

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

BODIES ON THE LINE:

LIFE, DEATH, AND AUTHORITY ON THE ARIZONA-MEXICO BORDER

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an ethnographic analysis of contemporary struggles over life, death, and authority in the Arizona-Sonora region of the United States-Mexico border. Drawing on over 30 months of multi-sited field research (2002-2007), it examines the politics surrounding the death of unauthorized migrants in the Sonoran Desert. In tracing intervention efforts aimed at protecting the border from unauthorized migration and unauthorized migrants from the effects of extreme desert exposure, this project explores how and why their bodies and stories are deployed in the contestation and articulation of power over people and space. This ethnographic take on the management of migrant death and trauma conceptualizes a politics of life that reimagines the relationship between authority, legitimacy, and right. By examining how migrants' bodies and their stories frame and are framed by what I label "deliberate neglect," this study contributes to the scholarship on violence by articulating the conditions that turn arrests into rescues, migrants into mere bodies, and rescuers into outlaws. In so doing, the dissertation offers a fresh and timely perspective on U.S.-Mexico border dynamics, and contributes to the theorization of power and its manifestations on bodies and life across spatial and social relations. As anxieties over the management of territories and human mobility continue to set preemptive global agendas and produce "acceptable" exceptions to physical, legal, and sociopolitical protection, this examination of the tensions between border safety and border security expands our understanding of the politics of policing, vulnerability, and exclusion at work today.

CHAPTER ONE

BODIES ON THE LINE,

AN INTRODUCTION

Rule [...] over every living creature that moves
on the ground.
- Genesis 1:28 (New International Version).

Paola had been sitting quietly, hugging a navy blue backpack, in the *Protección* Office of the Consulate of Mexico in Tucson as people crowded in with requests for help ranging from impounded vehicles to labor disputes, and the phones rang with incessant reports about missing persons, Border Patrol messages, and appeals from hospitals for help in dealing with border-crossers-turned-patients. Paola waited untouched by the noise and activity. The 19-year-old had been detained two nights before when she and her aunt were crossing the desert. Her silence, bloodshot eyes, the blackened skin peeling from her lips, and the dust marking every seam of her clothes spoke of her journey. Paola was the first crosser I met who had been granted a humanitarian permit by U.S. authorities post detention. These rare permits—consular officials see only a few dozen granted each year—are typically issued to men and women who, having witnessed the death or near-death of one of their relatives in the desert, must officially identify the bodies or authorize the cessation of life-support. Authorizing these family members to stay in the country while cases settle allows their speedier, certain, and cost effective closure. The

circumstance also creates an exceptional situation for permit grantees. Paola was no longer in U.S. Border Patrol custody. The Mexican Consulate had no power over her decisions. Her humanitarian permit legitimated her presence in the country for a few more days, and she was free to go anywhere she could. After pondering her situation for hours, she finally asked the *Protección* Chief if she could use the phone. Over the course of my research, I met a few other people in her situation—mostly men who had lost wives and brothers in the desert. Making the most out of an exceptional chance at safe passage that came at an exceptional cost, most of them continued their journey north in pain and mourning.

This dissertation focuses on the politics, sociality, and spatiality that surround the injury and death of unauthorized migrants in the Arizona-Mexico border region—henceforth referred to as “the border” for simplicity’s sake. Everyday, hundreds of people attempt the multiple-day journey across the Sonoran Desert, a number that has radically increased since the mid 1990s. Every year, a few hundred of them die in their attempt to reach the United States. Hyperthermia, dehydration, and what death certificates identify as “exposure to the elements” are the main causes of death among these crossers—all readily preventable as confirmed by a group of doctors and medical examiners who reviewed the forensic data available (Sapkota et al., 2006).

Tallies vary and are themselves contentious, but the number of migrants who are known to have died attempting to cross this border region in the last decade stands at about 2,000.¹ This figure only includes those whose bodies are found and recovered by

¹ This estimate, based on figures provided by Coalición de Derechos Humanos, draws on data from Southern Arizona’s Medical Examiners’ Offices. The U.S. Border Patrol figures prior to

authorities. Under current practices, which Chapter 2 addresses, the number of those who disappear represents an unworkable calculation complicated by the unease of most migrants and their families to seek help from authorities, and by the lack of a seamless process to report and keep track of these cases. As a Mexican federal migrant protection agent put it when I asked about inter-agency collaboration in the fall of 2006, “the Border Patrol is not interested in the dead [migrants]; they’re after the alive ones.” Although this might seem to be a form of “neglect,” what it is done or not in regard to these deaths, and how that becomes known, is the manifestation of complex struggles over the value of these migrants’ lives and border protection. The central thesis this project investigates posits that the management and exposure of these deaths have become central to the production of authority in relation to border policing and its contestation.

The decade-long, record-breaking number of fatalities registered in the Arizona-Sonora region since the late 1990s is without parallel in the history of contemporary Mexican migration to the United States. Following the implementation of the 1994 Southwest Border Initiative—which practically sealed traditional unauthorized migration corridors along major border cities like San Diego-Tijuana, El Paso-Ciudad Juárez, and Nogales-Nogales—the Sonoran Desert turned into a bottleneck for human smuggling. A 2002 study by the California Public Policy Institute found that the strategy effectively changed crossing patterns increasing “the probability of apprehensions” but making them more dangerous. The authors note that,

2005 are significantly lower since the agency only counted bodies found by its own personnel, excluding those reported by other agencies such as the Tohono O’odham Tribal Police and the local Sheriffs, Police, and Fire Departments. Despite numerical disputes, the general agreement is that death tolls have in general—and, for some years, dramatically—increased since the late 1990s. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of differing death tolls.

Migrant deaths declined in the late 1980s and early 1990s, reaching a low point in the years immediately preceded the increase in border enforcement. Following the introduction of the Border Patrol's current enforcement strategy, which increased the difficulty and risk of crossing the border, migrant deaths increased rapidly, reaching a 15-year peak in FY 2000. At the same time, the INS Border Safety Initiative prevented a significant number of deaths [allegedly rescuing about 2500 crossers by FY2000]. The increase in migrant deaths, couple with the substantial number of life-saving rescues by the Border Patrol indicates that crossing has become more difficult (Reyes, Johnson, and Van Swearingen 2002:75-76).

With literally thousands of people in the desert at any given time trying to walk distances ranging between 40 and 100 miles of difficult terrain, ill equipped, and with increasingly weary and vulnerable bodies, border policing becomes an issue of life *and* death.

U.S. Border Enforcement Policies and Politics, 1994 and Beyond

In order to situate current border policies, it is necessary to know their trajectory. Many trace the institutional point of origin of illegal immigration to the United States to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Since it not only changed the migration conditions for the Chinese (see Lee 2003),² but also redefined American attitudes towards territorial and population policing (see, for example, Dunn 1996; and Espenshade 1992). Indeed, in 1904, a cavalry force was created to stop Chinese entrants at the border with Mexico.³ Two decades later, in 1924, this force would become the U.S. Border Patrol (U.S. CBP 2003), marking a decisive turning point in what would become a rich history of

² The Act of 1875 restricted the admission into the country of individuals with criminal records and prostitutes, but the 1882 Act was the first one to deny admission on the basis of ethnicity.

³ On the Canadian front, "a historically amicable diplomatic relationship and a shared antipathy for Chinese migration" (Lee 2002:56) characterized similar efforts as "Border Diplomacy."

fluctuating but progressively increasing border surveillance, unauthorized crosser apprehensions, and deportations over the 20th century.⁴

Throughout its history, U.S.-Mexico border concerns have occupied the national spotlight intermittently but continuously, as shown, for instance, by Leo Chavez's (2001) analysis of American magazine covers and attitudes towards migration.⁵ Yet, it would be border-related events and permutations in the 1990s that become central to the examination of current conditions along the Arizona-Sonora boundary. The intensified immigration anxieties and rapid enforcement build up that took place during these years has been described by some as the "militarization" of the border (Nevins 2001). The political climate and policies that shifted migratory flows to the Sonoran Desert becomes particularly salient in 1994. As a way of situating that climate, I briefly outline here three major events that took place that year: the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the approval of the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California, and the launching of the Southwest Border Initiative.

After years of intense lobbying and fierce opposition to NAFTA in its three participating countries—Mexico, the United States, and Canada—the trade agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994. Under the premise of enhanced growth and innovation, the treaty sought to open borders to commerce, but not labor. Not everyone was enthusiastic. In the United States, for example, there were workers fiercely concerned that the sort of economic deterritorialization NAFTA promised would displace

⁴ Elsewhere (Magaña 2003), I provide a more elaborate account of the history and politics behind border enforcement and build up between 1840s and 2001.

⁵ Intense government intervention and mass repatriations have taken place repeatedly. For an account of repatriations dating between the late 1800s and early 1900s see Hernandez 2007. Juan Ramon García (1980) examines the politics surrounding Operation Wetback in the early 1950s.

workers through the relocation of jobs and greater immigration (Bacon 2004). Partly because of such opposition campaigns, immigration measures were left out of the agreement. The issue would be dealt with separately, later.⁶ In the meantime, NAFTA created what Peter Andreas has called “the apparent paradox of U.S.-Mexico integration,” in which “a barricaded border and a borderless economy are being created simultaneously” (1999:593).

Public calls to strengthen such barricade against illegal migration spiked nationally during the debates surrounding California’s Proposition 187. Old anxieties, which had already been brought to the surface by the NAFTA debates, found a new platform in the politics surrounding the anti-immigrant ballot initiative that sought to deny social, medical and educational services to unauthorized residents. Arguing that similar anti-immigrant sentiment had been manifested in the 1890s, the 1920s, the 1950s, and 1970s, historian David Gutierrez notes that,

Insisting that the current rate of immigration threatens the very fabric of American life, [...] critics demand that strong action be taken to regain control of the nation's borders by increasing enforcement efforts and by sharply limiting the number of immigrants allowed into the United States (1995:207).

The continuous string of rallies, walkouts and vigils held throughout the California as well as national debates both in favor and against the initiative made tensions readily visible.⁷ The images of young Latinos holding Mexican flags, and others protesting them, became hallmark of news coverage. Although the initiative passed by about two

⁶ Indeed, the expectations that a binational agreement on migration would be reached between the two countries were high until September 11, 2001. A few days before the attacks, on September 6th, Mexican President Vicente Fox and U.S. President George W. Bush meet in the White house and about the need to recognize and regulate migrant labor. Fox writes about the encounter in his presidential memoirs *Revolution of Hope* (Fox and Allyn 2007).

⁷ About 800 students from Merced High School, which I attended, walked out in protest as well.

thirds of the vote, the social and political tension that it created reasserted the place of concerns regarding illegal immigration and border control in the civic space.⁸

In the midst of a climate high in anti-immigrant sentiment, the Southwest Border Initiative was launched in an effort, Peter Andreas argues (1999, 2000), to demonstrate greater governmental investment in border control. Although border enforcement had not been initially at the top of President Clinton's agenda,⁹ the country would witness the greatest increase in border buildup during this administration. The 1994 fiscal year began with a total of 3,965 USBP agents on payroll; by the end of his tenure in 2000, they numbered 9,078 (Tracmigration 2006). The increase was a central component of the 1994 Border Patrol Strategy, which, through a tactical deployment of force, sought to decrease migration along urban areas—where it was most readily visible to the public.

The deterrence principle of the Border Patrol Strategy was first tested in El Paso in September 1993 under the name of Operation Blockade, later known as Operation Hold the Line. For a period of two weeks, some 450 agents and dozens of Border Patrol vehicles were stationed along 20 miles of border. The Operation was deemed successful in that the total number of apprehensions registered in the targeted area dropped significantly during those two weeks. Those who wanted to cross the border had to go somewhere else—and, if they were anything like the migrants I came across in Sonora, they most likely did. Still, the Operation was then extended to California under the name

⁸ Kent Ono and John Sloop (2002) offer an interesting analysis of the sociopolitical effects of Proposition 187 through their study on vernacular “outlaw” discourse.

⁹ In an effort to save money, Clinton initially proposed to reduce the number of Border Patrol agents—by 93 (Schmitt 1996). Certainly, it was a small number given the overall increase.

of Gatekeeper and to Arizona as Operation Safeguard by 1994. Then, in 1997, “Operation Rio Grande” was launched in South Texas (Nunez-Neto 2005).

The strategy’s expansion is ongoing although it has had mixed results: apprehensions did drop in some areas, but have remained rather steady when looking at the region as a whole (GAO 2006). What is more, following the attacks of 2001, border security became a major objective of the George W. Bush Administration. In his 2006 Presidential address, Bush promised to bring the USBP force to a total of 18,000 agents. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, by the end of the 2007 fiscal year, there were 14,923 agents on payroll. The involvement of commercial defense contractors has been another area of growth. For instance, during the time of my fieldwork in Arizona, Geo Group (formerly Wackenhut, Inc.) took over the detention and repatriation transportation, Corporations Corrections of America housed border detainees, and Boeing, Inc. oversaw the development of a “virtual fence.”¹⁰

By strengthening enforcement efforts along cities, the strategy succeeded at channeling migrant flows away from where they had been more readily visible. This, however, did not translate into a lower profile for immigration among public concerns or a decrease in anti-immigrant sentiment. As Chapter 5 discusses, the growing use of Internet technologies provided a prolific platform for groups concerned immigration to organize, voice their opinions, and maintain border issues on the public’s spotlight.

¹⁰ The privatization of border and immigration enforcement tasks is the focus of emergent scholarship, an example of which is Stokely Baksh’s work on the Business of Immigration Detention Centers.

Border Crosser Deaths in the Arizona-Sonora Context

It is estimated that about half a million Mexicans emigrate every year. According to the calculations of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, in 2005 the number was close to 585,000. The majority of these people migrate to the United States, but not all cross the border illegally. A 2006 study by the Pew Hispanic Center suggests that 45% of those who reside illegally in the United States entered the country legally, but overstayed or violated the terms of their visas. Between the fiscal years ending in 2004 and 2007, the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) reported that the bodies of 723 border crossers were recovered from its Tucson Sector, covering roughly two-thirds of the 389 miles of boundary shared by Arizona and the Mexican state of Sonora.¹¹ The number reported by the region's medical examiners stands at 754. Coalición Derechos Humanos, a migrant rights advocacy group, reports a tally as high as 955 for the same period.¹² Although the counting methods tend to remain blurry and change over the years, the varying totals are constantly set against each other to assess and contest border policies, authority and the legitimacy to intervene in the migration-theater unfolding in the desert. The discrepancies in the counts are but a small indicator of the highly contentious politics surrounding these migrant deaths.

These deaths and the issues that surround them have contributed to the contemporary perception of this border region as a site of binational failures—failures to adequately manage migration, secure populations, protect life. The situation has led to widespread intervention efforts from a wide array of efforts from private citizens,

¹¹ See Appendix B.

¹² In some cases, and for some years, the figures include in bodies recovered in Southwestern Arizona, under the jurisdiction of the USBP Yuma Sector.

organizations, and government actors in both countries. As I explore elsewhere (Magaña 2003), perceptions of danger, risk, and insecurity have long been elements in the history of the U.S.-Mexico border (Paredes 1958; Martinez 1998). However, as this study suggests, current dynamics centered on the protection of life, the management of death, and the legitimacy of authority in the Sonora-Arizona region position border anxieties beyond archetypal territory-centric national discourses (see Donnan and Wilson 1999; Alonso 1994; Brenner 1999). In comparison to prior migratory patterns in the region and elsewhere on the border, the general distress associated with unauthorized border crossing through the Sonoran desert is unprecedented.¹³ However, as local residents and activists declare the Arizona Border Control Initiative a “major policy disaster” that reveals a “profound failure of the state” (Garcia, personal communication 08/11/2004). Yet, as Peter Andreas (1999:593) has suggested, the main outcome of border policing has been more about “managing the image of the border,” than deterring or managing migration itself. With the continuous introduction of immigration reform proposals in the American Capitol that call for tougher border enforcement prior to, or instead of, the creation of work visas, there is no reprieve in sight for situation in the desert. In lieu of policies to manage migration flows and address its causes, the intensification of “enforcement first” or “enforcement only” approaches can only exacerbate the conditions that lead crossers to take riskier and more remote routes, a trend known to results in the death of hundreds of them every year (see Eschbach et al. 1999, and Reyes et al. 2002).

Before strategic tightening of enforcement along urban border corridors in the late 1990s, the Tucson Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol was by comparison relatively

¹³ See Wagner 2005.

quiet. Over the last decade, however, the Arizona-Sonora border has become *the* major corridor for this human exodus to the United States. The Tucson Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol, with 262 miles of boundary with Mexico, accounts for roughly 13% of the international boundary, and about two-thirds of Arizona's border. The sector's Detention and Removal Operations (DRO)¹⁴—the combined total for formal deportation and voluntary repatriations¹⁵—have risen sharply from 5.5% in 1991 (49,728 of 1,077,876 DRO incidents along the Southwestern border) to 43% in 2004 (491,771 of 1,139,282 detentions).¹⁶ Every single day, thousands of people embark on the illegal trek across Southern Arizona's deserts and mountains.

The increase is also significant because much of this migration takes place across the region locals refer to as the "West Desert." This mostly uninhabited area extends roughly over 200 miles along the border and extends north about 100 miles. It includes, from east to west, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, the Tohono O'odham Nation, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, and the Barry M. Goldwater Bombing Range. With population density ranging between one and

¹⁴ The number of detentions account for apprehension incidents, and not for the actual number of individuals trying to cross the border. A single crosser can be detained several times. Chapter 5 offers a more detailed explanation of these numbers and the politics behind them.

¹⁵ Deportations are court-ordered. Crossers who have been previously deported can be charged with re-entry and face anywhere between two weeks to six months of imprisonment. An agreement between Mexico and the United States allows Mexican nationals to opt for voluntary repatriations in which they forgo their right to see an immigration judge, but do not face the jail time if detained again while trying to cross.

¹⁶ These figures come from the 1997 and 2006 editions of Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. Appendices B and C provide tables and figures. Additionally, Chapter 5 will examine numerical representations of border dynamics.

three people per square mile,¹⁷ the desolate character of the region shapes the methods, risks, and stakes for both border policing and unauthorized crossing.

It was only after the implementation of the 1994 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) that the Arizona-Sonora border felt the impact of this “funneling” of unauthorized migration (Rubio-Goldsmith et al. 2006). The 1994 Southwest Border Initiative—in its deployment as Operation Gatekeeper in California, Operation Hold the Line in Texas, and Operation Safeguard in Arizona—is summarized by its “prevention-through-deterrence” motto. The goal was to discourage border-crossing attempts by increasing the number and visibility of patrolling personnel and surveillance technology. The strategy aimed to do this through a wide array of instruments ranging from stadium lighting, heat detectors, night vision cameras, remote motion sensors, surveillance towers, and unmanned surveillance planes, to multi-layered fencing and dirt roads for low-tech enforcement and detection techniques that ranged from dragging dirt roads smooth to detect incoming footprints to the calculated integration of the crosser’s physical exertion. The drafters of the strategy, it was claimed, assumed that the dangers of the desert would serve as a natural deterrent (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2002). The assumption proved wrong.

A decade into the implementation of the border control strategy, the overall volume of unauthorized migration remained unaffected while the number of related

¹⁷ According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the County Census Division for Welton, east of Yuma, has a population density of one person per square mile. The Ajo CCD is three people per square mile, and the Tohono O’odham Nation population density is two individuals per square mile. Arivaca and Nogales CCDs are significantly more populated with 38 and 58 people per square mile respectively. As a point of comparison, in 2000 CCD population density for San Diego was 2,994, and 3,622 for El Paso, Texas.

deaths had doubled according to a commissioned report from the U.S. General Accountability Office (U.S. GAO 2006). At least locally and during the summer, it is not altogether surprising, then, that the old American apparatus of border-crossing deterrence has found a new public *raison d'être* in search and rescue efforts. Binational negotiations result not in nuanced migratory agreements, but in quick courses of action that convert Mexican and American border enforcement agents into emergency paramedics and rescue specialists. Policing agencies from both governments collaborate in the installation of rescue beacons and the distribution of survival kits. American consular representatives are rumored to visit and take supplies to migrant shelters in dusty Mexican border towns, while Mexican consular representatives aid post-hospitalized migrants. Civilian patrols also search the desert for crossers to assist or arrest, convinced of the necessity of their intervention, yet concerned that the legality of their actions might be called into question. Who, after all, has the right to intervene on this border and on what grounds? What makes such efforts a “right” or an “obligation”? What, after all, are the kinds of spaces, technologies, knowledge, discourses, and relations possible in this context? This ethnographic account explores the politics that seek to legitimate efforts to aid, persecute, or prey upon those who attempt to cross the border through the Sonoran Desert. In a context of significant individual and political risk resulting from a long history of inadequate migration policy and recent structural neglect, the very constitution of political authority is at stake in the articulation of intervention discourses and practices.

Approach to the Study of Migrant Vulnerability and Border Enforcement

This is an ethnographic account of the struggle to control and intervene on space, populations, and bodies amidst exceptional terrains and circumstances, and as such, it is a study of the articulation of power in flux. Throughout the dissertation, I explore three interrelated arguments. First, I argue that, among other forms of border-making processes vis-à-vis migration (see DeGenova 2003; and Inda 2006), current border intervention and enforcement practices in the contexts of the Arizona-Mexico region transpose the border onto the crosser's body through its exposure to the desert, the surveillance apparatuses, humanitarian strategies, and media representations among other factors. In this sense, I examine how remote areas of the Sonoran Desert become are presented as border-related only in relation to the presence of crossers or the apparatuses that seek to aid or detain them.

Second, by looking at the intervention efforts intended to protect the border and/or save lives, I explore the relationship between claims to authority and legitimacy and the perception of the border as being in a state of continuous crisis. From the practices of the Midwestern American retiree and the college student participating in humanitarian efforts, to the gun-totting vigilante and commercial defense contractor, a complex politics of life emerges around their various claims to police or protect these crossers and their bodies. I offer an examination of border crossing and enforcement dynamics that focuses on how unequal relations of power manifest in efforts to contest and constitute the legitimacy based on interventions on the exposed lives and bodies of others.

Third, I explore the political implications of the objectification of border crossers in relation to the legitimating of interventions. Precisely because of the moral, political, and ethical implications of presenting migrants as mere bodies, threatened or threatening, I examine the productivity and fragility of claims to authority that hinge on such possibility. Throughout, I trace how different actors mediate and navigate the border—its power regimes, its actors, its publics—by way of their claims to the crossers' bodies and stories.

Through this study of social and legal exclusion enforced through environmental and physical exposure, I show how the underscoring of people's threatened biology vis-à-vis their biography is employed to contest and claim authority. At stake here is not only an examination of the specific policies and practices that frame contemporary unauthorized migrant flows along the U.S.-Mexico border, but also an understanding of how social, economic and political systems capable of producing gratuitous deaths and unequally valued lives become sustainable. In this sense, my dissertation examines the conditions surrounding the death of unauthorized migrants along the Arizona-Mexico border to produce an analysis of the kinds of violence, inequality, and deadly neglect possible under contemporary security paradigms that dictate national policies and regional politics.

Over the next chapters, I explore the political production surrounding the management of migrant fatalities and injuries by different actors at various degrees of separation from the border drawing from ethnographic observation on intervention cases and the particularities of individual migrant stories. The damaged biology of these crossers bears the potential to compromise an enforcement apparatus whose growth,

authority, and, increasingly, profitability depend on the continuous flow of migrants across this desert. Because of this, it presents both an opportunity to challenge contemporary border policies to those seeking comprehensive immigration reforms, and a condition to manage and exploit to those in the enforcement business. In order to highlight the political potential of the death of migrants in the desert and their injuries, or to deny it, border actors also rely on the crafting and these migrants' biographic representation. Ranging from the hard-pressed migrant laborers to the embodiment of national vulnerability and "illegality," their personal stories are tactically deployed to denounce or justify their exposure. By examining how, when and where the biology and biography of crossers are invoked, I provide an analysis of the social and political struggles emerging from the Arizona-Sonora region, and the implications that the tension between the protection *of* the border and protection *from* the border have to the study of the politics of life.

