cigarettes, indigenous vendors selling woven goods and jewelry, children asking for dollars or pesos- you would see all of this and more. By car, foot, bicycle, or stroller, people moving from one country to another.

This movement, this border traffic, is characteristic of life on the border. After all, a central benefit to living along an international boundary is the ability to access both sides— to utilize the diversity of options, prices, and perspectives offered by two different systems. This capacity, however, is not a given. Throughout the history of this binational metropolis, the character of borderland mobility has undergone profound transformations. Consequently, manifestations of *fronterizo* (or *borderlander*) identity have been dynamic and eclectic in the urban area of El Paso, Texas and Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua. The purpose of this thesis is to relay how borderland mobility has been

reconstructed in recent years, and to discuss the implications of this upheaval in terms of fronterizo identity.



Figure 1. Plaque at the Paso del Norte Bridge, photo by author.

In order to proceed with this inquiry, some explanation of the history of this urban area in terms of mobility is essential. The following section provides a brief history of mobility and borderland identity in the el Paso del Norte region, examining broad economic, political, and social changes, in order to suggest how these forces and movements have played out in the daily lives of local residents. The historical moments summarized here serve not only to demonstrate the long-term evolution of borderland mobility in El Paso del Norte, but also to reveal the echoes of the past that we can see in the events of today. For this reason, it is important to note that this small history is partial

and, at times, non-sequential. Its purpose is not to trace an all-encompassing timeline of this border urban area, but pick to out some key junctures and shifts in its history, highlighting aspects of this region's history that bear upon current understandings of place. Although some of the events and trends addressed in this chapter may not overtly appear to relate to mobility, their inclusion is designed to convey the forces and changes that have influenced where and how people move about this cityscape, historical moments that are embodied today in diverse ways as they are recalled, rejected, or re-inscribed in the landscape.

I begin this chapter by offering a brief explanation of what is meant by the term, mobility, as it is employed throughout this study. Following the provision of this definition, I move through a discussion of el Paso del Norte's early history- considering how it first became an urban area, and examining some early forces and factors shaping patterns of mobility in the area. Then, I address the tremendous population growth that el Paso del Norte has witnessed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflect upon the role of neoliberal economic reform in transforming the cityscape, and comment on the implications of this rapid population boom. After this, I explore issues of gender in el Paso del Norte, focusing on trends in maquiladora employment and the phenomenon of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. Next, I identify changes to border security policy and the nature of drug trafficking through el Paso del Norte. Finally, I outline of some of the sweeping changes that have occurred in El Paso and Juárez in the past three years, broadly considering the upheavals that this cityscape has undergone, in order to fully contextualize interview materials.

Mobility describes the way in which a body navigates through space, as it is constrained and framed by myriad social, cultural, political, environmental, and temporal factors. Although mobility is commonly understood as it refers to an individual or group's ability to move through space, this movement occurs in varying social and political contexts, which then frame and influence the nature of this movement. Robin Law (1999) offers a helpful summary of the utility of mobility as an analytic tool for feminist geographers, contending:

Daily mobility incorporates a range of issues central to human geography, including the use of (unequally distributed) resources, the experience of social interactions in transport-related settings and participation in a system of cultural beliefs and practices. Attention to flows of people through the daily activity-space animates our understanding of geographic location of 'home and work', and links spatial patterns with temporal rhythms. It reminds us that while residential and employment location may be stable, human beings are not rooted in place, and that activity-space is not divided into a sterile dichotomy of (male) public and (female) private. Mobility is also a potent issue for local political struggles, drawing on the interests of individuals variously identified by class, gender, disability, age, and neighborhood residence. (Law, 1999, p. 574-5)

Law's summary emphasizes the markers of difference that shape and confine personal mobility, while also underscoring the interpretative and interactive nature of mobility.

Personal and collective mobility is as much based upon shared understandings and ideas as it is upon a physical form changing its position—the perceptible motion is bound up in imperceptible histories and connections, a dense fabric of forces and feelings imbuing the material form. The conditions and nature of one's mobility are integrally linked to a number of marginal characteristics, such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, citizenship, religion, and age. Doreen Massey (1993) considers the different ways that mobility can reflect inequalities, differentially positioning social groups in regards to flows and interconnections (1993, p.62), while Jennifer Hyndman (2004)

contends that “critical analysis of mobility at multiple scales opens up a space for developing common ground between feminist politics and political geography. Redefining scale changes the geometry of social and political power” (2004, p. 316). Hyndman continues, commenting that mobility can vary markedly across ‘axes of race, class, gender,’ while it is simultaneously framed by the unequal application of institutional policies and practices (2004, p. 316). As this claim reflects, the composition and evolution of patterns of mobility and restrictions therein can function as compelling indicators of a changing local quality of life, everyday reflections of broader power structures as they are embodied and understood.

In sharing some historical moments concerning mobility in el Paso del Norte, my explanation of current spatialities will be fortified through the integration of previous spatial realities that frame and influence the urban landscape of today. The following survey of past mobilities in this border settlement is by no means exhaustive, yet serves to reveal the dynamism and transnational nature of this locality. Through discussing some of the major changes that this area has beheld, the dynamism of perceptions of place, distance, and the local will be revealed.

### **Boom Town Sisters**

*“Go to El Paso, young man, and grow up with the city.”  
El Paso Daily Times, 1901 (García, 1981, p. 15)*

El Paso del Norte literally means “the Pass of the North,” an apt characterization of the role it played in Spanish northward exploration of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (City of El Paso, “Downtown El Paso History,” 2011). For the first several hundred years of this area’s

habitation by non-indigenous residents, it was an important stopping point along the Camino Real journey, which traversed the interior of Mexico to Santa Fe (City of El Paso, “Downtown El Paso History,” 2011). The physiographic character of the area, the pass of the Rio Grande/Bravo River through what are now called the Franklin Mountains, makes it an appropriate byway for travelers— and it long served as an outpost prior to becoming a major urban area. Additionally, the area has been long inhabited by tribal peoples such as the Tigua and Chiricahua, whose livelihoods following colonial settlement have been marked by increasing displacement, economic struggle, and political impuissance (Martínez, 2006, p. 72-3).

At el Paso del Norte the U.S.-Mexico borderline is transformed from a physiographic path following the Rio Grande, into a geometric line through the Mohave and Sonoran desert regions (Herzog, 1990, p. 35). In the year 1848, the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded much of the southwest to the U.S. and established this international borderline through el Paso del Norte. That same year, the discovery of gold in California brought hoards of fortune-seekers through the West, turning el Paso del Norte from a “quiet little adobe town...into a bustling, brawling frontier crossroads” (Timmons, 1990, p. 103). As was the case throughout much of the borderlands, between 1880 and 1920 the population of El Paso surged. El Paso’s rapid urbanization, propelled by mining, ranching, supply, tourism, and transportation, led it to be termed an “instant city” by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (García, 1981, p. 11). It should be noted that the tremendous wealth generated by El Paso’s ranching industry was entirely dependent on the cattle of northern Mexico (ibid, 1981, p. 23-4), an early indicator of the economic interdependence of this binational border community.



El Paso soon became known as the “Queen City of the Southwest,” due to its increased international commercial significance and status as a major receiving city for Mexican immigrants (García, 1981, p. 3-4). “Between 1880 and the beginning of the Great Depression almost 1 million Mexicans entered the United States, thousands first arriving in El Paso” (ibid, 1981, p. 4). During this period, the frequency and volume of cross border traffic increased exponentially. The first trolley service across the border began in 1881, underscoring the frequency of cross border traffic at this time (City of El Paso, Texas; “Downtown El Paso History,” 2011). Trolleys eventually gave way to electric trams, which then became buses, until public mass transit across the border ended in 1973 (ibid).

Since its division in 1848, this midpoint in the 2000 mile U.S./Mexico international boundary has more closely resembled a large gray fuzzy area than a clearly delineated separation. Indeed, according to border scholar Lawrence Herzog (1990), “the modern boundary that separates the two nations is hardly a logical one in terms of ecology, culture, and history” (p. 35), a comment that reflects the interconnectedness and interdependence of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. This integration across the international boundary can, to some extent, be linked to the relative isolation of these border communities from their own nationalist discourses.

In David Dorado Romo’s (2005), *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923*, he reflects that “*fronterizos*, people who live on the border, are unclassifiable hybrids. They are not exactly immigrants. Immigrants don’t cross back and forth as much. Border crossers are

a people on the margin. Not real Americans. Nor real Mexicans for that matter” (p. 11). And indeed, for Mexico, “historically, the northern zone has been seen as having economic interests, customs, and traditions vastly different from other parts of Mexico” (Martinez, 2006, p. 3). El Paso and Juárez alike have represented this singular image of the *frontera*; “El Paso symbolized to Mexicans what New York had represented to European immigrants: the opening to what they believed would be a better life” (García, 1981, p. 2).

While many border scholars have agreed that there is a distinctive borderland culture (Ruíz & Tiano, 1987, p. 3), this is not to indicate that international sister cities such as El Paso and Juárez are without division or inequality. Some scholars have emphasized the hybridity and fluidity of border life, viewing sister cities such as El Paso and Juárez as united cultural entities (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gómez-Peña, 1986; Saldívar, 1997). Although this viewpoint emphasizes a major strength of borderland communities, it is a partial explanation of border life. The political and economic realities of living at an international border play out along national lines, shaping and dividing the lived realities of residents along a number of lines of marginalization. Indeed, for much of El Paso’s history, schools and neighborhoods have been segregated (García 1981, p. 5), and the economic disparities of the region are profound. In this way, as the El Paso del Norte urban area has grown, there have been fundamental inequities characteristic of this growth, occurring based on distinctions of nationality, race, indigeneity, gender, and ethnicity.

During the turn of the century period (1880-1920), Ciudad Juárez was substantially smaller than El Paso (with a population of less than 20,000 in 1920 as

opposed to El Paso's 100,000) (García, 1981, p. 11; Esparza, 2004, p. 122). This imbalance in the population was amplified by the large number of refugees who fled Mexico into El Paso during the Mexican Revolution in order to escape the threat of violence, a mass movement that we see echoed in the recent events of el Paso del Norte. David Dorado Romo (2005) reflects upon this revolutionary era demographic shift, commenting: "Large numbers of both rich and poor Mexican refugees crossed over to El Paso and stayed for good. The influx of new residents created a boom in the city's economy and cultural life" (p. 136).

These twin cities were deeply interlinked, especially in times of conflict. Romo (2005) shares stories concerning how great of a draw the revolution was, noting the huge numbers of El Pasoans who would pay admission to sit on rooftops in downtown El Paso and watch the Battle of Juárez in 1911 (p. 86). He also specifies how there were American casualties and wounds during the revolution, as mortar and bullets flew across at the spectators (p. 83). This occurrence is interesting to consider in the modern context, as El Paso has reeled from bullets hitting downtown buildings linked to today's drug violence, and has absorbed a tremendous refugee population fleeing the tumult in Juárez. The cultural ramifications for these population shifts, both in the revolutionary era, and today, are incredibly similar, as El Paso businesses boomed, nightlife expanded, and *fronterizo* identities responded dynamically to political upheaval.

Ciudad Juárez's growth has largely been tied to the circulation of U.S. dollars across the border, with its initial boom occurring as El Paso's red light district closed and moved to Juárez in 1910 (García, 1981, p. 29), and the subsequent implementation of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment (U.S. prohibition) in 1918 (Romo, 2005, p. 145). The Prohibition era

brought a major tourist boom to U.S./Mexico border towns in general, and further amplified the existing economic interdependence of El Paso and Juárez (Martínez, 1975, p. 38). Juárez was soon referred to as the “Wettest spot on the Rio Grande,” as alcohol sales, gambling, prostitution, and drug availability flourished. The increase in southbound tourism was dramatic during this period: “Between 1918 and 1919, about 14,000 tourists crossed the border into Mexico; a year later the official U.S. Customs tally was 418,700” (Romo, 2005, p. 145).

It was during this U.S. Prohibition era that Juárez began to gain its reputation as a city of sin and degeneracy (Martínez, 1975, p. 57). This notoriety had implications for political perceptions of Juárez, as it was increasingly characterized as a “mere *barrio* of El Paso” (ibid, 1975, p. 63), with constant charges from Mexico’s interior of a ‘de-mexicanization’ occurring among northern borderlanders (ibid, 1975, p. 67). It is true that a distinctive borderland culture became more apparent at this point, and the money of tourists fueled nightlife and the various cultural forms of that time that were linked to it, such as jazz music, big band dance halls, distinguishing clothing styles, and other markers of what critics would call a ‘lifestyle of loose morals’ (Romo 2005, p. 140-6).

The U.S. side of the border did not experience these same national stigmatic effects, as the strong military presence of Fort Bliss (El Paso’s U.S. Army base) and evangelistic debates regarding the depravity of Juárez’s growing nightlife established El Paso’s Americanness (Timmons, 1990, p. 229). Ironically, although Juárez gained a reputation as an epicenter of crime and immorality, both the tourists spurring vice industry and the businesses producing the alcohol were from the United States. “During

the Prohibition most of the beer and liquor sold to Juárez saloons was manufactured by American firms that had relocated across the border,” (ibid, 1990, p. 229). This period of transnational exchange exemplifies the asymmetries and contradictions embedded in life on the frontier— at the edge of multiple worlds, existing in simultaneity.

The World War II era was a time of tremendous growth for el Paso del Norte, largely due to the implementation of the Bracero Program. This program, intended to ease the manpower shortage caused by the war, brought over four million Mexican workers for temporary employment in U.S. railways, agriculture, and food processing (Martínez, 1975, p. 110). This prompted a massive movement of *campesinos* without documentation, many of whom were subsequently expelled, in total an estimated 4.7 million immigrants between 1942 and 1960 (ibid, 1975, p. 110). Needless to say, these huge movements of workers had a significant impact on day-to-day realities for border cities, with population explosions for both El Paso and Juárez. Indeed, between 1950 and 1960, El Paso’s population doubled (City of El Paso, Texas; 2011), while Juárez’s population exploded from 48,881 in 1940 to 252,110 in 1960 (Lugo, 2008, p. 70).

The termination of the Bracero Program in 1964 meant 200,000 suddenly unemployed braceros at the border, and a continued northward flow of migrants from southern Mexico, looking for work. The official response to increasing unemployment rates came in the form of the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in 1966, a key part of which was the Maquiladora (Export Processing) Program (Lugo, 2008, p. 71). The BIP represented a “new departure from traditional forms of the international division of labor,” featuring “poor nations sending raw materials and commodity products to the

rich” (Seligson, 1981, p. 1). This program involved the creation of a “development” zone stretching along the U.S./Mexico border, where there were substantial incentives for U.S. plants to relocate and abundant cheap Mexican labor (Esparza, 2004, p. 123). This program represented an early manifestation of neoliberal economic globalization, and carried with it a number of implications for local understandings of place, urbanization, and patterns of mobility.

On a number of levels, the Border Industrialization Program represented an increasing asymmetry of benefits associated with Mexican industrial development in the neoliberal era. As the presence of foreign-owned factories increased, local economies responded to these new factory jobs, adjusting home, community, and economic livelihoods. In this emerging production structure, factory employees earned low wages, were identifiable through their ‘disposability,’ (Wright, 2006) and seldom reaped the benefits of the wealth that they were assisting in generating. Meanwhile, the maquiladora process focused solely on the final stages of production, removing Mexico from the processual interconnections and accumulation that would typify industrial development (Herzog, 1990, p. 53). Consequently, Ciudad Juárez gained employment from foreign-owned companies, but was an “export enclave,” characterized as little “islands of growth with no links to the economy,” (Gallagher, 2007, p. 9; Herzog, 1990, p. 54).

Nonetheless, the BIP steadily grew, with Mexico’s eventual full embrace of foreign direct investment (FDI) and policies characteristic of the Washington Consensus in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Gallagher, 2007, p. 1).

Mexico's signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) represented an official move to fully incorporate neoliberal economic policy, culminating years of neoliberal restructuring and locking in reforms for future generations. Under NAFTA, Mexico opened its markets further to foreign direct investment, largely coming from the United States (roughly eighty percent of *maquiladora* industries in Mexico have U.S. majority share-holders) (Wise, 1998, p. 56). Since 1994, many new jobs have been created throughout Mexico and especially along the northern border. However, as 96 percent of the new jobs generated between 1994 and 2002 were in the *maquila* sector, it should be noted that the jobs created are generally of "poor quality," without benefits and barely satisfying a declining minimum wage (Gallagher, 2007, p. 63).

The cancellation of the *bracero* program and the increased availability of *maquiladora* employment in Juárez led to a population explosion of unprecedented scope for the area. Between 1950 and 1990, the population increased by 450%, from 122,600 to 800,000, (Esparza, 2004, p. 125). Indeed, industrial labor soon came to overwhelmingly characterize the economic landscape of Ciudad Juárez, and by 2004, over 40% of the residents of this border city were employed in the industrial sector (ibid, 2004, p. 127). The city also grew geographically during this period, expanding spatially by 318% between the years of 1960 and 1980 (ibid, 2004, p. 128). As will be discussed in later sections analyzing interviews, the social and geographic divisions of the "old" and "new" Juárez from this period of growth can be clearly discerned when communicating with locals. The associated urban imaginary is one in which there is a "real" Juárez of Juarenses, and then there is the newer, southern section of the city, which is associated with recent migrants from the interior— a "false" Juárez, so to speak.

The rapid population boom that Juárez absorbed due to the availability of factory work from the sixties through the nineties was not met with corresponding infrastructural developments to the city. Rosa Linda Fregoso (2003) discusses this inadequate response in her book *MeXicana encounters: the making of social identities on the borderlands*, where she comments on the unevenness of Ciudad Juárez's development, identifying the lack of "housing, sewage, electricity, health and other basic services ... to accommodate the many poor immigrants recruited from southern Mexico and Central America by the maquiladora industry" (p. 8). Indeed, driving through the more recent portions of the city today, one can easily observe the discrepancies in the nature of this city's growth, as new residents were accommodated in more and more ramshackle settings.

In a detailed quantitative exploration of levels of deprivation (or the physical and institutional conditions that detrimentally affect quality of life) throughout the city of Juárez in the years 1990 and 1995, Esparza et al. (2004) observed "industrialization spurred rapid population growth that was channeled into the south and west of the preindustrial central city. Levels of deprivation, in turn, mirror the pattern of sequential expansion, with the most recent and deprived neighborhoods located at the city's periphery" (p. 133). Esparza's (2004) research was part of a broader project to investigate the local effects of globalization, and it demonstrated clearly that, in the case of Ciudad Juárez, industrial development associated with globalization has carried tremendous implications for the lived realities of locals.

Esparza's (2004) study hints at what I consider to be a key insight regarding mobility in Juárez: as the city has grown, the poorest residents must travel farther and



farther both to be able to access the international borderline, and often to access employment. The barriers in the material conditions of transit also worsen as one moves into the peripheral areas of the city, creating an additional impediment to travel beyond the physical distance (p. 131-4). So here we have a transformation of Juarese mobility that emerges as a result of industrial development and geographic expansion- an increasingly classed experience of movement, where these class divisions echo divisions between “new” and “old” Juárez, recent immigrants from the South and “real” Juarenses.

Through these industrial expansions, population shifts, and changing social understandings, an urban morphology has emerged of a large binational metropolis, characterized by its interdependence with either side, and mutual dependence on neoliberal economic reform and the presence of foreign-owned (primarily U.S.) factories. Sweeping changes in el Paso del Norte, especially those following the institution of the Border Industrialization Program, have carried significant ramifications for local residents, modifying livelihoods, the composition of the city, and what it is to be a *fronterizo* (borderlander). The following section will explore the changes associated with maquila expansion as experienced by residents, specifically considering the gendered implications of these emerging economic forms.

### **Factory Fronterizas and Femicidio**

The growth of maquila employment in el Paso del Norte did not merely constitute an upheaval to local economic realities and urban morphology, but also substantially shifted family dynamics and gender norms. In the 20-30 years following the inception of

the Border Industrialization Program, the significant majority of *maquila* workers were women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four (between 65 and 90 percent) (Herzog, 1990, p. 55). This trend was not surprising, in that *maquiladora* employment necessitated a cheap, unskilled, and “flexible” labor pool, of which women, the more vulnerable component of the working class, served as an ideal source (Lugo, 2008, p. 82). The increased presence of women in the paid labor force represented a major shift, however, in both norms of the workplace and of the home.

According to Altha Cravey (1998) in her book, *Women and Work in Mexico's Maquiladoras*, “an array of state policies, beginning with the Border Industrialization Program ... eroded a comprehensive factory regime based on a male, unionized, fairly well paid, stable workforce” (p. 114-5). She then demonstrates how this regime transition entailed an upheaval of household structures, as the single wage nuclear family model (where the male head figure generated income and the female head was responsible for domestic tasks) became far less viable (1998, p. 118). Cravey explains:

Since the family wage has been dismantled in the new factory regime, class and gender processes within households have become the locus of additional struggle and negotiation. The male worker... continues to struggle with himself over conventional notions of gender but, as a result of household negotiations, is actively creating new conventions by sharing the burden of domestic labor with his wife. His struggles and those of others like him result in the invention of new male (and female) identities, (1998, p. 126).

Cravey's study revealed the flexible and varied ways in which the new factory regime played out in terms of household dynamics; however, in other studies of this transition that will be discussed next, the resulting status of women is framed in more dire terms.

With the advent of globalized industrial development in Juárez and the en masse integration of women into the labor force, the prevailing media sentiment was that this would result in increasing liberation of women from long-standing patriarchal constraints, through added social and economic independence (Fernández-Kelly, 1983, p. 133). As Patricia Fernández-Kelly (1983) contends in her lauded work, *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier*, this was not the manner that the growing maquila sector affected Juarenses culture. Through extensive ethnographic research, Fernández-Kelly (1983) discusses the manner in which traditional family chore structures and child-rearing expectations did not change even as female family members were working long hours at the factory, creating the 'double-duty' of household tasks and wage labor (p. 137). The tension embedded in this scenario is evident, as the burdens placed on female family members increase, and the hours in the day do not. Additionally, the social pressure upon the male head of household to provide for the family, economically, is threatened by the income generated through female family members (ibid, 1983, p. 134).

