

Close Encounters of the Deadly Kind:
Gender and Migration in a Time of Increased Border (In)Security

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss some of the findings of my study of the encounter between female migrants and immigration enforcement authorities along the U.S.-Mexico border. An objective of the research was to ascertain a more accurate picture of women temporarily suspended in the "intersection" of diametrically opposed processes: those posed by border enforcement measures and those posed by transnational mobility. The most pressing issue that emerged from this research was how close women come to the possibility of death as they skirt around the border wall to cross the border without authorization into the U.S. Their testimonies in this way not only shed light on physical realities grounded in extreme poverty, but also illustrate how the intersection of conflicting processes contribute to a humanitarian crises in which the likelihood of death is increasingly present. Their experiences thus contradict political rhetoric largely based on a "rational" appraisal of what increased border security measures hope to accomplish and makes urgent a reassessment the assumptions upon which current immigration enforcement policies depend.

Introduction

There is little doubt that the migration of women from Latin America has been steadily increasing since the 1980s. In spite of this, little is known about women's border crossing experiences. The research of the brutal murders of women in Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico (Camacho 2004, Urquijo-Ruiz 2004), has been important for bringing to the public's attention the unprecedented violence against women who have migrated to the U.S. Mexico border in the post-North American Free Trade Agreement period (Greenlees and Saenz 1999, Hirsch 2002, Marquez and Padilla 2003). Newspaper accounts have also been instrumental in making public several cases of border patrol agents' sexual assault of migrant women (Cieslak 2000, Falcon 2001, Steller 2001, Urquijo-Ruiz 2004). These cases have been critical to raising more questions than answers about the risks migrant women face and how common they are. However, the tragic outcome of the relationship between gender and the border crossing experience has only recently surfaced. Research on migrant deaths in the Tucson sector since 1991 by the Binational Migration Institute at the University of Arizona¹ have not only determined that migrant deaths due to exposure have increased since 1994 when harsher measures to enforce the border between the U.S. and Mexico border were implemented but also that the death rate of women migrants due to exposure has outpaced that of men by nearly three times (Rubio-Goldsmith, et. al 2006). The objective of the study, "Women at the Intersection: Immigration Enforcement and Transnational Migration on the U.S.-Mexico Border" was thus inspired by the scholarly interest in the death on the border² and in the spring of 2006, the research began to systematically collect the *testimonios* of repatriated migrant women. The interviews with migrant women provide greater understanding of the border crossing experiences that include their encounter between U.S. immigration enforcement agents and undocumented female migrants, from the time they

were apprehended in the field to the time they were released. Their experiences have been contextualized within broader economic and social environments in an effort to render a complete a portrait as possible of migrant women who were temporarily suspended in the “intersection” of diametrically opposed border processes: immigration enforcement and transnational movement. These testimonies also recount women’s brush with death in attempting to cross into the U.S. through the inhospitable Sonoran desert.

After summaries of the political and historical bases for the research and the research itself, I will discuss some the findings by way of three narratives. Through these, a prominent feature of the intersection is fleshed out, which consists of the potential for encountering death. Both the goal of crossing into the U.S. undetected and the failure to do so can be seen as opposite sides of the same coin: both the result of poverty and the involuntary migration that may help relieve it. Poverty thus lies at the heart of women’s encounters with the physical and psychological trauma that may prove fatal. Moreover, the ways in which women are subjected to harsh and punishing realities lie at the heart of border enforcement practices. At the international border, boundaries that delimit the nation and nationhood reflect socio-political practices created by established by relations of power that designate who belongs and who is excluded. In this way the intersection can be seen as the “space” in which the politics of “Otherness” and marginalization is carried out. However, as more and more women enter and exit the intersection of oppositional forces, the outcomes in terms of risks calls into question the established disciplinary mechanisms by which exclusion is enforced. The intersection in this way thus reveals extratextual insight necessary for assessing underlying social currently upon which immigration enforcement policies are premised and for raising concerns about the clash between economic and political realities.