As the dissertation explores the articulation of power and space through the exposure and protection of migrants, it accomplishes three tasks. First, it provides an account of the blurring divide and tension between the policing and rescuing of unauthorized border crossers in distress in the Arizona-Mexico desert region by focusing on the efforts of those who seek to aid, apprehend, or profit sense from them in the broadest sense of the terms. This emphasis complements and problematizes recent scholarship on these deaths' statistical, medical, social, and policy implications (Sapkota et al. 2006; Eschbach et al. 1999; Cornelius 2001; Rubio-Goldsmith et al. 2006). Second, in doing this, the dissertation offers an ethnographic account of the politics and sociality of border spatialization and maintenance as called for by other scholars (Barth

1970, Pratt 1999). Third, it offers a reflection on biopolitics not as an uncomplicated analytic pointing to absolute moments or sites of control over biological life, but rather as a “perspective” (Rose 2007) employed to examine fields of sociopolitical contestation over the regimentation of bodies and the valuation of lives.

Over the course of five chapters, I explore the intricate relation between the movement, exposure, and management of unauthorized migrants in the Sonoran Desert and the constitution of the border through the creation of spaces and states that, presupposed in crisis, demand and encourage intervention. Regardless of the actor, the interventions target the body of the crosser; they seek to detect, detain, document, deport, rescue, or recover his body. In analyzing the implementation and logic of this kind of dynamics, biopolitical scholarship on borders and migration (Myrivili 2004; Fassin 2005; Ajana 2005; Prakash and Kollman 2003) tends to depart from Foucault’s assertion that “life has now become [...] and object of power” (in Hardt and Negri 2001:24) to examine the effect of territorial regimes of exclusion and control on migrant populations and individuals. Not disregarding the fatal effects of border policies, my dissertation problematizes such articulation of power over life. I take Foucault’s concept of biopower—the power of the Sovereign over life, which he sees as manifested in “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (1990:140)—as a framework with which to approach its study and exploration, to look for zones of tension and moments and contradiction. In this spirit, I suggest a decentralized approach to biopolitics, one that not only examines its effects on the body or life, but that also privileges its politics—the nuances of its diffused and contested articulations and its diffused and contested power over life. This

opening of the perspective allows a richer, albeit less orderly, examination of alleged failures and imperatives to intervene on (other people's) bodies and patrol the border landscape in the name of the protection of life—individual and national. For, as the case of Paola, with which I open this chapter, suggests, despite a dense history of protocols and regulations to deal with unauthorized migrants, the recognition of the extreme exposure of their bodies produces a moment of ambivalence that bears rich political, legal, and humanitarian implications. Grounded on my ethnographic study of the Arizona-Mexico border region, this perspective also offers a critical assessment of the kinds of politics at work at a time when security concerns, the declaration of states emergency, and the emergence spaces of legal exemption dictate the rules of local, national, and global engagement.

An analysis of this border as a field in which the neglect and exposure of life are operationalized must go beyond the notion of fences, walls and geopolitical lines. With this in mind, “the border” my dissertation maps out is simultaneously biopolitical and a chronotopic landscape, being fundamentally shaped by the intersection of border-crossing and enforcement time and space (see Bakhtin 1981; Basso 1984). This border, as I approach it, is a relational field brought to light by the intersection of crossers and those who have the power to act on them through the subjection, management, and exposure of their bodies to various spatio-temporal regimes of policing, medicalization, and mediation. My focus then is on these interventions on migrants and the kinds of territoriality and spatiality variously operationalized through them. Through an approach that takes the political and the social as elements of an ideologically unified field (Abrams 1988) while remaining attentive to the fact that actors possess dissimilar access,

capabilities, and authority to intervene at all sites and at all times, I develop a biopolitical analysis of the claims and contestations at work in this border landscape. I analyze border intervention as constitutive of a field that revolves around “the *contestation* over the ways in which human vitality, morbidity, and mortality should be problematized, over the desirable level and form of the interventions required, over the knowledge, regimes of authority, and practices of intervention that are desirable, legitimate, and efficacious” (Rose 2007:54, emphasis added). In this sense, this ethnography privileges not the biology of these crossers per se, but the politics that lay claims over them.

Thus, to get at this contentious politics over bodies and life, this project focuses on the *sociopolitical fields* that frame the border-crossing experiences of people like Paola and her aunt, and examines the alternating operationalization of their “biologic” versus “biographic” condition to enforce, navigate, and defy territorial state controls. As I discuss multiscale migration deterrence and protection campaigns, body recovery efforts, border rescues, pre- and post-repatriation medical care, as well as media outreach and coverage, I analyze the shifting emphases actors place on migrants either as bodies or as people with complex personal stories. Amidst the shifting terrain of the so-called border crises, certain deaths of unauthorized border crossers become highly visible and politically contentious, while others, if even recognized, are characterized as merely individual, accidental, or statistical events. Paradoxically, although these deaths arguably result from current border control policies (Nevins 2002, 2005; Reyes 2004), and the refusal to manage migration otherwise (Sassen 1999), they have been used to call for the intensification of such controls despite that their legitimacy is threatened by the potential of border fatalities to reveal unjustified state violence. Unpacking the crux of this

paradox is the aim of the project's examination of the border's spatial and bio/political production through the physical and symbolic management of the migrant's body.

Ethnographically, this project follows the different and often-conflicting ways in which the bodies and personal stories of crossers are articulated and deployed within, beyond, and against the sociopolitical apparatuses of the desert/border by various actors including law enforcement, humanitarian groups, citizen patrols, local residents, human smugglers, and the media among the most salient. Through this exploration of the politics of life, my work contributes a situated analysis from which to examine "injurability and aggression as two points of departure for political life" (Butler 2004: xii). It does so by examining not just the politics that produce border injuries and deaths, but also the politics that they themselves produce. To this end, although the stories of migrants and their deaths serve as an entry point to the examination of the border's sociopolitical geography, my analysis targets the series of actors, policies, practices, and strategies designed to intervene on them—the regimes of power that form on the grounds of the regimes of power that emerge around border crosser vulnerability. This enables an analysis of the of the crafting of legitimacy to exercise power over people, their bodies, and state territoriality while offering a fresh look at the dynamics of spatial control and human mobility that have characterized the U.S.-Mexico boundary region.

Because official positions and protocols vis-à-vis the deaths and injury of unauthorized border crossers in the Arizona-Sonora region were shifting and less rehearsed than in other border regions, timing and location of this project offer a unique vantage point to the examination of state territoriality and biopolitics. Together, the deaths, disappearances, hospitalizations, and the uncounted injuries of those who vanish

north and south of the international line, constitute relatively recent phenomena in the Arizona-Sonora region, and the effect on the shaping of interventions and perceptions on the border are innovative in various ways. Death and bodily loss have been part and parcel of the political history of the U.S.-Mexico border (Cornelius 2001, Espenshade 1989), and been of national import at least since President Santa Ana's military expeditions in the 1840s (Lomnitz 2001). Yet, the contemporary exposure and death of border crossers, together with high visibility and attention brought by international mass media and citizen action groups create a productive set of sites and scenarios through which to examine the ongoing struggle of the exercise of power over bodies and space.

I explore how authority is legitimated and challenged through an analysis of interventions aimed at protecting crossers' lives, managing their death, and framing their representations. Although the migrants' vulnerability, risk, and injury, are themselves constantly portrayed as exceptional within the border's political field, their analytic consideration must to go beyond their folk deployment as such. To explain this, it is first necessary to address how I approach key conceptual concerns, particularly surrounding biopolitics. Contemporary biopolitical analyses have posed the body as the ultimate source of legitimacy (Fassin and d'Halluin 2007), in ways that privilege biologically inclined interpretations of the social (see Comaroff 2007). However, this border's scenarios stand aside from sites studied by other scholars in which death and permanent injury are imminent, and victims, patients, asylum seekers and others (are made to) center their political efforts and struggles on their *own* threaten bodies (Petryna 2002; Biehl 2005; Fassin 2001). In this case, the fluid spatio-temporal indeterminacy of the border's effects on the crossers body together with the structural conditions that maintain

crossers invisible and in flux make this a rich terrain on which to test the analytic limits of contemporary biopolitical perspectives.¹⁸ In what follows, I sketch how this study on the politics around the deaths of unauthorized migrants in the Sonoran Desert positions itself within the anthropological scholarship on borders, bodies, the state, and the study of biopolitics, and outline its contributions to current debates within the field.

The Border as a Biopolitical Field: Disciplinary Context & Contributions

For a long time, borders have been seen as sites where the state is most visible (Trouillot 2003; Donnan and Wilson 1999), and where its sovereignty is geopolitically tested (Sack 1986). In a classic Westphalian framework, Gupta and Ferguson remind us that

Sovereignty not only depends on the protection of spatial borders, but in above all the ability of state elites to regulate activities that allow flows across those borders, such as the crossing of commodities, surpluses, the passage of people in the form of labor, tourists, etcetera, and the movement of cultural products and ideas (1992:71).

With the rise of global capital, such models of territorial state control have morphed in response to pressures from the intensification of transnational flows (Brenner 1999; Sassen 1996). In this context, Appadurai once argued that, “The isomorphism of people, territory, and the legitimate sovereignty that constitutes the normative charter of the modern nation state is under threat from the forms of circulation of people characteristic of the contemporary world” (1996:191). As I have argued elsewhere (Magaña 2003), because these sort of territorial “threats” offer the state renewed

¹⁸ This is not to say that migrants lack an opinion on these processes. Yet, their interests lie in successfully crossing and trying to stay away from the border. Even when individual cases rise to notoriety in the struggles to control border space, it is hardly at the crosser’s initiative. As their stories circulate it is not they in particular, but their “slot” in general that is at play in this field.

opportunities to strengthen its presence, they tend to be operationalized. In other words, the constant articulation of potential threats becomes an intrinsic function of border policing through which it justifies its own permanence and growth.

In the United States-Mexico border, the concurrent implementation in 1994 of the North American Free Trade agreement, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), and the Southwest Border Control Initiative point to a double bind: “the national commonwealth appears to demand, but is simultaneously threatened by, *both* openness and closure” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000:18). What could be seen as a “zone of ambiguity” (Stoler 2006) resulting from contradictory demands on national borders has different territorial and sovereignty implications for the United States and for Mexico, as individual nation-states. Indeed the stakes are different for each country when it comes to managing the conditions that actively and effectively produce “unauthorized” migration and border “transgression.” Others have examined the logic of these flows within the historical, sociopolitical, and economic contexts of nation-states and global capital (Sassen 1999; Castles and Miller 2006; Bustamante 1978, 2003; Massey et al. 1987). My objective however, is not to explain unauthorized migration as a whole, but rather to examine the production and articulation of state power vis-à-vis vulnerable crossers by focusing on the moments and sites in which power over their lives turns ambivalent or inconsistent, like in Paola’s case in which she is offered humanitarian parole instead of repatriation. Thus, my focus is on such moments or sites of exception. I suggest that the dynamics around the deaths of unauthorized migrants in the desert of the Arizona-Mexico border offer an opportunity to investigate state power, particularly in relation to life, bodies, and space.

To this end, and because of the differential and overlapping involvement of Mexico and United States in the intricate network interventions this project examines, it is necessary to bracket the idea of the state as neatly bounded by the nation-state. Instead, it seems more appropriate to understanding the dynamics in this border to pursue and an examination of power as hegemonic—one that takes into account that both Mexican and American societies and governments participate in systems of consumption and governance that maintain the conditions that produce, and even require, this form of migration. Here, Trouillot's propositions that "state power has no institutional fixity," that its "effects never [prevail] solely on through national institutions or in governmental sites," (2003:80) ring particularly relevant to the phenomena at the center of this study. Yet, as it will be explained, the diffused character of state power is no less effective on its claim over bodies and space.

My initial approach to the study of the deaths of border crossers in the desert employed a biopolitical framework that sought to examine the regimentation of the migrants' bodies, and the alleged impunity with which their lives were being arguably taken by the series of factors and forces that led to their de facto expulsion and exposure to the desert (Agamben 1998). Although this approach is not too distant from contemporary studies of territoriality and human mobility (Ngai 2003; De Genova 2002), the ethnographic data I collected over the course of more than 30 months of fieldwork suggest a richly contentious politics of life at work in the production of the border as a space of exceptional exposure and justifiable vulnerability. Thus, the scope of this project not only includes the effects of regimentation on the migrants and their bodies, but also the fluid social relations and tensions that frame such border management

efforts. As I explore in Chapter 2, exposure and vulnerability become the means through which border space is created, enforced, and imposed onto particular subjects.

Social theorists have long argued that risk is a fundamental component of modernity (Beck 1992; Hacking 1990), and that vulnerability among certain populations is more the norm than the exception (Benjamin 1968). The events following the attacks of September 11, 2001, reinvigorated the political potential, public discussion, and apparent acceptability of risk, vulnerability, and exposure—particularly regarding the calls for protective or preemptive subjection of those deemed “Other.” The politics behind this turn to the acceptability of zones and regimes of exception in which laws are suspended and rights undermined under the premise of insecurity (Butler 2004) deserve critical scrutiny for, as Mary Douglas had observed, “the well-advertised risk generally turns out to be connected with legitimating moral principles” (1985:60). While political legitimacy has long been a concern of the states and the political powerful (Machiavelli 2005; Weber 1990); the circumstances of the contemporary (post 9/11) moment have lead to a shifting on the ground of what is considered legitimate. Contemporary processes of legitimacy and the popular perception of increased insecurity and threat intertwine justifying the exercise of tremendously (oppressive) power over the social in ways that are rabidly visible and problematically transparent. Torture is perhaps the most salient example of this (Butler 2007, see also Aretxaga 2000, 2002).

In the case of the United States-Mexico border, a double threat has been historically invoked to legitimate border interventions: the threat of external attacks and the treat of miscegenation. Samuel Huntington offers the most recent popular articulation of these anxieties stating that “the most immediate and most serious

challenge to America's traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico, and the fertility rates of these immigrants" (2004:31). Certainly, and among other factors, such view presupposes a fixed notion of American identity and ignores the long history of migration, but it also reminds us of the political productivity of the articulation of threats. On the one hand, these kinds of claims become part of the constant production and reframing of nationalisms (Brubaker 1996). "The self-identity of nations has been secured partly through the constructions of internal Others" Ana Maria Alonso points out (1994:390). On the other, it posits the body of migrants as both the source of the threat and, therefore, as "a field for various interventions" (Caldeira 2003:326).

Throughout the history of the U.S.-Mexico border, like Alejandra Minna Stern has demonstrated (2009), security measures have aimed to enforce the boundary and control space through the subjection of the body of the migrant to various forms of discipline, inspection, and surveillance. Yet, this kind of state-subject dynamic is not exclusive of this border region, like Adriana Petryna, writing about the context of post-nuclear disaster Chernobyl, suggests, "state power is as concerned with making bodies and behaviors more predictable and knowable as it is with creating both intentionally and inadvertently spaces of nonknowledge and unpredictability" (2002:13). The more marginal and the furthest removed the border crosser is with respect to the sociopolitical institutions that enforce and create the boundary, the more exceptional his or her state becomes (see Chapter 2 and 3). To be more exact, as the border enforcement mechanisms have gotten more effective at tracking, documenting, and intercepting bodies through their very exposure, they have also given rise to conditions in which such

exposure escapes the systematic controls of the enforcement mechanisms. This is the state/space in which the deaths of unauthorized migrants occurs; it is the instance in which the power over the migrant bodies and lives implodes simultaneously threatening and reinforcing the legitimacy of the border enforcement apparatus.

I approach this moment of implosion extending Paulo Virilio's analysis on technological accidents. "To invent the ship is to invent the shipwreck. The ship that sinks says much more about the technology than the ship that floats," he posits (1998:20). Avoiding prescription, which does not necessarily advance analysis, I examine the deaths of migrants as border enforcement failures or accidents, in the Virilio sense, in order to get at two moments in the articulation of power. First, the dissertation maps the normalization of the incorporation of life and bodily risk in the calculations of state operations. And second, it offers an ethnographic examination of the process and politics through which the reclaiming of legitimacy and authority at moments of failure takes place.

One of the challenges of examining state-subject dynamics as manifested along this border region is the contiguous presence of two states and three nations—Mexico, the United States, and the Tohono O'odham Nation. Although they are separate and sovereign entities, their unequal power and resources together with their tendency to collaborate on certain aspects of border enforcement and immigration management makes it difficult to speak with consistency and accuracy of the "state" or "states" as if they were clearly demarcated by the boundary. Because of this, the examination of this border I propose requires a decentralized approach to the study of the state, one that reexamines "the convention distinction between the state and civil society, on which a

large portion of scholarship on the state is based (Gupta 1995:376). I discuss how actors ranging from state policing institutions to religious youth groups, from award-winning reporters and international human rights observers to senior citizen volunteers compete to stake their claims on the desert, on the deaths (Chapter 3), the lives, and the bodies of these migrants (Chapters 4), and on the public's perception of this border (Chapter 5). This allows a broad examination of the institutions and processes that shape and enforce "regulated forms of social relationships" (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:185).

Additionally, as I explain in Chapter 3, the struggle to de/politicize the deaths at the border suggests that, in at least some contexts, biopower is dialogically claimed, constituted, and contested. Weber's argument that "the claim of the modern state to monopolize the [legitimate] use of force" (Weber 1990:122) is, it has been argued, precisely that: a claim. My research on the politics surrounding migrant deaths shows that the production of biopolitical bodies that "may be killed yet not sacrificed" (Agamben 1998:5), considered the hallmark of contemporary state power by the scholarship on biopolitics, hinges as well on claims that are always under constant articulation and contestation. I argue that the production of legitimacy is at stake in the struggle over whether or not the deaths of these migrants are even recognized, and under what terms such recognition might take place.

In examining how legitimacy is produced and deployed in the relationship to this border's phenomena, it is important to keep in mind its mediating role, its temporality, and the grounds or sites on which it is wrought. Others have argued that the body emerges as a container of "truths" to be used in legitimating claims (see also Kleinman and Das 1997; Feldman 1991). This follows from the idea that the body is the constant

site in which violence is exercised and “power is imprinted” (Fassin and d’Halluin 2005:597). This proposition, together with the well-established notion that “violence is intrinsic to the definition of the state” (Aretxaga 2000:64), have rendered medical and racialized understandings of corporeal violence and neglect privileged topics of analysis. Margaret Lock takes this further, “The body, imbued with social meaning, is now historically situated, and becomes not only a signifier of belonging and order, but also an active forum for the expression of dissent and loss, thus ascribing it individual agency” (Lock 1993:141). My project examines how meaning is attached to the migrant’s bodies as they move or are moved across border space.

Qualifying the debates on state-sanctioned or inflicted corporeal violence, Carol Nagengast writes that the object of state violence is not the infliction of pain itself, but the creation and policing of social categories and boundaries (1994:122). Still, scholars have argued that, unjustified violence can only be seen as illegitimate, in the words of Abrams, as “unacceptable domination” (1988:76, see also Riches 1986; Frankenberg 1993). The efficacy and sustainability of any claim to legitimate violence is affected by the contexts in which violence is said to operate. Hardt and Negri suggest that, “violence is legitimated most effectively today, [...] not in any *a priori* framework, moral or legal, but only *a posteriori*, based on its results” (2004:30). This set of considerations frames my approach to the social and political production that results from efforts to police and protect life at the Arizona-Mexico border.

As fatalities remain unreported and bodies unclaimed, these human losses stay outside the public’s purview and in a state of literal abandonment and exclusion. As such these deaths are only potentially compromising to the border apparatus, but that potential

may never be fully activated. Their political volatility surfaces when they become reported, in their extraction and recovery from the desert—whether actual, symbolic, or discursive—and how they then reenter the domain of the polity. It is for this reason that their management becomes highly contentious and political. Under such conditions, it becomes possible to posit the idea of what Agamben (1998) has called “bare life” as a *referent* at work in the production and contestation of legitimacy in the border’s political field, that is, as a category employed to justify or challenge interventions on the bodies of migrants on the basis of their physical risks and injuries. In this sense, the idea of “bare life” is always deeply embedded in complex social processes and political contestations over who deserves protection and who is entitled to offer it.

Reports about migrants long missing in the desert, and crosser accounts of sightings of human and skeletal remains that go uncollected, propel claims that the deaths of certain border crossers take place under conditions of incomplete accountability. However, through the very articulation of the possibility of such deaths, I show how the deaths are discursively reclaimed, infused with political meaning, and deployed to contest the conditions of their production, or, alternately, systematically managed and transformed into statistics and records that while ostensibly depoliticized reify state controls.

I also examine the demands for accountability that present the most desperate of these migrants as incarnations of *Homo sacer*, as bearers of naked life who, once expelled to the desert and thus literally placed outside of the saving reach of the polity, can be killed with impunity. Interestingly, these demands for accountability come from all kinds of actors: from individual citizens, non-governmental groups, and journalists;

from international organizations like the UN;¹⁹ from politicians and public officials;²⁰ and from government agencies such as the General Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service. Through an ethnographic account of the shifting claims and interventions over the power over the bodies and lives of these migrants, I map the social geography framing this border's biopolitical contestations.

The notion of "recovery" is operationally and analytically central to this ethnographic project. On the ground invocations of "recovery" were used to frame and justify intervention efforts. Actors spoke of recovering bodies, or restoring their humanity, of reclaiming the desert. Here I would like to highlight a series of intersecting social, spatial, and analytic concerns that the issue of recovery brings to the forefront. As a perspective guiding practice, it creates a series of dichotomies that delimit the politics of interventions. The most immediate of these dichotomies is the relation between those who may do the recovering and those who are put in a position to be recovered. Scholars of humanitarianism have examined the biopolitical implications of the relation between the helper and the helped (Redfield 2005; Fassin and Vasquez 2005; Duffeld 2007). This inequality is not limited to moments of direct action on people's bodies, but also emerges in the deployment of their stories in the public sphere. In his discussion of humanitarian testimony, Didier Fassin cites Hannah Arendt to point to what he sees as "two forms of

¹⁹ For instance, in *Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social And Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development* a commissioned report submitted to the UN General Assembly in March 2008, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants Jorge Bustamante discusses some of the problems associated with border crossing on the U.S.-Mexico region (see U.S. GAO 2006).

²⁰ Requests from conservative republican Senator Bill Frist for comprehensive death tolls precipitated much of the battle between journalists and the U.S. Border Patrol over the agency's counting policies.

humanity and two sorts of life in the public space: there are those who can tell stories and those whose stories can be told only by others” (2007:518).

This separation pivots on the separation between biology and biography as objects of political production upon which to build legitimacy claims. The recourse to a biological or “biomedical definition of life” (Comaroff 2007:206) as a central site of contestation does not go unchallenged. Leslie Sharp argues that biomedicine promotes the “separation of body and self,” facilitating “the depersonalization—and thus dehumanization—of persons as bodies” (2000:290). Similarly, Margaret Lock has suggested that the medicalized body is “reified, isolated, decontextualized, and abstracted from real time, actual location, and social space” (1993:370-371).

Certainly, border actors could not hope for more at the moment of removing migrants in distress from the desert, or providing them with food, water, and shelter—life-saving acts that are only one claim away from il/legality and public sanction. In the Arizona-Sonora border region, this separation between the helpers and the helped is of fundamental political importance in legitimizing interventions that seek to aid crossers on the basis of their distressed bodies. Crucially, it is this distinction that allows the “helpers” to sidestep the contentious politics of helping migrants who, after all, are also unauthorized border crossers. Drawing on a fetishization of the biomedical life and upholding a popular notion of a moral imperative to protect it, border actors strategically frame their interventions on the bodies of migrants as they navigate their way across border space and through its various policing apparatuses. Chapter 4 examines this precise dynamic.

The biological versus biographical emphasis changes in accordance to spatio-temporal logics. The further removed the interventions are from the border and the crosser, the heavier the emphasis on the crossers' biographic selves. This dynamic is explored in Chapter 5, in which I examine media practices and the imaginaries produced in relation to this border. Following Judith Butler, I investigate when, where, and how "the body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of social relations" (1990:117). I explore various ways in which bodies are produced and represented, and the implications for the legitimacy of authority and the maintenance of border space.

The exceptional extraction of migrants from the desert that reframes them as diseased or injured bodies also produces significant spatial effects. In examining the convergence of bodies and space, scholars have highlighted the space-making impact of acts from the most mundane (de Certeau 1983) to the extraordinarily violent (Feldman 1991). This project looks at the desert as a place in which the violent becomes mundane through willful neglect. This border is not only marked by the movement of migrants across desert space, but also by the host of actors policing this landscape in hopes of saving lives, protecting space, or simply get a glimpse at such struggles. The positing of the desert/border as a site of loss, biophysical threat, and national vulnerability is of significant analytic import. Following David Harvey, if space "is always a container of the social power, then the reorganization of space is always a reorganization of the framework through which social power is expressed" (1990:255). The making and policing of the border through its transposition onto crossing bodies constitutes, therefore, a crucial site for critical analysis, particularly as the private sector becomes more invested in enforcement efforts.