It follows then, that the emergence of women into the Juarenses workforce has not resulted in substantial liberation from long-lasting patriarchal forces:

Researchers consistently agree that maquiladora work for women has neither enhanced their position in the family nor eroded the impact of patriarchy in their lives. Instead, they have been hired for their presumed docility and the gendered attitudes that produce sex-based discrimination in Mexico, are firmly reflected in prevailing wage differences in the maquiladoras between men and women. (Arreola, 2000, p. 799)

However, the nature and experience of maquiladora employment in Juárez has neither been static nor singular, and the localized experience of gender, class, and community is

a continually evolving and dynamic reality, only partly revealed through the studies and observations cited here. Neoliberal industrial development in Juárez has indeed carried tremendous implications for the manner in which women (in particular) are navigating public spaces; however, this trend represents part of a broader political and societal atmospheric shift, in which the expectations of women as public actors has evolved considerably.

The uneasy emergence of women upon the factory frontier should also be placed in the longer term allegorical context of Mexican gender roles. There is an archetypal violation that occurs through this transformation and feminization of the industrial labor force, and it can be discerned through the discourse that has surrounded these sweeping changes to the Mexican labor force. It is widely known that Mexico has long had strictly defined gender roles, explained here by Elvia Arriola (2000):

“Machismo,” or “male chauvinism,” has traditionally called for men to be sexually aggressive, independent and emotionally restrained, the wage-earner, and the ultimate patriarchal authority over wife, children, and servants, if any, in the household...The gender role for women, in contrast, has been described as *Marianismo*, a role modeling based upon the legendary image of the *La Virgen María*, the mother of Jesus Christ. Given the prominence of Catholicism in Mexico, *Marianismo* has influenced generations of women to be dependent on their fathers, husbands, or elder male relatives. The women are responsible for the domestic chores and completely selfless and devoted to her family and children. (p. 777)

While these essentialized figures are a narrow frame through which to view a diverse and rich culture, they do continue to hold strong sway in depictions and understandings of the Mexican people, even as they are eternally contested and upended.

Furthermore, La Malinche, the mistress of the conqueror Cortez, is a central figure in the gendered imaginings of Mexican culture. The independence day cry of

“¡Viva Mexico, hijos de la Chingada!” or “Long live Mexico, children of the violated mother!” refers to the sexual conquest of Mexico that bred *mestizaje*, or a nation of mixed indigenous and Spanish ancestry. In his famous text, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Octavio Paz elaborates on the tension bound in the figure of la Malinche, “She embodies the open, the *chingado*, to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians...The malinchistas are those who want Mexico to open itself to the outside world...once again we see the opposition between the closed and the open” (1985, p. 86). These archetypes hold a strong captivation throughout Mexico, and the associations that they entail can extend to broad ranging aspects of Mexican society.

Pablo Vila (2003) discusses the role of the narrative of la Malinche in the frequent conflation of female maquila workers with prostitutes, arguing that the violated female body (maquila worker) is synecdochic of the Mexican social system being corrupted by American influence through U.S. factory jobs (2003, p. 77-9). Vila bridges this conversation concerning the sexualization of female maquila workers with a commentary on perceptions of borderlanders in general, as they are frequently associated with hypersexuality and vice (2003, p. 80). Indeed, this reputation has stuck since the notoriety gained in prohibition days, and Juárez continues to struggle with its stigma of lawlessness, banditry, and prostitution (Vila, 2003, p. 79-80). For Juarenses women, this stereotype is especially potent, as economic or social independence becomes perceptually coupled with the negative sexual implications of the *chingado* archetypal role. Vila comments, “We can easily see how difficult it is for Juárez’s females to construct a positive narrative identity when they continuously confront this negative image of their city and its inhabitants, a city of vice and prostitutes” (2003, p. 84).

This narrative of Juárez's contamination by vice and cultural degradation linked to U.S. influence and globalization has also been invoked in discussions of another more brutal phenomenon the city has seen: the growth of feminicides, or (female) gender-based killings, occurring in Ciudad Juárez from the early nineties through the present. Although finding accurate data concerning the victims of femicide is nearly impossible, many media sources cite more than 400 murders as having occurred in Juárez between 1993 and 2005, often involving torture and rape (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 2010, p. 119; Fregoso et al., 2010, p. xix). In their work, *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*, Rosa Linda Fregoso et al. (2010) offer a more comprehensive definition of 'femicide' beyond the traditional "murder of women and girls because they are female," by implicating both the state and individual perpetrators, be they private or state actors (p. 5). In highlighting the structural and institutional factoring contributing to feminicides, Fregoso et al. draw attention to the impunity which has long characterized criminal proceedings regarding gender based violence in Mexico and elsewhere. Additionally, this work identifies femicide as a form of systemic violence, "rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities" (2010, p. 5). Indeed, part of the purpose of bringing in a discussion of the occurrence of feminicides in Juárez as part of this borderlands history segment, is to identify the powerful narratives and systemic forces at play in gendered realities of place.

Although the crimes themselves are horrendous, the official response to these crimes is just as frequently chastised, as the perpetrators of feminicides have seldom been brought to justice.

Edward Buscaglia, who was a member of the Commission of Experts from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, argues in the judicial audit of September 2003 that the impunity of the judicial system in the State of Chihuahua is one of the strongest determining factors in the violence against women because of “the systematic abuse of procedural and substantive discretion.” (Fregoso et al, 2010, p. 183)

Pervasive distrust of police officers is characteristic of most Juarenses (and was uniformly observed in interviews), and for good reason. “Their [Mexican official’s] refusals to recognize this systemic violence and to implement effective policies against it have left women and teenage girls without protection,” (Harrington, 2010, p. 158). Clearly, this climate of gender-based violence and impunity is a significant factor to consider when analyzing public behavior in Ciudad Juárez, and will be referenced and reflected upon in interviews, as it plays largely into current understandings of being a woman in this border metropolis.

The political and discursive response to femicides in Juárez and other border cities sheds light on the institutional forms of patriarchy that exist in Mexican society, as violence against women is rationalized and dismissed. Melissa Wright argues that a predominant ‘blame the victim’ manner of explaining the femicides has been employed among media portrayals of the crimes. Wright (2006) explores how Spanish criminologist José Parra Molina explained the rampant crimes in 1998 to Mexican officials, discussing how Molina’s narrative of the crimes “explains that exposure to the United States [through maquila employment and proximity] has eroded traditional Mexican values to such a degree that young women are offering themselves, through their impudent behavior, to their murderers” (2006, p. 75). In this borderland narrative of the femicides, the victims are often accused of leading double lives, in which they work

in the factory by day and on the streets at night (Wright, 2006, p. 74-77). “The silent corollary to this... is the understanding that “Men will be men,” especially macho men, and if a woman is out drinking or partying or dancing on Juárez Avenida, then she should be prepared for the risks” (Wright, 2006, p. 77).

Additionally, the feminicides in Juárez have consistently been tied to maquiladora employment among scholars and members of the media (Olivera 2006, Landau and Angulo, 2000). Ranging from the sensationalistic critique of globalization to more nuanced discussions of female bodies in the factory machine, the association between maquiladora labor and femicide offers a fascinating yet partial explanation of these horrible and rampant crimes. Melissa Wright (2006) explores representations of Mexican female factory workers in her text, *Disposable Women and other Myths of Global Capitalism*, using a Marxian explanation of the transformation of labor power into waste, in which she notes that “the laborer who is worth less than her labor is, in the story of turnover, eventually worthless even as she creates value” (p. 78). Wright ties this discussion of the disposable third world woman into her analysis of the murders of women in Juárez, offering a keen reflection on both the nature of these crimes and the official response to them (utter and total impunity, demonstrating the disposability of the poor Mexican female body).

The occurrence of femicides, while less frequently discussed in popular media today throughout el Paso del Norte, is nonetheless a key facet to the fronterizo psyche, particularly for women, as it represents both an anonymous threat through its mystery and an official dismissal in the response it garnered. In terms of mobility, the occurrence of



femicides is noteworthy as it is often linked to the dangers that poor people face when navigating the city.

The victims are usually workers in the maquiladoras, waiters, laborers in the informal economy, or students. Most live in poverty, often with children to support. They have no option but to travel alone on the long bus rides from the poor suburbs surrounding Ciudad Juárez to and from their place of work or study. (Harrington, 2010, p. 158)

The peripheral nature of these crimes is a key aspect of their representation, as the victims of these crimes are characterized as living in the outskirts, traveling about the city (at night, wildly), and then their used and discarded bodies are returned to the edges of the city, lost and abandoned in the brutal desert landscape. However, the victimization and discarding associated with femicides has now given way in popular discourse to the ever-increasing casualties associated with Mexico's drug conflict. As a way to contextualize Mexico's current climate of narco-trafficking and cartel violence, the following section discusses el Paso del Norte as a major portal for drug entry in the United States, discussing how border policies have evolved, and what the growth of the city has implied for its role as a junction of drug transit.

### **Hard Drugs-Hardening Borderline**

The role of el Paso del Norte as a key drug trafficking hub between Mexico and the United States represents a key contextual element to the violence that plagues Juárez today. According to Howard Campbell (2009) in his book, *Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez*, "the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez region has

been a smuggler's paradise for at least a hundred years" (p. 30). Campbell's ethnography of drug trafficking in El Paso and Juárez offers fascinating insights about narco-culture, elaborating on the ways that the transnational drug industry plays out in local day-to-day realities. Describing the ways in which el Paso del Norte provides an ideal stage for drug smuggling, Campbell comments: "The local landscape provides myriad spaces for imaginative traffickers... Besides the many rural, riverine smuggling venues, drug traffickers also take advantage of the many connections between the two massive, densely intertwined cities of El Paso and Juárez," (2009, p. 30-1).

Aside from being structurally suitable for moving large quantities of drugs, Campbell also reflects upon how the tremendous number of migrants from the south has provided an excellent reserve army for the cartels, as most live in impoverished conditions and would be willing to make good money through working for cartels (p. 32). Moreover, Campbell (2009) reflects that "the enormous maquiladora industry and related El Paso long-haul trucking industry provide the heavy-duty eighteen wheelers and every possible storage facility, tool, equipment, or supply needed to package, conceal, store, and transport contraband drugs," (p. 32). In this context then, it is not surprising that the drug industry has experienced a recent surge in this borderland metropolis, coinciding with a U.S. recession that eliminated thousands of maquiladora jobs from the cartel's 'reserve army' (Kolenc, 2010). Specifically, the El Paso Times cites a loss of more than 83,000 maquila jobs in Juárez between January 2008 and June 2009 (ibid, 2010).

The methods employed by those involved in narco-industry in Juárez are, of course, inextricably linked to both the extent of U.S. demand and the permeability of the

international borderline. A 2010 report to the U.S. Congress acknowledged, “Drug demand in the United States fuels a multi-billion dollar illicit industry. In 2008, about 20.1 million individuals were current (past month) illegal drug users, representing 8% of individuals aged 12 and older” (Seelke, 2010, p. 9). This movement of illegal drugs through the area has played a major role in shaping the experience of crossing the international bridge that divides El Paso and Juárez, an activity that occurs regularly among many residents of el Paso del Norte. Howard Campbell (2009) suggests:

U.S. border law enforcement in the DWZ [Drug War Zone], like Mexican narco-culture, generates a kind of cultural economy of its own. Like narco-culture, key features of border antidrug law enforcement include processes of seclusion and public presentation...Other aspects of the cultural economy of border antidrug efforts include processes of symbolic classification of the civilian population into categories of criminal versus noncriminal, legal versus illegal, etc. (p. 175-6)

Indeed, the evolution of the border antidrug apparatus has carried broad implications for all border residents, regardless of their connection or disconnection from illicit industry.

The international bridges in el Paso del Norte are extremely busy places: a 2011 Texas Department of Transportation document revealed that in 2010 over 60,000 passenger cars and 22,000 pedestrians crossed the border in el Paso del Norte daily (Cambridge Systematics, Inc., 2011, p. 1-1). This same study found that “industries reliant on border crossings account for about 115,000 jobs in El Paso County, 559,000 direct jobs in Chihuahua, and 19,000 jobs in Doña Ana County” (Cambridge Systematics, Inc., 2011, p. 2-6). What these numbers reflect, and yet do not entirely convey, is that crossing the borderline is an integral component of living in both El Paso and Juárez. As national policy changes are implemented upon this international port of entry, these changes are acutely felt among residents. Beyond border crossing related to employment,

myriad recreational, familial, and cultural practices lend to an transnational border environment, wherein residents anticipate some amount of fluidity in movement between the sister cities.

However, the extent of permeability across the international borderline has undergone some tremendous transformations throughout the past century, as the U.S.-Mexico border has become a major site of national security policy and reform. As someone who has resided in El Paso since childhood, I can attest to the dramatic effect that policies from D.C. have had on the cultural landscape of el Paso del Norte. Depending upon perceived national imperatives of the time, the borderline in el Paso del Norte has softened and hardened, driving the movements and urban imaginations of local residents as governmental stances evolve. In this way, it is evident that el Paso del Norte is an especially poignant example of national and international actors playing out on a local stage. The following section briefly touches upon some significant moments in the history of the international borderline at el Paso del Norte.

The Immigration Law of 1917 passed as the U.S. entered WWI, and required that crossers have a passport, pass a literacy test, and pay a head tax (Romo, 2005, p. 229). It was with the passage of this protocol that the division of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez was first solidified. Prior to this measure, crossing the border had required no identification or interrogation, and the union of el Paso del Norte was evident in commercial, social, cultural patterns of activity (Romo, 2005, p. 228). Additionally, the U.S. Public Health Service published the “Manual for the Physical Inspection of Aliens,” which outlined the numerous types of ‘defective’ individuals who should be denied admittance into this

country, including homosexuals, imbeciles, physical defectives, alcoholics, anarchists, and persons afflicted with loathsome diseases (Romo, 2005, p. 229).

It was in this context that the implementation of a brutal quarantine policy at the border occurred, beginning in 1917. Largely fueled by racism (with limited actual risk of disease outbreak), hundreds of thousands of Mexican border crossers were stripped naked, inspected, bathed in chemical agents including “gasoline, kerosene, sodium cyanide, cyanogen, sulfuric acid, DDT,” and Zyklon B (later used in Nazi Germany to exterminate “pests”) (Romo, 2005, 241-3). This forced ‘bathing’ of Mexican border-crossers demonstrated the incredible cruelty and racism that often permeated early renderings of border policy, and was a policy linked to modern day prejudices of ‘dirty Mexicans,’ with officials at the time wondering why they would ‘not want to be clean’ (Romo, 2005, p. 237-43). Despite significant protests (including the “bath riots” at the Santa Fe bridge in 1917, during which those subject to inspection at the border blockaded all cross-border traffic to express their dissent), this brutal example of institutionalized racism continued for *more than 40 years* in el Paso del Norte (Romo, 2005, 237-43), and reflects the tremendous external forces that divided and affected local people.

This quarantine inspection did not occur evenly across Mexican border crossers, but was implemented selectively, as travelers were divided into categories of first and second class (Romo, 2005, p. 234). In the early years of this new border policy, the number of refugees who could flee the violent Mexican Revolution was dramatically reduced, presumably divided along class lines (Romo, 2005, p. 255). Here we find another echo of the past in the events of today, as the ability of border residents to avoid

risk was limited by political status and economic class, along with a host of other marginalized statuses that are often linked to prejudice. As we move forward in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at el Paso del Norte, we can bear in mind that, although El Paso and Juárez continued to constitute a highly interdependent and unified metropolis following this dramatic first iteration of the hardening borderline, the presence of nationally and internationally imposed strictures on the local population continually have served to demarcate and separate this binational border community.

Joseph Nevins (2002) reflects in his text, *Operation Gatekeeper*,

In a little more than a 100 years, the governments of the United States and Mexico eliminated the frontier and constructed an international boundary. During this period, the dividing line between the two countries became increasingly real in the sense of having a physical presence characterized by entry and exit points, fences and other physical demarcations, and patrols and inspections by a variety of law enforcement bodies. In other ways, however, the division between Mexico and the United States became increasingly blurry- more a border than a boundary- as transboundary links intensified, a process greatly facilitated by the high levels of population growth in the border region. (p. 45)

His analysis of the nature of cross-border traffic demonstrates an intrinsic tension, in that efforts to increase the impermeability of the international barrier are tempered with simultaneous desires to enable the free movement of capital between countries. To consider this differently, the politics of consumption and accumulation have run in opposition to xenophobic urges, bent on keeping the outsiders out.

Nevins elaborates on the treatment of Mexican border crossers throughout history, quoting historian George Sanchez, who notes that the creation of the U.S. border patrol was “crucial in defining the Mexican as ‘the other,’ ‘the alien’ in the region.... [U.S.

immigration officials] would constantly denigrate those who crossed at the bridge, even if their papers were perfectly legal” (2002, p. 53). The public sentiment which has framed the treatment of Mexican immigrants entering the U.S. has drifted between poles of greater acceptance and utter exclusion, often coinciding with periods of expansion and recession (Massey, 2003, p. 8), and these pendulum swings have been materially evident in the nature of passage between El Paso and Juárez. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, public sentiment became more relaxed in regards to border traffic, and the movement of Mexican immigrants across the border received little attention, while in the late 60’s and 70’s, national dialogue increasingly fretted over the porous borderline and the potential threat it represented (Nevins, 2002, p. 77).

Despite the power and scale of nationally implemented border policies in el Paso del Norte, local residents have not been passive witnesses to broad scale changes in the international borderline. A significant example of the collective response to Border Patrol abuses came in the form of the landmark Bowie lawsuit in 1992 staged against the El Paso Border Patrol. This suit was brought by students at Bowie High School (a school located adjacent to the border, where students and faculty faced frequent abuse by Border Patrol agents), and emerged as a reaction to the proclivity of Border Patrol agents to stop persons who appeared to be of Mexican descent on the streets in El Paso and demand to see proof of their legal status (Dunn, 2009, p. 21). “This meant that out on the streets of El Paso, Hispanic residents had to be prepared to prove their right to be in this country at all times or face the prospect of arrest, detention, and possibly even deportation by Border Patrol agents,” (Dunn, 2009, p. 21). In Timothy Dunn’s (2009) work, *Blockading the Border and Human Rights: The El Paso Operation that Remade Immigration*

*Enforcement*, the significance of the Bowie decision is explored, as it established the limits of immigration security policy, even while also highlighting the disparity in rights afforded to local citizens and noncitizens, considering that noncitizen students were not allowed to participate in the suit as plaintiffs despite numerous claims of abuses (Dunn, 2009, p. 42).

In 1993, Operation Blockade (later referred to as Operation Hold the Line) went into effect, largely inspired by the ruling of the Bowie suit, with an emphasis on a deterrence and displacement strategy of border policing, as opposed to the prior focus on detaining undocumented border crossers after they were already in the U.S. (Dunn, 2009, p. 61). This move represented a turn towards hardening the borderline, which was greatly tempered by the contrasting interest in creating an environment conducive to NAFTA reform, with openness for trade and commerce. Additionally, following the implementation of Operation Blockade reforms, discussion began to circulate regarding the construction of a border wall west of El Paso, which would eventually come to pass, despite widespread protest among residents (Dunn, 2009, p. 193). Likely the most significant impact of these reforms for el Paso del Norte was the invisibilization of Mexican border crossers, who could previously be seen on inner tubes, floating between downtown Juárez and El Paso, as they now crossed more discreetly (at night, or a greater distance from the city center) and stayed longer (Dunn, 2009, p. 87). Although the reforms of Operation Blockade carried significant implications for undocumented immigrants crossing the border, they were largely well received by local residents, and the experience of crossing the international bridge was not notably altered, as documented residents continued to cross back and forth with relative ease.



In 2001, the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks dramatically altered the dynamic of crossing the border, both temporally and interpersonally. From my personal experience as a high school student in El Paso, I can clearly recall the state of chaos that affected so many schools, communities, and places of employment as the border was closed in reaction to the perceived heightened risk of terrorism. Tony Payan (2006) comments in his book, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security*, “probably no other region in the country paid as high a price as the U.S.-Mexico border did for the tragic events of that day” (2006, p. xii). His comments regarding the upheaval and transformation of the border following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks refer not only to the tremendous inconvenience that El Pasoans and Juarenses faced when trying to conduct their daily duties, but also to the changing discourse surrounding immigration security, as it became conflated with the risk of terrorism, and how this conflation was performed on the international borderline. “With the terrorist attacks of 2001, trade, trucks, vehicles, student and tourist visa holders, cross-border workers, etc.- all border crossers- became suspect” (Payan, 2006, p. xiii).

As binational mobility has evolved in El Paso and Juárez, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> carried major implications for subsequent bridge crossings. This topic emerged frequently in interviews, as participants explained that prior to 9/11, one could anticipate a relatively short wait (15-20 minutes) at the bridge, unless it was a holiday, or during certain rush periods. Following the increased security efforts associated with 9/11, the wait times at the bridge have been much longer (2-3 hours), and largely unpredictable. This characteristic of border crossing has diminished slightly as the years have passed,

but the wait time is still consistently longer than it was pre-9/11, typically lasting around an hour.

### **The Growing Chasm in El Paso del Norte**

More recently, the tensions embedded in borderland life have reached a breaking point as drug violence has hit Juárez explosively. Fallout is absorbed in El Paso, where tragedy manifests as an economic boon. Since 2008, Ciudad Juárez has been marred by increasing violence, destruction, and upheaval, as an extreme escalation of a conflict between rival drug cartels seeking access to U.S. markets has turned Juárez into the most dangerous city in the world. With a homicide rate of 229 per 100,000 people as reported by the 2010 Mexican census (Minjáles, 2011), this city of 1.3 million has witnessed the killings of 9,752 people since early 2008, accompanied by countless instances of kidnapping and extortion, creating an environment of lawlessness and mayhem (Molloy, 2011; Giovine, 2011; Minjáles, 2011). In response to growing violence, there has been a mass exodus of individuals, families, and businesses from Juárez, many displaced into El Paso. The International Displacement Monitoring Centre has estimated that around 230,000 individuals have fled Juárez, with about half of that number crossing the border into the U.S. (2010, p. 73). Additionally, a considerable amount of the commercial activity of remaining Juarenses has moved to El Paso (Miglierini, 2010; Licón, 2010).