Immigration Enforcement in the Age of Border (In)Security

Unknown to most people, the increased policing of the U.S.-Mexico border area began long before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (Dunn 1996). While a concern for national security justifies to a large degree the military intrusion into civilian life, it also invites the escalation of the use and abuse of armed enforcement by policing authorities³ and civilians alike,⁴ leading to a less secure environment. The extent to which undocumented migrant women are made vulnerable to the increased policing along the border is still under researched. Critics have long argued that in the interest of border security and the rapid hiring of agents, standards for screening, training, and supervising agents may have been relaxed, which led to the rash of high profile cases involving the sexual misconduct of Border Patrol agents between 1993-2000 (Steller 2001). More recently, the intensification of anti-immigrant rhetoric during the 2006 elections has worked to aggravate a climate of fear and distrust, and greater insecurity for residents of border communities. The existing political climate is important for understanding how information about what rights noncitizens is subverted. Under U.S. law, migrants are entitled to protections regardless of legal their status (Hull 1993). Racist attitudes and hate messages however, threaten the rights of noncitizens (Johnson 2004), and have been known to justify, condone, and/or encourage the use of harsher mechanisms of control of racialized groups, including legal residents and citizens. Furthermore, the harsh treatment of racialized groups may go unreported because offenses often take place outside public purview or lie outside the legal definitions of misconduct (Milovanovic and Russell 2001). Therefore, offenses against racialized groups go unreported because those victimized are members of social groups that are already marginalized based on other social divisions, such as gender and ethnicity. In the case of undocumented migrants, violations of their rights remain

undisclosed by the simple fact that victims are repatriated or deported and they have little to no opportunity or incentive to denounce their offenders.

Since the implementation of the Southwest Border Strategy⁵ and the adoption of measures to seal the border implemented since 1993, Nogales, like other Arizona-Sonora border cities have experienced exponential growth in migration-related activities due to the “funneling” or “rechannelling” of migration traffic that these measures produced (Cornelius 2001, Rubio-Goldsmith, McCormick, Martinez, and Duarte 2006). Indeed, Tucson Sector where Nogales is located, soon outpaced the apprehension rate of busiest Border Patrol sector, San Diego. Although the process of repatriation varies, many migrants until now are administratively removed from the U.S. without appearing before a judge. This is called voluntary departure. Arizona also had the most voluntary departures when all field offices were considered, a total of 395,597 out of a total 887,115 reported by all field offices for 2003. Other undocumented migrants are deported after an immigration court hearing and/or after having served time in any of Arizona’s immigration detention centers. Of those migrants who are removed or deported, it is estimated that over one third reenter the U.S. without authorization.⁶ Undocumented migrants who re-enter the U.S. without authorization and are re-apprehended are charged with illegal entry after removal and depending on the number of times they have been charged with this violation serve progressively longer prison terms in Arizona’s immigration detention centers (Alvarado 2004). The high recidivism attests to the economic imperatives that outweigh the risk of serving longer prison terms if re-apprehended. In Arizona, about 31,000 individuals—the vast majority of which are Mexican nationals—were imprisoned in 2004, and the number is growing (Abramsky 2004).

The Research

The present research was conducted at a migrant shelter, Albergue San Juan Bosco, in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Nogales, Sonora, a Mexican border city 55 miles south of Tucson, Arizona, lies within the funnel, or channel created by the Southwest Border Strategy. Like many other border cities along the Arizona-Sonora border, Nogales is experiencing rapid growth due to the high influx of migrants, 48% of which are women (Monteverde García 2004).⁷ Many studies suggest that gendered migration patterns, those in which the movement of unaccompanied men is followed by that of wives and other family members, are undergoing change (Cerruti and Massey 2001, Donato 1993). These studies suggest that the migration patterns of women are increasingly resembling those of their unaccompanied male counterparts. For example, the growing research on domestics, one of the fastest growing labor sectors and one that undocumented women are most likely to engage in, shows that more Latina women are leaving their own children behind to take care of the families of others in the U.S. (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2002, Ibarra 2003). In addition, similar to their male counterparts, once women begin migrating, they are virtually assured of migrating again (Donato 1994). The increase in the migration of women without spouses and family and the cyclical nature of migration increasingly also increases the chance that they will experience multiple apprehensions and detentions and also the changes that they will be victims of violence (Monteverde García 2004). I would add that without systematic documentation of what occurs at the intersection of two powerful but contrary processes, border enforcement and mobility, such policies may very well be institutionalizing and normalizing death and extreme suffering.