Among the analytic contributions this ethnographic project makes to the study of the sociality, politics, and spatiality, then, is its appeal for an open, decentered approach to biopolitics, posited here as the contested and dynamic social field through which the power over bodies and lives is continuously articulated, reframed, and manifested. Initially I had conceived of these dynamics as constitutive of a field of *participatory biolitics*, highlighting the irony of social relations and processes that, while democratically oriented in their framework of operation, result in and depend on the reproduction of the unequal valuation of lives.

Alternative approaches to the study of biopolitics have resulted in the coining of various terms. For instance, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) offer the term “biopolitical production” to point to the laboring processes and material production required in a society that regiments bodies and populations, a biopolitical society. Calling attention to the deep and diffused history and contestation of the exercise of power over population and bodies, Jean Comaroff encourages us to think about “counterbiopolitics” as “a product of governmentality” but also as “forms of rogue sovereignty” (2007:211). Examining the claims subjects can articulate vis-à-vis the state and society Adriana Petryna (2002) proposes the idea of “biological citizenship” in her study of post-Chernobyl Ukraine, while Joao Biehl advances “health citizenship” (Biehl 2005) to examine the relationship between the sick and the politics of belonging. Adding to all of this, Didier Fassin in an analysis on humanitarian interventions (2007) posits “politics of life” as strictly different from biopolitics to differentiate, respectively, between the processes to determine who is helped and why, and the general approaches and strategies to control life threatening situations and manage refugee camps with large

populations.²¹ These terms highlight an active scholarly engagement with biopolitics. My own project is less invested in proposing a new term than in suggesting a more socially inclusive and grounded employment of biopolitics as a perspective that takes life and the body as sites of both, direct interventions and political production.

On Methods, Sites, and Research Ethics

This project draws on over 30 months of fieldwork in the Arizona-Sonora region beginning in the summer of 2002 and continuing through the summer of 2007. The project design called for significant geographic mobility, methodological creativity, and a constant emphasis on transparency, particularly because ethnographic activities took place among a wide variety of (often-times conflicting) actors, institutions, and locations, linked together by the death of migrants in the deserts of Arizona and Sonora. I oriented data collection along two major concerns: (1) documenting and understanding border intervention practices and strategies; and (2) mapping the forms of social and political interaction and relations among different actors. In a context where individual safety and political vulnerability intertwine in complicated ways, intervention becomes the vehicle through which authority can be challenged, articulated, and reproduced. For the purposes of this research, “intervention” included both extraordinary activities and quotidian practices, each framed for the purposes of border policing and migration control, the

²¹ Fassin suggests that “Humanitarian intervention is a biopolitics insofar as it sets up and manages refugee camps, establishes protected corridors in order to gain access to war casualties, develops statistical tools to measure malnutrition, and makes use of communication media to bear witness to injustice in the world. But humanitarian intervention is also a politics of life [...], in that it takes as its object the saving of individuals, which presupposes not only risking others but also making a selection of which existences it is possible or legitimate to save” (Fassin 2007:501).

preservation of life and/or the management of death, as well as efforts to frame public opinion and affect policy to alter or maintain particular border conditions.

In order to investigate the ways in which political authority is produced, maintained, and contested through the management of life, death, and bodies, I followed border-related activities through a variety of methods and sites, taking into account the temporal and spatial variability of border crossing phenomena. For instance, summers represented the busiest and most challenging fieldwork months. Days frequently began at 3:00 a.m., involved driving hundreds of miles, interacting with hundreds of migrants, or included day-long activities with visiting volunteers. With bodies discovered almost daily, institutional, civil, and media actors intervening on the border were constantly inundated with activity. Late fall and early winter were periods of decreased border-crossing activity and attention. Because of these periods coincided with the end of political and fiscal calendar years, I focused my attention on political pronouncements and agency reports during these months. Fieldwork intensified with the arrival of the temperate spring months, which routinely register the highest volume of border crossings attempts as well as migrant deaths resulting from vehicle rollovers. During the spring months, both Mexican and American governments typically announce strategies to address the problems of desert exposure aggravated by the high temperatures of the approaching summer season. Civil associations and NGOs increase their memberships, activities, and interaction. Governmental and institutional actors—Mexican and American border patrols, consulates, hospitals, criminal and forensic investigators, community liaisons—devote long hours to the management of the bodies, dead and alive. This is also the season that lures most journalists. From mid-May through the end of

September, there is a continuous trickle of media professionals with microphones, cameras, and notepads looking for *the* border story in sanctuary churches and vigilante outposts, in intensive care units and small Mexican town “guesthouses.” A few of them reappear in the spring months.

Keeping in mind the impact of these seasonal variations on transborder phenomena, I attended public meetings and events, conducted interviews, and carried out participant-observation—sometimes deciding, given the activity or the group I was with, to remain solely and openly an observer. Fieldwork ranged from participation in highly structured binational seminars on very specific topics of border security and/or human safety, to informal desert hikes accompanying concerned citizens in their more solo efforts. Research participants included border crossers, residents, local and foreign activists, public officials, medical service providers, law enforcement personnel, attorneys, and journalists, in both Mexico and the U.S., representing a wide array of positions on border issues. As a general rule, I only use the names of individuals who are public figures by the nature of their work or their political position. However, even in the case of public figures, I have at times opted not to use real names. Because interactions with some research participants were brief or took place under strenuous conditions, I distributed business cards and maintained research protocols online. Throughout, I took special care to maintain the transparency of my activities and of my identity as a researcher. I subjected myself to the different protocols of the groups and agencies with whom I interacted, and respected the trust and good will of participants.

This project weaves together activities currently taking place throughout the Arizona-Sonora region. In Mexico, my research activities required constant movement

between places and people in Altar, Sásabe, Nogales, Naco, Agua Prieta, and Benjamin Hill in the northern Mexican state of Sonora, as well as selected institutional sites in Mexico City. In Arizona, research took place in Tucson, Douglas, and Nogales. Much of my work, however, happened in open spaces in the desert, either in private, public, and, when invited by tribal members, in the land of the Tohono O'odham. Research activities in, or pertaining to, the reservation were limited to such invitations and public events.

My role in these various locations varied. In rallies and protest, organizers tended to group scholar observers with the media. When staying in migrant shelters for several nights or weeks, I was often asked to perform admittance interviews and document human right report abuses. Other times, I would be asked to keep company to migrants whose health or emotional status was fragile. My interactions with Mexican and American border police consisted in formal interviews, daylong outings, and a surprising number of informal conversations in the field and off duty. In the company of activists and journalists, I constantly offered simultaneous translation as an incentive for them to take me along on assignment. Translation work, letter writing, and basic phone managing skills were major activities while doing fieldwork with the Mexican Consulates in Arizona. In my encounters with migrants, if I was out with a particular group, I always made sure to know and adhere to its protocols. When driving alone in the desert, I always carried extra water, snacks, and basic medical supplies, which I was more than thankful to have on more than one occasion. Over the course of my activities with some of the humanitarian border action groups, I became a certified Wilderness First Responder, and had the opportunity to join desert patrols and weeklong migrant trail marches. Particularly at first, these desert excursions would leave me with unbearable

headaches caused by improper hydration and heat fatigue. While exposure is minimal in comparison with that experienced by crossers in distress, the consequences of underestimating the effects of the environment of my own body brought an awareness of my own physical vulnerability that enhanced my field practices and informed my interactions with others in the desert. Thus, sometimes I was mostly an observer, while in some situations mandated taking an active role on whatever activity or challenge lay before me. Throughout, however, I strove to maintain my role as an ethnographer visible and my data-gathering practices transparent.

In addition to the forms of ethnographic participant-observation already described, my research methods included in-depth and systematic conversations and interviews, the collection of personal stories and institutional trajectories, as well as the mapping of social networks and alliances, and the tracking of disagreements and practices. Generally, my methods were aimed at capturing and documenting the various ways in which this border was experienced, perceived, and imagined as an un/safe, in/secure place, and the conditions that framed those relations. The resulting analysis investigates the everyday practices and intervention strategies that constitute political authority and legitimacy in a politics that works through lives and bodies to hold its line.

* * *

To summarize, this project looks at the management of migrant death and trauma to conceptualize a politics of life that reimagines the relationship between authority, legitimacy, and right. Through an examination of how claims to the migrants' biology and biographies both frame, and are framed by, zones of deliberate neglect, the

dissertation makes a critical contribution to the study of violence by articulating the conditions that may turn arrests into rescues, migrants into mere bodies, and rescuers into potential outlaws. In so doing, the thesis offers a fresh and timely perspective on U.S.-Mexico border dynamics, and contributes to the theorization of power and its manifestations on bodies and life across spatial and social relations. As anxieties over the management of territories and human mobility increasingly set preemptive global agendas and produce “acceptable” exceptions to physical, legal, and sociopolitical protection, at the stakes behind this examination of border safety and border security is arriving at critical understanding of how the politics of policing, vulnerability, and exclusion produce unequally valued lives and deaths.

CHAPTER TWO

DESOLATION BOUND:

BORDER CROSSING AND ENFORCEMENT

IN THE ARIZONA-MEXICO DESERT REGION

It is a weary journey, even in imagination—no people, no homes, no fields; but only the solitudes of a continent’s innermost depths.
- Egbert Viele (1882a:264)

This migration is a heartbreak.
- Isabel García

“The Desert is one big cemetery,” bemoaned Father René Castañeda¹ between cigarette puffs to the visiting border journalist as they both examined the plaza full of men and women in dark clothes holding on to small backpacks and big dreams of menial jobs somewhere north. Castañeda would repeat variants of this assertion to countless reporters, activists, officials, scholars, and others who, seeking this border’s stories, passed through his migrant shelter in Altar, the once-sleepy desert town along the mission route established by Father Kino in the late 17th century. Changes in the

¹ In a few cases, like this one, I use the real names of people who engaged in my research as public figures either because of their sociopolitical position (functionaries, representatives, leaders, spokespeople), or the circumstance of their participation (press conferences, public appearances, court hearings). In individual interviews, oral permission was obtained to use the real names of such people. However, pseudonyms are given to public figures when deemed a necessary protection or to honor a request for anonymity. In some cases, names are occasionally omitted altogether. Pseudonyms are used in all other cases.

American border enforcement strategy in the 1990s suddenly turned this town into *the* hotbed for trans-border human smuggling along the Arizona-Sonora corridor, not only attracting aspiring migrants, vendors, and visitors, but also international attention.

My first trip to Altar in June 2003 was a typical case in point. Reverend Robin Hoover, President of Humane Borders, Inc., the Tucson-based humanitarian border action group that maintains over 100 barrels of water for migrant consumption throughout Southern Arizona, invited me to join him on a quick trip south. He was taking a crew of Dutch journalists across the desert. Their mission: To report on the American border crisis—in any way it could be defined, interviewed, photographed, and produced in a compelling fashion. The plan on the agenda that day was to get a quick, air-conditioned glimpse of the migrant journey by retracing it *grosso modo* in reverse. Leaving from Tucson, we would check a few desert trails, stop at a couple of known bivouac sites, cross south through the Sasabe port of entry, rattle our way down the 60-mile graded road to Altar, and find ourselves some interviewees. Hundreds of thousands of aspiring migrants pass through this road on their way north every year; while hundreds of journalists, human rights observers, government officials, and scholars like myself take it south in hopes of witnessing and documenting what many call the border's "crisis." Most migrants come chasing dreams of financial relief; the observers come chasing after the border's dramas and failures. Although the latter seeks a glimpse of desolation, it is the former who might actually find it. As the day progressed and the truck's thermometer rose past the century mark; as any exposed skin turned red despite the mix of sunblock, sweat and sand; and as the headaches that come with heat fatigue began to manifest among our Dutch companions; any doubts about the effects of this

“green desert” on the body dissipated together with the group’s early chattiness. We had been roaming in and out of the truck at the mercy of the desert sun for about 12 hours by the time we finally reached Father Castañeda and the blessing of the two overstrained swamp coolers in his migrant shelter. The *Centro de Atención al Migrante y Necesitado*, CCAMYN,² had been providing dinner, shelter, and shower access to migrants since 2001. It was built on a plot of land that was a repository for small planes in the 1980s. According to local lore, these planes flew cocaine and other contraband north.³ From housing low-flying Cessnas, to sheltering wretched walkers, this exact place continues to be a hub for illicit trans-border traffic, its problems, and promises.

After dinner and some small talk, Castañeda proceeded to impart his media-ready migration homily. “These people have come from very far to try to understand your story,” he said turning to the six migrants seeking shelter that night. “Tell them why you are here?” Stories of economic scarcity, want, and frustration filled their brief and muted responses. “Now, tell them of your experience in the desert.” Castañeda instructed in a caring but commanding tone.

² The Community Care Center for the Migrant and the Poor (CCAMYN) is part of the Catholic Church’s International Migrant Ministry. Before the *Centro* opened in 2001, local parishioners would give out food after Sunday mass to those who had arrived in Altar. Demand grew weekly, as did the amount of food locals would donate, until it became clear that an alternative source of support needed to be found. Eventually, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops made a large donation that enabled Father Castañeda to build the facility.

³ When returning to Nogales from Altar at night, I was often told by locals to take highway 2 with its speeding and overloaded NAFTA trucks, and to keep clear of *Camino de las Misiones*—my preferred route which strings together secluded desert villages across a hundred miles of undeveloped land. By taking highway 2, I could avoid running into a drug trafficking operations. Apparently there was a time when the road was used as a landing strip. Although the U.S. has achieved tight control of air space throughout (most of) its border since the 1990s, such a fact does not erase the imprint left in the memory of the Altareños by Amado Carrillo Fuentes, *El Señor de los Cielos*, once Mexico’s most powerful drug trafficker.

Even before crossing the desert, migrants must successfully navigate complex and often-obscure networks of obligations, dependencies, and hierarchies. A shy distrust is the norm that most people learn upon arrival. Disclosing personal information makes them prone to exploitation, and speaking to outsiders may even put their crossing plans at risk. People fear retaliation from anyone in the migrant trade who might feel actually or potentially exposed by an indiscrete “client.” Consequences may range from direct physical violence to the refusal of services at any point. Because the stakes of shortsighted candidness are high, initial exchanges tend to involve noncompromising responses and timid eye contact from migrants, particularly in the presence of others. I was often surprised to hear people who were apparently in charge give unsolicited permissions to crossers to speak with me—“Talk to the lady, go ahead!”⁴—or others. That afternoon, the priest had asked the migrants at the shelter to reveal the details of their lives and journeys to this group of international strangers who wanted to photograph them and film them. The migrants were bound to comply: to surrender their stories and the images of their broken, sunburned bodies in exchange for the priest’s shelter, and for legitimacy in the eyes of the journalists and their audiences.

The silence was heavy. Alicia, the only migrant woman in the shelter that night, looked at us with tearful eyes that aggravated the already uncomfortable situation. Finally, a tall, redheaded man in his fifties from southern Mexico said, “It’s the most difficult thing I’ve ever tried to do.” Grateful, the journalists and the anthropologist scribbled this man’s account of his border journey. “The guides tell you, ‘We are going to walk for a night.’ And we have walked all our lives, but out there it’s different.” He

⁴ *¡Platica con la muchacha, ándale!*

hesitated. “Hour after hour, you walk just the way they tell you: trying to step on the footsteps of the person in front of you... You walk and walk, until you just can’t any more. [...] You know you are going to die.”⁵

Members of the Samaritan Patrol, a group of desert medical activists and humanitarians, spotted Alberto lying near a road the following morning. He was disoriented and barely responsive. Ultimately, a Border Patrol’s Search, Trauma, and Rescue crew (BORSTAR) came evacuated him to Tucson. Alberto sustained that he owes his life to the activists who literally and symbolically plucked him from the condition he was in. He recalled the moment in which they wrapped a wet sheet around his upper body. He had been sure he would die abandoned in the desert, but all of the sudden, the care of these good Samaritans had brought him back. The concern here is with that state of abandonment Alberto experienced, with what it takes to create and defy it, and the politics it makes possible.

Envisioning Desolation

In this chapter I explore the strategic incorporation of the Sonoran Desert into the contemporary American border enforcement plan and its consequences. The shift in the flow of migrants to remote regions resulted not only in greater time windows for the detection and apprehension of unauthorized crossers, but also, as I will argue, in changes to the enforcement mechanisms. Contrary to the experience of crossing the international boundary through ports of entry or jumping the metallic fences that have progressively

⁵ “*Todo: el desierto, el cansacio, el miedo... todo el viaje pues. Te pesa, pero te haces el ánimo porque sabes que te vas a morir.*”

appeared along urban enclaves, in the desert, the border swells over space and time. In the remote regions of Southern Arizona, the few seconds that it takes migrants to maneuver their way through the four-strand, cattle-ranch style fence that marks the boundary are insignificant when compared to a border-crossing that involves at least a two-day walk and sometimes more of to 60 miles. In this context, enforcement revolves around the monitoring of crossers, their exertion and exposure, a strategy that results in hundreds of thousands of relatively peaceful apprehensions each year. However, it also kills.

As I examine border policies that aim to control bodies and space, my approach is not directly focused on what some have termed “the art of governing ‘illegal’ immigration” (Inda 2006:8). I am interested in the “assemblage of mechanisms and devises for producing knowledge and intervening upon the problem of ‘illegal’ [migration]” (Inda 2006:8). However, in looking at this through the vantage points of migrant deaths, I approach this border through the possibilities of its negative production. In doing this, first I borrow Paul Virilio’s basic analytic model that the “accident is diagnostic of technology” (1998:20), to examine what deaths in the desert reveal about border controls. Virilio suggest that technological accidents (shipwrecks for example,) are more telling of the capacities and limitations of particular technologies than working models themselves (ships themselves). Following that premise, I examine the deaths of border crossers for what they might reveal about the border enforcement apparatus and its strategy. I argue that these deaths point to important practical and political limitations of state efforts to control people, space, and the sociopolitical productivity of the border itself. This becomes important in thinking about the ways “deliberate neglect” works as

a form of violence. And second, as I explore such limitations of enforcement efforts, I also take license in expanding an allusion to the Great Desert of Desolation from ancient texts, which I explain below. Throughout the chapter I employ the idea of “Desolation” to refer to that condition of strategic abandonment and exposure that is what ultimately kills crossers in the Sonoran Desert. While the border in itself has no agency and effects are mostly derived from the apparatus of security and enforcement, this changes when the desert and the border conflate particularly in those moments and space that escape state controls. To put it in another way, “Desolation” could be seen as that instance in which the border enforcement techniques, technologies, and strategies go wrong. When they fail, they fall flat of expectations however these may be defined; when they go wrong, they kill.

Because such fatalities carry the potential to reveal the state’s use of unjustified violence and creation of spaces of deliberate neglect, those fatalities must be managed. While the deaths maybe conceptualized as a manifestation of biopower, their management most certainly reveals a field of contested biopolitics. Although I argue this throughout the dissertation, this chapter sets the stage by providing an analysis of the spatio-temporal framework of absolute human loss against within which legitimacy and interventions are couched. The remaining chapters deal with various forms of recovering the bodies and the stories of those who fall in the desert. This chapter deals with the loss of their lives and bodies

Here, I examine the sociopolitical significance of the space and state of deliberate neglect—or *Desolation*—in which border crossers die. No word better captures the space and state that results from the kind of human loss due to isolation and exposure to the

desert.⁶ The emphasis on both space and state as is meant to highlight the relational and temporal aspects of this condition of extreme exposure, and decenter an exclusively geographic view of this border.

Deserts, real and metaphorical, have historically captured the human imagination not only as places of personal penance, transcendence, and becoming. Philosopher Jean Baudrillard posits the idea of the desert as the state/space of violently extreme contemporary abstraction (1994:1). While, reflecting on biblical exoduses, Edmond Jábés writes that the desert is “the privileged place of depersonalization,” and “[where] one becomes other” (1990:32-36). These themes echo through the discussions about the context in which these deaths take place. I borrow this literary rubric of “desolation” because it encapsulates the dynamics, claims, and anxieties about the spatio-temporal conditions of abstraction and depersonalization that surrounds with impunity the death and disappearance of crossers. In this context, “Desolation,” a space and state of absolute social and geographic exclusion, becomes the background against which border interventions are designed and contested.

This invocation of Desolation is ancient. According to apocryphal texts, even God found deserts powerful, transformative, and insufferable. The Book of Enoch describes fallen angels banned by God to be bound and buried the Great Desert of Dudael, a place also know as Desolation. Writer Luis Urrea uses the mythical metaphor to reconstruct the deadly border crossing journey of the “Yuma 14.” In May 2001, the group, originally composed of 26 migrant men, attempted to cross through one of the

⁶ The capitalization of “Desolation” is kept in accordance to the proper name of the place it refers to, and also when I use it to term the condition and space of abandonment experienced by some crossers. It appears in lowercase when it refers to feelings or emotions.

most unforgiving regions of the Sonoran Desert, a region historically known as *Camino del Diablo*.⁷ The Devil's Highway could be the very place of divine banishment, he suggests (2004:4).

The border/desert works through corporeal exposure, and Desolation points to situations in which the effects of exposure escape the mechanism of control. I use the term to refer to such readings of the dynamics in the desert that provide frameworks for the design of intervention efforts and their claims to legitimacy. Its articulation reveals the complex set of sociopolitical relations that distinctively delineates claims to the migrants' bodies in relation to border space. Desolation turns the policing officer into a rescuer, the activist into a medic, the crosser into a body, the dead into the missing, the found into the *desconocidos*—the unknown. Because of its polyvalence, and the diverse dynamics and relationships that it engenders, Desolation reveals the border's power over bodies and subjectivities. The term not only implies the harsh and almost agentive effects of the desert, as one may read in some of Urrea's passages. It also marks a particular kind of marginal space and a physical or emotional state of being, but denoting a strategy and a threshold. It is a marginalizing manifestation of the sociopolitical relations that reproduce exclusion in the state-space-subject triangulation, which in this border results in the categories of the unauthorized, the illegal, the banned, the banished.

If the border's mechanisms that impose and regulate physical exertion and exposure to the desert may be seen as a technique of biopower, Desolation allows to see

⁷ In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea reconstructs the story of these men who became known as the "Yuma 14," for the total sum of bodies recovered in relation to the case. During the summer of 2004, the book became essentially required reading for all volunteers joining humanitarian and pro-migrant border action groups in region.

moments of instability in the articulation of that power. Territory alone does not determine this potential, which is more likely found in a particular kind of spatialization resulting from the “enunciative” walking (de Certeau 1988) of border subjects—crossers, smugglers, policing officials, interventionists, etc.—across the social, political, and geographic landscape of this border region.⁸ Yet, not all “walks” through these lands produce fatal seclusion. Rather, the spatial enunciation of Desolation suggests a kind of border *topos* that is not fixed, and that cannot be cartographically mapped, not in any exhaustive way. If in other scenarios, state schemes aim at rendering subjects legible (Scott 1998), visible (Virilio 1989), or docile (Foucault 1977; Butler 1990), in critical engagement with in the contemporary scholarship on biopolitics (Agamben 1998; Butler 2004; Rose 2007), the idea of Desolation denotes those spaces and states of exception that posits certain kinds of subjects as being completely outside of (the protection of) the law.

In this sense, the focus is on the experience of a small number of crossers and the border they encounter. Only a few among the hundreds of thousands of people who attempt to cross the desert into the U.S. every year fall completely into Desolation. It would be too threatening to the border enforcement apparatus if every crosser experienced it, but as an exceptional moment in the implementation of a strategy that

⁸ Walking, de Certeau suggests, “has a triple ‘enunciative’ function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic action-out of language), and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic ‘contracts’ in the form of movement (just as verbal enunciation is an ‘allocation,’ it ‘posits another opposite’ the speaker and puts contacts between interlocutors into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation” (de Certeau 1988:97-98).

makes subjects, demarks space, and reproduces authority, Desolation provides an opportunity to rearticulate claims to legitimacy. Because once it is located or invoked, Desolation obliges intervention. Once a call for help is registered, once a body is reported, the dead and the distressed must be retrieved or rescued from the desert. Hence the possibilities of recognizing someone in such a state of neglect, in Desolation, involves reestablishing contact, at least symbolically, with that subject. In this sense, one of the politically productive aspects of Desolation is that the very possibility of its (social) articulation calls for its (social) undoing. It is in Desolation, as that space and state of biological exposure and political exclusion, that control over the border and the walkers' bodies can be achieved. In the state/space of Desolation, every body and every life can be excluded, exposed and potentially erased, at least until the moment of intervention, which bears recognition and potential recovery and reintegration into the civic sphere.