What remains in Juárez following this exodus? The Municipal Planning Institute has reported that as many as 116,000 homes are abandoned, or about 25% of the houses

in the city (International Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2010, p. 73; Martinez, 2011), while the city's urban planning department has announced that remaining residents have implemented street closings: erecting gates and posting security guards, with a total of 2,011 streets closed in the city (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2011). Meanwhile, scores of business establishments have closed throughout Juárez, ostensibly due to the increased prevalence of *cuota* requests (cartel protection fees) and threats: the Latin American Herald Tribune (2011) reports that some 300 bars and 4,000 restaurants have closed since early 2009, with total estimates by the Mexican Chamber of Commerce of around 10,000 businesses closed throughout the city (Gomez-Licón, 2010). Many business owners have restarted their enterprises across the border in El Paso, even forming a Juarese business owners association based in El Paso called, *La Red* (Gomez-Licón, 2010).

This is a time of tremendous change for el Paso del Norte. Whereas previous estimates had placed the population of Juárez at 1.2 million, and El Paso at 665,000 (City of El Paso; "City Stats," 2010), the city of El Paso now states on its website that "no reliable estimates exist as to how many people have left the area [of Juárez]... so we are unable to publish any reasonably accurate figure [for Juárez's population]" (City of El Paso; "City Stats," 2011). Although estimates do exist regarding the amount of displaced persons who have relocated to El Paso, we should bear in mind the complexities of borderland existence, in that many residents of Juárez are U.S. citizens- I can recall the jokes about downtown El Paso's Providence Hospital, where so many babies from Juarese parents are born after making the short walk across the bridge.

The level of destruction and devastation that remains in Juárez is nothing short of horrifying, as roughly 98.5% of crimes in Mexico go unpunished (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2010), and some 10,000 children are now orphaned in Juárez, facing limited support in social services and grim prospects for the future of their hometown (Gomez-Licón, 2010). The brazen nature of the crimes committed is a key component of the new visual landscape of Juárez, where threats scrawled in blood, brutal scenes of violence can be encountered in main thoroughfares, beheld by passersby. Strangely, amid this rampant violence and lawlessness in Juárez, El Paso has seen crime rates reduce to the point where it was recently voted the safest large city in the United States, with only 5 homicides in 2010 as compared to Juárez's 3622 killings that year (Gaynor, 2010; Molloy, 2011).<sup>3</sup>

And who are the dead of Juárez? Look to the newspapers, and the most common description will be that they are cartel killings: narco recruits shot by other narcos, or by the police. This is true to an extent; there are a great many cartel-related killings that plague the Juárez cityscape. However, the number of innocent bystanders or unfortunate scapegoats who exist within these tallies can scarcely be estimated, sufficed to say that there are a great many people dying whose level of connection to the cartels is dubious. There are also demographic trends occurring within the large numbers of the dead, where the vast majority of the fallen are young men, between the ages of 18-35, and increasing numbers of minors are dying (Gutierrez, 2011; Molloy, 2010). The number of women

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<sup>3</sup> Since 2008, New Mexico State University librarian Molly Molloy has kept a daily tally of the number of killings in Ciudad Juárez, as part of a comprehensive database she maintains concerning the violence in this region. Her numbers are widely considered to be the most accurate available, although she regularly discusses the limitations to true numerical representations of the violence on the Frontera listserv she runs—an email list followed by hundreds of border scholars.

killed has consistently hovered around 10% of total deaths in the city (Molloy, 2010). The pervasiveness of death and insecurity is evident not only through the dwindling commercial culture and scenes of violence, but also through the increasingly militaristic official methods of addressing local crime.

Beginning in 2006, Mexico's President Calderon has been waging an offensive against the drug cartels. As violence and impunity have increased along the northern border, thousands of federal troops have been brought, in order to keep the peace. In Juárez, the presence of over 10,000 troops has done little to quell the violence, as homicide rates have soared following their introduction (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2011). A plan to impose "safe corridors" throughout the city was largely a failure, as crime rates along the patrolled byways actually increased with the heightened troop presence (Torres, 2011). Experientially, the increased troop presence in Juárez translates into a cityscape that carries more and more markings of militarism, and feels increasingly like a war zone. For example, driving through a 'safe corridor' involves being stopped repeatedly at sequential intersections, while young men wielding machine guns peer into your vehicle. Crossing the bridge into Juárez, the signs of this increased militarism are immediately discernible, as army jeeps and camouflage-clad young men are now permanently assembled just past the tolled entry.

This current context seems exceptionally bleak and disheartening, yet amid the turmoil of cartel violence there is resilience and reinvention. In many ways, the bridges separating El Paso and Juarez have extended from the length of the narrow Rio Grande to the immeasurable distance of a massive chasm that exists between the sociopolitical and

economic context of the United States and that of Mexico. Border scholar Tony Payan (2006) comments, “The residents of the U.S.-Mexico border straddle two languages, two cultures, two legal systems, two economic systems, two currencies, and two political systems, and most of them do it with great ease,” (p. 5). Now, as the barriers of long wait times, increasing danger in travel, and polarizing discourse are compounded, those who continue to surmount this chasm find ways to adapt and endure- the experience of which comprises the focus of the following investigation.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Methodological Approach

7/16/10

*I drive to a part of El Paso I didn't know existed. The clouds are ominous and dark in the sky on the way. In order to get to this area, just east of downtown, I drive through a winding passage of refineries, where roads have names like Chevron Way. I can't imagine that I'm en route to a residential area, the surroundings are so entirely industrial. Bumpy and bumpier roads bring me to her house, where two little boys are playing in the front yard while an old hound dog watches. She and I sit in her kitchen and discuss her life. The little boys are her grandsons. As she describes the past years of tremendous loss, thunder shakes the foundations. We frequently stop our conversation to marvel at the torrential downpour. I later find out that this area and others face destructive flooding almost every monsoon season, and this storm in particular damages several houses and makes a number of roads impassable. She makes me coffee and is so hospitable. The boys are running in and out, drenched from playing in the rain.*  
- Field notes related to interview with Celia

Striving to learn something about day-to-day mobility in the borderland metropolis of El Paso del Norte, I conducted 34 semi-structured interviews in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua during a two week period in December of 2009 and a six week period in June and July of 2010. This was not my first time visiting this area; I have intermittently resided in El Paso since childhood, and have family in both El Paso and Juárez. In my youth, I crossed the border regularly into Juárez: going to the fair in the summer, visiting the gigantic *mercado* (market), attending mass in the beautiful Juárez Cathedral, dancing at the weddings of relatives at Cibeles (the city's grand convention center). In high school, I would park with friends in downtown El Paso and walk across the bridge to the strip of bars in Juárez. The drinking age was 18, but girls were eagerly ushered in regardless of age. We would sip on Coronitas and dance to the

American music that blared. These bars, so close the bridge, catered to kids like us— as did the swarm of vendors who filled the streets.

Walking along that same strip today one is greeted by a vastly different scene. The vendors are mostly gone, as are the bars by and large. Spray painted on boarded-up storefronts is “Sin mi Edo,” (see Figure 2). A play on words, this scrawl means both ‘without fear (*miedo*),’ and ‘without my state (*mi Edo /Estado*).’ In this place one now sees army jeeps, young men with semi-automatic weapons, and the steady stream of people coming and going—people who have somewhere to be, somewhere other than here. Downtown Juárez today is considered to be quite dangerous, and for this reason, it has quieted considerably. The *mercado* is closed now, coincident with many other businesses around the city. The stories of transformation told to me by interviewees are echoed in the urban landscapes of Juárez.



Figure 2. Sin Miedo graffiti, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; photo by author.



The interviews conducted in the winter of 2009 and summer of 2010 were shaped and propelled by my personal experiences in the area, interests that emerged through years of beholding the turbulent changing morphology of the region. I aimed to foster an interview environment that was comfortable and engaging for both the participant and myself; I encouraged participants to share their opinions on wide-ranging issues, and would often ask if there was a better question I could be posing in regards to a particular issue. I went into interviews with a basic premise concerning how things would go and a roster of questions and topics that would typically emerge, yet would often encourage the participant to dictate which topics were of greatest interest or concern within the general focus area of mobility and local identity in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.

The design of this thesis was intended to be responsive and collaborative, influenced by feminist critiques of neopositivist research methods, seeking to disrupt rigid traditional notions of objectivity and object/subject dichotomies (England, 1994, p. 242). Adopting a reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork, I sought to continually engage with my status as a researcher, questioning how power dynamics and preconceptions can influence the research process, while striving to foster a cooperative and open interview setting.

My participant pool comprised women ranging in age from late teens (18+) to mid-seventies, with the only requirements of participation being that they had 1) participated in the wage labor force in either El Paso or Juárez, and 2) had cross-border familial or community connections. For this project on borderland mobility, I opted to speak solely with women. This decision was based on my knowledge of the history of

gender violence in the region and my interest in exploring the differential navigation of *female* bodies through space in this borderland metropolis.

My awareness of gendered expectations regarding the navigation of bodies through public spaces in el Paso del Norte was partly based upon my personal experiences as a woman, living in El Paso and visiting Juárez frequently. This personal awareness of the different pressures and assumptions regarding gendered spaces was bolstered by my familiarity with the extensive feminist scholarship that has investigated gender violence and gender norms in Ciudad Juárez. For example, Melissa Wright (2011) discusses the nature of gendered public and private spaces in Ciudad Juárez, explaining the prevalent conflation of the public woman with the prostitute, while the term for ‘public man’ is akin in meaning to citizen (p. 713-6). This appraisal of women in public spaces often accompanies dialogues concerning the increasing role of women in the labor force, and the frequent association of female factory workers (*obreras*) with whores (*rameras*). Wright (2011) reflects, “The characterization of *obreras* as typifying a kind of public woman relies on a negative interpretation of prostitution as emblematic of women who are contaminated by their activities in the public sphere and who, in turn, contaminate their families, communities, and nations” (p. 713). As is evident in this commentary, there are differential understandings of the ways in which men and women should navigate public spaces, represented through local official and popular discourse.

However, the gendering of public space is by no means limited to the borderlands, or to Mexican culture. Mimi Sheller (2008) points out in her essay, “Mobility, Freedom, and Public Space,” that, “even in so-called free societies women cannot always move

about freely, especially at night, and are often counseled to travel with companions. Other dimensions of sexual inequality may also affect women's personal freedom of mobility," (p. 28). She further argues that the uneven distribution of personal mobility often falls along lines of gender, race, nationality, and ethnicity (p. 27). My awareness and interest in the differential expectations of women navigating public spaces was the primary motivation for my decision to focus on the stories of female residents of el Paso del Norte through the course of this research inquiry.

The nature of my access to participants, and my particular subjectivity (as a young Anglo female, speaking stilted Spanish) also impelled me to focus my inquiry on women—as I aimed to engage in a somewhat intimate dialogue with a stranger, surmounting numerous power structures and social codes already implicit in the nature of a research-oriented interview. I felt that my ability to form a connection and foster a genuine discussion of the participant's life would be significantly less problematic to facilitate with another female. Interviews regarding the masculine experience of moving through the public spaces of el Paso del Norte would likely hold many additional insights regarding gendered mobility; however, this feminine exploration of borderland mobility that I offer is thus partial, but it seeks to highlight a particular component of a complex and intricate topic.

The individuals whom I interviewed spanned many lifestyles, class backgrounds, and complex iterations of documentation and legality. The current primary occupations of participants included: maquiladora line worker, maquiladora management, domestic worker/house-cleaner, student, nurse, nurse's assistant, house-wife, unemployed, graphic

designer, teacher, small business owner (in Juárez), and secretary. Over half of the participants had previously or currently worked for a maquiladora, either in El Paso or Juárez. Interviews were conducted at a wide variety of locations, from the home of the participant to their workplace, the foyer of a participant's church or the plaza of a local community organization.

As someone with long-standing community and familial ties to the area, I utilized preexisting contacts throughout Juárez and El Paso in order to obtain the first interviews I conducted. I pursued a snowball technique of obtaining further interviews, asking participants to refer friends, coworkers, employees, family members, or acquaintances to me. Additionally, I communicated with many local organizations and community members, providing them with business cards and a basic description of my project, and had additional participants referred to me in this way. Participants were always aware that I had local ties, and this knowledge was evident in the way that place-name geography was discussed with me during interviews.

Although the participant pool represents a wide range of class backgrounds, it should be noted that there is an upper-class skew to the sample. Indeed, the requirements of participation and the focus of the inquiry involve an implicit class bias, in that in order to be someone who crosses the border with any frequency, that individual is more mobile than the most deprived socio-economic strata. Thus, when looking at *fronterizo* identity, this study focuses on those who have the ability to traverse the international borderline on a semi-regular basis. This is not to deny *fronterizo* status to those who lack the documentation or means to cross the border, but rather to place the focus of this study

upon those whose livelihoods straddle the borderline. Obviously, this ability is not static, and is completely based upon the nature of border policy- yet it does exclude the most marginalized class bracket.

It is also important to bear in mind that prevailing standards and definitions of class on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands are vastly different from those typical of a location firmly situated within the global north. El Paso falls among the poorest cities in the nation, with a per capita income average at \$20,129 (Dominguez-Ruvalcaba, 2010, p. 3), while Juárez is one of the wealthiest cities in Mexico: creating an ambiguous and dynamic system of social class stratification linked to income, citizenship status, race, indigeneity, and language. With that being said, a declaration of an upper-class bias to this sample is situated within the borderland schema of social strata, where a woman traveling from Juárez to clean houses in El Paso would likely be considered ‘middle class.’ The class bias present in this study is not an unintended facet to the project; rather, it represents a key component of the subject area under investigation, in that the greatest factor shaping personal mobility in the borderlands is class status. This contention will be discussed at greater length in later sections analyzing fieldwork, but bears mention here in this explanation of the basic premise and composition of the fieldwork experience.

In the course of obtaining and conducting interviews, every effort was made to ensure the safety of participants and of myself. IRB protocol was fully implemented in regards to the ethical treatment of human subjects. Additionally, low-income participants and those who went out of their way for the interview were compensated for their

participation. The majority of interviews were conducted in Spanish (a total of five were held in English). Although participants received a general description of the study topic prior to agreeing to participate, I began interviews by briefly explaining my research interests and focus area.

Questions that were always posed included: current and former employment conditions, family structure, frequency of border crossing, how the experience of crossing the borderline has changed, how the presence of violence in Juárez has or has not affected daily decision-making, and what it means to be a *fronterizo* (borderlander). These questions were not framed in the same way in every interview, but rather, they often emerged organically as the person shared with me their daily patterns of behavior. Additionally, I used a map of Ciudad Juárez in interviews as a way to facilitate the citation of specific places and routes. In having a map present, I aimed to enable the participant to create a visual reference tool that would clearly chart out the extent to which their regular activity spaces had been altered as a result of the escalating violence in Juárez. This is linked to an aim, advocated by many feminist geographers, to conduct research ‘with’ as opposed to ‘about’ the participants, designing the research process as an interactive opportunity to connect and foster a dialogue, rather than an avenue for analyzing a distanced object (Grosz, 1987; Bowles & Duelli-Klein, 1983; McDowell 1992; Roberts, 1981).

When I first contemplated using maps in the interviews, it was partly with an intention of quantitatively demonstrating the amount that people have changed their patterns of movement in order to minimize the risk of violence. This design was inspired

by Mei Po Kwan (2002) who adopted a participatory framework for fieldwork, one in which spatial representations constructed by informants are a key component to the data collection process. My preexisting familiarity with the area and its inhabitants led me to the hypothesis that most people would have significantly altered patterns and pathways of movement since the dramatic rise of violence in 2007 and 2008. As I began holding interviews, I quickly realized that, while I was certainly correct in my hypothesis concerning changed activity spaces, spending time quantitatively measuring the spatial and temporal extent of change to daily geographies would not tell a story with much depth. Rather, I chose to adopt this hypothesis as a given in interviews, a starting point from which to expand.

In accepting that life is radically different now for those who cross between El Paso and Juárez regularly, I modified the focus of my inquiry considerably. My aim shifted from *to what extent* have fronterizo daily geographies changed, to *why* have they changed in this particular way: what rationalizations need to occur in order for one particular mode of operating to be deemed least risky? And then beyond this, when specific ways of responding to risk are adopted collectively, what are the implications for the future city that is performatively built? In this way, the emphasis is placed on the substance of these daily geographies: the thoughts, feelings, and tensions embedded in maneuvering through a turbulent cityscape.

From here, the use of maps became an exceedingly valuable tool in interviews: it was often a jumping off point for discussing particular sites, experiences, and conjectures. In map exercises, the participant would be offered markers in three different

colors, and the colors would represent 1) areas they went to before the escalation of violence, 2) areas they visit now, and 3) areas they consider to be especially violent. Whenever an area that they currently visit intersected with an area they considered to be especially violent, this was a topic of conversation. “Why do you continue to navigate through or within that area?” “How do you minimize risk?”

The way in which participants interpreted and followed my instructions with map exercises varied greatly— representing differing levels of comfort with the interview process and using a map, as well as different ways of mentally processing spatial information. For example, when some participants were given markers and a map, they quickly would draw all over it: considering my instructions and then running with them. Others would hand the marker back to me, carefully analyze sections of the map, and point out areas for me to mark. Some contemplated the area in terms of neighborhoods and communities, drawing circles and discussing general areas. Others focused on particular routes, sites, and place-names; these maps were covered with lines and points, rather than scribbles and circles (see Figure 3 for example map section). When asked to point out which areas of the city were especially dangerous, *every single participant's* initial response was to emphasize that the entire city is dangerous. I would nod or express agreement, and then repeat the question, asking what areas they associate most with violence and danger, or avoid because of violence.



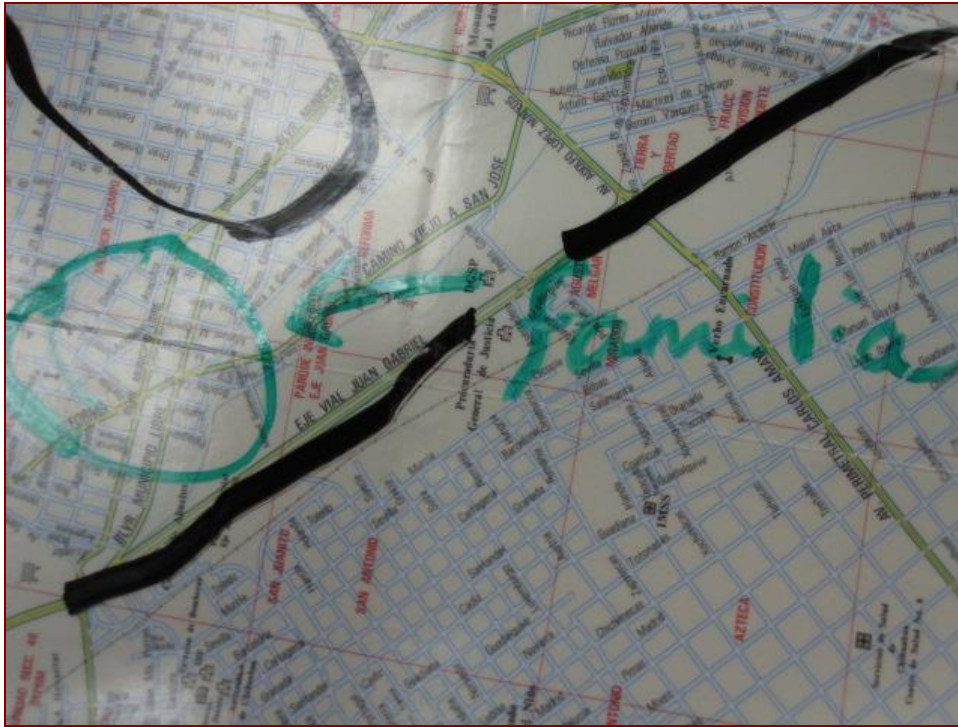


Figure 3. Map exercise; photo by author

In this way, the nature of using spatial representations in a participatory manner diverged from the framework of Kwan and others. The purpose of map exercises was not to analyze the physical document after the fact, using tools such as GIS; rather, the map exercises were integrated as a way to insert a fundamentally spatial component into the conversation. As participants discussed their patterns of movement, they were encouraged to be specific, using the map as a reference tool, and reflecting upon how their activity space changes appeared on the map. As participants drew markings to reflect dangerous places, past places of movement, and present places of movement, they charted out the changes that they had made, responding to the environment of impunity and danger.

Following the fieldwork process, interviews were transcribed and analyzed in order to deduce broad themes that emerged pertaining to mobility and identity. Field notes taken concerning interviews were used to aid in my recollection of the conversational dynamic that existed between particular participants and me, specifically as these nuances could help in contextualizing interview commentary. Interview analysis consisted of repeated comparative readings of transcriptions, wherein thematic commonalities and variations were noted. Since all interviews included specific questions concerning mobility and identity, direct commentary on these subjects was highlighted. Additionally, indirect comments that related to ideas of mobility and self were considered, especially as they were intermingled with observations concerning the changing cityscape of el Paso del Norte.

I avoided quantitative accounting of interview material, preferring to emphasize differences among participants, looking at nuances in perceptions and performances of mobile identities. In this way, although themes of mobility, for instance, are identified and described, they are dynamically embodied and understood by participants, based on a number of axes of difference. When considering interview material, I also gave added weight to the statements that participants emphasized it was important that I know, and sought to deemphasize more sensational stories of tragedy. This is significant, because participants frequently would begin interviews by sharing extreme stories of the death and kidnapping. Even in cases where the question I posed had little to do with crime or danger, interviews often began in this way. From this tendency, I deduced that these were the stories participants inferred that I wanted to hear, based on the predominant narratives of the border I described previously. In representing participants, I move away

from stories of victimization, even while embracing commentaries regarding the nature and experience of fear, in an effort to avoid the simplified narco/victim binary of Juarese people.