Like other migrant shelters that have sprouted along the U.S. Mexico line, Albergue San Juan Bosco is dedicated to the aid of repatriated migrants who, upon their release from the

custody of U.S. immigration enforcement authorities, find themselves without shelter or a support system in the area. Unlike the other two shelters in Nogales, Albergue San Juan Bosco is a non-governmental organization and depends almost entirely on local volunteers. It accommodates both male and female women migrants.⁸ Guests at the shelter typically stay only one to two days at Albergue San Juan Bosco before either attempting to re-enter the U.S. or to return to their communities of origin. It was because of this, a Rapid Appraisal (RA) method was chosen for the research. RA emerged initially from development research (Carruthers and Chambers 1981), but it has increasingly been used in the development and assessment of public health interventions.⁹ Consistent with RA methods, a topic guide was used to interview migrant women who arrived at the shelter and to get at the heart of migrant woman's experiences. The topic guide was designed to investigate among other things what women's experiences were while in the custody of immigration enforcement agents in Arizona and how those experiences impacted their lives and their decisions to attempt to cross again or return to their communities of origin. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and obtained through a combination of social interactions with respondents: by conversing, sharing meals or assisting in the center. In this way, the decision to migrate and the migration experience was situated within broader social and economic contexts.

Although perceived policy needs have been built into the research design, the research also adopts a postmodern approach through the use of women's narratives. These small narratives, or testimonies that explain practices and local events contrast large-scale, dominant explanations of social phenomenon, or grand narratives. Postmodern scholars (Lyotard 1984) argue that grand narratives mask the contradictions inherent in existent social orders and view opposition as disorder, deficient or irrational. Discovering oppositional thinking is seen as key to

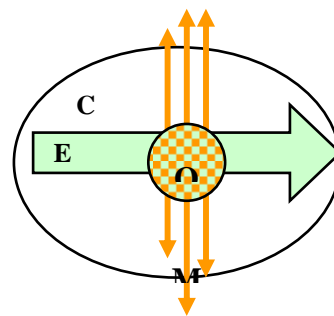
challenging the existing order and to destabilizing the grasp of oppressive systems. The discovery of this individualized knowledge represents an attempt to “deconstruct”—to unmask and make transparent the rationales that support authoritative structures and systems. Through deconstruction, then, the dominant forces in articulating ideas that maintain harmful constructs may be transformed.

Conceptualizing the Field Site

Cunningham and Heyman (2004) argue that national borders are particularly well suited for empirically examining two salient but diametrically opposed processes: those posed by enclosure and mobility processes. The process of enclosure is better understood by the challenges that impede its implementation. Conversely, mobility is better understood in the context of the barriers that impede or restrict it. I have reworked this framework to conceptualize where these two processes intersect (Figure 1), and delimit the field site. This also follows Hannerz’ (1998) suggestion for organizing transnational research where instead of the conventional community study of migrants at the

end or beginning of their migration journey, migrants are viewed as somewhere in between two points: temporarily suspended in an interstitial space. This space, the “O” in Figure 1, is thus structured by horizontal systems that “enclosure” (such as walls, surveillance, patrolling), and vertical mobility systems (such as migration, commerce, smuggling) that facilitate transnational flows.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Horizontal and Vertical Processes



C = Context: The U.S.-Mexico border region
E = Enclosure: the immigration enforcement system.
M = Mobility system(s)
O = Outcome is the intersection of competing processes