“No story of about death and the Devil’s Highway could rightly exist without the strong presence of Desolation, in all its intimidating glory,” Urrea explains (2004:xii).⁹ In many ways, deaths by border-crossing attempts have deep roots in this boundary’s history. Migrant deaths by drowning or vehicular accidents have been rather common in

⁹ The term “Desolation” seemed to be so brilliant in its terrible accuracy, a kind of deep historical reference to the region somehow seemed only logical to me. After some unfruitful explorations of the records left behind by the early European settlers, I finally asked Urrea himself. He accepted credit for appropriating the term, writing in his reply, “I’d never heard it used in terms of our beloved border. [...] But I was reading some stuff about the arcane/Enochian elements of the Old Testament. Specifically about the fates of the Grigori, or “Watcher” angels that fell to earth to mate with human women. Fathers of the mythical Nephilim--bad vatos! But it was deemed that these Watchers be buried in chains beneath the deserts known as desolation. [...] Anyway, from that mythos to the Camino del Diablo mythos. It seemed to fit the dark and almost frightening vibe of the desert down there. Sort of Cthulhu comes to Arizona” (Personal communication 11/2007).

the contemporary history of U.S.-Mexico border enforcement and unauthorized crossing. For instance, the so-called “Banzai Runs” of the early 1990s in which crossers would run en-masse against port-of-entry and interstate traffic in Southern California resulted in more than a few fatalities and hospitalizations, and much media hype (Andreas 2000, Nevins 2002). But, the mode and temporal characteristics of the death of migrants in Arizona’s border/desert sets them apart in many ways from other forms of border crossing fatalities. While the deaths of some migrants become widely publicized events (see Chapter 3), others fail to even register and earn recognition as such.

Crossers who die in Desolation, do so in a state of literal exclusion. Taking Carol Nagengast literally when she writes that, “It is the deviants [...] who are the subject to the state violence” (1994:117), deviating from the expected trails can result in the crossers death. By being undetectable he or she becomes unrescuable and, potentially, permanently foregone.¹⁰ Desolation then represents this moment of extreme isolation and exposure in which certain migrants succumb to the desert. Paradoxically, the articulation of its very possibility becomes an act of recognition, an intervention that negates it. *Pace* Elaine Scarry’s (1985) conceptualization of individual bodily pain as the absolute definer of reality, the focus here is on the sociality and politics enabled by the idea of migrant distress. As Theresa Caldeira reminds us, “A world of negotiated signification is created by language, not by pain” (2001:366), and both language and meaning are social. For this reason, the idea of Desolation I propose operates as a *referent* to a state/space of exclusion and exposure. In other words, it points retrospectively or hypothetically to that moment of violent systematic neglect and

¹⁰ Chapter 3 discusses the disappearance of crossers.

potentially lethal abandonment experienced by gravely distressed crossers pre-intervention or rescue effort. Yet, the very claim of the possibility of such a state of exclusion and exposure frames the possibility, design, and justification of interventions that aim simultaneously to police and rescue while reproducing notions of the border as a threatened and threatening space. In what follows, I explore how Desolation is perceived to operate spatially, corporeally, and socially.

Dying in the Desert

The temporality of the deaths in the desert has significant implications. Particularly when compared to other forms of border fatalities such as drowning or vehicular accidents—both of them relatively common—dehydration, hyperthermia and exposure, as causes of death, are relatively easy to bring under control, and its effects may be reversed at almost any point within the window of time in which they occur (Sapkota et al. 2006, see also Chapter 4). Three dynamics emerge from this temporal framework. First, it makes crossers aware of the effects of the desert on their body and their companions, potentially changing their view of their own position vis-à-vis space and their relation to border enforcement authorities. If, when entering the desert their priority was to remain as secluded as possible to try to evade the policing gaze of the security apparatus, as the seriousness of their heat-related sickness increases, their survival depends on capturing its attention and being brought back from their seclusion. Mexican cell phones are used to call 911, fires are lit, small mirrors are held against the sunlight to signal distress. Injured and sick crossers may wait long hours to be rescued.

This brings up a second dynamic: The temporarily around these deaths in the desert allows ample room for intervention. Saving a life can take as little as providing water, a can of Vienna sausage (to replenish minerals), or an air-conditioned ride to Tucson, be it to a hospital, a church, or a detention center. A third point emerges from this: Those who die in the desert are mostly those who cannot be reached in time or at all. They are effectively rendered unreachable by the conditions that push their migratory journey away from official ports of entry (see Reyes et al. 2002; Reyes 2004). Although it might be tempting to see these migrants in the light of the *Homo sacer* figure, as creatures whose lives can be taken with impunity because of their condition of absolute exclusion from the city (Agamben 1998), such a quick analytic move prevents an examination of the processes through which such power is articulated and diminishes competing claims.

In the desert, the border has a way of being marked on those who cross it and become its subjects, particularly when it manifests as Desolation. Echoing the perception of intervening actors, Urrea anthropomorphizes the border/desert in his writing. “Desolation drinks you first in small sips, then in deep gulps,” he warns (2004:121). Yet, the power of Desolation is not only in the geophysical or climatologic characteristics of the desert. My interest is in the sociopolitical dynamics it points to by drawing from and surpassing its literary and its physical referents. Just like that mythical desert of arcane texts, the Arizona-Sonora border/desert is a place that selectively bans, binds, and buries. The history of human flows across this desert suggests that it has exercised such power on people and their bodies over the years. However, as I show, it is with the advent of

the contemporary border policing strategy that Desolation becomes a powerful referent in this border's biopolitical contestation.

In this context, the strategic sealing of the boundary to manage unauthorized migration reveals border enforcement as much more complex than the mere sum of policies that succeed or fail to control transborder flows completely. Desolation becomes an expression of border enforcement that operates not on space, but on subjects; it recreates the border by marking its subjects whether these are consumed, spared, or ultimately untouched by the dynamics in the desert. From my examination of border crossing deaths, injuries, interventions and recoveries, I argue that through the perception of the calculation of risk, the regulation of recognizable pain, and the mediation of border crossing and enforcement narratives at the center of the triangulation state-subject-space that frame the border/desert is a politics of life manifested through the invocation of Desolation.

Some have argued that, "The Border, [sic] *strictu senso*, is a state-sanctioned system of violence: physical, environmental, economic, and cultural" (Davis 2002:x). However, even if "the Border" is such a system, its violence does not apply and operate consistently across subjects. In order to understand the structural significance of the deaths of migrants in the Sonoran desert, it becomes necessary to examine conditions and manifestations of the border as violence, and how they fit within the idea of its monopoly by the state. As it will become clear, the border and the desert, the sites and objects of my study, are fundamentally conflated in Desolation, particularly for the afflicted border crosser. A dissection of the spatialization of this border will help unveil the politics behind such conflation. My objective here is to try to capture the perceived operability

of Desolation by mapping the social geography of its actors, their spatial and spatializing practices, and the consequences of these, in order to provide a platform from which to investigate authority, vulnerability, and powers at work in those liminal national spaces we call “borders.”¹¹

As I trace the contours of Desolation through the interplay of unauthorized border crossing dynamics, I follow a tripartite approach to the possible forms of engagement with this border/desert in dialogue with theorists of space (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 1990; Smith 2003). I am interested in separating the different ways the border, the desert, and Desolation operate first at the level of direct experience. For this purposes I examine the effects of bodily exposure. Second, at the level of perception, I look at how spatial understandings of the border/desert are framed and how they manifest in intervention strategies. Third, I am interested in tracing how this border is set to work at the discursive level, through the production and circulation of its representations and the imaginaries these may elicit. It is important to track these three domains of spatial practice and the subjects they affect in order to understand how the dynamics in the Arizona-Mexico border region are construed, contested or legitimated through interventions at the these three levels.

The Desolation this chapter presents differs fundamentally from notions of “in-betweenness” or “Nepantilism” popular in borderlands scholarship. Speaking of the metaphorical benefits to be derived from being in a state of constant fluidity, Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “To be disoriented in space is to be in *nepantla*, [that is] to experience

¹¹ By liminal spaces, I refer to those spaces or sites that force or facilitate a transformative transition between fixed and knowable states (Turner 1993:111).

bouts of disassociation of identity, identity breakdowns and buildups. The border is in a constant *nepantla* state, and it is an analog of the planet" (1993:37). The focus of *Desolation* is not the crosser's identity, but the body, and this is what makes it politically productive. Because the identity or biography of the crosser as an unauthorized "entrant" is legally compromising and political contentious, his threaten biology is privileged to legitimize rescuing interventions. The idea of *Desolation* as a condition of lethal corporeal exposure provides the basis for such border interventions and their biopolitical constitution.

Additionally, while I acknowledge the contributions of scholars that have found in the "liminal" and "disorienting" character of the border interesting metaphoric locations for the analysis of cultural, social and sexual identities in flux (Anzaldúa 1987; Behar 1993; Gomez-Peña 1996; Price 2004; Vila 2000), my study departs from the preoccupations of much of this literature. I analyze the work of borders through an ethnographic examination of the Arizona-Sonora region of the U.S.-Mexico boundary by focusing on the material conditions that result in physical harm to particular border subjects and its subsequent sociopolitical productivity.

If indeed, "Every society (...) produces a space, its own space" (Lefebvre 2001:31), and *Desolation* is the space emergent from the geopolitical margins of both Mexico and the United States; then, one must interrogate the kind of social structures, relations, and practices that result in dynamics such as this one. Traditionally, the study of border regions has focused on "the ways in which territory and topography, among other aspects of the physical environment, interrelate with the social, economic, political, and cultural conditions of nations and states" (Donnan and Wilson 1999:44-45). My

focus here is on the border enforced via the exposed body of the crosser that results from the transformation of the desert into a selectively deadly and prolonged threshold—a biopolitical border zone.

Border Crafting in the West Desert

Historically, the potential for Desolation and death seem to have been always already present in the Sonoran Desert's human ecology; however, what is of interest to the border observer is that, in some ways, the potential for this kind of destructive exposure has also been part and parcel of contemporary border enforcement efforts. From the moment the U.S. Border Patrol Strategy brought into its fold the human ecology of the Sonoran Desert, the potential for death by hyperthermia and dehydration was there. Petryna reminds us that while states are concerned with imposing regimes of control and predictability, in the process they also create their opposite: fields of “nonknowledge and unpredictability” (2002:13). The border/desert is a space of continuous calculation and surveillance, while Desolation is the space that circumvents technocratic visions and mechanisms of territorial control. In order to explain this, however, it is necessary to backtrack.

Throughout much of the history of this region, trans-boundary flows have traditionally obeyed micro-local needs and dynamics. With the notable exception of what came to be known as the Apache Wars (Nugent 1993; Basso 1996), following the final demarcation of the boundary after the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, flows of people and goods within the region immediately north and south of the boundary have historically

echoed local dynamics mostly centered on cattle ranching, mining, cultural events, and family ties (Martinez 1988).

Starting in the 1980s, post-Cold War national politics largely centered on migration and border control anxieties in the U.S., and economic recessions in Mexico are behind some of the changes this border rancher resents. Economic downturns tend to make border control an issue of national alarm in the U.S. Joseph Nevins writes that,

The peaks of anti-immigrant fervor in the United States have all taken place during times of economic uncertainty and decreasing job security, when the social, ethnic, and cultural disparities between the dominant culture and new immigrants have loomed large, and when "large and sustained" inflows of immigrants have occurred (2002: 96-97).

Leo Chavez posits a positive correlation between unemployment hikes and the recurrence of immigration as a front-page issue in national magazines (2001:21). Perhaps the most important combination of factors shaping the pre-9/11 foundations of the current policy dates from the 1980s. In the earlier part of the decade, Mexico went through a period of economic inflation, and the United States experienced an economic recession leading in 1983 to the highest unemployment rates of the post-war era.¹² The effects of the economy on the general perception of immigration would manifest a few years later, for instance, when, in 1985, President Reagan stated that, "The simple truth is that we've lost control of our own borders and no nation can do that and survive" (in Martinez 1988:1).¹³ At this time, it was mostly the Texan and Californian corridors that

¹² The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports unemployment rates of 9.7% for 1982 and 9.6% for 1983, the highest since 1940 when it was 14.6%.

¹³ The comments first appeared in the June 25, 1985 edition of Newsweek magazine, but the message continues to be a favorite of pundits, media personalities, and advocates of tougher border and immigration controls, such as Minutemen Civil Defense Corps co-founder Jim

typically bore the brunt of such anxieties, with images of migrants jumping fences or running against traffic in California's Interstate 5 flooding the evening TV news. These images portrayed crossing under a timeframe of relative immediacy.

The dangerous image of the border, so compactly articulated by Reagan, became a fixture in the American imaginaries to such degree that it is recognized as a turning point in the escalation of demands for tougher enforcement, immigration reform, and the rise of Mexican-centered xenophobic anxieties (Chavez 2001). The image of the compromised southern border that renders the nation vulnerable, and which lingers today, enabled the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. In addition to regularizing the legal status of many unauthorized workers, it brought about the first major increase in border policing personnel and surveillance technologies. The Clinton administration further intensified the border control implementations that had been set in place by the IRCA. In order to "gain operational control of the border"¹⁴ with Mexico, the strategy would change migratory patterns, routes, and enforcement, ultimately giving rise to the conditions that operationalize physical exposure and make death and Desolation border possibilities.

The interception of illegitimate goods and substances has been *the* priority at different points in the history of the boundary. However, since the 1980s, unauthorized labor flows have become almost the sole focus of border enforcement efforts. Although the threat posed by narcotic smuggling and drug cartels remains a common trope in border control discourses, the management of unauthorized human flows dictates the

Gilchrist and book co-author Jerome Corsi, who speak of "the coming end of the United States" (2006:201, see also pages 90 and 96).

¹⁴ Chapter one discusses the threat triad constituted by terrorism, drugs, and illegal migration.

bulk of day-to-day ground efforts. Such a trend can be seen in the design and implementation of the *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*, popularly known as Operation Gatekeeper, taking after the name of one of its regional incarnations—Operation Gatekeeper in California, Operation Safeguard in Arizona, Operation Hold the Line in Western Texas, Operation Rio Grande in Southeastern Texas. The Plan outlines the mission of the United States Border Patrol as follows,

The mission of the United States Border Patrol is to secure and protect the external boundaries of the United States, preventing illegal entry and detecting, interdicting and apprehending undocumented entrants, smugglers, contraband, and violators of other laws (USBP 1994:5).¹⁵

In the Strategy's summary, the agency also acknowledged that, "those attempting to illegally enter the United States in large numbers do so in part because of the weak controls [Americans] have exercised over the southwest land border in the recent past" (1994:4). In order to "regain" control of the nation's boundary, the U.S. Border Patrol began the implementation of its "Prevention through Deterrence" strategy. At face value, the strategy's premise was rather simple: "to raise the risk of apprehension to the point that many will consider it futile to continue to attempt illegal entry" (1994:6). Thus began the systematic policing and surveillance build up along the major corridors traditionally used by unauthorized crossers. Frustration—to cross and to stop the crossings—would eventually lead to despair.

¹⁵ Perhaps *the* most significant threat to the security of both Mexico and the United States that can be associated with their common border is posed by the drug cartels. Following enforcement intensification and pressure on Ciudad Juarez Cartel and the Arellano Felix Cartel in Tijuana, competition over Arizona-Sonora corridors have made organize crime violence increasingly visible in the region. The governments of both countries seem to be able to do little against cartel violence. Even the National Guard retreated when faced with the possibility of an encounter with the armed mafias that operate near Sasabe (McCombs 2007).

“Prevention through deterrence” materialized in cities like San Diego, El Paso, and Nogales through the increased deployment of agents, the expansion of surveillance technologies, and the erection of physical barriers. The efforts seemed to work. Soon, the border was practically sealed along these cities, and the flows adapted as predicted. Indeed the INS considered Arizona’s Operation Safeguard a spatial management success. “By moving potential crossers away from urban areas where they were able to disappear into local communities, the Border Patrol has taken advantage of new equipment and technology and increased staffing to make apprehensions in areas where illegal entrants are more visible” (USBP 2003: np, see also GAO 2001).

Thus, the flow of unauthorized transborder crossers moved to increasingly remote and dangerous locations where their incongruous presence gave them away. This is colloquially known as the “balloon effect,” as pressure increases at any surface point, content shifts, but overall volume remains unchanged. As the U.S. selectively sealed its border along urban enclaves, the relatively unpatrolled “openness” of the Sonoran Desert turned siren song to smugglers, aspiring immigrants, and traffickers. This is when Desolation entered the field of contemporary border enforcement and crossing.

As I have mentioned, death has not been foreign to the border, but the possible entente death-border-Desolation is a development particularly seen since the implementation of the 1994 Border Patrol Strategic Plan in the region Arizonans call the “West Desert.”¹⁶ The funneling of human flows produced by the policy, together with

¹⁶ The West Desert basically stretches west of Highway 19 connecting Nogales and Tucson continuing north along Interstate 10 to Casa Grande, and south of Interstate 8 from Casa Grande to Yuma. This vast and mostly uninhabited 200-mile wide corridor is comprised of private, public, and tribal land, starting with Arivaca and Altar Valley on its eastern end and continuing

the human ecology of the desert, was expected to have an effect on border crossing phenomena, and it did, but it was not deterrence. A 2006 report by the U.S. General Accountability Office revealed that border-crossing deaths had doubled since 1995 while the volume of illegal crossing attempts had remained unchanged. In the years following the implementation of “prevention through deterrence,” Arizona, with its rugged mountains and deserts, has become the center stage for both illegal entries and border crosser fatalities.

These deaths have been publicly portrayed as “an unintended consequence” of border controls. Doris Meissner, a former Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner who supervised the 1994 National Strategy implementation, lamented the deaths at the end of fiscal year 2002, which brought about a then-record 116 registered cases for the Tucson Border Patrol Sector. Moreover, in an interview with local Arizona media, Meissner declared that, “This is an issue where you don’t throw out the strategy because of unanticipated consequences.¹⁷ You work on correcting the problems.”¹⁸ The deaths, I suggest, might have been unstated or unannounced, but were not unanticipated. In addition to the agency’s own predictions, a picture of border deaths begins to emerge

west across Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, the Tohono O’odham Nation, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, and the Barry M. Goldwater Bombing Range. Most of this land falls under the jurisdiction of the Tucson Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol, except for the 70 westernmost miles of boundary in Arizona, which are patrolled by the USBP Yuma Sector.

¹⁷ Also, a 2005 Congressional Research Service report entitled “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol” states that: “As noted (...), the “Prevention Through Deterrence” strategy (...) pushed unauthorized migration away from population centers and funneled it into more remote and hazardous border regions. This policy has had *the unintended consequence of increasing the number of fatalities along the border*, as unauthorized migrants attempt to cross over the inhospitable Arizona desert without adequate supplies of water” (Nuñez-Neto 2005:19, emphasis added).

¹⁸ Cited in Stellar, Tim & Nacho Ibarra. “Scoring heating, soaring toll.” *Arizona Daily Star*. Sep. 29, 2002.

when juxtaposing the expectations of the strategy planners and the history and human ecology of the Sonoran Desert.

The complete “sealing” of the border was never the objective of the 1994 Strategy, suggests California attorney and activist Claudia Smith. Based on documents obtained from the INS through the Freedom of Information Act,¹⁹ she argues that, “the strategic plan recognizes that ‘illegal entrants crossing through remote, uninhabited expanses...*can find themselves in mortal danger*’ and [it] assumed that the ‘influx will adjust to Border Patrol changing tactics.’” (Smith and California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation 2001: np, emphasis added). Just as the strategy planners expected, illicit border flows dropped along areas of increased policing; however, deterrence cannot be evaluated on these bases alone. A decade after its initial implementation, the U.S. Border Patrol (now a part of Customs and Border Protection),²⁰ maintains “Prevention Through Deterrence” as part of its renewed National Strategy, allegedly because of its perceived results:

Past success has demonstrated that effective deployment of the proper mix of assets increases the “certainty of apprehension” of those intending to illegally cross our borders. Certainty of apprehension along with vigorous prosecution strategy for recidivists and smugglers has established a deterrent effect in *targeted locations*. This strategic approach to border control has set the foundation for establishing *focused* operation control of other areas along our

¹⁹ FOIA filed requesting the entire text of the document Smith cites have had little success. A journalist once shared a copy of the executive summary someone else had shared with him earlier.

²⁰ Following the events of September 11, 2001, and after a long series of discussions regarding the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s conflicting missions—to enforce immigration law and to welcome immigrants—the INS, was restructured in 2003. As part of the newly created Department of Homeland Security, naturalization services and immigration and border enforcement fell under two different agencies, of U.S. Citizenship and Immigrant Service and Customs and Border Protection respectively.

Nation's borders, *especially in high-traffic/high-threat areas* where illegal border-crossing and smuggling is prevalent (USBP 2003:9, emphasis added).

Measuring the strategy's efficacy in terms of deterrence is complicated because if arrests increase success is declared, and the same happens if arrests decrease. Furthermore, scholars and analysts sustain that instead of decreasing, unauthorized migration flows have merely adapted and change routes (Reyes 2002, GAO 2005). Such a shift was itself expected by the strategy's planners. Indeed, such a change is forecasted among the success indicators. The executive summary outlines three shifts that are relevant to this discussion: (1) "Alien apprehensions will decrease as Border Patrol increases control of the border;" (2) "Influx will adjust to U.S. Border Patrol changing tactics;" and (3) "Violence will increase as effects of the strategy are felt" (USBP 1994: np).

In retrospect, the prediction that increased policing would have resulted in a drop in total apprehensions—which could only be possible either with an overall drop in crossing attempts, or the abandonment of enforcement activities altogether—seems disingenuous and at least counterintuitive. It is particularly so because it was formulated at a time in which border enforcement technocrats openly expected a rise in the number of unauthorized migrants attempting to cross the border. In November 1993, as the strategy was being drafted, the ratification of the North America Free Trade Agreement was on the American Congressional table. Then-INS Commissioner Meissner was invited to testify before Congress on the foreseeable impacts of the trade liberalization treaty on American borders. Amidst her forecast was the indication that NAFTA would most likely result in increased unauthorized migration from Mexico to the United States. Commissioner Meissner cautioned, "Responding to the likely short- to medium-term

impacts of NAFTA will require strengthening our enforcement efforts along the border, both at and between ports of entry” (in Nevins 2002:138). More crossers were going to be heading north, but the border operations—Gatekeeper, Safeguard, Hold-the-Line, and Rio Grande—would make sure that the flow would stay clear of border cities and towns.

Moreover, the strategy assumed that the environmental and infrastructural characteristics of certain areas would make them natural “obstacles.” On the map that accompanies the 1994 strategy, three areas were identified as such “obstacles” on the border with Mexico: Big Bend National Park in south Texas, the Chihuahuan Desert in New Mexico and Eastern Arizona, and the Sonoran Desert. However, a quick overview of the history of human activity in these places makes it clear that the overbearing characteristics of these regions have not prevented people from traveling across them, or at least trying to do so. Furthermore, as the border became increasingly fortified in and near cities, smugglers, crossers, and contraband began to compete for remote trans-border corridors.

For the unprepared hiker, the West Desert can be truly forbidding. Part of this is the area known as *Camino del Diablo*, the Devil’s Way,²¹ a land that has always been austere and menacing to life. German Jesuit Ignaz Pfefferkorn who came to the region as a missionary in the early 1700s writes of this desert as being “very dangerous to man.” First there is the issue of water. “One travels eight or ten hours without finding a drop of

²¹ Historically, *Camino del Diablo* was the name given to a trail connecting the Sonoyta and Gila Rivers, near today’s Sonoyta, Sonora, and Yuma, Arizona respectively (Ives 1941; Pfefferkorn 1989 [1725]; Sykes 1927, Viele 1882a). More recently, the name has been reappropriated to refer to the area stretching 150 miles north of the boundary in the region known as the West Desert. *Camino del Diablo*, in contemporary border discourse, is used to speak of the journey of unauthorized border crosses in this border region (e.g., Annerino 1999; Urrea 2004).

water, a condition which is extremely inconvenient in such a hot country” (1989:37). If the lack of water is a primary preoccupation, heat comes next.