As a researcher, I strive to represent participants as they intend to be represented, and for this reason, I bring in stories they highlighted and changes they described as significant. I apply my own interpretative gaze to the information provided to me by participants, and this analytical framing is guided by the work of other scholars and theorists who have considered issues of cities, human rights, and performances. The following section engages with diverse theoretical perspectives that this project draws from, situating the work presented here epistemologically, and considering the ethical aims embedded in this topic. While this chapter explores broader theoretical principles and considerations, it does not broach more specific questions of performance, identity, and embodiment, which instead are addressed in later chapters, as they are connected to interview-based findings of the study.

### **Interpreting Everyday Practices**

*Already my gaze is upon the hill, the sunny one,  
at the end of the path which I've only just begun.  
So we are grasped, by that which we could not grasp,  
at such great distance, so fully manifest—  
and it changes us, even when we do not reach it,  
into something that, hardly sensing it, we already are;  
a sign appears, echoing our own sign...  
But what we sense is the falling winds.  
-Rainer Maria Rilke, Spaziergang (A Walk)*

Here and there, I go back and forth between the two places. When I am there, I feel the jarring tug of foreignness. When I am here, I feel the comfort of my security. My security is rooted in my familiarity, my expectations of what will transpire. There exists, day to day, a spectrum of possibilities that I accept as legitimate, and dependent upon where I am in place and time, the extent of that spectrum expands and contracts. The way in which I behave in this place and that is quite different. I associate the person I am with the way I behave, among other things. I accept some intrinsic constancy to my identity, yet I must also acknowledge that I am not only an internal being, but an external representation. What does that even mean? The internal is shifted and displaced by the external—the external could not manifest in this way without inner forces flowing throughout.

To discuss borderland identity is to grasp at fluid multiplicities. The person I encounter in El Paso who lives in Juárez, is merely exhibiting one facet of a polyhedral persona, likely as it is in the midst of continually turning, refining, tarnishing, burying, and unearthing itself. My aim is not to uncover and bring into clear view a definitive ‘borderland identity,’ but rather to shed some light on dynamic borderland livelihoods and understandings of place. The day and the hour and the place and the temperature—these are a part of the person I am right now. I can tell you who I am, and the way in which I share this information is filtered and framed by my sphere of influence and understanding. The same is true of the person who I ask to tell me of their family life, or their employment history. And yet, to say that you or I or the participant is ever-changing is not to deprive their narratives of a comprehensible meaning—of their influence through the traces they leave, the impressions they form.

Quite the contrary, it is the primary contention of this inquiry that the mundane methods of performing our lives carry tremendous reverberations throughout society. As we respond to our surroundings, as we reform our concept of self, we are engaged in a communal creative act. We create place. This project looks at the creative interpretation of el Paso del Norte in the year 2010, as understood by a handful of residents. Through analyzing these individuated yet interconnected senses of self and place, this inquiry seeks to disrupt traditional notions of institutional power- resting the transformative capacity of society firmly within the lived realities of residents.

The organization and underlying meaning of this study's composition is predicated upon a number of theoretical and practical assumptions that bear some discussion and analysis here, as a way to elaborate upon the overall methodological design. First, the role that philosophers have had in shaping the course of this study will be summarized here. Next, the question of the right to the city, and that of mobility as a human right will be discussed, engaging with the ethics of this project and the scholars who inspire it. Following this, analysis of (gendered) social factors to mobility will be invoked. Finally, as a way to explain and elaborate the scale and contextual basis for this research design, it will be helpful to bring in commentary regarding the field of urban geography and theory of cityscapes, particularly within the context of globalization. Sharing excerpts from the diverse influences shaping this research inquiry the following section will sketch out a theoretical and scholarly context from which this project has emerged.

Several philosophical works have played a major role in my decision to conduct research through the lens of the everyday. The work of Michel de Certeau (1988), more specifically his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, directly addresses this question concerning embedded meanings within the mundane. He discusses everyday practices and their merit for inquiry within the social sciences, examining problematics with constructing representations of social phenomena and critically engaging with scholars, such as Foucault, Bourdieu, and D  tienne. He contends:

Like law ..., culture articulates conflicts and alternately legitimizes, displaces, or controls the superior force. It develops in an atmosphere of tensions, and often of violence, for which it provides symbolic balances, contracts, of compatibility and compromises, all more or less temporary. The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices. (1988, p. xvii)

De Certeau continues, discussing how practices of resistance are embedded in everyday activities:

More generally, *a way of using* imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the historical law of the state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference. (p. 18)

De Certeau's book looks at specific mundane activities (for example: reading, cooking, walking, taking the train), discussing the potentialities and understandings they imply, and investigating their role in place-making and social transformation.

De Certeau's (1988) chapter, "Walking in the City," is particularly relevant to my study, in that it investigates everyday practices of mobility and the meanings conjured therein. De Certeau contends: "walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it "speaks,"" (p. 99), as part of a larger discussion of the

enunciative function of movement through society. In this way, de Certeau explores the relations between spatial practices and signifying practices. He continues:

Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body. "I feel good here": the well-being under-expressed in the language it appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice. (1988, p. 108)

His commentary reflects the way in which spaces are constructed and modified through embodied appreciations of place. Additionally, his analysis sheds light on the way ghosts of the past are embedded throughout places of today, refracting the futures built in this compounded timescape.

The work of de Certeau reflects the theoretical basis from which this study borrows and expands. Additionally, the politics of de Certeau's work is closely aligned with the ideological stance of this study- looking at everyday forms of resistance and placing the power of transformative change firmly in the hands, feet, and minds of the collectivity. As it is based in a locality disrupted by violence and impunity, this project aims to undercut traditional representations of power, victimhood, and social change. Looking at everyday local actors as constructive participants in historical change, integrating mundane choices and practices into the matrix of political upheaval and resistance, is not merely a philosophical stance, but can also represent a pathway toward personal and community empowerment in a region so frequently depicted as a passive receiver of transnational forces.

The work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) has also provided a helpful starting point for this analysis, particularly through the theoretical outlook espoused in his work, *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre comments:

Knowledge falls into a trap when it makes representations of space the basis for the study of 'life,' for in doing so it reduces lived experience. The *object* of knowledge is, precisely, the fragmented and uncertain connection between elaborated representations of space on the one hand and representational spaces...on the other; and this 'object' implies (and explains) a *subject*- that subject in whom lived, perceived, and conceived (known) come together within spatial practice. (1991, p. 230)

Lefebvre's explanation of the interconnections and encounters that compose spatial practice and produce space is helpful in considering the cityscape of el Paso del Norte and its inhabitants. The objective of this inquiry is not to produce a finite picture of the human geography in el Paso del Norte, but to express the continuum of behaviors, materials, and understandings that are currently at play in this region- reflecting the lived realities of this urban landscape, and considering what today's spatial practices can tell us about tomorrow's place.

Lefebvre's conception of spatial practice corresponds to de Certeau's everyday practices (which are distinguished from Bourdieu's *habitus*, as they can just as easily represent transgression of social norms as they can the maintenance thereof). Lefebvre reflects upon spatial practice, stating:

*Spatial practice* thus simultaneously defines: places- the relationship of local to global; the representation of that relationship; actions and signs; the trivialized spaces of everyday life; and, in opposition to these last, spaces made special by symbolic means as desirable or undesirable, benevolent or malevolent, sanctioned or forbidden to particular groups. (1991, p. 288)

De Certeau's elaboration on spatial practices aligns closely with Lefebvre's, yet integrates resistance to social norms and upheaval into his conception of everyday operations. De Certeau comments, "spatial practices in fact secretly structure the determining conditions of social life," (96) as he espouses the need for theories of



everyday practices which reveal the ways in which structures of discipline and norms of society are subverted and maneuvered.

The work of Iris Marion Young (1990) also represents a key component of the theoretical lens through which this study is framed. Her postmodern conception of scientific inquiry and social representation is useful, in that the emphasis is not placed upon declaring a singular reality or truth, but rather emphasizes how, “some modes of reflection, analysis, and argument aim not at building a systematic theory, but at clarifying the meaning of concepts and issues, describing and explaining social relations, and articulating and defending ideals and principles” (1990, p. 5), a practice that she terms ‘situated analysis.’ Her feminist analytical approach critiques the historical tendency of Western thought to deny and invisibilize difference, “where difference means particularity, the heterogeneity of the body and affectivity, or the inexhaustibility of linguistic and social relations without a unitary, undifferentiated origin” (p. 10). Composing a study that is not predicated on absolutist assumptions or essentializing tendencies is a central aim of this project, and critical feminist discourse has contributed significantly to my stance concerning representations of individuals, communities, and place.

This project draws from disparate theoretical sources in some ways, as the post-structuralist cultural philosophy of de Certeau contrasts with the postmodern feminist situated analysis of Young. Indeed, the methods and perspectives employed by these theorists vary greatly- and yet the locus of their inquiries is similar, and the ethical projects that undercut these works harmonize. There is a presumed worldview that

imbues any scholarly inquiry, and for this study, the influences and threads that permeate my understanding of lived realities in el Paso del Norte are eclectic and densely woven.

The work of scholars involving corporeality and the theorization of bodies in space is also central in my mind as I construct this study. Many scholars have investigated the spatial performance of bodies, stemming from diverse disciplines and perspectives, most notably philosophy (de Certeau, 1984; Latour, 2004; Serres, 1985) and feminism (Butler, 1993; Haraway, 1991; Grosz, 1994). Judith Butler's (1988) conception of performativity is helpful for the purposes of this project, as I examine the connections between altered patterns of mobility and the evolution of borderlander identity. Her theorization of performativity maintains that identity is a "complex matrix of normative boundaries" and that these boundaries are "materially embodied and performed by each of us" (Bell, 2008, p. 177). This notion of performativity has been discussed extensively among scholars, and is helpful for this study as it calls into question traditional representations of subjectivity, instead emphasizing the ambiguous and dynamic nature of identity composition.

The work of corporeal feminist Elizabeth Grosz (1994) is useful in considering the manner in which this study can represent the performances and constitution of 'volatile bodies' in el Paso del Norte. Grosz's (1994) work is posited in contrast to what has been a predominant worldview based on binary divisions, such as mind/body, interior/exterior, thought/feeling, human/nonhuman, female/male, nature/culture, subject/object, etc. She instead frames the body through its connections with other bodies, discussing and challenging the work of Deleuze and Guattari as she considers the conceptualization of assemblages and 'becomings,' (p. 160-83) yet also investigates the

importance of difference in scholarly representations, contemplating the ontology associated with women's bodies and the centrality of sexual difference to problems of theoretical models (1994, p. 187-210).

As it pertains to my study, Grosz's (1994) theorization of the female body and her analysis of the work of other scholars offers a helpful perspective for designing my own theoretical and methodological approach- one in which the complexities and dynamism of local encounters and understandings are emphasized, while heterogeneity and conceptions of difference are not downplayed. Grosz (1994) closes her text, *Volatile Bodies*, by stating her ultimate goal and articulating the problems that scholars face when constructing a research study: "Once the subject is no longer seen as an entity- whether psychological or corporeal- but fundamentally an effect of the pure difference that constitutes all modes of materiality, new terms need to be sought by which to think this alterity within and outside the subject," (p. 208). Clearly, Grosz's prompt to researchers in this vein is fundamentally linked to the process of composing a reflexive and flexible study, where the researcher is attentive to difference, subjectivities, and power. Focusing on the movements, decisions, and interconnections of el Paso del Norte, I aim to compose a study that, while acknowledging the power of the dominant dichotomous ontology in the practice of city life, also complicates this ontology and unsettles its- instead mobilizing the ambiguities and connectivities that transform time and space.

In his (1996) writings on the *Right to the City*, Lefebvre states his aims for his work, that he "wants to break up systems, not to substitute another system, but to *open up* through thought and action towards *possibilities* by showing the horizon and the road" (1996, p. 64). His ambitions for composing a study mirror the aims of this study, as do

his ethics concerning the collective right to the city. Lefebvre (1996) contends, “the city’s transformations are not the passive outcomes of changes in the social whole. The city also depends as essentially on relations of immediacy, of direct relations between persons and groups which make up society...” (1996, p. 100-1). Here he offers helpful analysis concerning the material morphology of the city and the social fabric of urban life, conceptualizing the co-signification of these components to the urban (p. 103).

Lefebvre (1996) argues “the right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life...Only the working class can become the agent, the social carrier or support of this realization” (p. 158). He emphasizes the presence of utopian ideals in analysis of urban form, challenging scholars to adopt an alternate methodology of engaging with the structural significations and praxis of urban life, contributing to a critical dialectical understanding of the city (1996, p. 151-6). Lefebvre highlights the role of mobility in the structure and construction of the city as key (p. 173), demonstrating that the ability of inhabitants to live city life, to maneuver through and among urban spaces, is the embodiment of the right to the city.

This ethical aim is especially poignant in the constrained urban spaces of el Paso del Norte. In Juárez, residents are incredibly limited in their efforts to navigate freely, both due to physical impediments (closed streets, military presence, deteriorated conditions), and perceived insecurity (cartel violence, lawlessness, impunity). The manner in which people have coped with and responded to these barriers to movement is diverse and stratified- yet demonstrate divergent possibilities within the performance of

resilience through strife. The navigation of the border and emerging manifestations of Juarenses life in El Paso offer valuable insights about urban violence and resistance, as the manner in which residents cope and respond carry wide-ranging implications for the nature of the place itself.

Gerald Houseman's (1979) text, *The Right of Mobility*, explores the concept of mobility and freedom of movement through a legal/policy-oriented perspective. In it, he contends: "The transcendent reason for establishing the right of mobility is to prevent abuses of human freedom, whether these are threatened by governments, private persons or institutions, or agents of one sort or another" (1979, p. 10). Through this contention, we can surmise that the limitation of personal or collective mobility is, at best, a confinement of one's freedom to act and move, and at worst, tantamount to a fundamental human rights violation. It is clear that, when discussing mobility, the role of technology, modernization, and access are key. However, beyond material indicators regarding the nature of one's movement, the concept of mobility is also fundamentally concerned with the practices of daily life, and the ability to operate with any degree of independence. Houseman (1979) states:

The right of mobility, then, has a justification which goes well beyond legal considerations. It is a recognized social "good," a first premise, that people should possess a right of mobility in order to realize the best approximation of their hopes and desires, and also in order to escape those persons or forces which may threaten their existence, their livelihood, their culture, their loved ones, or their human rights, including the right of mobility. (p. 11)

This then, represents an idealistic question of human wellbeing and quality of life, wherein the experience of mobility is contextually relative, temporally dynamic, and yet carries significant implications for the social good.

It too holds that most other commonly recognized human rights are linked to access and mobility, thereby revealing the pivotal placement of personal and collective mobility among any appraisal of local ethical concerns and human rights necessities. Beyond physical access and overt movement through space, there is also the more ambiguous social mobility to take into account with this analysis, which involves one's ability to acquire new opportunities or navigate differing social contexts with relative ease. In a cityscape such as el Paso del Norte, the aspects of social mobility are linked not only to traditional indicators of social mobility, such as class status, racial and ethnic standing, and gender- but also to the complex iterations of legal documentation that exist along the borderline. Additionally, the nature of social mobility is often based upon presumptions of an economically viable future, and involves planning for what is not currently present, investing in oneself through traditional and untraditional avenues of education, employment, and training. In this way, the nature of *present* mobility is tied to collective visions of the future- the sense of the worth and meaning of one's actions for the *possibilities* that they entail.

For David Morley (2000) in his text, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, and Identity*, "Mobility is increasingly seen as a social good and immobility increasingly acquires, by contrast, the connotation of defeat, of failure, and of being left behind," (p. 202). He makes this comment as part of a broader discussion concerning mobility in the context of globalization and a commentary on the work of geographers regarding the space-time compression and deterritorialization of the globalized world. His comment is pertinent, in that the nature and expectations of personal and collective mobility have

fundamentally changed as the world has ‘shrunk.’ Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) fleshes this thought out, contending:

As the means for long-distance travel increase, and as the time necessary to cross vast distances diminishes, more and more barriers are constructed to screen movement. Movement in the modern world is regulated by an ever-tightening matrix of economic, political, sexual, and cultural factors. (p. 52)

Exemplifying this disparity between rapidity of movement and the barriers to it is the contrast between the free movement of capital and the highly regulated and confined operation of labor. This commentary is especially poignant to consider in the case of el Paso del Norte, where the hardening of the international borderline for human traffic has been accompanied by the opening of it to the transfer of commodities and capital, an observation discussed by geographer Jennifer Hyndman in her work on the geopolitics of mobility and border crossings (1997).

Papastergiadis (2000) continues his discussion of movement in the context of globalization by arguing,

We need to ask how certain socio-political flows and barriers, that constitute spatial configurations, also constitute and reflect the formations of identity. The dynamics of our movement in space, our ability to move, speak more about the form of our identity than the conventional answers to the questions: Where are you from? Where do you belong?” (p. 52)

His contention here reflects a key component of this inquiry’s construction, and the assumptions that it entails- the basic premise that the way in which one moves through space and society is fundamentally linked to the development and articulation of identity. The manner in which individuals and groups respond to environmental conditions and attitudes is internalized and reflected, thereby connecting the process of identification to appreciations of place and the nature of movement therein.

There has been much scholarly discourse regarding the manner in which culture and identity have been altered and upended by the increased movement and interconnection associated with globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Meyer, 1999; Croucher, 2004), and yet less often do we encounter discussions of the mundane/everyday mobility alterations occurring within a globalized context. As the dynamics of mobility in el Paso del Norte are discussed, they are linked to patterns of drug violence, militarization, and risk management- but cannot be removed from an urban environment dramatically reformed through processes of neoliberal economic reform and transnational capital flow. As was articulated in the history section, the conditions which have enabled the heightened drug trafficking to flourish, and the tensions embedded in border policies, can all be linked to modifications associated with neoliberal economic globalization and the conditions it fosters.

Considerable academic inquiry has addressed the gendered implications of globalization, and as a researcher focusing on gender and mobility in the globalized, transnational metropolis of el Paso del Norte, it is important to invoke the commentary of other feminist scholars concerning gender narratives that permeate understandings of globalization. The rationalist dichotomous worldview that is so frequently critiqued as a container for patriarchal conceptions of reality, in the form of binaries between man/woman, society/nature, mind/body, idea/feeling, has also been associated with the championing of the globalized marketplace, wherein the global and local are placed in opposition to one another, and these labels carry gendered associations (the female is connoted through the local, private, micro level, while the male is associated with the global, public, macro) (Roberts, 2004, p. 128). Clearly, the purpose of this work involves



disrupting and complicating these black and white representations of reality, and although the focus of this project is centered upon what, through a cursory appraisal grounded in this rationalist perspective, could be considered the local realm, looking at encounters and patterns of the everyday- it is the contention of this thesis that the processes and forces of the global are deeply enmeshed with these signifiers of the mundane.

When considering how to represent and interpret urban practices, particularly in a sphere complicated by blurred local and global forces, scholars have adopted varied approaches and perspectives. Sallie Westwood and John Williams (1997) introduce their edited volume, *Imagining Cities*, by discussing recent shifts among urban social theory, discussing how post-structuralist forms of theorizing more and more entail an examination of the practice of the city, wherein the social is decentered and “‘society’ is understood to be fractured and constantly evolving in relation to its constitution and reconstitution” (p. 5). Clearly, my study builds from this change in social theorizing, wherein dynamics of spatio-temporal urban form are thoroughly imbricated with the perceptions and understandings of the multitude of human and nonhuman actors moving throughout.

Edward Soja (1997) has offered a critique of what has been termed the ‘view from below,’ commonly associated with Michel Certeau, wherein the focus of study is placed upon a micro-view of everyday life (Soja cites studies of the body, the local, psycho-geographies, and studies of intimacy/erotic subjectivity among these micro-level inquiries). Soja (1997) contends that these studies are composed at the expense of macro-scale structures and processes which bear heavily upon the composition of urban

life (p. 21). Clearly, this study would fall decisively within this category of micro-studies of everyday life, and I argue that, contrary to Soja's claim of diminishing the role of macro-level processes through this method, a micro-level view functions holographically, where all of the components contain within them representations of the whole. To speak with an individual who has lived and worked in Juárez for their whole life, the conversation that we have, while focused upon their day to day ways of getting along, will necessarily entail some discussion of the broader economic, political, and social shifts which have occurred, changing the terms within which that person operates.

And yet the context that sets those terms is not only grand scale forces, but the swirling and upending assembly of people and things and environmental conditions. The benefit of locating the epicenter of the study among the mundane realities of urban life is that the myriad ways in which structural changes are *practiced* and *understood* forms the focus of the inquiry, rather than the imposition of the changes themselves. This method of inquiry seeks to reflect the divergence and creativity that accompanies broad macro-level reforms and, in doing so, underscores the constructive capacity of everyday actors and non-human forces. The participants in a research study can gain something from their participation, not merely the thoughtful synthesis that comes from responding to a stranger's questions, but rather through the underlying assumption that their manner of operating carries weight in society- and it does. A decentered yet thoroughly located research study offers an avenue of subtle empowerment, as the urban form is discussed through poignant moments and shifting awareness- embracing it's complexities and ambiguities. Here, I seek to embrace that methodology, representing the present and future of el Paso del Norte in a way that carries the weight of encounter and thought.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF FRONTERIZO MOBILITY

7/10/10

*Behind the mall there is a pleasant neighborhood of parks and adobe houses. In one of these houses I interview an older woman, a housekeeper here in El Paso, who lives in Juárez. I wait for her to finish ironing to begin the interview, and feel like a pest. She and I sit in the comfortable living room, the walls dotted with a collection of owl kitsch. I consider the Mexican symbology of the owl, the harbingers of death and destruction, and wonder how this woman feels about the décor in this house where she spends so many hours, keeping it immaculate.*

*- Field notes related to interview with Lupe*

Day in and day out, she is moving through a series of necessities, chores, interactions, and perhaps the occasional luxury. She both constructs her daily pastimes and is confined by them, as they are formed through the negotiation of limitations, desires, and material assemblages. Her movement reflects her political reality, her economic status, her balance between the expectations of others, the way she may or may not adopt them, and her own appreciation of self. This is her personal mobility, reflecting her broader social mobility. Her identity, her sense of personhood, is shifting and reformulating throughout— integrally linked to these mitigations and perspectives.