Emergent Patterns: Close Encounters of the Deadly Kind

Interviews with women at the Albergue San Juan Bosco advance our understanding the intersection as a place where opposite processes thus converge, not only theoretically but in concrete terms as well. In part, being caught in the intersection can be understood by noting that for decades, the desire for family reunification has been historically central to the decision to migrate. However, recent studies suggest that gendered migration patterns, those in which the movement of unaccompanied men is generally followed by that of their wives and family members, are undergoing change (Cerruti and Massey 2001, Donato 1993). In the current study, almost all of the migrant women interviewed had children but considered themselves mothers made single by the abandonment of their partners. The most pressing issue that emerged from the study was how women were more likely to encounter situations that may have been fatal.

Their situations can be summarized as having been developed by following patterns.

- An increase in the time that needed to cross the desert and accordingly, an increase in time in which they are exposed to the elements.
- An increase in the distance needed to stay out of reach of the border patrol and concomitantly, the stress needed to carry water and food over greater distances.
- Encounters with unfamiliar and more treacherous topographies, and greater exposure to physical trauma such as broken or sprained limbs.
- Because of the above, there was an increase in the number of women who gave up in the middle of their trek through the desert.
- Also due to the above, there was an increase in the number of women who were ultimately abandoned in the desert by their guides.

The case studies highlighted below, further illustrate these problematic patterns and indicate how women are more at risk women when crossing into the U.S. without authorization.

Gabriela¹⁰

In September of 2006, I met 24 year old Gabriela, who had come from the State of Mexico. She had traveled with a group of people on the bus, at first strangers, but through the course of the long bus trip to the North they all became friends. As their friendship grew (and perhaps with the growing tension with their approximation to the border) Gabriela and her companions bonded. They resolved to make the crossing together and support each other no matter what. Gabriela's story about her ordeal and the migrating group's commitment to each other is different from most stories of migrant women thus far in that Gabriela was profoundly touched and spiritually inspired by the strength of the group's solidarity. Her own story seemed to generate a renewal of hope, and strengthen her resolve to attempt to cross again into the U.S. as soon as she could.

Gabriela explained that there were a total of 18 people traveling together as they commenced their walk through the desert. One group of ten walked ahead, and the rest, those she considered her friends, walked behind the lead group. She felt lucky in that they encouraged and supported each other as they grew tired. By the third day of walking, they had developed into true friends

Mi grupo por suerte fue muy bueno, todos se convirtieron en muy buenos amigos. Un rato uno me iba jalando, otro me arrempujaba allá atrás... Éramos ocho personas, seis hombres y dos mujeres.....el tercer día ya nos hicimos Buenos amigos.... nos lo demostramos todos". .."Hicimos un pacto de que nos íbamos a apoyar y lo cumplimos"

[It was fortunate that my group was very good, everyone became fast friends. At once, one would be pulling me, then another would push me from behind... There were eight of us, six men and two women... On the third day we became friends...we proved it to each other. We made a pact that we would support each other and we honored it.]

Gabriela mentioned that the group was already in U.S. territory when they had to stop because the border patrol was performing a search utilizing dogs. She says it was already night time so they stayed in that area overnight to avoid the border patrol. In this way, a day of travel had been “lost.”

According to her, after they stopped she began to feel really tired, especially the women, because the “*terreno*” (terrain) was difficult to navigate. On the last day was the most difficult, but it was when she came to realize she truly had friends. The other woman reassured her that they would not leave her behind.

“llego un momento en que sí ya me sentí desesperada porque veía que el grupo se iba quedando atrás, ya en ese momento estábamos dentro de Estados Unidos, nadamas teníamos que alejarnos un poco más, para que la migra no nos hechara. La migra pasaba cada cinco minutos, y pense ‘no, en realidad estoy poniendo en riesgo la vida de diez-y-ocho personas, y no se me hizo justo”.