When (...) people, whose bodies are not yet accustomed to this penetrating heat, walk for long in the sun or, more often, stand still somewhere for a time, the rays, they say in Sonora, have a way of pressing down upon the body. There result unbearable headaches, inflammatory fevers, stitches in the side, and other deadly illnesses” (Pfefferkorn 1989:40).

But it was not the Jesuit, but the engineers of the International Boundary Commission, who came through the desert to re-mark binational territorial limits between 1891 and 1896, who best captured the region’s desolation potential. Their report states,

This road is appropriately called by the Mexicans ‘El camino del Diablo’ [sic]. When traveling in it for the first time, alone, or with but few companions, it is hard to imagine a more desolate or depressing ride. Mile after mile the journey stretches through this land of ‘silence, solitude, and sunshine,’ with little to distract the eye from the awful surrounding dreariness and desolation, except the bleaching skeletons of horses and the fatefully frequent crosses which mark the graves of those who perish of thirst—grim and suggestive reminders when the traveler’s supply of water is running low” (in Sykes 1927:66).

A look at the history of deaths by exposure across this land would have strengthened the admonitions of these men of the cloth, and their engineer counterparts. People have always attempted to travel across this region, and among them, there have always been some who pay dearly their daring attempt.

Scattered bones and unknown graves dot the desert landscape. The earliest marked burial sites date from the Spanish colonial era in the 1700s (Ives 1989). These were followed by the graves of Mexican nationals lured by the promises of California gold in the 1840s (Velasco 1985). It is believed that the desert kept about 400 of these Mexican forty-niners (Gaillard and Du Bosse 1896). Francisco Salazar, a Sonora native, offered one of the first descriptions of what some have called the desert’s “killing fields”

(Annerino 1999). “The Tinajas was a vast graveyard of unknown dead... the scattered bones of human beings slowly turning to dust,” he wrote of the sight at the Tinajas Altas water hole. “The dead were left where they were to be sepulchered by the fearful sand storms that sweep at times over the desolate waste” (in Barney 1943:16). American geologist Rapahel Pumpelly, who traversed the region in 1860, and again in 1915, writes that, “it is a matter of history that more than two thousand persons have died of thirst and exhaustion on this part of the ‘Old Yuma Trail’” (1918:775). Be it migrants or gold seekers, Desolation kills by thirst, exhaustion, and desert exposure that come from inescapable seclusion. Fast forward to July 1980 when a group of 27 Salvadorans seeking to leave the turmoil of their country’s civil war tried to enter the United States through the desert. After walking in the desert for two days, they were found in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, 30 miles north of the border; 13 of them had died, the other 14 had to be rescued (Cunningham 1995).²² Although deaths had been taking place continuously since the establishment of the boundary line in the middle 1800s, the experience of this Salvadoran cohort was a sign of the times to come.

Given this history, and the assumptions of the 1994 Border Patrol strategy when it was enacted, it was foreseeable that more people would try to cross the border illegally, and that they would do it through regions that already proved deadly. This brings us back to the third dynamic expected by the strategy’s planners: the increase of violence. Certainly, the kind of border violence envisioned by Washington technocrats includes,

²² Estimates suggest that about one million people left El Salvador during the country’s civil war (1980-1992). At least 500 thousand of them sought asylum in the United States. A common practice among Central American asylum seekers was to enter the country illegally, typically through the U.S.-Mexico border, and then, if captured, request a judicial hearing before an immigration judge.

but it is not limited to the wide array of abuses that take place in the unpoliced vastness of the desert today. In what has become almost a symbolic rite of passage, crossers are victimized by bandits waiting on the boundary line. Most people believe that their smugglers take them through the areas where the bandits are as part of some pre-arranged deal. Some believe desert guides double as border bandits when not taking groups across. Border thieves order people to strip so they can thoroughly inspect people's bodies and belongings. Most crossers carefully hide any valuables—sewing bills behind clothing tags and inside seams, fitting them into small slits in belts and shoes, or tucking them underneath braids and buns. It is during this process that most assaults take place. The absence of police presence contributes to the elaborate and lengthy character of these assaults. Bandits are armed, and operated in groups of 12 to 15 members. Agents of Mexico's Migrant Protection Force, Grupo Beta, avoid them citing personal safety; American law enforcement agents contend the thugs simply cross south whenever they are around.

Robbery, assault, rape, kidnapping, and extortion are all experienced in one form or another by most crossers. According to an estimate by Mexico's Migrant Protection Force, Grupo Beta,²³ 90-95% of repatriated crossers they see report having been

²³ Grupo Beta was founded in 1990 in Tijuana to protect Mexican nationals from border thieves, fraud, and extortion. Its mission is to “work in defense and protect the human rights of migrants by aiding and safeguarding them from risky situations, and abuse from authorities and others” (<http://www.inami.gob.mx/Paginas/420000.htm>, 10/10/2006). There are five Beta Group branches in the Sonora-Arizona border: San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonoyta, Sasabe, Nogales, and Agua Prieta. It is a rare occasion when more than a dozen agents are assigned to a particular jurisdiction. Grupo Beta in Sonoyta functioned with only two members for several months during its first year, while a single agent, aided by a municipal employee, constituted all of Grupo Beta in Palomas, Chihuahua. The work of these Beta agents has been widely recognized and is commendable, but it is clear that their efforts are severely limited by their numbers given the gargantuan need for their services.

assaulted at some point during their trans-border journey. The conditions of possibility for this violence, together with the violence inflicted by the desert on the crosser's body, stem from the rerouting of border flows produced by the strategy. Robert Bonner, once Commissioner of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, has himself conceded that the region became, "literally a corridor of death" (Gold and Kraul 2003). If people come through this area, "there is a high probability that they are going to die if they don't have any assistance," suggested a Customs and Border Protection Officer as his Agency announced its Border Safety Initiative (Green 2004).

Over the past decade of annual record-breaking death tolls, the U.S. Border Patrol has fiercely held on to variations of this mantra, "Secure the border: people will stop dying." Alas, the strategy that turned the desert into an extended border and produced these deaths in the first place has only been intensified. With the exception of urban enclaves, the mechanics of policing, as I will discuss in more detail later, preclude any significant enforcement along the actual boundary. The volunteers of the controversial Minuteman Project, a civil border patrol group that captured international attention with its first month-long deployment in 2005,²⁴ also understood the potential effects of actually sealing the border with the direct deployment of manpower and installation of technology right on the boundary. "We'll do the job our government won't do," they chanted to media and outside observers from their lawn chairs lined up along Border Road, a good 10 yards north from Mexico. They understood that the visibility of patrols, civil or governmental, on boundary line had an immediate negative effect on crossing attempts.

²⁴ See Chapter 5 for a more detailed description of local anti-illegal immigration campaigns.

During the month of the first Minuteman border encampment in April 2005, I joined Grupo Beta Agua Prieta on one of its protection patrols. The Mexican government had intensified the group's operations in the region because it was concerned about any possible confrontations, abuse, or media exploits that Mexican nationals might incur at the hands of the Minutemen. In the field, a Beta agent spotted a group of 12 crossers hidden in the brush about 300 yards south from where the Minutemen were. "*Muchachos*, what the heck are you guys doing here?" asked the Beta agent jokingly. "We are waiting," came the reply. "Waiting?" I asked. "Yes, we are waiting for them to go," one of the men replied with a half laughter and pointing to the people camping north of the barbed wire fence. "They are going to be here all month," I told him. "Well, we may have to go somewhere else then," replied one of them. After talking to them for a little while, a crosser with a boyish face asked me innocently, "Hey, have you heard of Altar?" Apparently we both knew about the Mexican Migrant Mecca.

Desolation Bound

There are two ways to get to Altar, the narrow, semi-windy, bridgeless, and solitary *Camino de las Misiones*, and Highway 2, locally dubbed "The NAFTA Highway," a newer, multilane road that allows for high traffic and higher speeds.²⁵ Aspiring migrants that will cross the border/desert arrive through the NAFTA way. There is no bus station in town, so passengers must descend quickly as their buses make a momentary stop in front of the plaza announcing their human delivery with their squealing breaks and

²⁵ Road improvements and the expansion of the port of entry in San Luis-San Luis Rio Colorado are part of a plan to make this route the major gateway for trade between Vancouver and Mexico City.

roaring engines. One by one, the dreamy passengers add themselves to the town's floating population and major source of income. Their timid manner and "migrant uniform"—dark shirt, heavy jeans, baseball cap, small backpack, work boots or walking shoes—gives them away. The next time they get off a vehicle, they will be carrying a gallon of water in each hand, and following someone else's footsteps with more determination. They will be at the starting line of their desert-walking saga.

According to the Grupo Beta agents who manage a checkpoint known as "El Turtugo," on the dirt road to Sasabe, hundreds of thousands of people from all over Mexico, Central America and beyond who pass through Altar on their way to the U.S. each year. Although the town lies 60 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico boundary, it functions as a quasi-mandatory stop on the journey north in the post-Gatekeeper border era. On any given day during the "high season" (February to mid-May),²⁶ the number of "visitors" to Altar can match and even surpass its 15,000 residents. It wasn't always like this. Altar had an economy dominated by cattle ranching until American authorities began to tighten border surveillance along urban enclaves. "We really noticed [the change] around 1995," said Ana, a native of Altar in her mid 40s and an active member of the parish's Migrant Services Ministry. "There were always a few people who would come through here on their way North, but then, all of the sudden there were hundreds arriving each day. You would come out at any time of the day or night and see the plaza

²⁶ Local residents, migrant service providers such as shelter workers, and Grupo Beta agents suggest that the flow migrants is higher during the earlier part of the year because it includes those who are returning to the U.S. after spending the holidays with their families, and because they tend to bring with them people who are migrating for the first time. Indebtedness following the holiday seasons as well as milder temperatures are also cited as reasons for the higher number of people.

full of new people.” Indeed, nurses, ranchers, policemen, outdoor enthusiasts, border residents, my Sonoran and Arizonan interviewees, point to 1995 as the year that marked a turning point in migration dynamics affecting local communities. The border that had always been there was suddenly made visible by thousands of people dragging their bodies northward along desert trails in the hope of getting somewhere in the United States.

With the aspiring crossers came the “migrant trade impresarios,” as native Altareños call human smuggling service providers. These people, domestic migrants themselves, support smuggling operations by providing specifically tailored services to the crosser’s needs, from renting them sleeping space in room-wide bunk beds by the cubic meter, to selling them food and gear. Most services are on credit, and added to the smuggling fees. To avoid losses, aspiring crossers are then practically held in captivity in “guesthouses” before the journey, and in “stash houses” afterwards. If the crossing is successful, it will transform these people’s position in the legal, economic, and sociopolitical cartographies of this border. “Clients” will turn “contraband,” and eventually enter that category of personhood many preface with “illegal”—illegal worker, illegal alien, illegal resident, illegal subject.²⁷ Through these, the border marks its subjects, and desolation becomes an embodied state.

But before any of that, migrants must confront Altar, navigate its smuggling industry, and fend off its multiple schemes to exploit them and defraud their sponsoring relatives and friends. Migrating is expensive business, and much more so if it is to be

²⁷ I use term “illegal” here to point to the legal apparatus that creates and imposes such a category on particular subjects. See Chapter 1.

accomplished without the legal luxury of a visa. During my fieldwork, between 2003 and 2007, human smuggling fees alone for Mexican nationals ran between \$1,500 and \$2,500 for a multi-day guided crossing through the desert on foot; Central Americans were known to pay between \$5,000 and as much as \$8,000. The methods varied, and the costs grew exponentially for people from other world regions.²⁸ True newcomers, the untouched goldmine entering the human smuggling market, are immediately identified upon arrival, betrayed by their relatively clean clothes, unscathed skin, and hesitation, even if fleeting. Relentless self-appointed fixers, locally known as *enganchadores*—literally, those who hook—are always there to welcome the fresh arrivals with alluring promises of guaranteed crossings, knowledgeable guides, and speedy routes. During the night, the encounter with the *enganchadores* “amounts to kidnapping,” explained Francisco García, Altar’s former mayor. *Enganchadores* take their “clients” to the highest paying guesthouse. This may be the first in a series of transactions in which the aspiring migrant travels the social geography of this border as merchandise, a form of spatio-temporal social subjection that impinges on their rights, but that comes with the

²⁸ During my time in the field (2003-2007) basic smuggling services—which include a desert guide, transportation from a pick up site to a stash house, and sometimes delivery to an agreed city or town in the United States—range between \$1,500 and \$2,200 U.S. dollars. Getting ready to cross is expensive too. Bus tickets from southern Mexico are so expensive, some migrants prefer flying. Everyday, Hermosillo, Sonora’s state capital, receives two “*vuelos étnicos*,” as the locals call the flights from Mexico City and Puebla that bringing darker skin Mexican nationals to the border region. The flight costs about \$150, a taxi from the airport to Altar, two hours away will be shared by crossers costing them about \$50 each. In Altar, a basic room with a full size bed costs about \$40 per night, a luxury unsustainable for most, but specially for repeat crossers. Ultimately everyone ends up in one of the guesthouses, where one is charged between \$3 and \$5 and the promised 2 cubic meters of sleeping surface are not necessarily a guarantee. Meals cost between \$2 and \$4. Taiwan-made socks, shoes, t-shirts, bandanas, backpacks, and caps are readily available at U.S. prices. Under the premise of camouflaging against the desert, some smugglers refuse to take anyone who is not wearing dark colors; a good incentive to support migrant trade retailers.

decision to enter the illicit border (crossing) economies. Through their movement across space, networks, and agencies, migrants articulate the intricate connections linking together the institutional frames and systems that make up the fabric of the border. Their enunciative movement within the territorial margins of the nation state reveals borders as sites of institutional intensification and productivity. From a local vantage point, massive illegal migration may be problematic in many ways, but it certainly generates a great deal of economic activity throughout the communities it touches. Unlike highly organized drug smuggling, in which large profits are divided mostly among a few hands, human smuggling remains, for the most part, a mom-and-pop operation, if not in terms of values, at least in terms of organization and money flow.²⁹

Money, power, and space are intimately linked throughout the border. Without cash or social capital in the form of relatives or friends who may sponsor them, migrants reach the point of ultimate social vulnerability falling completely into the hands of those running the local smuggling trade. They might be literally sold to other smugglers or migrant trade impresarios. They might end up as servants in guesthouses or as drug mules carrying 50-pound marijuana packs across the border in exchange for the crossing. Without economic or social safeguard, the possibilities of the extreme seclusion begin to appear, exposing the aspiring crossers, disconnecting them from their familiar worlds, and consuming them even before they set foot on the border/desert.

²⁹ A perfect example of this is the case involving the “Juarez Alien Smuggling Operation” (JASO). When U.S. District Attorney for Arizona Paul Charlton announced the disbandment of JASO, and the indictment of 54 of its members, I attended the press conference and some of the trial hearings. The men and women on trial had been certainly involved in human smuggling activities coming through their town, Bowie, Arizona. However, the standards of living of most of the accused, barely above poverty level, betrayed any ideas of plush lifestyles to be derived from entering organized crime.

Notwithstanding their own financial misery, each attempt they make to cross the border has an economic ripple effect on both sides of the boundary. Indeed, in the last decade, economic growth was tangible throughout the region. Traditionally dormant Mexican border towns like Altar and Sásabe exploded. Altar alone had 47 officially registered hotels, motels, and guesthouses in 2005; its number of restaurants, food stands, beer deposits, supply stores, and communications service outlets (internet cafés, cell phone providers, money wiring services) grew in sync. Both federal governments increased the number of their border policing officers proportionally. Each year, the U.S. Border Patrol added a few hundred elements to its rank and file,³⁰ while Mexico's migrant protection force Grupo Beta increased by a handful agents and locations. Border action groups and their interventions in the desert had also gained in numbers, members, activity, and attention.

Recently, the military complex and its commercial defense corporations have joined in the border policing/smuggling economy. In Arizona alone, The Boeing Company now implements the newest virtual fence project; Geo Group (formerly Wackenhut Corrections Corporation) repatriates captured crossers; Corrections Corporation of America incarcerates those non-repatriated; while Halliburton and Blackwater USA build new detention centers in which to house them.³¹ The “indefinite

³⁰ President Bush's Plan to achieve “operational control of the border” with Mexico proposed to increase the number of U.S. Border Patrol elements to 18,000. Since there were a little more than 12,000 when the plan was announced, Bush authorized the deployment of the national guard to the border until the goal had been achieved. By the end of 2007, however, most National Guard troops had been recalled despite the fact that the U.S. Border Patrol was not meeting its hiring quotas.

³¹ Since 2001, the San Francisco Bay Area-based organization CorpWatch has been tracking border contracts granted to corporations (www.corpwatch.org). Common Defense provides an

delivery/indefinite quantity” contracts awarded to these corporations basically gives them unrestricted liberty to subcontract and expand, at least for the duration of their assigned projects. The result is not only the effective privatization of American border enforcement, but also the actual transformation of the U.S.-Mexico border from a field of traditional state-territory-subject negotiations into an entrepreneurial goldmine in which security, safety and management challenges become commercial opportunities to exploit, not dissipate.

In this border’s crossing-policing-rescuing economy, all actors monitor with devotion the statistical pulse of the unauthorized migrant flow, viewing every rise as a call for intensification of their operations, and every plunge as a suspicious indicator of the need for better intelligence and regional expansion. “People must be crossing somewhere else,” was a mantra constantly heard with every drop in detention statistics, or in potential clients to smuggle, or in injured crossers to evacuate from the desert. Illegal transborder flows are the bread and butter of complex border-related economies and socialities. Despite national discourses to put an “end” to illegal migration, the border’s social, political, and bureaucratic economies depend on the continuous illegal flow of bodies across the desert. And this is precisely the dynamic that paves the crosser’s road to Desolation.

Despite promises of guaranteed crossings, many of those passengers descending from buses near the plaza have already been to Altar. They will return to it multiple times until they finally succeed at evading the border policing apparatus, or succumb to

industry oriented approach border security and technology through ongoing workshops and conferences (<http://www.ideea.com/comdef.htm>).

the desert. With each repatriation, the crossers progress along the learning curve of desert understanding and preparedness, of the workings of the border, and of its networks; alas, this comprehension is inversely correlated to their funds and physical integrity. They realize the position they are in, and knowing the consequences of simply turning back, they feel compelled to move onward. With this sober understanding they take a step closer to Desolation.

The only migrants that arrive for shelter at CCAMYN are the ones who are seriously physically, financially, and emotionally depleted. They have been to the border/desert, and are alive, but exposure and Desolation have consumed them to the point that not even the most callous in the migrant trade bother with them. If the migrant trade people find a way to make a profit, or at least recuperate their investment on these crossers, they do not let go of them. This is why there are never more than a couple dozen people at the shelter, explained Father Prisciliano Peraza,

Those who come [to CCAMYN] are considered trash (*basura*). They are like lemons: they were squeezed over and over until they gave out their last drop of juice. Once there isn't anything left in them, and they are all dried out, then, what happens? Well, if something is no longer of use to you, you treat it like trash: you throw it away. The people that come to CCAMYN are the people no one wants. They are like those lemons that have no juice left in them. They have no money, or someone who might respond [for them]. To the smugglers and those people [in the migrant trade], they are worth nothing; they are a burden; *son basura*.

These crossers, who become financial liabilities even within the underground smuggling economies, will stay at CCAMYN for a few nights to allow their bodies to recover and to buy themselves some time to find work³² or credit, either by appealing to a new

³² Back-breaking, low-paying seasonal agricultural work is sometimes available to those who stay at CCAMYN. One summer, there was a posting for jobs picking grapes that paid 1.25 pesos

smuggler, or to relatives or friends in the U.S., for support. The more time aspiring crossers spend in Altar, and the more time they spend on the border, the weaker and more consumed they become; the more impenetrable and insufferably real the border/desert seems. Desolation requires and produces their subjectification and exposure.

Finding a way out of their border bound situation for these depleted crossers is not easy. If getting there was difficult, getting away seems impossible. The challenges of finding help even from a place like CCAMYN reflect the difficulties of the crosser's journey. The first and biggest obstacle in getting assistance from CCAMYN is knowing the place actually exists. The second is finding it. From the town's plaza, one is instructed to follow a path marked by white crosses attached with wire to utility poles. Each cross is about two-feet long and bears the name of someone who died trying to cross the desert into the U.S. Some simply read "*desconocido*," referring to those whose found remains were unidentified. Among the handwritten scribbles of names too long to fit on the crosses' horizontal beams, the unmarked surface of one of these "road signs" to the shelter's temporary relief serves as a warning of sorts to the aspiring desert crosser.

The symbolism is rich. The sight of crosses and shrines in public spaces, which mark the site of someone's death, is commonplace throughout Mexico; every thoroughfare in the country from the newest highways, to the most remote dirt roads is peppered with these commemorative markers of loss. But the message of the CCAMYN crosses is of a different nature. They signal the way north to temporary respite, but this

or \$0.11 USD per five-gallon bucket filled with the fruit. In order to be able to buy the most basic meal (30 pesos) with a drink (12 pesos) at one of the local cafeterias, a worker had to pick 168 cubic gallons of grapes. A couple of aspirins would cost him an additional 60 gallons.

migrant way of the cross³³ also signals the potential danger and despair to be incurred in the path north, across the desert, into the U.S. Ironically, migrants concede that it is only by undertaking such a journey that they might attain sustainable financial respite. Even if they know firsthand the distresses of the road ahead, they remain ready for the journey.

By the time these men and women make it to Altar, Sasabe, Agua Prieta, or any of the other border towns, they know there is no turning back. “*Ya quemaron las naves*” explained Mexican Consul Carlos Flores, referring to Cortez’s decision to burn his ships, eliminating the possibility for his men to return to Spain, and thus changing the fate of an entire continent. Most crossers have employed all their social and financial capital to make it this far. If they were to head back, their situation would be even worse: their debt larger, their social ties damaged, their credibility squandered. Their vulnerability may be substantial, but the only apparent way out is forward. They are already border bound.

Crossing bodies: Desolation as a border-making strategy

The time to cross finally comes. Prior to the day of departure, the crosser would have spoken to someone sent by his or her smuggler to the guesthouse to break the news and give last-minute instructions. There is a list of things everyone must bring along: 2 gallons of water (3 if you can carry them), 2 bottles or powder packets of *Electrolitos*, 2-4 cans of tuna or refried beans, a loaf of Bimbo (the Mexican Wonder Bread), tortillas if

³³ During Holy Week each year, the Catholic Parish in Altar organizes a *Viacrucis del Migrante*, the Migrant’s Way of the Cross, in which a local reenacts the suffering and ultimate death of the “migrant-Christ.” While this reenactment is explicitly a performance, the way of crosses to the shelter is a better statement of the state of affairs of this desert-turned-immigration control apparatus.

preferred, although they tend to dry out and harden in the desert heat. Backpacks are heavy with rations as the migrants wait in the plaza under the watchful eyes of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* Church for the right signal to board a prearranged “Altar-Sasábe” shuttle.³⁴ In absolute defiance of the manufacturer’s recommended 9-12-passenger load, shuttle drivers fit groups of up to 30 tightly packed crossers in old and rickety Dodge vans. They will drive their human loads about 60 miles north to their desert rendezvous in strangely named locations—El Torgugo (The Tortoise), Cochi Feo (Ugly Pig), La Ladrillera (The Brickyard), El Güero (Blondie’s). There, crossers will meet for the first time their actual desert guide, the young man whom they will entrust with their lives.

They have finally arrived to the starting line. Some have suggested that crossing the border/desert is a matter of “math and endurance” (Annerino 1999:15). Understanding the basics of that equation, most crossers realize upon arrival the fragility of their condition and the magnitude of the challenge.

Imagine crossing a threshold—not into someone's home but into another world. (...) [T]he world you've entered into is swarming with leafcutter ants, carpenter bees, hummingbirds, and kangaroo rats. (...) You have not entered into someone else's home, but one which for a day, a year, or *an entire lifetime*, may be your own: The Sorona Desert" (Nabhan 2000:1, emphasis added).