The story we have here is one of decisions. Decisions made by people in a divided urban landscape: propelled by connections and histories, made in the moment, reflecting visions of the future. The future is built from the traces of these decisions; the people embody the echoes and memories in every now. Determining who a person is in this moment, we look at their surroundings, the control they can exert upon them, the way they respond to them. Gazing through the patterns and pathways of movement can reveal

how practical choices amalgamate into local essences and personal identities. This chapter represents an attempt to discuss the relationship between intention, pressure, and practice— looking at how a city can collectively reframe itself while resisting, denying, and persisting in mundane spaces. The shape and contour of daily geographies form this corpus of the city: the response of el Paso del Norte to violence, and the dynamically performed urban form.

A basic premise maintained throughout interviews was that methods of navigating among the urban spaces of el Paso del Norte were significantly altered following the dramatic rise of violence in Juárez. This premise was continually reinforced during the interview process, as conversations with women of diverse livelihoods and perspectives all echoed that the nature of their movement within Juárez had changed substantially, as had the locational patterns of daily activity within El Paso and Juárez. Typically, more activities became located in El Paso than in Juárez, among both those who reside in Juárez and those based in El Paso. Participant commentary concerning the activities of local family members and friends also reflected these changes, as it was frequently noted that far fewer gatherings and events were taking place in Juárez than had occurred prior to the increase in violent crime.

As I engaged in interviews with different *fronteriza* women, themes began to emerge regarding the methods undertaken by participants to cope with this perceived risk of violence. These common characteristics serve as the focus of this chapter, designed to identify key attributes of borderland mobility in this context of criminality and impunity. Prevalent alterations of mobility observed among participants included a heightened sense of embodiment, a different temporal experience of movement (both in terms of the

time of day for travel, and the amount of time involved in travel), and an increased awareness of personal control: a taking into account of which vulnerabilities can be controlled/avoided, and which cannot.

The first part of this chapter analyzes the role of corporeality as it pertains to the changed nature of movement throughout public spaces of el Paso del Norte, considering ideas of visibility, material class status indicators, and the sensory experience of feeling danger and avoiding it. Following this, the changing activities of night are considered, as they link both issues of visibility and temporal modifications of habits. This conversation concerning nocturnal shifts in behavior then flows into a discussion concerning the temporality of borderland mobility today, and how it is different from that of el Paso del Norte prior to the escalation of violence. Finally, this chapter discusses the issue of control, looking at class factors of risk aversion, and considering the rationalization of how to endure within this tempestuous climate.

As these negotiations of mobility are contemplated, it should be emphasized that they are all integrally linked to one another, and manifest in divergent ways among a wide variety of individuals. Although the interviews were held with women specifically, the commentary of participants indicates that these changed patterns of behavior largely transcend gender boundaries. Interviewees often shared that male family members and friends had applied similar methods of adapting and enduring in this context— and considering the numbers of those killed have been disproportionately male, this is not surprising. And yet there is definite gendered component to the changes that accompany

preparation for potential victimization. This is especially present in the first identified theme of borderland mobility in this context of violence: embodiment.

## **Embodiment**

When contemplating mobility in the context of violence and transnational power structures, the scale of the body can offer a helpful lens through which to analyze social dynamics. Since the mid-90's, feminist studies have increasingly incorporated concepts of embodiment into their analysis of trends and experiences (Duncan, 1996; McDowell, 1999; Longhurst, 2001). And indeed, prior work in this area by feminist scholars such as Melissa Wright (2006), and Altha Cravey (1998) have framed discussions of factory labor, power, and gender through analysis of women workers' bodies in Juárez. So too has migration research tied concepts of embodiment and mobility to explorations of identity and power (Mountz, 2004; Hyndman, 2000), emphasizing a differentiated and performed mobility characterized by dynamism, corporality, and interconnectedness. Feminist theorization of bodies and performance will be further broached in chapter five as part of a discussion of identity, performativity, and place.

A heightened sense of one's corporeal form is a key component of mobility in the context of heightened insecurity and danger, and this appreciation of embodiment is linked closely to markers of difference such as gender, class, race, indigeneity, and citizenship (formal or informal). In Deborah Lupton's (1999) essay concerning the ontology of pregnant embodiment, she articulates, "women have traditionally been positioned as embodied subjects in ways that men have not, and their inherent

embodiment- their supposed emotional and physical lability- has been used as evidence of their inferiority to men,” (p. 60). In reference to the binaries we discussed previously, this ontology would echo the gendering implicit in divisions of mind/body, rationality/emotionality. Lupton continues, “women’s appearance, their deportment of their bodies, are subject to continuing surveillance and control, both on the part of women themselves and of others,” (1999, p. 60).

Lupton’s argument is generalized, stating that as a whole women are more frequently made aware of and defined by their physicality and corporeality; and yet, the contention of this section is that the population as a whole responds to an environment of rampant criminality by being more aware of their physical presence, their visibility to others, and their emotional and psychological response to the elements about them. Perhaps an alternative way to consider this section is not simply by considering the heightened embodiment, but by focusing on the attentivity to one’s corporeal form- as we are always embodied, we are always located within space, and yet the attention we direct to ourselves as a public material entity and a conflicted form can change drastically depending upon the circumstances within which we are functioning.

Throughout interviews, this attention to one’s embodiment has primarily manifested in responses concerning the nature of moving through Juárez, and how the interviewee felt when in public spaces. I spoke with Martha, an older woman in El Paso, who is from Juárez but lives in El Paso now. She works at a maquila in El Paso, has two kids, and tries to maintain her familial ties to Juárez. She used to cross around 2-3 times per week, but since the escalation of violence she has minimized her time and visits to

Juárez, where she now goes once a week or less. I asked her how she felt about crossing into Juárez now, to which she responded,<sup>4</sup>

In Juárez, one has fear, or feels their heart, fast; and crosses the line into El Paso, and one feels secure, peaceful, because here nothing is going to happen to anyone. And in Juárez one is always looking on all sides, taking care. If I get out of my car and enter a shop, I have fear because I am out. Or if we go to a restaurant to eat, one doesn't eat peacefully because I am always thinking that someone could arrive, or there could be someone on the side. It's always a heart like this. And here no, I don't have fear of anything, and in Juárez yes. I have a lot of family in Juárez, and all are the same.<sup>5</sup>

Martha's reflections concerning her tension and anxiety when moving through Juárez were frequently echoed by other participants. Indeed, the visceral feeling of being in Juárez, as compared to being in El Paso, was often expressed physically as well as verbally by interviewees. When talking about the way it felt to be in Juárez, participants would stiffen, look all around, physically tense their bodies and reflect unease. More than one participant explained the feeling of crossing the border into El Paso by letting out a deep exhale, as though releasing the tremendous tension carried while in Juárez.

Sonia, an upper class housewife who lives in El Paso, but grew up and was educated in Juárez, discusses the emotional and physiological impacts of the violence in Juárez. She explains:

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<sup>4</sup> When quoting participants who spoke in Spanish during interviews, I include their original Spanish language phrasing in footnotes, both in order to relay their words as accurately as possible, and to enable bilingual readers to verify my translation or consider what nuances it may lack.

<sup>5</sup> En Juárez, uno tiene miedo, o siente su corazón, rápido; y cruza por el línea para El Paso, y siente uno seguro, tranquilo, como aquí no le va pasar a uno nada. Y en Juárez siempre esta uno viendo para todos lados, ciudandose. Si yo deajo mi carro en algún lado, y entro a una tienda, tengo como miedo para que salga. O en algun restaurante vamos a comer, no come uno tranquilo porque yo siempre pienso que puede llegar alguien o que estén alguien en un lado. Siempre están una corazón asi. Y aquí pues no, no yo tengo miedo de nada, y en Juarez si. Yo tengo mucho familia en Juarez, todos están igual.



Now it's a stress, a depression. I think that many of the people in Juárez and El Paso now are in depression. When all this violence began, we began to be like this [breathing heavily, opening eyes wide, fingers outstretched], we began to be very stressed. Many women, many women very stressed, with a fear that you don't know... and you begin to be sick, a sickness begins of the nerves. The stress begins, more allergies begin, more... everything, more anxiety. So much anxiety.<sup>6</sup>

Associating the fear of violence with physical malady, Sonia's reflections convey the intense physiological ramifications that persistent feelings of vulnerability can play upon a person. Considering both the comments of Martha and Sonia, it is clear that the nature of operating throughout public spaces in Juárez has health implications for these women; this persistent hyperawareness and worry affects Martha's ability to eat at a restaurant, while Sonia compares it to allergies, as it is the city space of Juárez that fosters this malcondition.

Indeed, the manner in which fear and stress can take a toll upon the well-being of a person is extensive and harsh. One woman I spoke with lamented that she could not sleep at night in her home, ever since she had received phone threats that her house would be burned to the ground, and had endured the kidnapping of her daughter and son-in-law. It is worth mentioning here that nearly every person I spoke with had undergone the death or kidnapping of a family member, and many had also experienced extortion, robbery, and harassment. It was this common experience throughout the interview process that made me realize the full extent of the rampant criminality that residents of Juárez experience. Reading newspapers and hearing stories conveys the lawlessness to

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<sup>6</sup> Ahorita es un estrés, un depresión, yo pienso que ahorita mucha la gente que estamos en Juárez y aquí en El Paso, estamos en depresión... Cuando empezamos tanto violencia, empezamos así [breathing heavily, opening eyes wide, fingers outstretched], empezamos muy estresadas, muchas señoras, muchas señoras muy estresadas, con temor que no sabes ni que ... que empiezas enfermar, empieza enfermaros de los nervios, empieza estresar, empieza mas alergias, mas- todo, mas ansiedad. Mucha ansiedad.

some extent, but when I sought out interviews from people living in both Juárez and El Paso, I was astonished to discover how much each person with whom I spoke had suffered. Furthermore, it speaks to the prevalence of threats and violence that those who agreed to speak with me had endured this high level of insecurity, as likely those who feel the most peril would refuse to participate in an interview, for fear of raising their profile.

Indeed, the second component of this heightened embodiment associated with current mobility in el Paso del Norte is the predominance of sight as a tool for risk aversion. Maximum utilization of one's visual field, and a sense of one's constant visibility to others were notable within descriptions of movement in public spaces. During an interview with a young woman named Alma, the tendency to be hyper attentive to surroundings, and the maximization of available sensory information while traveling became apparent. Alma lives in Juárez, but works and attends school in El Paso. She has been crossing the border daily for years. She and I met up at her church in the early evening, and I worried about the interview lasting too long, since she expressed the strong reluctance to drive in Juárez at night. Alma told me about the way she navigates through Juárez and El Paso, and how she feels while traveling. Discussing the nature of moving through Juárez, she asserted: "You are always looking around you, you are vigilant, looking at what comes... and what do they want. So it isn't the same, you aren't as free to go peacefully through the streets."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Siempre estas viendo around you [spoken in English], estas vigilando, viendo que que viene ... y que quiere. Entonces ya no es el mismo, no estas como libre, de ve ir tranquilo por las calles.

Participants reflected a persistent awareness of the manner that one may be perceived by others, and how this perception may or may not contribute to risk. Sonia visits Juárez on a semi-regular basis now, less than she did before the rise in violence. Her husband works in Juárez, and is there everyday. Sonia expressed how an awareness of one's visibility has altered manners of presenting oneself to the public. She explained to me that she and her husband bought an older car, especially for driving in Juárez, in order to not draw attention to themselves.

Before, looking at Juárez, you would see very nice vans, new cars, and now no. Now it's all bad and old cars because they don't call attention. Now all I want in Juárez is to go, not to call attention. Nor do people go very dressed up, or elegant, we go more simply because it makes you feel more secure.<sup>8</sup>

This attention to one's own visibility, and the way that one's visage would be understood by would-be aggressors, was echoed among many people I interviewed. There is a clear class dimension to the modification of appearances. This diminishment of accessorizing, hiding possible markers of wealth, is made with the aim of decreasing the likelihood of being targeted for kidnapping. Those who appear to be very low income are not as likely of targets. It should be noted that, many of the women I spoke with were not wealthy, and yet this (justified) fear of kidnapping extends throughout much of the middle and lower class. In a place of lawlessness and impunity, if one possesses something that someone else may want, there are minimal repercussions for their forcefully taking it.

Through the comments of Sonia and others, we see that it is not only the field of vision of Juarenses navigators that is shaping patterns of movement, but also an

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<sup>8</sup> Ya, antes vea uno Juarez, camionetas muy hermosas, carros del ano, y ahora no. Ahora está todo pues todos carros males viejitos para no llamar la atención. Ahorita lo que quiero en juarez si ibas, no llamar la atención. Ni andar muy arreglada, ni muy elegante, andarnos más simple que puedes para sentirte más segura.

appreciation of occupying someone else's field of vision which influences where and when people travel through the city. In this way, the intensified embodiment of borderland travelers is enacted. The association between vision, visibility, and security is also notable when considering the changes to nocturnal activity in El Paso and Juárez, a key component to the second signifier of borderland mobility in this context of criminality- an altered temporality.

## **Time**

In a number of ways, the temporal experience of moving throughout El Paso and Juárez has undergone a significant transformation. As was apparent in the history chapter, the nature of the international border-crossing has changed from a state of relative porosity for borderlanders, to an increasingly militarized and solidified boundary. The hardening of the borderline for human travelers can be juxtaposed to the increasing fluidity of the borderline for commerce and capital, as neoliberal economic reforms have sought to 'open up' the borderlands to industrial enterprise. The capacity for human traffic to traverse the borderline carries some major implications for the structure of days (and the corresponding pace and content of livelihoods), as so many facets of existence on the frontier involve cross-border connections. The time consumed waiting at the bridge is a significant variable in local decision-making, as is the nature of transportation and routes: the ability of residents to utilize the most efficient byways and navigate with safety and confidence. For these reasons, the role of time as a major variable in patterns of mobility throughout el Paso del Norte will be considered here. Clearly, the temporal

reality of movement throughout El Paso and Juárez was not static prior to the increase in violence, yet there are discernable transformations to the time constraints present in patterns of movement that coincide with this period of heightened criminalization.

When participants were asked to contemplate the experience of crossing the international borderline between El Paso and Juárez, two significant transitions were commonly noted: that of the borderline pre- and post- 9/11, and pre- and post- the rise of violence in Juárez. Yvonne, a mother of two and small business owner in Juárez, recalled to me the way the border crossing was prior to 9/11. Yvonne shared:

I used to work at the maquila at Bermudez park [in Juárez], ... and from there, I would go to Luby's and Cielo Vista [Mall] on Fridays [in El Paso], for lunch if I wanted, we would go to Luby's and come back, maybe it would take 15-20 minutes the most, easy. Yeah... it was like having a picnic on the bridge, I could take my things, my stuff, I go, but it's changed.

Yvonne then elaborated:

It would take you 15 min, a half-hour to get across, and you knew all the officers who would work there. And now its like, 'what are you doing, why are you here,' 2 hours to get across, 3 hours to get across, all year round. And after 9/11 it was almost crazy to go across, my kids were in school, and we had to walk across the bridge, and then we hired a bus from the bridge to take them to school.

Her contrast of the international border crossing is striking, as she emphasizes how seamless and predictable crossing used to be—so much so that she could cross back and forth during her lunch break at work—while today it is an interrogative process that may take an exceptionally long time.

Indeed, a key part of the nature of border crossing today, as opposed to prior to 9/11 and the hardening of the borderline, is that the wait time is highly unpredictable.

For this reason, people who need to get across by a certain time will endure a high level of inconvenience in their schedule. During my conversation with Alma, the young woman who crosses daily for work and school (from Juárez into El Paso), she explained to me how her methods of crossing the borderline have adapted to the different political contexts shaping border policy. She mentioned 9/11 first, and how before 9/11 one could cross so easily, while afterwards it could take four, five, or six hours. She then explained how it calmed down afterwards, but now it has risen again: often an hour or an hour and a half. She explained:

It affects me, because my schedule at work, I go in at eight in the morning, and so I get up at four in the morning, leave my house at six in the morning, to be there at eight. And so it affects me a lot, that the bridge is so slow.<sup>9</sup>

Alma later expands upon this thought, after I ask her about what it is like for families straddling two countries. She comments:

It's very difficult. Your routine is very distinct. Your day begins very early, to be living in Mexico and working and studying in the U.S., the thing that is affected the most is your schedule, in your time. Because you spend so much time in transit, driving, so you risk a lot, you run many risks basically.<sup>10</sup>

In order to commence with the duties of the day, Alma dedicates a high amount of time to travel and waiting. Of course, many cities have traffic issues, where residents spend large quantities of time in transit, yet the nature of travel through the highly criminalized

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<sup>9</sup> A mi me afecta, porque en mis horarios de trabajo, entro a las ocho, yo me entro que levantar a las cuatro en la mañana, salir de mi casa a las seis de la mañana, para poder alcanza a mi trabaja a las ocho. Entonces, a mi me afecta porque cuando están muy lento los puentes.

<sup>10</sup> Es muy difícil. Tu rutina es muy distinta. Tu día empieza muy temprano, estar viviendo en México y trabajar y estudiar en Estados Unidos más, lo que te afecta es en tu horario, en tu tiempo. Porque inviertas más tiempo en viajar, en manejar, entonces te riesgas más, corres más riesgos básicamente.

and militarized zone that is Juárez makes these hours of travel a persistent hardship and harrowing necessity.

There are constraints when moving throughout Juárez as well. Throughout map exercises, participants repeatedly emphasized how many streets and zones of the city they avoided due to fear of violence. The need to choose routes based upon perceived danger, rather than upon the directness or speed of the route, creates an additional time obstacle to movement throughout this metropolis. As shown in Figure 4, participants viewed major portions of the city as too dangerous for travel.

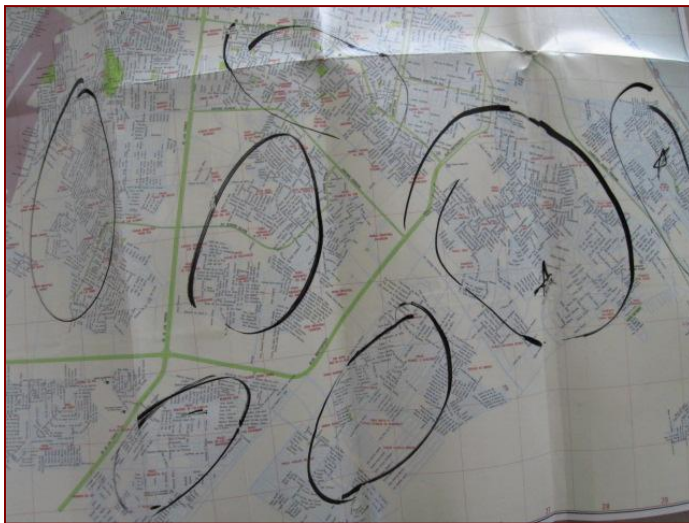


Figure 4. Sonia's map, covered with black circles identifying dangerous areas; photo by author.

Furthermore, the presence of military and police blockades along the 'safety corridors,' throughout the city, and the ever-increasing barricaded neighborhood streets further complicate this process of choosing a time-efficient trajectory (see Figure 5). Being frequently stopped by young men with large semi-automatic weapons while going about daily duties is not only an inconvenience, but a major stress factor in this area

where extreme distrust of police and military personnel is so pervasive. The obstacles to movement are many, and are fairly unpredictable, making local navigation a testing experience, to say the least.



Figure 5. Police stop along a ‘safety corridor,’ Ciudad Juárez; photo by author.

The temporal implications of Juárez’s rise in violence also extend to the navigable hours in the day, as there has been an upheaval in preconceptions concerning appropriate times for movement. This heightened violence in Juárez has resulted in a dramatic shift among nocturnal activity spaces; namely, that those who can avoid being in public spaces at night in Juárez will do so, regardless of the inconvenience this may present.

Consequently, the nightlife of El Paso has seen tremendous growth, as nightclubs and restaurants in Juárez have closed and reopened in El Paso. Have people modified their habits in this way because of the nature and timing of violent crime in Juárez? While crimes are extremely pervasive in Juárez at all hours, many participants held the opinion that most crimes actually occur during the daytime. Although hard numbers regarding the time of day of violent incidences are nearly impossible to come by, there is little



evidence to support the idea that night hours are more dangerous than those of the daytime. Indeed, just as many, if not more killings occur during daylight hours in Juárez (Molloy, 2011). With this in mind, it becomes apparent that the power of stories and senses are tantamount when determining what factors influence the masses to restrict and rearrange the hours and locations of their public life.

Alma, the young woman I spoke with in the church, reflected that nightlife in Juárez has changed very much. She said, “in the nights, at nine at night, there is no one, all of the streets are empty, the restaurants close early, there are few clubs that are open. Those that stay open, it’s because they pay money to the sicarios (literally: assassins, but commonly used to refer to narco-traffickers and gang criminals).”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the threat and extent of drug violence in Juárez has resulted in dramatic reassembling of nightly navigation, and this has reverberated throughout nocturnal commercial enterprises.

The actual risks posed in night travel versus day travel reflect the significance of alternative motivations for changed patterns of movement, aside of local experiential knowledge of danger. Sonia reflects how most of the activity in Juárez happens in the mornings now. She discusses how she and her friends now meet up for breakfast in Juárez, that she makes an effort not to be there at night. Discussing how empty the city is at night, we have the following exchange:

René: It’s very strange, since most of the crimes happen in the day.

Sonia: Yes! Yes, yes, yes it’s true.

René: I understand, of course, that people don’t want to go out at night.

Sonia: It gives (them) much fear.

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<sup>11</sup> Ha cambiado mucho mucho la ciudad, en las noches como a las nueve en la noche, ya no hay nadie, todas las calles están solas, los restaurantes los cierran temprano, ya son contados los antros que están abiertos. Los que siguen abiertos es porque se entiende que pagan botas o pagan dinero, a los sicarios.