[There came a moment in which I felt desperation because I saw our group lag further and further behind. We were at that moment inside the United States, and we had but go a bit further so that the migra would not toss us out. The migra passed by every five minutes and I thought ‘No, in reality I am putting at risk the lives of the 18 others, and I did not think that was right.]

So after she noticed that her group of eight was falling behind, because she could not walk any faster, she decided to tell them that she could not go on, and that it was not fair that she should be holding them back. She sat down on a rock and told them, “*Chicos*, I cannot go on. (*Están a un paso*). You are nearly there. Continue onward (*síganle*)” .She felt that they had made it this far and she would not risk the chance of the group reaching their destination because she was no longer able to continue. However, her friends chose to stay with her saying “*Si te quedas tu, nos quedamos todos. (If you stay, we all stay!)*” She sensed mixture of both courage, and sadness. (“*sentí tanto valentía como tristeza*”)

After they talked about it for a while, the group asked her to try again: “*héchale ganas ya estamos cerca,*” but she could not walk anymore. She told them she just could not do it, and she told them that she would just walk down so the migra could see her and they would find her. Again, she expressed her mixture of feelings: “*Me dio más sentimiento y pero también me dio más fuerza*”

She said her female friend was the youngest and the strongest of the group. “*Ella estaba extremadamente fuerte, no se de donde saco fuerza*”. The young girl told all the men to go. She told them that she was more familiar with the area and with a powerful voice she told the men to go and that she would say with her until the migra came: “*con una voz así de mujer dominante les dijo, váyanse, yo me bajo con ella hasta que nos encuentre la migra.*” However, no one wanted to leave. So Gabriela turned around and started to walk down the hill. They had no choice but to leave.

Gabriela explained that her young friend had told her from the beginning that she would stay with her because she herself had experienced being left behind on her first attempt to cross. She had suffered terribly because she did not know the terrain, nor had she a friend in the group to lean on. She had been terrified. Gabriela felt that because of this experience, her friend had the courage to stay with her. She made a promise, and Gabriela became emotional at remembering this and she began to cry. Her voice broke again as she continued with her story:

“Y sí, ella.. ella fue como.. ella fue mi... mi angelito. Ella me llevo por el brazo y ella fue mi bastón cuando ya no podia”.

[And yes, she had become like... she became little angel. She took me by the arm and she was my cane when I could no longer]

Gabriela says that she never imagined in her life that she could ever come across people like those in her group.

Alejandra

In January of 2007, I met Alejandra, a mother of two from San Felipe de Progreso, Toluca. It was a particularly busy night at the shelter with many women arriving. Alejandra walked about stiffly, a characteristic I had begun to recognize in many migrants whose muscles sore after days of walking through the desert. Experts explain that a buildup of lactic acid in muscle tissue occurs during strenuous exercise commonly result in muscle spasms or cramps, and subsequent soreness. With increased conditioning, it takes longer for lactic acid to build up in the muscle tissue. However, most migrants are unprepared for the two to four day vigorous walk through the desert, one that is more often than not punctuated by sprints and often up and down hills and gullies. Alejandra thus suffered on this night through the routine of tending to her two children that accompanied by her, a girl of 14 and a son age 12. She seemed relieved to have got them showered and fed and could now attend to her own needs while I talked to the other women. She untangled her wet hair, attentive to the accounts of others, nodding her head on occasion to agree with a common experiences.

Alejandra and her children had also just faced a harrowing ordeal which began after they had been walking through the desert for two days. They had been lead by a guide and were among a larger group of about 20 migrants. After two days of walking, Alejandra began to fear that she and her children could not continue. The weather was cold and rainy when she decided she could not go on. Adding to the physical stress was her concern over the safety of her daughter. She suspected that the *pollero* had developed a sexual interested in her daughter so she was working extra hard to keep a watchful eye on him. The guide would pull her daughter by the arm so that she would walk in front of the others next to him. He scoffed when Alejandra protested saying that he was only doing it to keep the young girl from getting left behind.