The enthusiasm of the desert biologist and conservationists who wrote that passage could not be more foreign to some of these crossers. “Before I got here, I imagined that [crossing] the border would be like [going through] a road toll, and we would be hidden in a car, or something, like in the movies,” confessed Silvia, a Mexico City woman who

³⁴ Just like everyone else involved in the migrant or border security trade, for these shuttle drivers, multiple-attempt crossers are heavenly manna. A group of 25 crossers at 100 pesos per person (\$10 USD) yields in a single two-hour roundtrip what would take a hard-working maquiladora employee in Nogales two entire weeks to make.

was trying to cross the border with her husband, 15-year old daughter, and 10-year old son. “But then I knew we were going to cross through the desert, so I thought we would be put in the back of a truck, and we would drive across a desert like those in the Jesus movies,” Silvia added referring to the stereotypical image of the North African desert, an imaginary the Dutch journalists of my first trip to Altar might have shared with her. Neither she, nor her family, was ready to encounter the environment of extremes—temperature, distance, threatening flora and treacherous creatures—that lay before them. “It has been said, and truly, that everything in the desert either stings, stabs, stinks, or sticks,” warned desert enthusiast Edward Abbey (1977:14) prefacing his first rule of desert survival:

Stay out of there. Don't go. (...) The Great American Desert is an awful place. People get hurt, get sick, get lost out there. Even if you survive, which is not certain, you will have a miserable time. The desert is for movies and God-intoxicated mystics, not for family recreation" (Abbey 1977:12-13).

Alas, turning back is almost as difficult and costly as moving forward. When I asked a group of young men from Veracruz if they were not afraid of dying in the desert, one of them replied “Either way, we are dying of hunger in our own land.”³⁵ Further supporting their decision to cross is the idea held by most migrants—and most Americans for that matter—that American immigration control is fundamentally ambivalent: It patrols its borders fiercely, but allows migrants, legal or not, to thrive once in the interior (Neal 2003). And the border enforcement agents know this very well. “It’s like a game of capture-the-flag,” explained Ranger Jon Schaffer to a border reporter, “They cross through here, or Texas, or California, and get to Phoenix, and ‘I’m safe!’ All

³⁵ “*De todas maneras no estamos muriendo de hambre en nuestros pueblos.*”

enforcement stops within 80 miles of the border. So, if you make it through that, you're golden" (Marizco 2006b). For that young *Veracruzano* who spoke of stagnation and starvation in Mexico, a better life was somewhere in *Norte Carolina*. The trick was to make it there.

Migrants travel far distances to get to the border with the idea of bettering their lives, but in the middle of the desert trek, priorities shift: the journey north becomes a matter of basic survival. It is really when crossers are face to face with the desert for the first time that the notion of biophysical survival and bodily risk really strikes them with a new understanding of their condition. With temperatures registering as high as than 170°F³⁶ in desert canyons, depressions, and sandy arroyos along the lengthy smuggling routes, climate, topography, and distance are greatest challenges of this desert turned border—the quiet simplicity of the drylands at their deadliest.

The crossers' strategy is simple: to go as fast and far as they can trying to avoid getting caught by the heat, by fatigue, or by the men in green. After a couple of days of trekking, however, they all catch up with the crossers. "It's all part of [the U.S. Border Patrol] tactic," Officer E.,³⁷ a desert native who has been in law enforcement most of his life, and in border policing in this region since 1995, explained to me. He is intimately familiar with the workings of the various policing agencies and smuggling operations in the region. Officer E. is a veteran with the battle wounds to prove it—five gunshot scars from three different incidents.

³⁶ Department of Fish & Wildlife officers assigned to Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Monument report having recorded temperatures of up to 175°F (Marizco 2006b, 2008). Volcanic soils, and topographic depressions and basins combine create spots of intensified heat. See also the work of geographer Godfrey Sykes (1927 and 1944).

³⁷ The name of Officer E. is not disclosed for confidentiality reasons.

Whenever Officer E. comes across migrants who have been detained or repatriated he likes to tease them, “I’m going to tell you how many days you guys walked: two days. ‘Yes,’ [the crossers] say. And they caught you guys when you were asleep underneath a *paloverde* [tree]. And they just stare at you with eyes wide-open, ‘how do you know?’ They ask me.” Those are the basic mechanics of border crosser interdiction at work in this region. Officer E. explains,

They have a tactic in which they let the migrant walk. They let him walk for two or three days so he would suffer hunger and heat. They have them very well localized, they know where the crossers are. [And they say] ‘Well, this [crosser] is going to be there, he is going to walk for two to three days. I am going to go home and sleep, tomorrow, when I come back, I’ll get him underneath a tree while he is tired or waiting. I am not going to need to chase him. Why? Because he is not going to run, the migrant is already too tired.’ I’m telling you, Rocío, two to three days.³⁸ (...) They have it well studied. They know when they are going to pick them up, they know the area and know where [the crossers] are going to try to get into. They have everything very well monitored.

This explains why there is hardly ever an agent in sight along the boundary line in remote regions,³⁹ which is also why the crossing is marked with an encounter with border bandits, and why fences and walls are ultimately irrelevant as an overall deterrent to migration. In the desert the border is enforced through fatigue, heat exertion, and occasional despair.

Only in a situation in which crossers are rendered docile and feeble would a single agent be able to detain a group of 10 to 50 men particularly in remote areas where

³⁸ In my interviews and conversations with repatriated migrants, these “two days in the desert” was a norm. Media stories presenting the experience described by Officer E. abound. See, for example, the stories in the books by Luis Urrea (2004), John Annerino (1999), Tom Miller (1981); as well as the work of border journalists like Michael Marizco, Susan Carroll, Ignacio Ibarra, and Brady McCombs, just to mention a few of the Arizona-based reporters.

³⁹ Some of my migrant interviewees reported having seen border patrol agents who informally “let them go” at earlier points in their crossing attempts.

possible reinforcements might be a couple of hours away (e.g. Marizco 2006b). Thus, “It is to [the Border Patrol’s] disadvantage to stop them at the line (*topetearlos*),” Officer E. reaffirms. If the Border Patrol were to seal the border by placing agents right on the line, Officer E. says that crossers would assess the situation this way: ‘Well, they are here, so I can’t cross. So, I am going to go this way, farther out, and try again.’” This is precisely the dynamic I observed east of Naco in April 2005, the waiting game between migrants and Minutemen. For as long as the American Civil Patrolmen “held the line,” crossers had to go farther away into the desert in order to find a place to cross, and they did.

In order for the enforcement strategy to work, the perfect balance between endurance and exposure must be struck; using the terms of Officer E., crossers must “suffer a little,” and all of them do.

The people who keep on going back [to the desert] are the ones who didn’t struggle; they didn’t fare badly. They had the good fortune to be stopped by the Border Patrol right away, and they didn’t suffer. They did not suffer blisters on their feet. They did not suffer sprained ankles. They did not suffer assaults. They did not suffer thirst or hunger. So, they say, ‘it wasn’t so bad (...) I’m going to try again. (...)’ Oh, but once they were assaulted; and one of their women was raped—a sister, [a] wife, someone—and, on top of that, they twisted a leg, and suffered hunger, and suffered thirst... No. Those are the ones that won’t return anymore.

Put this way, Officer E. describes the actual workings of the “Prevention Through Deterrence” strategy. The increasing of the Border Patrol ranks, the building of barriers, the installation of surveillance technology do not discourage border crossing attempts in and by themselves. Unauthorized crossing would be a “never ending story, unless they turn [the border/desert] into a space where they have to struggle, and they expose their lives,” says as a matter of fact Officer E. In this sense, deterrence is only manifested

among those who survive extreme trauma as part of their desert journey, that is, those who experience the power of the border/desert to deplete and to consume their bodies, but who were not completely overtaken by it. At least in relation to the unauthorized crosser, the border is operationalized through the creation of an environment of exposure and vulnerability. Over the course of hundreds of conversations with aspiring and failed migrants, deterrence only manifested among people who paid dearly for their crossing attempt: those who were severely victimized by border thieves and thugs; those who powerlessly witnessed the slow death of a loved; those whose bodies were permanently damaged or injured. Working this way, the deterrence strategy is the border's systematized infliction of calculated exposure.

Desolation is not the intended effect of the border strategy square and simple. It refers to a condition of extreme exposure created by a strategy that employs seclusion and exertion to enforce space and police bodies. It is the moment in which the migrant's exposure exceeds the control and intervention reach of the policing agencies. Indeed, some have suggested that the system of enforcement fails when crossers fall off the surveillance grid. Urrea writes that, "It's when the walkers get far off the drags that all the trouble starts (2004:30). Sensors are installed throughout the border, and once a group activates one, it is expected they will activate a particular series of them within particular time intervals. If this does not happen, officers in Border Patrol control rooms know something has gone wrong. In some areas of the border, this merits the immediate deployment of an officer; in others, it might go unnoticed. In any case, when the line between arrest and rescue are as thin as they are in the most desolate regions of the border/desert, field officers spent most of their time performing "lifesaving arrests."

Again, if crossing the border has always been a matter of “math and endurance” (Annerino 1999:15); then, given the mechanics of border crossing and interdiction, I suggest that the dynamics of the border that we see in the desert today is the function and expression of a math *of* endurance. As crossing becomes more difficult, the crossers’ determination, physical prowess, and cunning are tested. Border enforcement operations attempt, at least *prima facie*, to strike a balance between the difficulties of crossing and the migrant’s resources. If the crosser’s resources are greater, he or she will join the American community of immigrants. If he or she is matched by the challenges of the crossing but is able to walk away from the border encounter, he or she may go home always at the cost of financial, social, emotional, biophysical defeat. Then there are the rest, those who are consumed by Desolation, the dead, the missing. When Officer E. says that, “Border Patrol is not interested in the dead, [that] they are interested in the living,” one thing then becomes apparent: The dead belong to the border.

* * *

This chapter examines territorial controls and uncontrollable exposure, the conditions that lead to the deaths of unauthorized border crossers in the Sonoran Desert. My analysis of the operationalization of physical exertion and exposure as part of border enforcement policy focuses on the moments and circumstances where it proves deadly. I examine the context of these circumstances and identify the moments where exposure, endurance, and response capabilities are miscalculated and the crosser is technically abandoned, a condition I label “deliberate neglect.” In following these dynamics in the desert, I borrow the imagery of “Desolation” as a place of exclusion and unreachability,

to re-imagine the conditions that compromise the migrant's wellbeing through physical and social abandonment in the desert. By discussing the socio-spatial aspects of these deaths, this chapter paves the way for the dissertation's subsequent discussions of body recovery, medical interventions, and media representations. The chapter also works to de-essentialize the analytical relation between legitimacy, power, and bare life by emphasizing the political contexts in which claims to these are made. In addition to examining the spatial limits of border intervention, I explore the ways in which temporal considerations structure the range of possible political and social engagements available to border actors. Analysis of these spatio-temporal concerns continues into the next chapter, where I explore the crucial role of the play of time and space in deploying or diffusing the political potentialities of migrant deaths.

CHAPTER THREE

“SEARCHING THE DESERT FOR TRUTH”:

MIGRANT DEATHS, BODY RECOVERIES, AND THE POLITICS OF MOURNING

Every year has been the deadliest...
Every summer has been the deadliest.
- Kat Rodriguez, Community Organizer

A high-ranking Mexican official once shared with me the mathematical indiscretions of one of his American counterparts. One day, back in 2001, after a series of intense negotiations over a possible binational immigration accord and a couple of drinks, the American functionary turned to this Mexican official and declared, “What Mexico [now] has is the best deal you can ever bargain for. How many people cross into the U.S. every year? Half a million? How many of them die? Five hundred?” He went on to say that no American politician would ever push for immigration legislation that would grant half a million visas to Mexican laborers on an annual basis. “That’s political suicide,” concluded the American functionary. My interviewee, a seasoned diplomat and political consultant who wished to remain anonymous, lamented the cynicism behind such a calculated formulation of U.S.-Mexico binational relations, migration, and human life.

The valuation of migrant deaths is the focus of this chapter. It examines the politics that surround the processes through which bodies are recovered, deaths are mourned, and migrant lives are posthumously infused with meaning. The chapter’s

emphasis is not on the biophysical process of dying itself,¹ but rather on the conditions that guide the production, circulation, and suppression of knowledge about these deaths. It explores how these deaths are managed, materially and symbolically. This chapter also investigates the shifting emphasis between the crossers' compromised biology and their potentially compromising biographies as the basis on which the authority to intervene on the border is claimed and/or contested. Ethnographically, this discussion centers on the practices and policies that shape the recovery of human remains from the desert. As will be discussed, whether or not a body is recovered—and how that recovery takes place—is what greatly determines the sociopolitical potency and effect of these border deaths.

“Searching the Desert for Truth”

The phrase I use to introduce this chapter, “Searching the Desert for Truth,” comes from a border action group’s invitation to the general public to participate in searches for human remain hikes in the desert.

In 2002, Humane Borders volunteers suggested the idea of organizing a day hike to look for human remains in highly trafficked areas of the Arizona desert. With the increase in missing migrant stories that reach[ed] our office this year, this idea has been brought to life. You are invited to join us [...] to search the desert for the remains of somebody's loved one. (*Desert Fountain* 10/2007: np).

In addition to these haphazard surveys, humanitarian and migrant advocacy groups also undertake more targeted searches whenever the families of missing migrants request help

¹ The impacts of the desert and extreme temperatures on the human body have been a topic of study and experimentation for decades. Examples of such studies include *Physiology of Man in the Desert* by Edward Adolf (1947), and Claude Piatadosi’s *The Biology of Human Survival: Life and Death in Extreme Environments* (2003). Chapter 4 provides a discussion of heat related illnesses and the kind of interventions they allow on the migrants body and in the border/desert.

and are able to provide information on the approximate location of the body.² Activists believe that the number of bodies dotting the desert is so high that they can be simply stumbled upon, an idea frequently echoed by law enforcement agents, ranchers, and diplomatic personnel.³

“Searching the Desert for Truth” is significant as a call to action because it reveals some of the very expository work that these activists seek to accomplish through their interventions into death and border space. Activists believe that policy changes would result from raising the public’s awareness of the human toll the border imposes on the migrant’s body. The assumptions and provocations echoed by the phrase also point to key ethnographic and analytic concerns of this chapter. Unlike the activists who initiated this body search program, I do not claim there is a single “Truth” to be found among the spatial or material remains along the border. My interest lies in investigating the kinds of social and spatial relations orchestrated by the idea of unreported deaths. The phrase presents the border/desert as a self-contained social space that does not operate in straightforward terms, making interventions both possible and necessary. In this framework, the desert is considered ultimately a threatening place in terms of migrant safety (see Chapter 2). It must be approached, intervened upon, and examined. Indeed, “truth-finding” forms of regimentation—assessments, reports, intelligence operations, geographic surveys, and other forms of data gathering—have been central to

² Although most families only have a vague idea of the general border area where a missing relative was expected to cross, occasionally they have very precise information. A notable exception surfaced during research with the Mexican Consulate in Tucson. It involved the case of one man who provided GPS coordinates for the location of his cousin’s body.

³ Groups like No More Deaths, Samaritan Patrol, and Coalición Derechos Humanos were the most active when it came to civilian-lead searches.

the border's demarcation and enforcement. Because the border, as sociopolitical space, "is always in the process of becoming, [...] is always being made, [and] always, therefore, [...] unfinished" (Massey 1999:283-284), it not only can, but *needs* to be continuously searched and surveyed.

The framework of "Searching the Desert for Truth" also places the recovery of human remains at the center of this discussion. It evokes the bodies of unauthorized crossers as both the object of this border's effects, and as subjects capable of revealing of the border's violent workings. In the fragmentary border "truths" that the narratives of search and rescue missions recount, these bodies are not simply textual (see Featherstone, Hepworth, and Turner 1991) but intertextual,⁴ that is, the object of, and means to, multiple and deeply interconnected interpretations (see Kristeva 1980). The human rights activist finds in these calls to action a very different story than the narratives typically taken up by the environmentalist, corporate representative, or National Guardsman. These stories—enabled or foreclosed by the possibility and means of body recovery—are central to the production of authority, the legitimacy of interventions, and the exercise and contestation of power in this sociopolitical landscape. In this sense, the invitation to look for human remains in the desert is essentially an open call to participate in this border's biopolitics—to contest the sociopolitical conditions that expose people's bodies and lives by intervening upon them, and to claim the legitimate right to this intervention through the strategic deployment of the migrants' injured bodies and afflicted biographies.

⁴ Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality arguing that, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1980:66).

The production of legitimacy is central to the politics of life that invests migrant deaths with multiple and competing sociopolitical value. To explore this production, I first contextualize the kinds of border crossing practices that result in migrant deaths. I then introduce the body recovery process through a discussion of a case run entirely by state agencies and authorities. I show how the institutional work aimed at making bodies re/appear—collecting, examining, identifying, documenting, and ultimately disposing of them—renders bodies the object of intense state recognition, a dynamic that ultimately reaffirms the biopolitical authority of the state. In these technocratic forms of intervention, the human remains of unauthorized crossers become hyper-documented and hyper-mobile objects of intense bureaucratic performance, through which the state and the border are further articulated.

In the next section of the chapter, I discuss citizen-based efforts to reclaim the dead from the desert in order to explore the valuation and political potency of the lives lost. I examine the politics of mourning made possible by mass-mediated recognition of these otherwise silent border deaths. By analyzing how the bodies become the target of state and civil interventions and/or neglect, I show that border deaths, through the management of the conditions for their inclusion and exclusion, are both an *expression of* and *means through which* regimes of power are exercised, authority is legitimated, and the border is marked onto its subjects. As the migrants move across border space, their bodies (are made to) appear and disappear; in the process these bodies achieve or are denied certain kinds of social recognition. While the next chapter examines the interventions that surround injured but living migrants, here I focus on the biopolitical

management and contestation of migrant deaths and analyze the impact of these deaths on the constitution of space, authority, and sociality.

Part 1. A General Anatomy of Border/Desert Exposure

Propelled to migrate by social and economic factors and channeled north by a long history of binational dependencies and labor flows, aspiring crossers embark on the journey across the desert. Even before their departure, most of them learn about the border's potential for injury and death through popular songs and recurrent news reports, yet stories of economic relief and even success weigh heavier in their decision to give crossing a try. Preparations are made to the best of their ability and knowledge. They carry as much water as they can, but it is rarely enough.⁵ They walk as fast and far as chance and their best shoes allow them. Sooner or later, though, the desert heat climbs through their soles. Hot spots surface where their perspiring feet rub against the hot leather, synthetic, or plastic material. The longer they walk, the more dehydrated and fatigued they become. Their feet swell; their best shoes have now given them blisters. The strong and enthusiastic stride of the first hours progressively turns into a hobble. They disregard the discomfort, at least initially. They walk mostly by night and in silence. During the day, they attempt to rest, hiding in creosote bush bivouacs hastily cobbled together around palo verde trees. They eat a little. Their water is too warm for

⁵ Everyone suffers from some degree of dehydration. Dr. Bob Cairns from the Samaritan Patrol suggests that anyone (including humanitarian volunteers) undertaking a multiple-day desert hike during the summer should carry enough water with them to drink 1.5 to 2 gallons per day. The initial water weight for a three-day hike would be between 42-50 pounds and involve four to five gallon jugs. The most I ever saw migrants carry as they left Altar was three gallons, and some of them expected to have consumed one of those gallons by the time their actual border-crossing walk began.

their palates, but they drink a little, always trying to save some for later. If their hands are not too swollen or cramped from loss of minerals, and if they were thoughtful enough to bring along tweezers, they might try to remove some of the spines from the prickly pear and cholla cacti they brushed against during their night walk, a process that will go on for days.⁶ If they took their shoes off to rest, they struggle to get their engorged feet back in them. Near sundown they start to walk again. The cycle repeats once or twice more under progressively aggravating conditions. If everything goes according to plan, and neither fatigue nor illness nor injury nor Border Patrol succeeds at immobilizing them, the crossers will be spared from the consuming vortex of cyclical border crossings. Unfortunately, there is much room for simple things to go fatally wrong. An infected or expanding blister, a sprained ankle, a rattlesnake or brown spider bite, a silent nap in an unnoticed hiding place that extends beyond the departure of one's group: these all increase the risks that crossers face.

Although most aspiring crossers I encountered had heard stories of migrants dying in the border, they were encouraged by their intimate familiarity with other stories of migrant success. "Some people do die, but how about all the people who do cross?"⁷ one aspiring crosser, a 21 year old bricklayer from the State of Mexico, said to me enthusiastically as he prepared for his second transborder hike in less than a week. Clearly, cost-benefit calculations of border promises and risks are not the exclusive domain of state officials like those described at the opening of this chapter.

⁶ I met crossers who said that a week after they had been in the desert they were still pulling tiny spines from their arms, legs, and buttocks.

⁷ "*Unos se mueren, pero ¿y todo el gentillal que cruza?*"

Unauthorized border crossing is a serious matter, one that most people consider carefully and plan collectively. Simply to get as far as Altar, Nogales, or any other border town, people sell their valuables, deplete their savings, and go in debt. The degree of knowledge among fresh arrivals of what the experience will be like varies, but every soon-to-be crosser I met hoped their investment would be blessed with godspeed and a single and successful crossing attempt. The majority of migrants I encountered during my 30 months of fieldwork in the region, however, failed at least once in their crossing attempt. I typically met crossers in clinics, hospitals, and shelters, but I also encountered many who were waiting in the Protection Departments of Mexican Consulates or at Customs and Border Protection processing centers. With many of them, I spent hours in the desert as we waited for a Border Patrol vehicle or bus to arrive. We also met at the ports of entry, which were for them ports of repatriation. I cannot calculate the exact number of crossers I spoke with over the course of my months in Sonora and Arizona.⁸ With some, I carried on long involved conversations over several weeks. Others shared with me their anxieties, hopes, and border survival tricks over the course of a few minutes or hours, while waiting for someone or something that would enable their next move. There is much waiting involved in crossing. With many others, I exchanged only a few words, a few sips of water, a stick of gum, and a timid nod. Although “failed” crossers constituted the majority of the migrant population in my study, their momentary border failures did not necessarily get in the way of their faith in success. As a young

⁸ It is impossible for me to estimate how many people I spoke with over the course of my research, but I do know I gave out more than 800 personal business cards to all kinds of people I met while doing fieldwork.

aspiring smuggler put it once, “In the end, everyone crosses.”⁹ Undeniably, despite hundreds of thousands of annual detentions, half a million Mexican nationals find their way into the U.S. every year.¹⁰

Stories about “easy” and “speedy” crossings do circulate, but the degree to which they reflect the average experience is uncertain. Although uneventful and successful crossings must surely take place, such stories sound suspicious to locals who know better.¹¹ Mexican border residents, who have witnessed the rise of the human smuggling trade in their communities and families, hold that it is not uncommon for smugglers to circulate such success stories in order to steal clientele from their rival smugglers or to steal from the migrants themselves. There was a period of time between 2002 and 2004 in which I constantly met people who had been robbed and abandoned in some corner of the desert by pretend smugglers who had lured them with promises of a failure-proof three-to-five-hour crossing and lower smuggling fees (\$800-\$1,000 upfront instead of the more common \$1,500-\$2,000 per person upon “delivery”).¹² Even when they were not

⁹ “*Al fin de cuentas, todos Cruzan.*”

¹⁰ Chapter 5 provides a more extensive analysis on the use of statistics and the politics of counting. Appendix C offers USBP detention figures.

¹¹ The exceptions to this are children smuggled through ports of entry with “borrowed” American birth certificates and surrogate American moms, or adults crossing through the gates with “borrowed” documents. Perhaps because of the methods I employed or the scope of my project itself, during time in the field, I never met anyone who had successfully walked across the desert in his or her first attempt, although such crossers must surely exist. It is entirely possible that I did not come across such lucky crossers precisely because they were able to bypass the border in a speedy and efficient fashion. This might very well be a limitation of my fieldsite itself.

¹² During the time of my fieldwork, safe passage through Arizona ports of entry typically involved fraudulent documents and/or corrupt Border and Customs Enforcement officials, and was only a little more expensive than the more dangerous and physically extenuating desert alternative. Interviewees reported that fees for the speedier and safer port smuggling services ranged between \$2000 and \$3500 USD, while a guided desert crossing averaged at \$1500. The service, however, was not available to everyone. For a variety of social and economic reasons,

robbed, these promises of speedy crossings increased their vulnerability and exposure because, thinking they would only spend a few hours in the desert, they typically departed with few rations, insufficient water, and inappropriate gear for the trek.