René: But it's interesting

Sonia: Yes, even though this has happened, at least we are more aware when we drive of what is around, or we are more reluctant, and in the night, you also have to take care because there are less police, and there's more of a flow of people during the day ... You have to take care of the police, soldiers, and how also there have been things at night centers, or restaurants in the night, where there have been killings of young people, in the places for young people, so it's better to be more in the home, everyone is staying more in the home. Also, there has been another thing in the restaurants, the business in the mornings, and now it's a promotion. The prices have gone down in the restaurants for breakfast. There are many breakfast specials in Juárez, many. Because it's when the people go out. And in these same restaurants that were once so full at night, now they are promoting that you take your food to your house.<sup>12</sup>

Sonia's comments here reveal a number of interesting insights. Similar to the case of the expanded nightlife in El Paso, Sonia demonstrates how the changed patterns of movement in nighttime have reverberated throughout the business strategies of Juárez, underscoring the extent to which Juárez has disassociated itself from activities of night. Additionally, Sonia's commentary taps into a fundamental characteristic of the nighttime—the ability of darkness to obscure our vision. With obscurity, comes mystery and insecurity.

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<sup>12</sup> R: Es más curioso porque, más de los crímenes que ocurriendo en juarez estan en el dia.

34: Si! Si si si es cierto!

R: Yo entiendo, of course, por su puesto, porque la gente no quiero salir a noche,

34: Dan mucho miedo

R: Pero es interesante

34: Si aunque pase eso como que, al menos estamos más conscientes cuando manejamos que demostrar alrededor, o se estamos más pendientes y en la noche, también tienes que tener cuidado con menos de la policías, o sé, hay más flujo de gente en la mañana y en el día... Tienes que cuidar estar de los policías, soldados, entonces y como también habido cosas a lugares centros nocturnos o restaurantes en la noche, habido matanzas de muchachitos en los lugares para muchachitos, entonces mejor, casi sea cada vez ver uno más en casa, todos está haciendo más en casa, también habido otra cosa que los restaurantes, ya o es el negocio de la mañana, y ahorita están promoción, y hay parte han bajado los precios lo restaurantes, para y sobre todos los desayunos. Muchísimos especiales para desayunar en Juárez, muchísimo. Porque es cuando ya la gente sale. Y en los restaurantes así que antes se llenaban en la noche é lo que están ahorita promocionando mucho es que llevan tu comida a la casa.

I discussed changing patterns of movement with one woman, Marta, who lives in El Paso, but is from Juárez and visits regularly. I asked her if she felt fear while driving in Juárez, to which she responded:

Yes, it gives me fear, more when it is later, or at night. Yes, I have fear; almost all my visits are when there is sun, during the day. That it is not dark, not at night, because then no. Before all of this happened [referring to the violence], I went a lot, and would go at three in the morning, with my family or alone. And now, if I have to go, someone accompanies me, I don't go alone.<sup>13</sup>

Although there are diverse social understandings that shape this urge to limit movement in places of danger to the daytime, there is also a practical and sensorial contribution to this motivation, the manner in which the darkness of night plays on eyesight.

It goes without saying that our vision is limited by low light. When the sky changes from blue to black, reflected light diminishes, and the discriminability of objects thereby decreases. When driving around at night in Juárez, the city viewer is not encountering complete darkness, but rather a variety of more and less illuminated areas. The spatial navigation of mysterious dark areas becomes strained in this scenario, as ominous potentialities cast a shadow over desired routes and activities. If you cannot see what or who may be inhabiting a certain obscured region, it increases your vulnerability to the potential inhabitants of this darkness. Although sensorially we could gather additional attributes of the occupants of dark spaces, the pragmatic decision involves a quick glance and continual movement. The Juarenses navigator is a conflicted mover; looking, but without the time to see.

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<sup>13</sup> Si, da miedo, mas cuando es un poco mas tarde, o sé a noche. Si da miedo, casi mis visitas son que haya sol durante el día. Que no sea oscuro, que no sea de noche, porque asi no. Y antes de que pasara todo esto, yo iba mucho podía venirme a las tres de la mañana, con mi familia o yo sola, y ahorita, si tengo que ir con alguien que me acompañe, sola no voy yo.

Despite this tension, the senses are incredibly important tools for movement, especially in this scenario. Indeed, the heightened embodiment of borderland mobility today places the senses as key tools for risk aversion and security. Philosopher Michel Serres (2008) maneuvers with Panoptes as a theoretical tool, the all-seeing man who is never seen. Here, we can consider Panoptes the ideal of Juárez travelers.

An insomniac, without a blind spot, never inattentive or unaware, intensely present, nothing but face, an omnidirectional ball of eyes, an interlocking geometry of indestructible facets... Here at last is the right position for those who desire to be first and last, critical yet never subject to criticism, an observing presence with no observable opacity, always a subject, never an object, (p. 45).

The desire to continually avoid potential risk when in public spaces lends itself to a hyper-ocular, fully engaging with the span of one's point of view, seeking to monitor all that falls within it. However, despite rationalist associations between visual-centered analysis and the mind-body dichotomies that play into other binaries of a colonialist world-view, the ocularcentricity of those moving through Juárez is a fully corporeal enterprise.

Additionally, there are clear gender components to local understandings of vulnerability to violence and the performance of night, explored by Jorge Balderas Domínguez (2002) in his work, *Mujeres, antros, y estigmas en la noche juarense*, (or *Women, Dens [of Iniquity/Clubs, Dives], and Stigmas in the Juárez Night*). Domínguez reflects upon these stereotypes and their influence:

If traditionally the night is considered synonymous with disorder, drunkenness, and the night of borderlanders and Juárez is all the more violent, dangerous, and insecure, then those who disobey the advice that says “those of good conscience,” “the decent women don't go out in the night and even less alone,” amalgamate

these negative stereotypes and convert them into: “woman of the night- and woman of the street, (p. 56).<sup>14</sup>

From this, we can gather that patterns and perceptions of movement at night are gendered, and likely more restrictive for women than for men. Because of the nature of my study, in which I solely interviewed women, I am not able to contrast the limitation of movement on gendered lines, sufficed to say that it seems evident that most residents are limiting their movement to some extent in response to the violence, and that the women I spoke with all seemed to have fairly widely limited their mobility in an effort to avoid risk.

It is worth noting that increased nighttime productivity and activity among humans is largely a product of modernity, reflecting the urge to maximize the capacity of 24 hours for labor, and the liberating effects of artificial lighting. Murray Melbin (1987) discusses the colonization of night in his text, *Night as Frontier*, considering the growing occupation of night spaces, as it has resembled westward expansion and conquest in the United States (and indeed social realities of night echo those of the frontier; Melbin identifies relaxed attire, relative isolation, and a wider range of accepted behaviors as a few of the parallels) (1987, p. 37-9). Broadly, we shifted through the process of modernity into a more temporally and spatially mobile world. This transition has had discernable impacts upon expectations of our spatial and temporal maneuverability, and in this particular border zone the recent boundaries and limitations applied to personal mobility become especially striking.

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<sup>14</sup> Si la noche tradicionalmente es considerada como sinónimo de desorden, embriaguez, y la noche fronteriza juarense es además violenta, peligrosa e insegura, quienes desobedecen el consejo que dictan “las buenas conciencias,” “las mujeres decentes no salen en las noches y menos aún solas,” amalgaman los estereotipos negativos y los convierten en uno solo: “dama de noche- mujer de la calle.

There are some social predispositions that are eternal and speak to the wildness within us, as human animals. For instance, we are not the only creatures that become cautious in the darkness; most diurnal sighted animals do (Sorenson, 2008, p. 246).

Proto-human beings who did not fear the dark were not as reproductively successful as those who did have the fear. Thus, the generate-and-eliminate mechanism of natural selection is a plausible explanation of the reliability of our belief that darkness is dangerous. Under the innateness hypothesis, frightened toddlers are not even vicariously relying on the experience of nonancestors who were injured by darkness. Children know without relying on anyone's experience that dark places are dangerous, (Sorenson, 2008, p. 254).

This quote would indicate that fear and caution of night are somewhat innate to our human character, tied into a survivalist worldview. When this tendency is bundled up with the view from the brink, perhaps night becomes all the more sinister.

Amid this mix of social, cultural, and intrinsic ideas of night, there has occurred a marked shift in borderland mobility here. People are avoiding movement at night through Juárez, a trend frequently evinced in interviews. As an example of the modified temporality of borderland mobility, these changing dynamics of night spaces are especially palpable, as not only the testimonies of participants reflect these changes, but they are echoed through the business woes and successes of nightspots in Juárez and El Paso, respectively. While the time constraints present at the bridge and throughout Juárez represent elements of a different temporality beyond the control of residents, this tendency to limit exposure in public spaces to daylight hours is the result of a series of decisions and prioritizations in the effort to avoid risk: an exercise of control.

## **Control**

Closely tied into the manner in which factors of embodiment and temporality have affected mobility in el Paso del Norte is an acute discernment of personal and collective control, a taking into account of how to avoid risk while persisting with one's livelihood. The performance of innumerable mundane objectives is shaped by a series of decisions and negotiations. For risk-averse residents, these daily maneuvers are colored by an awareness of the ever-present possibility of danger within Juárez and a keen attention to how exposure to these threats can be minimized.

As this controlling capacity is exerted in terms of embodiment, we see alterations of one's physical appearance, efforts to 'blend in,' to not appear as a lucrative victim for kidnapping, carjacking, or robbery. Participants who commented that they drove older cars while in Juárez, dressed more simply, or even were hyperaware of their surroundings, were all maximizing the factors that they could control in the situation at hand. Temporally, many residents have dramatically altered their exposure to public spaces during night hours, opting to change their patterns of behavior rather than experience the fear and risk that they associate with night. This negotiation of what can and cannot be controlled is vast and idiosyncratic, yet we can deduce overall that a utilization of what can be controlled in efforts to remain safe is characteristic of mobility in el Paso del Norte today.

Speaking to Alana, a maquiladora temporary contract employee living and working in Juárez, who travels to El Paso several times weekly, reflected the careful attention to discerning which factors can be controlled that I beheld so frequently among

people who move around Juárez regularly. She commented, “So really, for me the only thing I can do is try to be aware of my surroundings, when I drive home or to work I pay attention at traffic lights who is next to me, I make sure I lock my doors.” She must continue to navigate the dangerous streets of Juárez, due to economic constraints, but she is also attentive to how she can make the best of her circumstances.

It is the class status of individuals and families that is the factor most significantly affecting their ability to control their exposure to risk, a sentiment frequently echoed in interviews. When I spoke with Alana, I asked her if she often considers the possibility of moving to El Paso, or leaving Juárez. She replied,

No, first of all, because I don't have the economic means to come and live in El Paso, and I don't have the papers either. And that's the thing, if you have the money, then you can come to this country. If you don't have the money, you don't come, unless you were born here or through some relative or you get married.

Indeed, the class status of participants was the most apparent factor that affected the nature of mobility throughout el Paso del Norte, and consequently, their level of exposure to danger. For example, residents often joke about the former mayor of Juárez, who has the economic means to own a home in El Paso where he resides, and when traveling in Juárez, rides in an armored car. Meanwhile, the poorest segment of society in Juárez is likely exposed to the highest level of risk, as they may lack their own vehicle and use public transit, and possibly be without the documentation necessary to cross into El Paso. The level of control one has in this situation, the ability of an individual to limit risk, is closely tied into their class status.



Issues of citizenship and legality also play into personal mobility in a binational metropolis. For instance, Analisa, a woman I spoke with in El Paso, had endured the deportation of her husband 12 years earlier. They are an upper class couple, and she and her children live in El Paso, visiting their husband and father on the weekends. She reflected how the children miss their father, and want to stay with him, but the fear of danger compels her to keep them in El Paso. She and I had the following dialogue:

R: Have you and your husband talked about moving somewhere where you could live together?

A: He's never had an ambition to live here [in El Paso] because that's his life, that's what he knows. But he always says but if we could actually do something, but I want to do it legally. A lot of people say well you could pay so and so and they could cross him over. No, because I don't want him to be inside a prison, it'd be like living inside a prison, because he won't have a life, he won't be able to drive, he won't be able to work, you know where he gets paid good. He knows how to work in a lot of things, he's very good at a lot of things.

R: But do you ever feel like Juárez is kind of like a prison?

A: Yes, that's the thing too- but over there I say, well God has been wonderful with us, and here I'd be driving with fear that if we get stopped he would have to go to jail for five years... I say, I have a double life, because I have a life here completely apart from over there, and then once I cross the bridge I forget about this life and start the new one over there. And it's very difficult, with this violence... We need to find a solution to this somehow. A lot of people say sooner or later something is bound to happen. And right now he opens his business every day and we're just praying to God every single day that nothing happens.

Of all participants, Analisa and her family had the most distinctly gendered appreciation of mobility through Juárez. She explained to me that, since the escalation of violence, she and all of the female members of her family never drove alone in Juárez. Every

weekend that she would visit, her husband would take the bus to meet her at the international bridge, so that he could drive with her, to protect her.

Analisa's situation is extreme in a number of ways, but it reflects the complex histories and understandings that can shape a person's preconceptions of how he or she might seek to minimize risk in this environment. When discussing the role of class status in shaping mobility in el Paso del Norte, it is important to note too that, while being of a lower class status diminishes the ability to control one's surroundings, it also lessens the presumption of victimization, at least for generalized crimes such as kidnapping, carjacking, and theft. For this reason, middle class and upper class residents seek to appear less well off as a way to avoid potential victimization.

The manner in which residents and visitors to Juárez seek to reduce the likelihood of victimization is varied and numerous, as the case of Analisa demonstrates, where her family goes to such tremendous added efforts to protect the women of the family, and continues to live in a strained family structure spread across two countries. An additional way that residents have sought to lessen their exposure to crime and danger is through changing the dynamic of neighborhoods, minimizing contact with one's neighbors and those who may be of questionable trustworthiness.

This tendency is addressed in Caroline Moser's (2001) essay, "The Gendered Continuum of Violence and Conflict- An Operational Framework," in which she discusses the impacts of varied forms of violence upon society. Moser delineates the forms of capital that are detrimentally affected, including: physical capital (or the productive resources associated with the business sector, and the economic costs of

violence), human capital (the level of investment placed in human wellbeing, in the form of education, health, and nutrition, for example), social capital (or the level of community trust and reciprocity present, associated with the maintenance of social norms), and natural capital (or the value of environmental assets to the community) (2001, p. 41-4). Moser then discusses the gendered implications of these diverse impacts of violence, considering how the influences upon these types of capital can vary along gendered lines.

If we are to consider how her framework for analyzing the impacts of violence applies here, then the focus of this study would reside primarily within the zone of social capital; yet the nature of a community's social capital is clearly linked to the other forms of capital listed, as is it inextricably tied to political and governmental factors that do not fit as clearly upon this spectrum. Nonetheless, Moser's (2001) observations regarding the gendered dynamics of violence and social capital offer helpful insight as we focus on the lived realities of el Paso del Norte in the context of violence. Moser elaborates:

Sustained violence also often systematically reduces trust between neighbors and communities. Poor women in particular rely on such informal support networks to share childcare, food, and water as the basis of their daily coping strategies. When these break down, women have fewer resources on which to draw, with fundamental impacts on the level of well-being. This breakdown of community and household cohesion can contribute to the growth of gangs, with their associated 'perverse' social capital, (2001, p. 45).

This commentary is certainly pertinent to the case of Ciudad Juárez, as the nature of trust in strangers and neighbors frequently emerged during the course of interviews- a notable example of the changes to the city since the increase in violence.

Beyond the fear and distrust that pervades the navigation of public spaces, there is an increasingly prevalent level of distrust present within familiar community spaces. The topic of neighbors and neighborhood solidarity often crept up in interviews, with interviewees by and large lamenting how neighbors were unable to trust one another, and were relatively powerless if there were any criminal occurrences in their neighborhoods. Ana, a woman from Juárez living in El Paso, reflected to me:

Before in Juárez there was a lot of trust, everyone was friendly. Now the people don't see you, they have fear- 'who are you?' So there is a lot of distrust... the families are united, but the neighbors, there is not so much unity among the neighbors. And so at times it is better that you stay closed off in your house, and if the police ask you if something happened, you can say that you didn't see anything. It's for security- you don't see anything, you don't hear anything, nothing, to have security. And so for the neighbors there is much distrust.<sup>15</sup>

Not all participants experienced this level of distrust for their neighbors, and indeed there have been news reports that within Juárez some local communities have banded together to blockade roads and set up patrols- helping one another to protect their homes and families from outside danger (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2011). Here we see two wildly different ways to respond to this danger- isolating oneself and avoiding conflict, or pooling resources and defending from harm. The tension between these two responses is apparent, as many participants reflected this need to maintain the strength of the

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<sup>15</sup> Antes en Juárez allá más confianza, más amables todos. Ahora la gente no te está viendo, tiene miedo, '¿quién eres tú?' Entonces tienen muchísimos desconfianza... si la familias están uniendo, pero los vecinos, la unión de vecinos no es mucha. Entonces a veces, lo que tienes que hacer quieres mejor quedarte cerrado en la casa, y si te pregunto la policía que liste algo, pues lo de veras que liste pero lo que no viste nada. Es por tu seguridad. No viste nada. Y me oiste nada. Nada. Por la seguridad. Y por los vecinos es mucha desconfianza.

community, to be brave before this enduring threat, and yet on a day-to-day basis, these ideals are exceptionally difficult to embody.

In this sense, the manner in which any given person or group can appraise what it is that they are able to control can vary widely. However, there is nonetheless a proactive capacity to the response of residents to violence. Whether it be through modification of appearances, bridging or segmenting neighborhoods, or picking up and moving, those who have the economic capability to alter their circumstances are doing so. These decisions affect not only the person enacting them, but also those in their proximity, the environment within which they function, and the possible spaces they opted not to inhabit. The nightscape of Juárez is fundamentally different because of the widespread abstention from its occupation, so too is the nightlife of El Paso. These understandings of constraints and possibilities echo throughout the economic, political, and cultural schemas that emerge.

So what, specifically, emerges from these altered livelihoods? How does the way that violence is manifested in the mundane change the composition of a city? The following chapter will focus on the nature and dynamism of *fronterizo* identity, emphasizing the manner in which place is remade through responses to local conditions. Patterns of movement within el Paso el Norte have undergone a tremendous transformation coinciding with the dramatic increase in lawlessness and strife. The content of this response to local tumult is varied and constantly shifting- yet bears some overarching commonalities. As this subtle violence is acted out daily, the amalgamated performances create new urban spaces, reverberating throughout.

## CHAPTER V

### FRONTERIZO IDENTITY CROSSING THE RIVER STYX

Here and there, I am moving between. I am this way now and that way there, and when I pass I feel the change within. I behave differently; I adapt to the way I understand myself to be seen here. I speak a relaxed ‘Calo’-inflected Spanglish to you tonight, I speak proper Spanish to you today; I puff my chest up in this place, I shrink in the shadow over there. Where, when, and with whom are helpful indicators of the person I will exhibit- and it is jarring at times, this polyhedral self. In the course of a day, or a weekend, or an hour- I peer through so many facets, I extend my personage from them.

Life on the frontier can be characterized both by sharp divisions and the cohabitation of ambiguous in-between spaces. In Chapter III, I indicated that to speak of borderland identity is to grasp at multiple fluidities. And yet, the objective of this section is to connect the modification of everyday practices (the focus of the prior chapter) with the emergence and divergence of local identities. Conversing with participants about what it is to be a *fronterizo* (borderlander), the responses were often replete with an uneasy mixture of competing and complex senses of self and place. But despite these tensions and uncertainties, there are discernable transformations to *fronterizidad* (borderlanderhood). These upheavals have occurred coincident with the rising violence, manifested performatively through the shifts in borderland mobility, reflecting uneasy intermingled visions of Juárez as past home and future wasteland.

However, the purpose of this chapter is not to prognosticate about the uncertain future of el Paso del Norte, nor is it to dwell on what has been lost in fronterizo identity as life on the border has fundamentally changed. Rather, it is to discuss the performance of fronterizidad as residents navigate the jarringly divided urban landscape of el Paso del Norte. Expanding upon the modifications of mobility expressed in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the way in which altered patterns of movement reveal and reflect a changing localized sense of self. Fronterizo identity formation can offer a poignant illustration of the differences and multiplicities which are often tied to cultural and regional identity construction, while also demonstrating the way that mundane practices performatively reconfigure lived places. In this sense then, this chapter not only articulates how identity formulation is being transformed in a context of heightened insecurity, but also how these modified constructions of self are applied to the urban landscape itself, emphasizing the co-constitutive expression of self and place.

The stories contained in this chapter focus upon changing and multiple appreciations of fronterizidad, as they drift between poles of hope and mourning, utopic remembrances and dystopic visions of the future. Memories offered are filtered through the lens of today, often proffered with an idyllic timbre, as questions of the past imply an emphasis upon what is lost. Yet through these stories of those who traverse a growing El Paso and decaying Juarez, we can more fully grasp the tensions and conceptions underlying lives stretched across a disparate and yet strangely unified place.

This chapter opens with a brief exploration of some key terms invoked throughout the chapter: identity, performance, sense of place, and fear. Following the exploration

these conceptual definitions, the remainder of the chapter engages with divergent understandings of *fronterizo* identity, as told by participants. First, I examine what participants identified as key benefits to a *fronterizo* livelihood, before turning to the tensions embedded in *fronterizidad*, a strain that is particularly evident through the conflicted appreciation of the region's former notoriety. Then, I present understandings of exclusion and unevenness as shared by participants, reflecting the negotiations and signifiers of difference among *fronterizos*. The chapter closes with an analysis of the ways in which *fronterizos* comprehend and consider violence and evil in their hometown. Through the exploration of these facets to *fronterizo* identity, a connection is drawn between the everyday practices that shaped the prior chapter, and the corresponding sense of self that is examined here. The interconnectivities between the mundane performances linked to a place, and the sense of self that emerges, are tied to a sense of place that frames the urban space of *el Paso del Norte*.