Alejandra, who measured around 5'2" and weighed about 160 pounds, was having considerable difficulty in keeping up with them under protest. She finally decided that she had had enough and would instead return to Mexico. The guide retorted that she and her children were only keeping the group from advancing and left them. Alejandra then made an attempt to retrace her steps but soon the three became disorientated. They wandered for two additional days in the desert trying to find their way back. In that time, it rained and the temperature dipped to near freezing temperatures. The small supply of food that they carried was soon gone and they huddled together at night, covering themselves with the plastic trash can liners that they had taken to protect themselves from the rain. At one point they lit a fire to keep warm and to attract attention of the border patrol so that they could be picked up. At one point, they met up with a border patrol agent on an all terrain vehicle, but he did not stop. He simply waved at them as he passed them by. They continued walking until they met up with another agent, who did pick them up and took them to the processing center. They were then repatriated. Both children were very polite and attentive to my inquiries. The daughter was slight and timid, and Eric, the son, engaging. Eric was eager join in the conversation to explain how they used black plastic garbage bags to cover themselves from the rain and the wind and how they rested under whatever bush they to protect themselves from the elements.

Marcela

Marcela was one of the oldest women I interviewed. She was a patient and sympathetic listener as some of the other women told their stories on the evening of Thursday, March 22, 2007. She entered the U.S. on foot through the desert somewhere near Sasabe, Arizona. She was traveling with a group led by a guide. Two of the others were individuals she knew from her home state of Hidalgo. She did not know the guide. In Hidalgo, she had contacted a guide

through a coyote that she did not know personally and who told her to go to Altar. She left Hidalgo in the hopes of finding her nieces in Houston, Texas. She herself had only three boys and her nieces regarded her as their mother, calling her *mami*, and insisted that she go visit them. However, there was more to this story. Her situation at home was perhaps the most important reason why she journeyed into the unknown. By her description of her husband's behavior, it appeared that her husband was suffering from paranoia. Earlier that evening, we had listened to Guadalupe and her account of domestic abuse by her husband. Marcela added that physical abuse was just one kind of abuse. The other, which she thought might be worse, was psychological abuse such as the one that she endured. Her husband continually, as he had for years now, accused her of trying to kill him. He made her taste all of his food before he ate, and insisted that she was trying to kill him to keep all of their possessions. "*Cuales?*" she said, since they had nothing. The psychological drain on her was so extreme that at times she felt that she, too, was going insane. She left him for a while, only to find another woman living with him upon her return. Without a place to call home, she decided to take up her niece's invitation to go to Houston. She was worried about getting a job because of her age. She was afraid to work in a *maquiladora* after hearing of the deaths of migrant women in Juarez. However, to have remained in Hidalgo with her husband, she said, would certainly have brought about a worse fate. There was no one there now to support her. She said that she had read about the risks involved in crossing the desert. As she weighed those risks, she felt that staying on in Hidalgo offered equally deadly risks.

She now says that her experience crossing the desert pales with the accounts of she had heard. Her journey with a group of migrants began in the late afternoon. She estimates that they had walked for about eight hours and into the night when her accident occurred. Because it was

dark and she could not see, she fell several feet off a cliff, or ditch (*un barranco*). She remembers rolling several feet before she caught hold of a grassy type of plant with her hand and this saved her from further injury. Her leg was hurt, but not broken. However, she was unable to get up and this clearly posed a serious problem for everyone. What devastated her more, however, was the group's decision to leave her behind. With this decision, her faith in humanity was devastated. Two members of the group were from Hidalgo, *compatriotas*, no less. On hindsight, she realizes that she could not hold them back in their quest for "*el famoso sueño*" ("the famous American dream"). She was even more disillusioned that no one, not even her so-called friends, offered to stay with her. Could it be that because she was older, she wondered, that she suffered this fate? It is worth mentioning that although she was 56, she appeared to be in good health. Instead, the group left her. They set a gallon of water beside her, a pint of "*suero*" (the electrolyte drink) and some crackers. In severe pain, she drifted in and out of sleep for several hours.