Most crossers I encountered at ports of entry, repatriation centers, and shelters were on their second, third, or fourth attempt. One summer I met a young man from the state of Jalisco who was on his eighth consecutive try; he had spent the better part of two months walking across the land of the Tohono O'odham. In March 2004, perhaps the busiest month in the history of border policing in Arizona, more than 63,000 detentions were made in the Tucson Sector alone (a region that accounts for roughly 70% of the 389 miles of border between Arizona and Mexico). Although it is clear to anyone following border politics that such a number does not indicate 63,000 unique individual entries, any substantial evidence on the actual number of attempted crossings is virtually impossible to derive from publicly available information. One way to estimate these numbers is through the analysis of privileged U.S. Border Patrol data. However, citing national security concerns, the agency refuses to release detailed information on the matter, providing instead only apprehension totals as an index of success.¹³

In any case, the point to be made is that a combination of factors keeps crossers exposed to the desert for days on end. Once would-be migrants have made it to the border region, they are determined to make it across. With luck, a knowledgeable guide,

most "indigenous-looking" clients are relegated to the desert. Fees increase as clients and smuggling methods get more exotic.

¹³ Although Freedom of Information Act requests filed independently by various border journalists have been consistently declined, data tends to be filtered out. An example of this is the 1994 Border Patrol Strategy document, which I cite in my work. A summary document was faxed to a border journalist, but the agency has responded to FOIA petitions for the entire document with dead Internet links and indications of failed searches.

and an excellent smuggler network, a successful crossing may consist of a two-to-three-day hike before reaching a designated pick up site near a major road where a waiting vehicle—typically stolen—will deliver crossers to a safe-house, from which arrangements to final destinations and all due monetary transactions will be made. In most cases, however, the total amount of time crossers spend on the border, whether crossing or waiting to cross, is counted in weeks, not days. Walks of five, six, and up to eight days are not uncommon. Each time they fail in their crossing attempt, their vulnerability multiplies. With no detailed official data, but based on three years' of observation and conversations, I can hazard that many, if not most, crossers will be detected on at least one attempt.

Many among these will be eventually detained and bused back to Mexican border towns, where they will try to cross again and again. This was clear at the processing center for the Internal Repatriation Flight Program in the summer of 2005,¹⁴ where it was not uncommon to see people previously detained. In the weeks I was there, a group of six young women from Estado de Mexico stood out among the detainees not only because of their age and gender, but also because of their urban look and banter both times I saw them being processed. “The third one is the good one,” one of them kept on saying encouraging the others as she nursed her blistered feet not denying her plans for a third attempt. The stakes of going back seem too high for most crossers, and they feel pressed to keep on trying, to keep on taking the risk even if the integrity of their bodies is

¹⁴ The Internal Repatriation Program has been in operation in Arizona every summer since 2004. Its premise suggest lives are saved that by taking people back to their hometowns and away from the border when it is most dangerous to cross. Every year about 13 thousand repatriations take place—some individuals are repatriated more than once—and it cost the U.S. about 14 million dollars. Mexico contributes mostly human resources to the program.

compromised, or they are otherwise fragile. Knowing this, consulate workers would try to persuade families with young children, the injured, and the elderly to take the flight option offered by the Department of Homeland Defense.¹⁵ Still, in most cases, it took major trauma for a crosser to desist and turn back. Sometimes, not even death did that.

Border Crossing Deaths

Every year, hundreds of people die attempting to reach the United States. As with the increase in number of detentions, about half of all registered border crossing deaths over the past decade have taken place in Arizona. Although a few bodies were recovered from the desert in the late 1990s—12 in 1998 and 27 in 1999—it was the case known as “The Yuma 14” in 2001 that attracted heightened public attention to the increasing deaths in the region (see Chapter 2). The deaths of “The Yuma 14” were an omen of times to come. “The deaths began to happen more and more frequently, so very quickly. We were not prepared,” recalled an ex-employee for one of the Mexican Consulates in the region. “With the Yuma 14, a tidal wave [of death cases] arrived, and we found out we just did not know how to swim,”¹⁶ she added.

Border crossing death cases flooded into the relatively small Mexican Consulates in Tucson, Nogales, Douglas, Yuma, and reached as far north as Phoenix. “I get frustrated with journalists who ask me about the Yuma 14. Everyone wants to talk about them as if [the event] had been the worst,” confided the director of the Protection

¹⁵ Deterrence typically comes after a major tragedy has stricken the migrant or his/her group. In Chapter 3, I discuss how the “Prevention Through Deterrence” policy operates only in cases in which the crosser has experienced extreme physical or mental trauma.

¹⁶ “*Con los ‘14 de Yuma,’ llegó la ola y descubrimos que no sabíamos nadar.*”

Department in the Mexican Consulate in Tucson. “You know, there have been weekends in which I go home on Friday, and the phone doesn’t stop ringing. By the time everyone comes back [to the office] on Monday, we have 16 *muertitos*.”¹⁷ Particularly during the spring (when most people attempt to cross) and summer (when the desert is at its deadliest), the mounting caseload of hospitalized and dead crossers keeps consular personnel rushed off their feet. However, the litany of bad news can be heard yearlong over the phones of the Consular Protection Departments in Southern Arizona. The caseload is accentuated by hypothermia cases in the winter, vehicular accidents in the spring, dehydration and hyperthermia in the summer, and body repatriations in the fall.

The business and politics of border death is something Consular Protection personnel have had to learn on the spot. With the exception of department heads,¹⁸ who hold diplomatic status, consular personnel are mostly composed of young locals, themselves Mexican migrants. Some hold degrees in law, international relations, or political science, but they have little or no specialized training to deal with the wide array of difficult trauma and death cases they receive every day. As mediators in a complex transborder network held together by human tragedy, these workers witness the border’s violence in intimate proximity. The experience of one 24-year-old *Protección* employee on her second day at work is revealing. She was assigned the case of a man who had suffered from dehydration so severe he had fallen into a state of coma. His family in Mexico had authorized the cessation of life support. “Someone from the Consulate was required to be there,” she explained. Nothing in her previous position as a clerk

¹⁷ Affective appellative for “*muerto*,” dead.

¹⁸ Mexico’s foreign service and diplomatic personnel receive at least part of their academic and diplomatic training from *Instituto Matías Romero*, a division of the Foreign Relations Ministry.

working on visa and passport petitions could have prepared her for her new duties. “He was the first person I ever saw die. I had to stay with him until he was [declared] dead. It took so long. I drove home crying. I think I cried every day during those first weeks,” she said. The pressure came not only from the ever-growing and constantly-overdue caseload. Adding to the difficulty of the job were the demands from multiple government agencies in both countries, from families, from civil groups, from the media. In this border’s social geography, there is little tolerance for error or delay for those who deal directly with the dead.

Interestingly, there are only a few kinds of border crossing deaths that attract attention. Despite the significant diversity in Consular Protection cases dealing with migrant vulnerability, it is the deaths *by exposure* that have most captured the public’s attention and imagination, while other kinds of death go virtually unnoticed. In Arizona, for instance, about a third of all border-related fatalities result from vehicular accidents. Smugglers pack upwards of 20 people per vehicle,¹⁹ making these accidents particularly deadly. Although the agency denies that its agents engage in high-speed pursuits, some rollovers result from dangerously extravagant chases by border enforcement officials,²⁰ and the occasional use of road spike strips. Although such accidents may result in multiple deaths, they typically receive media coverage only when bystanders are injured. A case in point is a particularly well-covered rollover in Sierra Vista in 2004, that left 22

¹⁹ Seats are often removed from vehicles in order to fit as many people as possible. I am familiar with cases in which crossers were literally layered like sardines.

²⁰ Testimonies from migrants and smugglers about the occurrence of such pursuits is confirmed by video footage from USBP surveillance cameras. Occasionally, clips circulate among agents or are posted online.

people injured and six dead, including two American bystanders. *Sierra Vista Herald* reporter Bill Hess, who spoke to eyewitness Alma Fox, wrote:

She said she saw somebody from the Sierra Vista Police Department put out what she thought were tire spikes before the incident. Then she saw a truck going through the air, after it hit the first vehicle in the turn lane. (...) “Before I knew it there were bodies flying through the air.” (...) Eight bodies landed to her left and three to her right, she said (Hess 10/17/2004).

These accidents were always a top concern to the chief of the Mexican Consular Protection Services in Tucson. “People always talk about those who die in the desert, but, in terms of work, they are nothing compared to these accidents,” said the department chief in response to my questions. “At any time, I can receive a call, ‘Hey, there was an accident. There are so many dead, so many injured, so many minors, etc.’ Believe me, it’s never just one,” he added. It is at these moments when the small Consular Protection teams go into high gear. Yet vehicular accident deaths, despite their statistical significance and frequency, lack the allure and attention given to those due to exposure in the desert—Urrea’s “death by sunlight” (Urrea 2004:19). Sometimes accompanied by “hypothermia” or “hyperthermia”, the poetic “exposure to the elements” is what appears as the official cause of death, inscribed onto the death certificates of most desert fatalities. Death by exposure is also the kind of border death showcased most frequently on the front pages of newspapers, in documentaries, reports, and demands.

Death tallies vary, but according to the latest official count by the U.S. Border Patrol, the bodies of 2,994 crossers were *recovered* from the U.S.-Mexico border between 2000 and 2007. The agency claims that 1,137 of these bodies were found along its Tucson Sector. As Chapters 1 and 6 discuss, records from the Mexican Consulates, the Medical Examiner Office, the media, and civil groups indicate that the toll is much

higher.²¹ During that same period, close to 10 million detentions took place along the Mexican border, 3.5 million in the Tucson Sector alone. If the numbers are reliable and convey the complexity of these dynamics, then it can be calculated that, in Arizona, authorities find three bodies per every ten thousand encounters they have with migrants. This border's math, however, is not that simple. Border death tolls take into account only the number of bodies *recovered* from American territory in close proximity with the border. Those who die from border crossing-related causes outside of the border/desert perimeter are not counted. Additionally, Mexico does not keep track of border-related fatalities taking place on its side of the fence. No one knows the exact number of those who die trying to cross into the United States. Unless authorities come across their human remains, the desert will be the final and anonymous resting place for a steadily growing number of crossers.

These bodies' sociopolitical afterlife emerges from these processes of creating accountability. Recovered or not, the increase in migrant deaths has intensified activity throughout the border, its agencies, and actors. As a response to the influx, temporary detention camps have been established in the desert. Consulate employees put in twelve-hour days, seven days a week. Hospitals and clinics providing care have gone into the red providing emergency care to crossers. With the increase in numbers, the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office soon found itself in a difficult bind as well. As the death tally mounted, the morgue's capacity of 120 was soon exceeded. In 2004, the county acquired a refrigerated truck to store the overflow of bodies, but this too became

²¹ See death toll comparison chart in Appendix B. Appendix A lists the names of those whose bodies were recovered from the desert between 2001 and 2007.

insufficient within a few months. A grant from the Department of Homeland Security procured a 55-foot trailer to contain the bodies recovered from the desert.²² Apparently, protecting the homeland has expanded to include migrant body recovery, identification, and processing. The border security regime that had managed the flow of unauthorized border crossers away from cities where migration could be more thoroughly policed was now forced to manage their dead bodies by bringing them back to the city to be forensically examined, identified, and returned.

While a substantial number of human remains is routinely collected, identified, and sent back to relatives for mourning and burial, many border-crossers simply “disappear” each year. Although policies about body recovery and counting appear stricter today, the frequency of reports for “missing persons” and the large expanse of desert that shows no deaths (i.e. body recoveries) for miles raise questions.²³ Some observers have suggested that “unofficial policy was to let them lie where they were found, resting in peace where they fell.” Since “each corpse generates a file. Every unidentified corpse represents one case forever left open (...). But uncollected—unreported—bones generate no files” (Urrea 2004:19). Indeed, reluctance to engage in the highly bureaucratic process of reporting migrant deaths as such—particularly in a state as centralized as Mexico—may help explain the lack of data on border deaths on the Sonoran side of the border.

Compounding the difficulty of compiling this information are issues of parameters, definitions, and even safety. “Migrants don’t die in Mexico. They die when

²² Burns, Saxon and Jim Nintzel. “Death and Taxes: The grisly toll of illegal immigration on Pima County,” *Tucson Weekly*. May 25, 2006.

²³ See Appendix D for maps.

they cross,” the *Comisario*²⁴ of Sásabe stated quite simply. My inquiries on the subject with other Mexican officials frequently yielded variations of this response. Local municipalities typically deal with bodies reported within their jurisdiction. This usually implies the production of a brief record of the incident, and prompt burial. Unofficially, I was told that bodies found or reported to be in remote locations were typically left alone or informally buried on site by locals. In a region of intensifying activity from competing drug cartels, the reluctance to deal with bodies found near the border stems in part from their dangerous association with the organized crime world. These bodies are said to be *calientes*, “hot,” and it is considered safer not to touch them. In order to protect drug smuggling routes, narcotics traffickers are known to police segments of the border along the Mexican side, and to use violence against smugglers and their clients in order to avoid an intensification border policing along the U.S. side, where strategy focuses on the detection and detention of migrants rather than drug trafficking. Fearing for their safety, local Mexican authorities are often circumspect about such forms of violence. When asked directly about particular incidents, they are quick to justify their limited intervention. By labeling the victim a potential smuggler or drug mule, the death case acquires federal or state status and is out of their hands. As the case moves across agencies, it will most likely become “cold”, if not lost entirely.²⁵

The processes and circumstances by which these bodies appear and disappear tell us much about this border. In the following pages I unpack how the death of

²⁴ A *comisario* holds functions similar to an American sheriff or police commissioner.

²⁵ Even relatively high profile cases, like that of disappeared reporter Alfredo Jimenez Mota, will remain inconclusive or be abandoned, particularly if they are connected, however remotely, to the drug mafias (see Marizco 2007).

unauthorized migrants in Arizona's deserts has come to characterize this border region, framing its dynamics and, by extension, mediating its social relations. This chapter tackles the social geography of desert deaths in order to examine the politics and socialities they make possible and visible.

I argue that the very notion of what this border is and how it operates hinges on the treatment of these deaths, which are themselves mediated through the material mobilization of the body. As it will be shown, the management, representation, and mourning of these bodies are contested fields of practice in which power relations between subjects and nation-states are fiercely and strategically negotiated. Key to this analysis is the examination of the possibilities of mourning as a vehicle through which political power is manifested. As Judith Butler reminds us, "it is not that mourning is the goal of politics, but that without the capacity to mourn, we lose that keener sense of life we need in order to oppose violence" (Butler 2004:xviii-xix). In this sense, the rest of this chapter focuses less on the mechanics of dying in the desert, and more on understanding the sociopolitical phenomena that generate, and are generated by, knowledge of these deaths.

A Schema of the Body Recovery Politics & Practices

What it is known about the deaths of migrants in the desert is highly mediated and political. At first glance, such a death may seem like the proverbial tree falling in the forest: if a migrant death is not literally perceptible through the literal or symbolic extraction of the body and its production into a statistic, it becomes a non-event. Yet, the very potency of this politics of death is revealed by the possibility of its negation. In this

sense, body recovery is pivotal to the peculiar and political importance of border deaths. The extent to which particular deaths can become more than a family's anxious suspicions, and can circulate in the highly charged and political sphere surrounding this border, is largely determined by the material availability and deployment of the dead body. Because of the kinds of claims enabled and foreclosed by the very possibility of body recovery, from state recognition to kin mourning, it is both an *expression of* and a *means through which* regimes of social inclusion and exclusion are articulated.

An analysis of the politics and practices of body recovery reveals how the need to manage these deaths comes from the very threat they pose to the state's claim to legitimate violence. As discussed in Chapter 2, these deaths reveal the limits of state territorial controls by exposing both the lethal consequences of the incorporation of bodily exposure as part of the enforcement strategy, and the inability of the state to effectively permeate and control space despite its claims. Efforts to produce and contest the legitimacy of (state) authority take place as these deaths enter the public sphere. Whether these deaths become evidence of an unjustified type of violence, or are used to reify the perception of state control, depends on the postmortem treatment and circulation of the migrants' bodies and stories. Governmental interventions work towards the objectification of migrants as mere bodies to be technocratically extracted, examined, processed, and transferred back to awaiting communities, dehistoricizing the conditions that frame their migratory journeys. The claims of other contending actors, however, emphasize the personal stories of these crossers and highlight the political duplicity on the part of the state that maintains the structural conditions to create such flows while keeping them outside of the law. The exceptional status of these crossers requiring

urgent intervention and removal, as a unauthorized entrants and as bodies, is tapped on by border actors to bring legitimacy to their activities in ways that create interesting implications for the reproduction of authority and the enforcement of the border itself.

Bodies & the Border's Landscape

Humanitarian activists are often frustrated and alarmed by the number of migrants claiming in post-repatriation interviews to have encountered bodies in their journey across the desert. Sometimes they report such sightings to their apprehending agents; other times, they just lament the fact, say a prayer, and decide not to make it their business. The detection of human remains has been one of the ongoing obstacles to the accurate assessment of border deaths. The recovery of bodies and, hence, the gathering of data, depends on the right combination of social, political, and even topographic factors. Besides crossers, border residents also share the unpleasant experience of coming across human remains. For instance, in a single year, one cowboy working for a ranch in Altar Valley came across bodies on four different occasions. This raises another important issue: bodies are hardly ever actively found; *they are stumbled upon*. A case in point was the experience of a man who, upon seeing that Border Patrol agents were approaching his group, dove into some bushes. Before he could realize it, he had taken a step onto the remains of human rib cage. He was so disturbed by the incident that his wife had to relate it to me. Remains are usually incomplete; wildlife gets to them first.

If a body is discovered, reported, and locatable, then it might be recovered. Only if sufficient and convincing evidence regarding its location is provided, a search unit consisting of any combination of Border Patrol agents, rangers, sheriff, and tribal police

officers may be deployed. Authorities are often reluctant to organize search parties, mostly because the location descriptions provided by migrants and relatives of the deceased rely on highly subjective memories of the landscape, and seldom produce immediate positive results.

Once a body is located by law enforcement, its technocratic odyssey begins. In most cases, the responsible field agent radios in the coordinates of the site to his/her headquarters. A criminal investigation unit from the local or tribal police department of the sheriff's office is then dispatched. Given the distance and the difficulty in accessing and locating some desert sites, several hours may pass before these teams arrive. Time is truly a matter of life and death in the border/desert. Eventually, the area is surveyed, photos are taken, any witnesses questioned. The possibility of foul play must be ruled out before anything can be done to the body. In a society in which the recognition of death relies on the pronouncement of experts, doctors or medical examiners must declare time/cause of death and rule out foul play. These declarations and assessments are part of the state's attempt to delimit understandings of violence around these deaths. Drawing on technocratic expertise, these declarations displace the possibilities of culpability outside of the state itself. Despite this displacement, I argue, can be read as an attempt by the state to control the narrative possibilities of these deaths, construing them as a manifestation of the illegitimate use of violence precisely because they result from state policies.

The removal of the body can only take place once the scene is cleared by law enforcement. A medical examiner team from the appropriate county will travel to the site, collecting the body and any evidence that may contribute to its identification.

Forensic experts will try to determine the cause and approximate time of death, and they will work with the local consulates to determine identity. At some point during the recovery process, a call will be made to the local Mexican Consulate—regardless of the actual nationality of the deceased. The vast majority, although not all, of people who die on these deserts are Mexican. More importantly, until recently, the Mexican consulates were the only ones to have a system in place to respond to these alerts.²⁶ “Our work with the Mexican Consulate has proven key to [solving] most of these cases,” the Pima County Medical Examiner, Bruce Park, once told me. Unlike most other consular diplomatic missions—which offer passports, visas, cultural, educational, and promotional activities—it is tasks related to the vulnerability of Mexican nationals attempting to cross the border illegally that sets Mexican Consulates in Southern Arizona apart. The primary everyday concern of these government representations is consular assistance or “protección.”

“Consular protection” does not carry the weight or implications of “diplomatic protection.” The latter is invoked and employed when a host state fails to respect the rights of a foreign national. The principles of diplomatic protection have deep historical roots. “Whoever ill-treats a citizen indirectly injures the State, which must protect that citizen,” wrote Emer de Vattel in *The Law of Nations* (1758). Far less formal than such diplomatic assistance, “consular protection” efforts consist mostly in interventions on behalf a Mexican national before the local, state, and federal authorities in a host country.

²⁶ It was only in 2005 that Guatemala opened a consulate in Phoenix, and El Salvador one in Nogales, Arizona. At the time of this project, all calls were first made to the Mexican Consulate, and subsequently directed to these other diplomatic representations, if necessary. Before these other consulates opened, Mexican Consulate workers would voluntarily answer calls and questions of El Salvadoran and Guatemalan citizens searching for a lost or detained relative.

According Article 2, §II of Mexico's Foreign Service Law (*Ley del Servicio Exterior Mexicano*), first approved in 1994, such protection lies under the jurisdiction of the Mexican Foreign Ministry. The mission reads as follows: "To protect, according the principles and norms of international law, the rights and dignity of Mexican nationals abroad, and to undertake actions procuring to satisfy their legitimate claims" (Article 2, Section II).²⁷ In its Protocols Manual, *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores* specifies their interpretation of the article.

In an broad definition, we understand protection as the set of actions a State may undertake to safeguard its nationals living temporarily or permanently abroad; extend assistance to them; guarantee their rights; [and] *prevent undue injury or damage to their personae* or their interest, as well as injustice or arbitrariness on behalf of the foreign authorities, and persecution or discrimination due to their origin or any other reason (SRE, Protección 2007, emphasis added).²⁸

In Southern Arizona, therefore, consulate officials working for Protection Departments are responsible by law to provide assistance to Mexican nationals who are affected in some capacity by the border or its dynamics, be it death, hospitalization, criminal investigation of physical abuse, or extortion.

Protección workers serve as cultural and institutional mediators in their work with the Medical Examiner's Office to identify remains. They work closely with forensic specialists, documenting all bodies and items brought with the bodies, and

²⁷ "Proteger, de conformidad con los principios y normas del derecho internacional, la dignidad y los derechos de los mexicanos en el extranjero y ejercer las acciones encaminadas a satisfacer sus legítimas reclamaciones" (1994 Ley del Servicio Exterior Mexicano, Artículo 2, Sección II).

²⁸ "En una definición amplia, entendemos por Protección el conjunto de acciones que un Estado lleva a cabo para resguardar a sus nationals que temporal o permamente radican en el exterior; brindarles asitencia; asegurar el respeto a sus derechos; evictarles daños o perjuicios indebidos en sus personas o intereses; así como injusticias o arbitrariedades por parte de autoridades extrajenras, y persecución o dicriminación por motivo de su origen, o cualquier otra causa" (SRE, Protección 2007).

opening a file for each case in the Consular Protection database of Mexico's Foreign Ministry, SIRLI (System for the Identification of Remains and the Localization of Individuals, a Mexican inter-agency database used exclusively to keep track of Mexican nationals who go missing or die in their attempt to cross the border with the U.S). Depending on the time of year, the temperatures of the desert contribute to the quick decomposition and mummification of remains. According to Bruce Anderson, from the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office, three weeks may be enough time for a body to become unrecognizable to the untrained eye.

In the best of cases, a body will be readily identifiable through the combination of forensics and material evidence—documents, photos, unique clothing or other belongings. In cases in which none of these kinds of evidence is available, DNA testing becomes the only reliable alternative to identification. This form of identification requires establishing a link between a family back in Mexico and a John or Jane Doe in the United States, and entails a long series of bureaucratic maneuvers, a process I analyze more closely in the third part of this chapter. There are other cases in which none of this expertise is required. Sometimes, a friend or family member witnesses a migrant death. In these cases, the word of the person who stayed behind with the body or who was able to guide law enforcement to its location will suffice.

Only once a body has been identified beyond reasonable doubt, as a particular Mexican national will the Medical Examiner release it to the Mexican Consulate for repatriation. A funeral home contracted by the consulate prepares the body for travel back to Mexico, typically via passenger airline. The remains arrive in a closed casket, not to be viewed. Before the actual repatriation, Consulate officials routinely talk with

these families; they explain to them that the remains they will receive will not resemble the memory they have of the person. In fact, they actively discourage the relatives from forcing open the caskets, urging them to avoid the experience of seeing the effects of the desert—mummification, dismemberment, decomposition—on the body of the deceased. After a long process that involves local, tribal, state, and federal authorities in two countries, lasting for weeks or months after the body is found, the family of the deceased is finally able to bury their loved one.