### **Identity, Performance, Place, and Fear**

Prior to engaging with the particulars of borderland identity in *el Paso del Norte*, it is helpful to define and frame the terms within which we are operating. When contemplating how to frame and analyze identity, many scholars have resisted a view of identity as essence, instead investigating identity as a reflexive, performative process, constructed in and through discourse and difference (Barthes 1983, Foucault 1980, Hall 2003, Sandoval 1991, Trinh 1991). The conceptualization of identity provided by Stuart



Hall (2003) in his essay, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” is closely aligned with the approach of this project. Hall contends,

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (2003, p. 222)

He continues:

Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (p. 225)

These excerpts provide a useful framework for the manner in which this project approaches the nature of identity formulation and maintenance, while also emphasizing the role of past and future projections as they link to present senses of self.

Revealing the iterations of borderland identity being produced in el Paso del Norte amid conflict and duress, this chapter highlights the reflections of participants concerning their sense of place and self, locating them within present understandings of tumult, the contrasts presented through remembrances, and the ideas that participants have about what is and is not possible for their future home. In this way, Stuart Hall's definition of cultural identity is very useful. However, borderland identity cannot easily be placed within the umbrella of a 'cultural identity,' as in a sense it also occupies the

mental space of a national identity. Cynthia Bejarano (2005) offers a fitting commentary on the subject, stating:

Relationships, interactions, arguments, emotions, policies, laws, intercultural exchanges, and national discourses, along with every other lived experience and ideological framework on the border, explode with charges of heightened nationalism, ethnic pride, and a contestation of border identity. The borderlands thus is a place where people face simultaneous affirmations and contradictions about their identities. Contesting identities is commonplace, and the question of who is more Mexican than American or vice versa frequently devolves to the physical barrier demarcating the border... (2005, p. 22)

These tensions and contradictions of borderland identities were evident among the commentary of participants, as residents of el Paso del Norte negotiate numerous markers of difference even as they describe signifiers of cross-border unity.

The complex identity politics of the U.S./Mexico borderlands have captivated many scholars (Anzaldúa 1987, Gomez-Pena 1986, Gonzalez 2001, Rosaldo 1993, Vila 2000), and the emergence of border theory as an interdisciplinary paradigm for academic inquiries is linked to the distinctness and complexity of border livelihoods. This multiplicity and dynamism of *fronterizidad* has likely already been made apparent in this study, as the focus has moved back and forth along the borderline, discussing El Paso and Juárez as one while simultaneously emphasizing their tremendous differences. As geopolitical materialities, such as international border-crossings, are integrated into local identities, a sense of self becomes continually tempered by notions of legality, citizenship, and nationality.

In contemplating the formation and negotiation of *fronterizo* identity, the relationship between the understanding and application of an individual or group's identity, and the performance of that identity becomes a critical question for analysis.

Linda McDowell and Gill Court (1994) utilize Judith Butler's (1990) conception of performativity as they consider the practice of identity, contending that identity is "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (McDowell and Court, 1994, p.732). As I proceed with a discussion of *fronterizo* identity, it is difficult in some ways to differentiate between the identity (or the internalized construction of self) and the manner in which that identity is performed to the public world. Even using terms such as internal and public imply a dichotomous other (external/private), which can obscure the interactivity of one's thoughts (or sense of self) with the way that those understandings of identity may be displayed or enacted. In bringing the term, 'performance,' to this preliminary section, it is with the intention of demonstrating the dialectical relationship between a dynamic sense of self, and a dynamic manner of performing that selfhood.

When considering the manner in which to frame performance and identity, it is important to consider that these concepts are bounded by the contested appraisals of bodies in space, situated within complex matrices of power. Robyn Longhurst discusses the influence of Butler's conception of performativity as part of her survey of feminist geographical thought concerning bodies, "Situating Bodies," (2005) as she articulates that the concept of performativity "moves away from essentialist and static understandings of identity, instead theorizing identity as constantly re-enacted through bodily performance" (p. 342). However, as geographers have employed performativity in the theorization of identity, Butler's conception has been problematized, due to its rejection of any notion of conscious negotiation on the part of subjects 'performing' identity (Nelson, 1999). Lise Nelson explore this limitation of Butler's formulation, contending, "Geographers are in a

good position to theorize identity formation as an iterative process, but one produced through a *recursive* relationship between power/discourse and critically reflexive, geographically embedded subjects” (1999, p. 341). This appraisal of *fronterizo* identity seeks to draw attention to the *negotiation* of these dominant discourses as they are applied in the everyday, discussing the performance of local identity as it reflects the iterative capacity of mundane practices to inform evolving senses of self and place.

In Chapter III, Iris Marion Young’s (1990) work regarding difference of the body was assessed as it pertained to social representations. Here, the influence of her work is apparent, since the aim of this chapter is not to provide a singular knowledge about the finite nature of borderland identity, but rather to express the heterogeneity of its manifestations. When considering markers of difference in identity construction, the role of class status especially bears mention.

As previously noted, class status is the single largest indicator of borderland mobility, one that frames access and understandings in countless ways throughout this borderland metropolis. And here, as we discuss borderland identity, there is a clear class dimension to the discussion. Activities of leisure, freedom of border crossing, diasporic capacity are all linked to class status. The manner in which borderland identity is discussed here has an upper-class bias, in that the focus is placed on those who are able to cross the international borderline, and not all residents of this metropolis. This is not to indicate that those who reside in a shantytown at the edge of Juárez and lack sufficient papers or means to cross into El Paso are not *fronterizos*, but that their experience of *fronterizidad* is fundamentally different from those who have the ability to traverse the

borderline. The design of this project was geared towards telling the stories of those whose lives straddle the international borderline; for this reason, narratives of those operating within the most deprived socio-economic strata are absent.

Indeed, *fronteriza* identity is marked by its unevenness, especially in the current context of displacement and unrest. In Jennifer Hyndman's (2000) text, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism*, she discusses this fundamental characteristic of cross-border movement, articulating:

Diasporic distributions are not, however, based on an equality of mobility and access among all groups. Opportunities to cross borders and move within a country, whether made voluntarily or involuntarily, depend on prevailing politics, economic resources, gendered access to jobs, and other key positionings. (p. 33)

The freedom that an individual or group has to maneuver effectively or confidently through a terrain plays a key part in the sense of place that they adopt, and the way that they may understand themselves as a part of that place. Doreen Massey (1996) contends,

It is the relation between identity, spatiality, and power which is crucial. Just as with mobility, degrees of spatial enclosure and openness/porosity and their relation to the construction of identities may be established through a range of very different social relations. (p. 115)

Massey's commentary reflects the process of identification as it is linked to the navigation of different spaces and contexts. In this sense, we can surmise that there are many versions of *fronterizidad*, each reflecting and relating to broader patterns and processes of power, movement, and connection.

Part of this discussion on borderlander identity in el Paso del Norte is locationally rooted, with this border metropolis not merely serving as a stage for these evolving identities, but rather as a social space, as a continually reconstituted place of

representations and upheavals, imbricated fully with the formulation of identities. When considering the performative process of identification, the expression and negotiation of place is a necessary component to this process. The methods of altering personal mobility, addressed in the previous chapter, have ramifications for the nature of place. As residents, for instance, opt to use an older, 'uglier' vehicle for their trips into Juárez, they participate in the transformation of Juárez as a place. As people opt *not* to move through certain spaces at certain times, they alter the urban character through their absence (in night spaces of Juárez, for example). This emergent and dynamic quality of place is interwoven with an emergent fronterizo identity, and thus is a term that bears some explanation.

Elizabeth Grosz's (1992) discussion of the linkages between bodies and cities is helpful here, as she considers the simultaneous projection and reflection of sociocultural space and the corporeal forms that constitute it. Grosz contends,

The city is... the place where the body is representationally reexplored, transformed, contested, reinscribed. In turn, the body (as cultural product) transforms, reinscribes the urban landscape according to its changing (demographic, economic, and psychological) needs... (1992, p. 249)

I use terms such as urban landscape, sense of place, and social spaces of el Paso del Norte more or less interchangeably, as a way to refer to the performatively constituted city.

This view of place and place-making contrasts sharply with a view that would associate place, like identity, with bounded, essential quality. Rather, the conception of

place offered by Doreen Massey in her text, *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), reflects the approach of this text to considering the nature of places. Massey contends,

The identities of place are always unfixed, contested, and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by places boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that ‘beyond.’ Places viewed in this way are open and porous. (p. 5)

It is important to note that, although the method I undertake of discussing identity and place is rooted in an understanding of their fundamental dynamism and multiplicity, the manner in which participants reflect or understand their own sense of self may well be grounded in an appreciation of home and self as essential characteristics. Therefore, although participants may identify the nature of their *fronterizidad* by bounding it and establishing an other, this informs the multiplicity of this identity manifestation, rather than the end of it.

When considering the interconnectivity of identity, spatiality, and power in regards to the status quo of el Paso del Norte, the interpretive application of fear, or reflected understandings of one’s potential victimization, is a key component to this modified process of identity construction and upheaval. As the prior chapter concerning mobility investigated, the level of attentivity that is directed towards embodiment is heightened in el Paso del Norte, and this increased sense of one’s corporeality is tied closely to a fear of potential victimization. The experience of fear has become ubiquitous for those who cross regularly, and in this sense, perhaps the most universal modification to *fronterizo* identity is the persistence of fear and feelings of vulnerability. The work of Rachel Pain and Susan Smith (2008) in their edited volume, *Fear: Critical Geopolitics*

*and Everyday Life*, offers helpful analysis of the geographical and experiential dimensions to fear in everyday practices. They contend: “Imaginariness of fear have always been spatialised: located in certain places rather than others. The ways in which fear is materialised and embodied brings these spatialities to life,” (p. 12). Their contention draws attention to the performativity and responsiveness embedded in understandings of fear and risk, as they emphasize the linkages between fear and the public sphere, most notably in urban spaces.

Pain and Smith (2008) continue, “Bodies are drawn into this unequal materialisation of fear too: certain people are more or less feared in different places and times, partly depending on bodily markers, and this profoundly affects their own feelings of security,” (p. 13). The situated appreciation of (other) bodies in particular contexts shape tendencies to fear or to feel fearless. Moving through this divided landscape, the performance of fear (or the outward rejection of it) is tied to location, time, the presence of others, social status, and a responsive sense of one’s corporeal form. However, these performances and understandings are also occurring within what has been termed a *necropolitical* order, originally described by scholar Achille Mbembe (2003). Mbembe argues that, “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror,” (2003, p. 39-40), as he considered the creation of “*death worlds*,” or “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the *living dead*,” (p. 40; emphasis in original).



Applying the metaphor of the river Styx to *fronterizos* is apt here, as border-crossers so frequently occupy diverging spaces of death and life, presumed victimization and assumed safety, as they navigate on either side of the Rio Grande. The presence of a necropolitical order has been applied by scholars to the circumstances of Ciudad Juárez, both in regards to the femicide phenomenon by Rosa Linda Fregoso (2006), and by Melissa Wright (2011) concerning gendered politics of meaning that frame both femicides and drug killings. As these works are focused upon dominant discourses in the region, and not on how they have been differentially embodied and expressed on opposite sides of the borderline, my study offers a new approach to considering a necropolitical order as it is performed on the ground. Although a gendered knowledge about power structures of life and death may be omnipresent throughout the borderlands, the way in which this knowledge is performed diverges markedly in El Paso and Juárez. An altered vantage must frequently be applied when inhabiting a realm of fear and one of security, and so there is an interpretive facet to a necropolitical order, where residents resist and strain from their part-time status as the ‘living-dead.’

Susana Rotker offers compelling insights regarding potential victimhood and fear in her introduction to the edited volume, *Citizens of Fear: Urban Violence in Latin America* (2002), as she explores the rationalization that occurs in a context of pervasive violence. Rotker equates the performance of fear with ‘practices of insecurity,’ discussing how these practices reconfigure relationships with power, with other citizens, and with urban space itself (p. 13). Rotker continues:

Potential victims are all of those who could be killed at any given moment because they could fetch a big ransom, because they wear brand-name shoes,

because the assailant- who made a bet with his friends- fired his gun by mistake. The potential victim is middle class, wealthy, or poor: it is anyone who goes out and is afraid, afraid because everything is rotting and out of control, because there is no control, because no one believes in anything anymore. (2002, p. 16-7)

Rotker's consideration of the relationship between an awareness of dire potentialities and practices of insecurity is notable here- as the understandings and tendencies associated with pervasive fear are closely linked with the way that place is appreciated, and that self is made manifest. Looking at the characteristics of *fronterizidad*, the persistent presence of violence and fear has wide ranging impacts on the reinscription of the urban landscape of el Paso del Norte, where these methods of interrelating responding to insecurity can reverberate and become dominant modes of operating everyday.

### **Making and Remaking Fronterizidad**

Alana and I sit at a breakfast diner in downtown El Paso on a Saturday morning, a convenient meeting place as she crosses over from Juárez for the weekend. She has a boyfriend here in El Paso, but lives and works in Juárez, her hometown. She describes her neighborhood as nice, although she is quick to mention the violent crimes she has witnessed from her window. She and her mother have known most of their neighbors for twenty years or more, and they are also well aware of which nearby houses have shady dealings occurring. Alana is currently a temporary worker for a maquiladora, but she has done office work for different maquilas in Juárez for years; she has not, however, worked on the assembly line floor, identifying her English proficiency as a key reason that she has held fairly high up positions.

I tell Alana about my interest in *fronterizo* identity, and she has a great deal to say on the subject. She explains to me:

This is a living organism, and it's got nothing to do with politics. It's people, here and there, and they get involved. They get married, they have kids, they come across, they go over there, they work there, they work here. So no matter how much politics, they're still going to come across, we're still going to go there. There are still going to be ties between us. The only thing that makes me angry, and it happens both for Juárez and El Paso, is that in El Paso is the Washington government, and they sometimes don't know the border, they don't know what the border is like, but what they read, what they're told. And it's the same in Mexico City. And I believe that this region, it's a different thing, a different animal, and we should have a different identity as border people. But I see it like that, it's going to continue too, unless the border is shut down, but that's not going to happen. There will always be this community of the two cities. And there will always be the people that don't like it and the people that like it, and on the other side (laughs).

Through this statement, Alana makes it clear that she sees a distinct *fronterizo* identity, while also expressing the divisions and incongruities of life as a *fronterizo*. In this section exploring articulations and reminiscences of borderlander livelihoods, the uneasy articulation of a unified border culture is evident. Because although there is an awareness and appreciation of the distinctness of *fronterizidad* (borderlanderhood), there are also so many markers of difference, so many internal divisions and dynamic components to life in el Paso del Norte, that articulating what it is to be a *fronterizo* is exceptionally difficult.

In this section, diverse responses of participants are shared as they contemplate a question of what it is to be a *fronterizo*. In asking the women who engaged in this study how they feel about *fronterizo* identity, whether they see themselves as a *fronteriza*, and how identification may be reflected in the way they lead their lives on either side of the

border, I recognized that these responses are constrained by the fact that identity is often a conflicted and multiple enterprise. However, tenuous as identity formation may be to derive through an interview, there is still considerable insight to be gained by the ways that respondents interpreted and expressed *fronterizidad*. This section is organized by the following series of questions: 1) why be a *fronterizo*?, 2) what are the (negative) stereotypes of *fronterizidad*?, 3) who is excluded?, 4) how is difference performed, and 5) how has violence affected *fronterizidad*? These questions were derived from interview content, as they reflect themes that emerged when participants spoke of *fronterizidad*. Through engaging with these questions as they emerged in respondent commentary, the internalization of mobility changes associated with violence become apparent. The connection between the dynamics of everyday practices, and an emergent localized sense of self is apparent, as the articulation of *who we are* is so frequently framed by *what we do*- the choices that are made, the responses to adversity and change.

When speaking with Alana about *fronterizidad*, we move from a conversation about the big picture, the nature of the border region and of a border people, to a more personal discussion of what it means practically to be a *fronteriza*. Alana tells me:

There are some things that I value and that I wish the Americans had more, like family concepts, you know, that its common for Mexican families to have the granny there, you know, stuff like that. I think it'd be nicer if Americans were more like that, but no, what I like about the border is that I have the two perspectives. And it's easier, you have a higher standard of living, because you know, when gasoline was expensive there, it was cheaper here, and when clothing is expensive here, it's cheaper there. But like I told you, that's for people who can get a visa and can come across, otherwise you just live in Juárez and Juárez is all you know. But Juárez is a very dynamic city, I mean there are a lot more shopping malls and places to go shopping for clothes, but still there is a lot more variety here [in El Paso].

Here Alana echoes my previous comments regarding the class dimensions of border crossing, as she articulates a key benefit of being a borderlander: the ability to maximize the options and diversity of either side. In fact, this beneficial aspect to border livelihoods appeared frequently during interviews, as participants would often lament that this formerly positive attribute of border life has receded due to the increasingly limited navigability of commercial spaces in Juárez.

As this primary benefit of *fronterizidad* appeared in interviews, it was spoken of as a relic of the past. Participants commented on how they used to be able to access the cheaper options for everyday products, by shopping on both sides of the border. They shared that it was advantageous to access both sides of the border as a way to provide their children with a diverse upbringing. Some of the participants would talk about dual citizenship, how it used to be thought of as a terrific asset, but how it is primarily U.S. citizenship that counts now.

When Yvonne and I talked about the complexity of citizenship within her family (she has two children, both of whom she gave birth to in the U.S., but she and her husband are solely Mexican citizens), she commented: “If you can give your kids the opportunity to grow up with two nationalities and then, whenever they need it, they can choose whatever is best for them at that time. That’s one of the benefits of living in a border city.” Yvonne is the small business owner in Juárez who we heard from in Chapter IV. When we talk about the content of her two children’s lives now, much of their public interactions are located in El Paso. Yvonne clarifies that they have both

always gone to school in El Paso, and now that it is so violent, they only go to parties that are in El Paso—none in Juárez.

If we were to follow Yvonne's children's ideas on the changing utility of their dual citizenship, they would likely closely mirror that of Alma, the young woman who lives in Juárez, but goes to school and works in El Paso. When I asked Alma what she thought about *fronteriza* identity, her response was focused on the way she negotiated her dual citizenship. She said,

I am an American citizen... but also I am a Mexican citizen, because of naturalization, my Mom is Mexican, and so through naturalization I have the right to be a Mexican citizen. I do not use it. I do not use the Mexican citizenship because all of my life is here- I study here, I work here. I don't really need to identify myself within Mexico, so I never use my Mexican citizenship. I have always been American- I am not interested in the right to use the Mexican [citizenship], because I want to make my life here in the United States. I like to live in Mexico, because the culture is different. For me, the culture is, in my opinion, more unified. There are more parties, the atmosphere is more social, more close, I like it more.<sup>16</sup>

In this way, the benefits of *fronterización* are clearly uneven, fraught by often contradictory cultural and national associations. The possibility of increased access and options were frequently articulated as a primary positive aspect of borderlanderhood.

And yet the manner in which these options have undergone a transition through the rising

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<sup>16</sup> Yo soy ciudadana Americana ... pero también yo soy ciudadana Mexicana, porque por naturalización, mi mama es Mexicana, y por naturalización tengo la derecha de ciudadana Mexicana. Nunca la uso, nunca uso la ciudadanía mexicana, porque toda mi vida la aca- estudio aca, trabajo aca, no necesito realmente identificarme dentro de Mexico. Nunca la uso la ciudadanía Mexicana. Yo siempre ha sido Americana- no me interesa la verdad usar la Mexicana, porque mi vida yo quiero hacer entre los Estados Unidos. Me gusta vivir en Mexico porque la cultura es diferente. La cultura para mi, en mi opinión, son como mas unidos, como mas las fiestas, el ambiente la gente es mas sociales, un ambiente mas cercana, me gusta mas.

violence in Juárez and the hardening of the borderline means that increased access can also be a divisive force in families and communities, wherein some have dual citizenship and others do not, some have the capacity to relocate to El Paso, and others cannot.

In contrast to these responses to a question of *fronterizidad*, which emphasized the distinct utility of residing on the border, drawing attention to what may be beneficial about a binational livelihood, other participants focused on aspects of border life that have made the area notorious. Many participants expressed mixed emotions about the prior infamy of Juárez as a city of sin, while simultaneously lamenting the loss of the city's nightlife. I spoke with Lupe, an older woman who has spent years crossing from Juárez into El Paso daily, employed as a domestic worker. After I described the nature of my project to her at the beginning of the interview, and asked her to summarize her history of employment and general information about her life, she responded as follows:

I was born in the borderlands, in Ciudad Juárez, and prior to the past three years, the border was very nice, very nice. There were many people who would come from the United States who went to the border, who would go to shop, who would go as tourists. In Juárez there were many big dance halls, many restaurants, and the Mexican markets- all of this. And the people from the United States would go there, to Ciudad Juárez, to shop... from here [El Paso] they would go there to eat, the most people would cross especially to eat at the markets. But since these three years that this disaster started, Juárez is alone, abandoned.... The border is very sad, very ugly. Everything is closed, where there were 500 dance halls, now there is nothing. Restaurants too.... Now it's like the ghost of Juárez, now it's a Juárez phantasm, because the people have fear to go out.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Yo nací en la frontera, en Ciudad Juárez, y antes de hacer tres años, la frontera era muy bonita, muy bonita. Había mucha gente que venía de Estados Unidos, que iban para la frontera, iban este de compras, iban como turistas. Pues en Ciudad Juárez verdad allí había este muchos salones de baile, muy grandes, mucho restaurantes, los mercados mexicanos sobre todo... De aquí [El Paso] iban para allá comer, lo más mucha gente se pasaba especialmente para era comer a los mercados. Pero hace tres años que comenzó todo este desastre, Juárez esta solo, abandonado... Esta muy triste ya la frontera, muy feo. Sobre todo

Lupe redirects the question I posed to her, drawing attention to a dramatic change that she has observed in the nature of cross-border movement: the extinguishment of downtown Juárez as a draw for touristic activities, both from El Paso and elsewhere. She speaks about these changes as part of a commentary regarding Juárez as a dying city, repeating the phrase Juárez Fantasma (the ghost of Juárez), as she describes the empty, abandoned city of today. This is a notable component to a *fronterizo* persona— not only the ability to access the options of either side (to which Alana referred), but the differing notions of legality (regarding vice industries) and corresponding dynamics of recreation that residents could access.