At some point, she woke and evaluated her situation. She drank the water and the *suero*. She said that she had an awakening and said to herself, that this was not the way that she wanted to die: alone with her face in the dirt. No, she said, she would not die here, not like this.

So she pulled herself up and found that could manage to walk. For three days she walked in the desert trying to find a road so that the *migra* could pick her up. At night, she was guided by lights that she said she saw in the distance. She made a fire to keep warm and hopefully to attract the *migra*. She saw the helicopters overhead, but no one came. Towards the end of the third day, she came to a water tank. Cows gathered around the tank and she became again afraid when she saw some of the steers paw the ground, thinking that they were warning her to keep away. She sat in the shade until finally the cows began to lie down. She then proceeded to walk

quietly around the herd so as to not upset them. She decided to follow the trail of cow dung which lead her to a path that she hoped would lead her to somewhere or someone. Indeed, she soon came to a road and followed it to a ranch, “Las Margaritas”, with a flag bearing a skull and crossbones. She remembered thinking that perhaps the flag was meant to discourage intruders. Not dissuaded, however, she approached and saw a man, an Anglo rancher. She drew nearer and communicated “migra” to him. He did not seem to know Spanish but appeared to understand because shortly thereafter, a border patrol truck came and picked her up. She was then taken to the detention center and processed, then returned to Mexico.

Conclusion

With my focus on the notion of “intersection” and on the migrant women who temporarily inhabit it. Their near encounter with death illustrates the cost of immigration enforcement measures in terms of its toll on the human condition. For migrant women, the need to negotiate the U.S. system of enclosure reflects the contradiction between U.S. immigration laws, its concurrent need for labor, and the devastation of Mexican economies. Interviews with women at the migrant shelter where they reflect on where they have been and what their next step may be flesh out the intersection and permit us to formulate a more humanistic understanding of the border-crossing phenomenon. Migrant women’s testimonies in this way not only shed light on physical realities grounded in extreme poverty, but also illustrate how the intersection of conflicting processes contribute to a humanitarian crises in which the likelihood of death is increasingly present. I hope that their experiences provide a counter balance to the political rhetoric largely based on a “rational” appraisal of what increased border security measures hope to accomplish, and encourages a more productive dialogue about the assumptions upon which current immigration enforcement policies depend.

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Notes

¹ The *Binational Migration Institute* at the Mexican American Studies and Research Center (MASRC) at the University of Arizona, seeks to comprehensively document and analyze the interaction between migrants and immigration enforcement authorities.

² Support for the initial pilot study for this research was provided by a Social and Behavioral Science Research Institute (SBSRI) Small Grant at the University of Arizona. The research subsequently was made possible by a Fulbright grant awarded for 2006-2007.

³ In 2004 alone there were four incidents of shootings of suspected migrants by Tucson Sector border patrol agents.

⁴ 2005 also has seen an increase in civilians assuming policing (vigilante) roles along the border.

⁵ This strategy involved the intensification border closures known as Operation Hold the Line (1993), Operation Gatekeeper (1994), Operation Safeguard (1995).

⁶ This figure is taken from a June 9, 2005 article in the *Arizona Daily Star*, Tucson, Arizona.

⁷ This figure is consistent with the percent of female migrants in Latin America and North America (Zlotnik 2003).

⁸ Albergue Plan Retorno, which was closed in early 2007, sheltered only men, and Albergue Menores Repatriados typically only shelters unaccompanied minors under the age of 18, although on occasion, women may also be sheltered there.

⁹ Robert Chambers might be the scholar most commonly associated with pioneering “rapid rural appraisal” techniques. Beebe (2001) provides a comprehensive history of the adoption of the method in a wide range of disciplines. Often known by different names, RA remains consistent with the early procedures advanced by Chambers and others.

¹⁰ The name used here as for all the migrant women interviewed are pseudonyms.