As the earlier history section detailed, a key component in the growth of Juárez as an urban center was its appeal as a destination for nightlife and vice. Although many residents have resisted the frequent conflation of Juárez with its ‘city of sin’ notoriety, now that its infamy has moved from lively dancehalls to empty street corners, the former glory of its nightlife is increasingly romanticized by Juarenses and El Pasoans alike. As participants reminisced about their youth, times when they freely walked about at night, enjoying the nightlife of Juárez, the feelings were mixed. For example, while Alana reflected on how much has changed since when she was younger, she also expressed her irritation at the way that El Pasoans would lament the loss of Juárez’s nightlife. She commented:

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ahorita todo están cerrado, como quinientos salones de baile, ya no hay nada. Restaurantes tampoco... no ya esta como Juárez fantasma, ahorita es un Juárez fantasma, porque ya la gente tiene miedo a ir.



But the people that used to go to Juárez just for fun, to go out partying and drinking and stuff, even now, they say, “Oh man, it’s so bad, I remember I used to go there and drink cheap beers and get all drunk,” and that’s what they miss, I mean they don’t say, “man Juárez used to be so much fun, and be able to do stuff, and I’m sorry for the people.” No they just, “Oh man,” it’s like somebody ruined their good time, or their place where they used to have their cheap good time.

Of course, this statement draws attention to the variety of lifestyles and manifestations of borderland livelihoods. This comment by Alana is not directed at all El Pasoans, but rather reflects broader sentiments concerning the exploitation of Juárez by Americans, and its present state of desolation and desperation. Indeed, Alana continues by commenting on how the American appetite for drugs has fueled the violence in Juárez. Her comments here demonstrate the tension between appreciating the vibrant nightlife that existed in Juárez prior to the increase in violence, and the manner in which the nightlife represents the dependent relationship between Juárez’s growth and changing U.S. demand.

As participants contemplated the beneficial components to fronterizo livelihoods and the persistent stereotyping that has characterized much of the area’s history, there were often several layers of differentiation and negotiation entailed in how the border is represented as opposed to what it really was or is. On both sides of the border, participants discern between those who are borderlanders, who know the border and participate in its culture, and those who take advantage of it, who are not from there or are outside of its culture. And with this appraisal, some El Pasoans may or may not be considered as insiders to fronterizo culture, as is the case to an even greater extent with Juárezenses.

Indeed, a third way that participants responded to questions concerning what it is to be a *fronterizo*, is by indicating who is *not* a *fronterizo*. This method of asserting one's identity, through the demarcation of the other, is an understandable method of definition. This area has undergone such dramatic fluxes and movements of population and demography throughout recent history, that the process of discerning who is actually a borderlander through exclusion (thereby presuming that more recent transplants do not 'know' the border), can be seen as a bounding method of deducing what it is to be a *fronterizo*. Among participants who were originally from Juárez, this typically involved the differentiation between 'old' Juárez and 'new' Juárez.

I spoke with Martha, an older woman who works at a *maquila* in El Paso. She currently resides in El Paso, but is from Juárez originally. She used to visit Juárez very frequently, and now visits substantially less, due to the violence. She and I were talking about the femicides of the past, and the violence of today, and Martha authoritatively stated that she does not believe that the people who are from Juárez originally are the ones who are doing "bad things."<sup>18</sup> She explained:

The people of Juárez, the people who were born in Juárez, are very kind. They are very, how do you say, educated. They are people very different than- but I say that because it's my city [laughs]- but it's that there has been such growth in the colonias of Juárez... of very different people. They aren't the people you would see there, in this other piece of Ciudad Juárez. In the old Juárez, I say.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> I think that what has happened in Ciudad Juárez, or the people who we are, I say that we, the people from there [Ciudad Juárez], who were born there [before] the growth, aren't the ones doing the bad things. Yo pienso lo que ha pasado en Ciudad Juárez, o la gente que somos, digo que somos, de allí [Ciudad Juárez], que nacieron [antes] que crecieron, no es la haciendo las cosas malas.

<sup>19</sup> La gente de Juárez, la gente que nació en Juárez es gente muy bonita, es muy amables, es muy, como te dire, educados. Es gente muy diferente a- dice a llamar porque es mi ciudad [laughs]- pero es que si tuve es

This opinion that Martha expressed, that the ‘original’ Juarenses are not the culprits the rampant crimes occurring throughout the city, was frequently echoed throughout interviews. Perceived as an outsider when conducting the interviews, I was often informed of how truly kind and good Juarenses people are— those who were born in Juárez, that is.

Recalling the history summary from the second chapter, the modern organization of the city is one in which the more upper class, older Juarenses communities are located closer to the borderline and city center, while much of the recent growth has been in the southern portions of the city (new Juárez). This urban configuration was linked to decades of economic globalization-fueled population growth and expansion (Esparza et al., 2004). A study by Esparza et al. (2004), which assessed the level of deprivation among different sections of Ciudad Juárez, established that these newer portions of the city (home to the more recent transplants) faced a higher level of deprivation in terms of infrastructural development (p. 133). These peripheral growths to the city emerged as more and more factory workers arrived in el Paso del Norte, and so the ‘new’ Juárez of the southern and western portions of the city is also by and large, the poor Juárez. As the capacity for cross-border movement is more limited for those among the more deprived socio-economic strata, it follows that ‘old’ Juarenses would differentiate their version of *fronterización* from that of ‘new’ Juarenses.

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las colonias que se crecías en Ciudad Juárez... de gente muy diferente. No es la gente que tu puedes ver aca, en el otro pedazo de Ciudad Juárez. En el Juárez viejo, le digo yo.

And yet for that reason, the national, residential, classed, and racial components to *fronterizidad* are increasingly fuzzy. More and more of the ‘old’ Juarenses live in El Paso now, as Juárez’s city center empties out, with families, business owners, and individuals seeking the security of the streets on this side of the borderline. In this way, the perceived authenticity of Juárez by these more ‘upper class’ *fronterizos* as a home *to* *fronterizos* has been diminished. Sonia, the upper class housewife who lives in El Paso, but grew up in Juárez, explains this dynamic to me:

It’s much more common here [in El Paso] to see people from Juárez, from my time there, and now it is strange, that there are people who stay in Juárez, but they emigrated there from Veracruz or Oaxaca. They stay in Juárez, but it’s because they don’t have papers, because if you have papers you come here. Because of the risk of much fear. Yes, now we are in El Paso; the people who [grew up in Juarez] are living here.<sup>20</sup>

As was observed in the history chapter, El Paso has long absorbed displaced populations from Juárez due to unrest and violence, as was the case during Mexico’s revolution when battles occurred at the border. That El Paso is home to a large number of first or second generation Mexicans is undisputed, and yet this does impact the way that Juárez is perceived by those who have left it behind, those who are no longer able or willing to visit.

As the differentiation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Juárez applies to this discussion of *fronterizidad* then, the emphasis is placed on these movements and displacements across

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<sup>20</sup> Es muchísimo mas común, aquí yo ver gente de Juárez, de mi tiempo, que allá. O sea ahorita ya es en raro, si hay gente que si pero emigro de Veracruz o Oaxaca o por allá, que siguen en juarez. Pero porque no tienen papeles, porque si tienen papeles ya estuvieron aquí. Porque es la riesgo de mucha temor. Si, ahorita si en El Paso ya, como que, la gente que hace nos que viene allá, estuviendolo aquí.

the borderline, as the authentic is remade and the dilemmas of identification compound while national and cultural associations become increasingly mixed. Yet despite the high level of interconnectivity, the divisions present in this binational community are increasingly exacerbated in the modern context. The militarized borderline is far more interrogative and time-consuming to cross, if the requisite papers are possessed, and the ability to access the opposite side is far more strained if documentation is lacked. Beyond this, the preconceptions of the two places, the safe place and the dangerous place, create a psychological and physiological schism that must be passed to maneuver between the two cities, exemplified by the 'exhale' of reentry into El Paso. How then are these divisions transcended by residents? "What has occurred is that border residents and those affected by border regulations have adopted some unofficial, unwritten ways to circumvent or smooth over the often unworkable definitions of the border," (Pacheco, 1985, p. 111) Although El Paso and Juárez may be clearly distinguishable from one another, and they are by their residents, they are still so entirely enmeshed in a practical sense that it makes their lines of differentiation all the more dissonant.

These markers and limitations of differentiation across the borderline are performed and interpreted in diverse ways in el Paso del Norte as residents continue in the operation of their daily business. Martha explained to me:

Martha: It's one world in Juárez, and here [in El Paso] it's another world. Here we have everything, and in Juárez they lack many things, in Mexico I believe all the places...

René: Is it difficult living in two worlds?

Martha: Yes, yes it's difficult. Yes, its two different worlds, very different. The people are very different in Juárez, than the same people are here in El Paso.

Here we respect all the laws, for example in transit, the policies. Here we wear our seatbelts, here we take out the trash, here we drive the speed limit. And then we cross the bridge, I have seen, when we cross, there goes the trash, we take off our seatbelts, we run [the stop lights]. I don't know why, but yes, it's very different the life there... Yes, the life is different here and there, and the people are different. The behavior is different here.<sup>21</sup>

Martha's comments demonstrate the manner in which the performance of place and identity changes upon crossing the borderline. Although she says that she does not understand why the same person who would obey traffic laws in El Paso would break them in Juárez, her description suggests that this disparity is simply the way things are. And that is likely a part of why things are that way: a cycle of illegality or legality maintained by the visibility of its prevalence. In other words, a person associates littering with the disposal of trash in Juárez and so they litter, and then there is litter and the association is maintained.

Of course, the interpretative maintenance and making of place in this way is constantly in a process of negotiation and re-interpretation, as residents may reconsider their practices, the policies of power structures may be modified, or a resident may stop visiting a certain location altogether. The decisions entailed here are linked to an internalization of necropolitics, to the interpretative process of inhabiting insecure spaces, maintaining a set of expectations regarding one's surroundings based on hostility and

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<sup>21</sup> Martha: Es un mundo en Juárez, y aquí es otro mundo. Aquí tenemos todo, y en Juárez hacer falta muchas cosas, en México yo creo que todos los lugares....

René: Es difícil viviendo en dos mundos?

Martha: Sí, sí es difícil. Sí, es dos mundos diferentes, muy diferentes, la gente es muy diferente en Juarez, nosotros mismos estamos aquí en El Paso, aquí respetamos todas las reglas, por ejemplo de tránsito, de policía, aquí llevamos nuestros cinturón, aquí nos tiramos basura, aquí vamos a límite velocidad, cruzamos al puente, y me ha tocado ver, en cuando cruzamos va la basura, nos quitamos al cinturón, correamos a todo lo que da, no se porque, pero, si es muy diferente la vida allí.... Sí, es diferente la vida allí y aca, y la gente, es diferente. Se comporta diferente aquí.

impunity, and adjusting the manner of maneuvering accordingly. How then, is the internalization and appreciation of this danger being expressed by residents? How has rampant violence, and the frequent bridging of this divide between security and danger, changed what it is to be a *fronterizo*?

I mentioned before that the most unifying emergent characteristic of *fronterizidad* today is the unshakeable fear that accompanies the performance of so many daily obligations. As that is applied and understood, it has led many to contemplate the human capacity for violence, and the concept of evil. In a place with strong undercurrents of a Catholic cosmology, the raw brutality that is frequently displayed in Juárez has left many to wonder how it is possible. How can so many people be able to commit such acts? Alana shared her thoughts with me on the subject at the end of our interview, when I asked her if there was anything I had left out, anything else she would like to say. She reflected:

There's one thing I do want to say for your interview, and it is that when you hear about some of the things that happened in Juárez, even in Mexico with all of this drug war. Some of those things are so terrible, so sad, that it really makes you believe that there is evil out there. Because some things are so terrible, and if you are not a religious person, it makes you question what you believe in. Well in Mexico most people are Catholics, even if we are just cultural Catholics, it makes you try and go back and be closer to your religion or something. Because for example, that experience that I told you about where they killed all the guys at the rehabilitation center, that night I was in bed, and I really felt like there was evil out there. *That night for me Juárez was like a place where there was evil*, and it was very sad. Even though it's no news, I mean we watch it on the news every night.

And it's probably also, you feel it more when it's close to you, like that night it was in my city, and all these things are happening in my country now, I feel like the presence of evil....And even with the drug cartel killings, one thing for me is

that there are a lot of kids in tough neighborhoods who might kill someone for very little money. And yeah maybe they do some drugs and then they tell them yeah, that's the car or this is the house, and then wait, and then they might kill somebody, get in the car and then leave. But those people they show who have been tortured, with their heads cut off, I mean, that's another level. *For me it's still easy to understand a poor kid that maybe does drugs, to be paid a little bit of money to go shoot at a car, and maybe not even see the people inside and just leave, but then torture somebody and cut their head off and throw it away from the body and cut their arms!* And to me— that's happening all over Mexico— that's the worrying part, that there are so many people who are doing this, because it's not only the drug cartels, but a lot of the people who are being kidnapped. They cut off one of the fingers and send it to the family, or cut the ear, I mean I've heard on the news of people who have been released after being captured for months in some cases, they're not just put in a dark room, they're being tortured, so it's like, really, how can this happen?

Alana's attempt to rationalize and understand the prevalence of violence in Juárez was a topic that appeared often in interviews, with participants differentiating between a violence of necessity (that of a poor kid, or a drug addict, who is paid to shoot someone), and a violence of pleasure or spectacle (the sexual violence and horrifying displays of gore that plague Juárez). Attempts to reconcile these displays of raw brutality with the people inhabiting one's home is a conflicted endeavor, and many participants expressed sadness and confusion when considering how this could happen. I included this longer quote from Alana because her commentary here encapsulates some very predominant themes that emerged when participants spoke about the violence in Juárez. An awareness of these two types of violence was prevalent, as was a contemplation of the human capacity for evil, and a growing concern that there was considerable evil 'out there.'

The disquieting force of these public displays of violence is visceral, as was demonstrated in the prior chapter concerning mobility. Participants considered the



omnipresence of danger that accompanied journeys to or within Juárez, and modified their behaviors bearing that risk in mind. They changed the way they would adorn themselves, the sort of vehicle they drove, the documentation they carried, and the attentivity/tension in their movement. They crossed into El Paso and felt at ease, and this was reflected in their understandings of how they should and should not perform mundane tasks. In this way, the necropolitical ordering of Juárez (as opposed to El Paso), was performed and interpreted, bodily enacted and observed by others. These responses were evident not only in the spaces residents occupied, but also in those they avoided, and the subsequent transformation of these spaces due to their diminished traffic.

Some stopped going to Juárez altogether, their awareness of the magnitude of this danger forming a barrier between themselves and their family, friends, or community. Speaking with Analisa, she summarized the power and the tragedy of this omnipresent fear.

Having to run away because they kidnapped your child or your husband, or because they killed your husband or your brother, you have to live in fear. They take a part of you, they might not kill you, but they do take a part of you. And I think it's not just my case, because a lot of people are even here illegally, and for some reason or another they have something similar happen, somebody killed, they can't even go to their funeral, because how can they cross back, it's very difficult.

Nor is it solely legal status issues that keep people from returning to Juárez for events, as participants frequently commented that there were less parties, less family get-togethers, less unity among their circles. Other participants reflected that they could not attend funerals of loved ones for fear of reprisals by the cartels at the funeral. Clearly, the divisions between El Paso and Juárez have been exacerbated dramatically through this

process, carrying some serious ramifications for residents who seek to maintain the lifestyle they had before.

When considering the identified attributes of *fronterizidad* in the context of these broad scale changes to mobility, it is evident that the primary benefits of being a *fronterizo* have been all but extinguished. While residents prized the ability to access either side, to offer their children a diversity of experience and perspective, to utilize the benefits of dual citizenship; now, the desired location to access, the desired citizenship, the desired experience- all is located on the U.S. side. And beyond this, the ability to maneuver between the two sides with any amount of efficiency, given the time involved, danger, and uncontrollability of the circumstances, means that the barriers are all the greater.

And yet the construction of these barriers is not divorced from the lived experiences of residents and their manner of responding to danger. On the contrary, some of the ways that these changes and divisions have amassed has been due to the cyclical nature of local performances. Residents feel fear at night in Juárez, despite prevalent opinions that just as many, if not more, crimes occur during the day; and so they stop going to public places in Juárez at night. The nightspots close and reopen in El Paso; fewer people go out at night in Juárez. “Juárez is abandoned.” Residents see the depressed, emptied out city; they feel the sadness of it, and they seek to escape this place of death and despair. “Juárez fantasma.”

Or residents have always seen Juárez as a place of lawlessness, just to a lesser extent. Perhaps this is because they grew up believing that police could not be trusted.

And so they have a different standard of observing laws when they are in Juárez than in El Paso. They cross the bridge and remove their seatbelts, throw their trash out the windows, and they do not know why. It is just the way it is. But it is this way because this is how the place is performed. And the barriers amass. What was once a differing notion of social conduct becomes another representation of the chaos that fills the Juarenseside of the border, volatility absent from the El Pasoan side.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The stories contained in this thesis were those of border-crossers. Individuals, families, and communities with livelihoods characterized by cross-border mobility- these participants *were* mobile. Although their patterns of movement were constrained and altered, they could access a great many more places than could the most deprived strata of society. The picture presented here is partial; it focuses on those who maneuver between El Paso and Juárez with regularity, some of whom are now shifting the bulk of their public activities to El Paso. And yet while these stories are characterized by the differences and multiplicities they carry, they are also marked by their connections to others, to place, and to ideas.

There are those who have not crossed for a long time, from either side; these groups also play into the constructive performance of the borderlands. These groups interact with the folks who cross, and their encounters carry echoes of past understandings of place, appreciations of difference, and feelings of security or insecurity. The focus of this thesis was on the performance of the borderlands, exemplified in the *fronterizos* who cross regularly, and how this performance is colored by fear and violence. As local identities are constructed and modified by changing understandings of self and place, the identities of the borderlands change along with the performance of place- the lived reality of el Paso del Norte.

Drawing from complex political economic histories of neoliberal globalized reform and industrialization spurred urbanization, this thesis positions personal mobilities within a transnational context. Consideration of gendered understandings of public space and fluctuating border policies are broached in order to address the ideas and constraints that frame day to day patterns of movement. Applying a nuanced and multiple representation of fronterizo livelihoods, this thesis approached mobility, identity, and place as they are marked by difference and fluidity. Interpretive performances of mundane practices are emphasized, in how they demonstrate the responses to and articulation of broader political, social, and economic processes and policies. In doing so, this ‘microstudy’ of the divided metropolis, el Paso del Norte, functions holographically, as local residents embody and reconstitute dominant discourses and power structures, variably embracing or resisting them as they go about their days.

Experientially, crossing the border can be poignant, tedious, trepidatious, or nonchalant. It is many things to many people across time and space. The border crosser enacts a transition, an in-between, and this can be felt and understood in wide-ranging ways. As it is appreciated in el Paso del Norte, the border has undergone a symbolic transformation. It once signaled diversity and options for many, while it now increasingly marks the division between danger and safety, the law and the lawless, the haves and the have-nots. The frontier is a place, it is not merely a line; and as these schisms are lived and maneuvered, they can be upended or maintained in subtle ways. The residents of the borderlands live in a shrinking place, where the line is growing. Those who transcend it must leap higher and farther, and the strain they feel grows. Their movement is shifting through their understandings, and their understandings are

linked to their patterns of movement. Cycles of abandonment and unevenness are embodied and transformed through bodies, even as they are exacerbated by necessity and practicality. “We must still go on with our lives,” I was told. In many interviews, I heard this determination uttered, be it sadly, defiantly, or resignedly.

How can cyclical urban performances be transcended? How can the residents who love their home participate in its reclamation? Much would need to be undone. The border is changing in the eyes of its people. The fluidity that formerly characterized *fronterizo* livelihoods is increasingly stopped up or diverted. People are giving up on Juárez, and feel powerless. And what has happened is appalling- my contention is not that Juarenses are responsible for the calamity that has befallen their city, but merely that they have participated in it through small ways that accumulate, ways that are often not consciously considered.

The identity of a place and the identity of a resident are constantly intermingling and re-constituting, and in this way, seemingly trivial methods that residents employ to adapt to violence are actually reformulating understandings of *el Paso del Norte*, just as much as is the violence itself. These responses are not a given: they reflect decisions mounted on preconceptions, built upon the practices observed of others. In other words, I see the performance of this place about me, I consider what I would do, and in conforming or not conforming to the patterns I see, I am an echo in this landscape. Material entities have the capacity to be observed, apprehended, and interpreted; and at any moment, that performance relates to that place, the way it is understood by another, and the changing visions of *how to be* in that place.

Considering the emerging sense of fronterizo mobility, it is deeply imprinted with the sadness of loss and violence. The morbid tragedies to which many residents have borne witness have pushed fronterizos to frequently consider the capacity of evil by their neighbors, their coworkers, the strangers around them. The evidence of displacement and despair is rampant throughout Juárez, offering a regular reminder of how much has changed. These are not simply the changes one undergoes while mourning or coping, but a collective grief that encompasses notions of family, community, home, and nation. Today, fronterizos are those who cross between the world of the living and the world of the dead- traversing the Rio Grande as River Styx. This experience is jarring, traumatic, and intensely felt- and many residents no longer want to do it. Those willing to participate in fronterizidad in its former sense are dwindling in numbers, as the conceptual distance between El Paso and Juárez grows.

In this context of rampant violence and impunity, the daily realities of living on the border are changing in extreme ways, and the process of sensing self is also adapted to this differentially performed context. The local is now understood more through its disparities and dangers, where it formerly was characterized by connections and interactivity. To be a fronterizo today is to be a resilient survivor (and also potential victim), and one who has likely witnessed the evidence of others' victimization. These changes occur responsively, through processes of interpretation and negotiation. As transnational forces are applied to the local, they are transcended and situated in unpredictable ways, and these daily performances represent the quicksilver in the construction of identity and place, mercurial maneuvering within a bisected cityscape.

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