Part 2. Sur/Rendering Lives

The complex journey across space, agencies, and technocratic processes described in the previous section is not necessarily the fate of all who die in the Arizona-Mexico border. In the desert, “similar deaths” of “similar subjects” have different sociopolitical fates depending on the material and social conditions of the recovery of their bodies. To better unpack this assertion, I examine three body search cases. Through a discussion of these three quests, the different ways in which the border operates across space, subjects, and agencies will become visible. The differences among these cases illustrate how the dead, mournable body can become the means through which authority is exercised, recognized and also resisted. By tracing the relations between actors, their claims to bodies and life, and how these affect, and are affected by, their spatio-temporal position vis-à-vis the border apparatus, this analysis contributes to what Judith Butler calls “a new kind of scholarship that seeks to bring theory to bear on [...] the temporality of social and political life” (Butler 2003:467). Depending on the context and the actors involved, the extraordinary efforts required for the recovery of a body from the desert can either

amplify or constrain the possibilities of mourning as a political act. What is more, the biopolitical character of authority that maintains this border is reified through both the loss and recovery of bodies. With this in mind, through the following three search-and-recovery stories, I explore what happens when border deaths acquire a sort of public life and, just as importantly, what happens when they do not.

Looking for Macario: The Unmournable Deaths

It was as I was conducting research at the *Centro Comunitario de Atención al Migrante y Necesitado* (Community Center for the Care of the Migrant and the Poor, CCAMYN), migrant shelter in Altar, Sonora, in July 2005, that I learned about the “disappearance” of Macario García Saucedo. One hot afternoon, as I was looking through the shelter’s archives, Gustavo de Arcos showed up at the door with a homemade “*Se busca*” [“Missing”] poster and some familiar questions. The picture in the poster showed the face of an average 42-year-old Mexican man—dark hair, brown eyes, facial hair, medium complexion—with the stern expression required of photos for official Mexican documents. It had been more than a year since anyone had seen him.

Macario García Saucedo, a farm worker, day laborer, and the father of two children, had left his hometown in Michoacan with hopes of returning to Phoenix, where he had lived 10 years before. His plans were to work hard for several months, and returning to Michoacan debt-free and with some savings. Macario had crossed the desert a few times before. Macario called his family from that the dusty desert town on May 12, 2004. He would cross north the next day. He promised he would call them as soon as he reached Phoenix, but they never heard from him again.

Constrained by resources, Macario's family initially searched for him only by phone. They called every person and agency they thought could help them. This yielded all kinds of contradictory information. They were told that he was detained in a border town jail; that he was sick in a hospital; that he had been arrested for having served as a mule for narcotics smuggling; that the U.S. Border Patrol had shot him and that he had died in a car accident as he was being smuggled. The only thing that was certain was that those who had crossed the desert with him and were now spread across the U.S., were avoiding the calls from Macario's family. It took the Garcia family well over a year to gather enough resources to send Gustavo to the border to look for his missing cousin. Even then, their search was limited, since no one in the family had a visa to cross to the U.S. to search for him.

When I met Gustavo, he seemed weary and well aware of the futility of his search. He had called every Mexican Consulate in Southern Arizona. No one had records matching Macario's profile. Agency after agency, inquiry after inquiry, the only response de Arcos got was the repeated suggestion that his cousin had most likely died after being abandoned by his group, and that his remains were probably somewhere in the desert where they would never be found. Without any specific information, he could not petition for a humanitarian permit to cross north to look for his lost cousin. It had been too long since Macario first disappeared. The García Family had certainly considered the possibility of Macario's death, but, "*¿cómo podemos estar seguros?*" Gustavo asked me. Indeed, how could they be sure? How could they mourn Macario's probable yet uncertain death? Could his "disappearance" be mourned in the same way that his death would have been?

Nobody knows how many people like Macario “disappear” into the desert. Nobody keeps track. There are no policies or procedures established to count and account for these cases, or to undertake any follow up. The Mexican Foreign Secretariat’s System for Identification of Remains and Localization of Individuals (SIRLI) would help do this.²⁹ Unfortunately, while SIRLI has systematized the information used and obtained in the search of people, its use had not been uniformly adopted at the time of my research. Although Macario’s family had been calling different authorities throughout Mexico and the United States, it was only a year into their search, when they called the Mexican Consulate in Tucson, that a SIRLI file was opened for his case. Even then, only the most pressing cases are entered in the database. Unless a match between a body and a file can eventually be made, these inquiries will sit unresolved indefinitely. Can loss itself ever be sufficient proof of death? Families, like that of Macario García, will wait for years in hopes of a miracle or closure.³⁰ Without a body to tell the story of his journey, without a body to bury, the mourning of Macario’s probable death becomes difficult. Without remains to add to tallies and process, border deaths are not much more than meaningless rumor. Again, to paraphrase Urrea (2004:19) the unreported generate no records, no evidence, and silence. Yet, this sort of condemnation to a desert grave does much more than simply deny the death or neglect a family’s plea.

²⁹ At the time of writing, a joint effort is underway between the Pima County Medical Examiner and Humane Borders to develop a comprehensive database capable of matching Arizona forensic data and missing person reports. The International Open GIS Initiative for Missing and Deceased Migrants is a project funded in part by a grant from the Howard G. Buffet Foundation.

³⁰ In a different case, an 80-year-old woman has been waiting for news from one of her sons after more than 20 years. “*Está perdido en Tijuana*” He is lost, she says. Unwilling to even articulate the very likely possibility of his death, she continues to pray and light candles for his return.

The *de facto* exile in which these desert deaths take place and remain, constrains their social possibilities as mournable deaths, maintaining them instead as incomplete losses. The combination of difficulty and reluctance in bringing these bodies back from the space of Desolation and into the sociopolitical domain of the civil sphere creates an opening for border actors of all kinds to intervene in this border's affairs. The geographic, social, and legal exclusion and exposure—the space/state of deliberate neglect—in which these migrant deaths take place creates a rich field of possibilities for intervening actors to lay claims to their significance.

Unlike recent writing on migration (see for example Mayer 2008, Strønen 2008) I believe it is important to resist the temptation of immediately equating unauthorized migrants with Agamben's notion of *Homo sacer* (1998), as beings that can be sacrificed, whose lives can be taken with impunity by virtue of declaring them in a state of legal exception or exclusion. An immediate transposition of the concept, I suggest, obscures the political tension behinds the conditions that lead to their deaths. Furthermore, it is precisely the possibility of claiming and rendering their lives expendable and their deaths unrecognizable that places them squarely at the center of political production. Unlike *Homo sacer*, the death of these migrants, substantiated via the recovery of bodies, does not automatically reify (sovereign) power. Rather, they threaten its legitimacy through their potential to showcase the limitations of such power to prevent these deaths, manage them, to minimize their impact on the public sphere.

Having said that, the individual political impact, recognition, and value of these deaths vary tremendously. Some aspects of this disparity are revealed by whether or not they can be conclusively mourned, by whom, and under what conditions. Judith Butler

argues that “some lives are grievable and others are not. The differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain *exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human*” (2004:xv). The surrendering of their bodies to the border/desert constitutes an ultimate form of abandonment. Ambiguity is the surface manifestation of the violence of internment in and by the border vortex, that complex set of conditions that maintains these migrants in a perpetual crossing and their deaths in a perpetual state of becoming. The literal and symbolic banishment of border crossers reveals the violent politics of the border/desert as a space and state of exclusion wrought on the basis of exposure and death.

Macario (was) vanished. His most uncertain death becomes only a disappearance, and one that is barely recognized. Indeed, even the delayed entry of his case into the SIRLI database does not grant him loss of full state recognition. Mexican officials believe that many of the open cases in the database correspond to nationals who are still alive, might have already reunited with their families, and whose relatives never bothered to update the Consulates or SRE offices. The government likewise does not conduct any kind of follow up. This mix of open cases includes dead, missing, and found individuals, and reveals only that someone, at some point, was looking for somebody. Thus, even through inclusion in this database intended for the missing and the dead, the status of the disappeared is still reflected by a question mark.

Like many other families with missing loved-ones, the García family wanted direct assistance for state agencies in helping locate Macario. Certainly, state intervention is not the only way to bring about closure available to the families. Besides

sheer luck—as in the cases in which bodies are stumbled upon—families undertake their own searches. This, however, requires resourcefulness as well as significant social and financial capital. Since Cousin Gustavo's frustrated search in Altar was as far as their resources could go, luck was the only hope left.

Finding Jesús: The Technocratic Production of Closure.

Luck, and a lengthy technocratic process surrounding body recovery and repatriation, allowed the Cabral Family from Villa Juárez, Sonora, to finally mourn and bury their son. Like Macario García, 22-year-old Jesús Alberto Cabral López called his mother from Altar on May 12, 2006, to let her know he would be crossing the desert the next day. Like Macario, that would be Jesús' last phone call to his family. Unlike Macario, however, Jesús' body would enter a complex circuit of bureaucratic maneuvers and hyper-documentation that eventually sent his body back across the border to his hometown for a community funeral and burial ceremony.

If the border-crossing north entails avoiding the gaze of government authorities and agencies, sending a body south requires its objectification through subjection to a wide array of them. A whole series of hurdles—logistical, financial, political, and even hygienic—will have to be overcome before each of these bodies can reach its final resting place. I chose to tell Jesús' story because it illustrates well how binational state apparatuses process individual bodies and manage border deaths in ways that seem to prevent, or at least minimize, potential social outrage. By actively enabling family closure through possible mourning, the technocratic interventions onto these bodies not only help to minimize the political mobilization of these particular deaths against border

policies and, thus, the state. Official recovery efforts also render these dead bodies objects of intense technocratic performance through which the border and the state are further realized.

I first learned about Jesús' story from Dean Knuth, photographer for the Arizona Daily Star, who together with reporter Mariana Alvarado, had convinced the Mexican Consul in Tucson to grant them interviews, access, and information to pursue a special report for the paper—not a small feat. Since the appointment of Juan Manuel Calderon in 2004 as head of the Consulate of Mexico in Tucson, access to and information on border-related cases has been tightly controlled. Alvarado and Knuth followed the process of the repatriation of Jesús' body, and produced a major three-piece feature, which conveniently ran on Sunday, September 30th, 2007, the end of the fiscal year (FY) and the border death counting cycle.³¹ A total of 237 bodies were recovered throughout Arizona during FY2007,³² a 29% increase from 2006 (Tiebel 2007). Jesús' death—taking place in FY2006, but processed in FY2007—is probably included in some tallies, and omitted in others. Double counting and undercounting are not uncommon practices in border politics. In any case, by following the trajectory of Jesús' body, a technocratic map of this border can be retraced. The story I present is a composite of conversations with the Arizona Daily Star journalists, their reporting,³³ and my own fieldwork experience with similar cases.

³¹ These kinds of stories are recurrent, typically tailored as award entries, and frequently assigned to reporters who are relatively new to the border beat. See Chapter 6 for an analysis of media practices and border coverage.

³² Numbers compiled by Coalición Derechos Humanos and based on data provided by Medical Examiners from all Arizona border counties.

³³ The multipart story produced by Tucson's *Arizona Daily Star* reporter Marina Alvarado

Jesus' family knew something had gone wrong when he failed to arrive at his brother's house in California, where he had lived and worked previously. They confronted the smuggler Jesús had contracted. Not atypically, the smuggler responded with a mix of lies, delays, and denials. Then, like Gustavo and so many others who show up in dusty border towns armed with arsenals of posters, photos, and questions regarding the whereabouts of their missing loved-ones, Jesús' younger brother Rosendo went as far as he could. Just like many others, Rosendo's fraternal quest would also be constrained legally and financially to the southern side of the boundary. Meanwhile, Jesús' older brother in California reported him missing to the Mexican Consulate in San Bernardino. Based on his best biometric and biographic description of Jesús, a SIRLI file was opened in the Mexican SRE databank. No official searches would be orchestrated: the desert is too large; American border enforcement authorities are more interested in finding crossers who are alive; Mexico cannot afford to look for the dead.

In most cases, a family's search of their missing crosser quickly turns into a long, passive, and despairing wait. The initially frequency with which family members call Consulates and other government offices for updates is actively discouraged. "*We* will call you back as soon as we know anything," was a phrase I heard daily in the Protection Department of the Mexican Consulate in Tucson where I carried fieldwork on and off during my time in Arizona. Indeed, it was a phrase I also learned to use when, frustrated by the disregard with which consulate employees treated the incessant ringing of the

Avalos and photographer Dean Knuth appeared on the Sunday edition for September 30th, 2007. Drawing from quotes from their interviews they titled their story installments as follows: Part I, "I've called to tell you the deceased could be Jesús;" Part II, "DNA test's slow path often holds last hope for a name;" and Part III, "We have him. At least we can bring him flowers."

phones, I began answering calls. In the middle of summer, one out every three calls involved a *paradero*, an “unknown whereabouts” case. In most cases, individuals reported “missing” were still under detention by the Border Patrol, hospitalized, or incarcerated.³⁴ A SIRLI file would be open only in cases in which a person had been missing for a significant period time, at least two or three weeks, according to unofficial policy, or if the family knew from other crossers or the smugglers themselves that the person had died or been left behind. However, without information on the location of the body sufficiently precise to merit a search by American authorities, the best a family could hope for was luck.

Jesús’s body lay in the desolate vastness of Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge a few days short of one year by the time luck finally struck. Someone came across the 44 sun-bleached bones—the average adult human skeleton has 208—that would constitute the remains of John Doe 55, and would eventually be positively identified as those of Jesús Alberto Cabral Lopez. With that, Jesús’ body began its slow and technocratically-mediated return home.

The quick criminal investigation of the scene that cradled Jesús’ one-year stint in Cabeza Prieta freed the remains for potential repatriation by indicating that he was most

³⁴ Unauthorized border crossing, particularly re-entry after a formal deportation, can be punishable with two weeks and up to six months of jail time. Typically, only rowdy crossers and those with a history of numerous apprehension are charged and taken to court. Recently, the Department of Homeland Security announced its intention to press charges against first-time offenders, thus expanding “Operation Streamline” from the Yuma and Del Rio Sectors to the entire border. Plans to construct more detention facilities must be in the works, since Arizona lacks the infrastructure to hold the potential growth in inmate population. Currently, Indiana prisons are contracted to house well over a 1000 of Arizona’s long-term inmates, while the state figures out how to manage the overflow.

likely a border crosser and not the victim of a violent crime.³⁵ The actual determination of the cause and time of death fell to the Pima County Medical Examiner team. Finding no sign of trauma, forensic anthropologists Bruce Anderson concluded the remains were most likely those of a young male, potentially a crosser. When the Mexican Consulate liaison for cases dealing with deceased Mexican nationals, J ronimo Garc a showed up, the two men went through the remains and personal effects. Garc a's college education in international relations had not prepared him for such a job; he had to learn, and sometimes invent, the ropes of body identification and repatriation case by case. As in every similar case, Garcia methodically photographed and documented everything brought to the ME's Office. Everything is carefully searched and examined in hopes of finding a clue—a document, a phone number, a letter—that would lead to the person's identity. In this case, Jes s' Mexican voter ID proved decisive, not because the remains could be identified from card's photograph or fingerprint like in other cases, but because it provided a name to trace, a place to start.

Jes s' name appeared in the SIRLI database, giving hope to J ronimo and his co-workers that this case would be solved. Reporter Mariana Alvarado described in her story what happened next:

Garc a telephones Antonio in California. "Do you know a young man named Jes s Alberto Cabral Lopez? Is Jes s Alberto still missing?" he asks. He tells Antonio that the Pima County Sheriff's Department has found some remains. "I've called to tell you the deceased could be Jes s," he says. Before he can finish, Antonio begins weeping and hands the phone to a friend (Alvarado 2007a).

³⁵ Certainly, activists and pro-migrant advocates believe that border-crossers are indeed victims of structural violence that can be considered criminal. See, for example Joseph Nevins (2002).

It was potentially a match. However, the Medical Examiner's Office would need enough conclusive evidence supporting the accuracy of the positive match before surrendering the body to the Mexican Consulate for its repatriation. The identity document and a family phone call do not suffice.

The bodies of migrants who die and are found in a way similar to Jesús' enter symbolically and literally into a vortex of hyper-documentation, and technical and bureaucratic maneuvers reaching across local, tribal, state, and federal agencies in both countries involved. The complex and lengthy process involving identification and repatriation is full of room for delays and mistakes, which often frustrate everyone involved in the case. "Identifying a U.S. citizen who dies unknown and alone can take three or four days" (Alvarado 2007a), but the case of unidentified border crossers extends over weeks and even months, involves a small army of specialists, advocates, and bureaucrats, and costs a small fortune. Border crosser autopsies cost Pima County about \$2,135 USD. In addition, the Mexican Consulate in Tucson spends about \$2,300 USD for each body it repatriates, not counting labor. In Mexico, various states through their Migrant Attention Offices may step up to cover, even if partially, land transportation costs. It is not uncommon however for migrant communities to hold fundraisers and pay for such expenses in an effort to expedite repatriations.³⁶

Despite such efforts, however, about one-third of all bodies of suspected border-crossers recovered in Arizona remain nameless. "We have a backlog of people we're

³⁶ A community of *Guanajuatenses* in Tucson who lost one of their members to the desert in the summer of 2006 proved remarkably cohesive and efficient in their work. After failed USBP search, which they considered mediocre, not only did they organize a search party of twenty men in horses and all-terrain vehicles who found the body within a few hours, but they also managed to fundraise \$10,000 in less than a week through a community carnival and a soccer tournament.

trying to identify and process before they can be buried,” Pima County Medical Examiner Bruce Parks said. “We don’t want to just throw our hands up and say, ‘Let’s get this person buried’ when we haven’t tried all the avenues of identification” (Turf 2004).

The process of Jesús’ identification was aggravated by the ever-present necessity to navigate multiple and often impractical bureaucratic regulations. The most secure procedure to identify skeletal remains is through mitochondrial DNA testing. The Mexican government has a contract with Baylor University in Waco, Texas, to conduct these tests. Each case costs about \$2000, and “it can take up to 360 hours and sometimes stretch over a year or more” (Alvarez 2007a). Adding to the delay is the negotiation of distance, an international boundary, and inter-agency protocols. To begin, despite the fact that the vast majority of cases requiring the procedure begin in Arizona, the Mexican government insists that all testing be done at Baylor and that all data and DNA samples be sent from SRE’s headquarters in Mexico City. In order for the Cabral family to have the remains tested for DNA, his mother, Guadalupe, would have had to travel from her hometown, Villa Suarez, to Ciudad Obregon, where a local SRE official working for the *Oficina de Atención al Migrante* (Migrant Service Office), would have had to figure out where blood samples could be taken. Forms would have been filled, memos written, and the samples would have begun to hop south from office to office halfway across the country until reaching the headquarters of Mexico’s Foreign Ministry in the country’s capital. There, the samples would have been re-documented and repackaged, and sent via diplomatic courier to the Mexican Consulate in San Antonio, where a consulate worker would have driven them to Baylor’s lab. Once the test results were ready, they would have followed the path of the samples all the way back to Mexico City, and, from

there, north again across the border to the requesting consulate in the United States. Every stop accompanied by a memo, every memo a bureaucratic project involving three to five people, various databases, and innumerable internal steps.

Hoping to have Jesús' body back in Villa Juárez as soon as possible, the Cabral family decided to forgo the certainty of DNA testing, and opted instead with the denture analysis suggested by the ME's forensic anthropologist. The only evidence Anderson needed was a photograph showing Jesús smiling. The family delivered two original photos to the nearest SRE office, where they were promised that the photos would reach Anderson the following day. Although Villa Juarez, Jesús' hometown, is about 500 miles from Anderson's office (about a nine-hour drive), the two photos ended up following the trajectory that the blood samples would have, taking nearly two months to arrive to the Consulate in Tucson. At least the wait paid off, as reporter Alvarado suggested.

It all matches: the gap-toothed smile in the photograph looks just like the gap in the skull. The age on the voter card matches those of remains. The sun-bleaching of the 44 bones coincides with the amount of time the illegal border crosser has been missing. It is enough to convince the medical examiner that the remains found in May in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge southwest of Tucson are those of Jesús Alberto Cabral Lopez (Alvarado 2007a).

John Doe 55 was officially recognized by the Medical Examiner as Jesús Cabral, a Mexican national. The process for the repatriation of the body could then begin.

Yet, before a body can be sent back across the border, it must first be rendered compliant. A whole series of hurdles—logistical, financial, political, and even sanitary—have to be overcome before each of these bodies can retrace its way home for final rest. Federal recognition of the body as that of a Mexican national must be

obtained. Permission to dispense funds to have the body prepared and packaged for the journey by a locally contracted funeral service home must be granted; a letter declaring the body does not present any public health risks, secured; a death certificate, filed; customs forms declaring the “package’s” lack of commercial value, filled. Once every document is ready, a commercial flight is sought for the body, and, if necessary, negotiations are made with local authorities to aid the family with ground transportation between the airport and the final destination.

There is a way to avoid this complex process: cremation. If the family feels satisfied with the identification process and grants consent to have the body cremated, the cremated remains will accompany consular memos, reports, and files in a *valija diplomática*, diplomatic courier bag. The transformation of the body into a small item through hyper-technocratic processes—recovery, identification, cremation, repatriation authorization, and mediation—allows its border-crossing south with virtual diplomatic immunity all the way to Mexico City. Through government channels, the ashes travel from office to office until reaching the *Oficina de Atención al Migrante* closest to the family, where they will go to retrieve the urn.

Cremation, however, was out of the question for Jesús’ family; they wanted to welcome back their returning son by giving him a grand burial. With over two months to prepare the burial, every detail was fine-tuned back in Villa Juárez. A cemetery plot was purchased and funeral arrangements made well in advance of the arrival of the body. The vigil took place at home, in the carport. The ceremony was held in the local church. A *norteño* music band was hired to play the day of the burial, an expensive gesture to honor the life of a son who loved music and dance.

In Jesús' case, the homestretch of the processes added a little anxiety to the family and more files to the already voluminous paper trail documenting the return home of his body. In order to cut costs and prevent potentially embarrassing situations, the Mexican government does not pay for the repatriation cost for the bodies of those who lived in border states, Sonora in Jesús' case. There is always the anxiety that the crosser might have been actively involved in trans-border criminal activities such as drug or human smuggling. Thus, the Cabral family, as residents of the Mexican border state of Sonora, had to find their own transport, and report to the DeConcini Port of Entry in Nogales, Sonora to receive Jesús' body.

Trapped in a process that also subjected the Cabrals to state decisions and allowed them little or no room to assert themselves, a decisive moment came at the local funerary home, *Funerales Económicos*, in Villa Juárez. An employee working on the cross that would crown Jesús' grave asked the family, "What date do you want for the date of death?" (Alvarado 9/30/2007c). After revisiting the anguish of the previous 15 months, Jesús' mother decided that "May 12, 2006" should be the date engraved on the cross. The day Jesús' crossed the border would be known and remembered as the date of his death.

Jesús' case demonstrates how the state, in both its Mexican and American expressions, operates and reinforces its presence through these migrant deaths in the border. If the story of Macario's disappearance shows the power of the state to turn the loss of human life into socially invisible and quasi-meaningless event, the story of Jesús and his family points the state's capacity to assert itself through the transformation of a life and a death into a packaged to be delivered. In this context, the possibilities for

mourning are contingent on the technocratic processes of recovery, identification, and repatriation that both the body and the family must endure. In the end, the biopolitical power of the state is made visible not only through the conditions that result in the death of unauthorized border crossers like Jesús, but also through the processes by which their bodies may be brought back from the border. Through technocratic efforts to control and mediate the conditions by which bodies are made to appear and disappear, this border as a space of exceptional death at transforms migrant bodies into objects of state performance, and survivors into docile subjects. And yet, this process, too, does not always unfold in the same manner.

The failure of the both states to fully control what happens in the border/desert, and how such failure translates outside of their control, represents a threat to state claims to ultimate authority, legitimacy, and violence. The dead and injured bodies of unauthorized migrants call into question the sovereignty of the state not only because they reveal the violence of state-orchestrated neglect on the body. These bodies also constitute a threat because the necessity to intervene on them, to find them and bring them back, opens up the field of bio/political intervention to non-state actors for participation and to the global community for scrutiny. Just as the state can only *claim* to have a monopoly on legitimate violence (Kelly 2006), it can only claim through its efforts to be the sole facilitator of official recognition and recovery of these bodies. These challenges to state authority are precisely the kind of dynamics most clearly evident in the final case of body recovery that I analyze here.

The Quest for Lucrecia: Body-Recovery as Resistance

It takes a major effort to take back a body that has been claimed by the desert, as revealed in the case of Lucrecia Dominguez Luna, a 35-year old woman from the state of Zacatecas. The events resulting from Lucrecia's death are extraordinary. Her death might have been the typical migrant death—a journey across the desert for several, unbearably hot days without sufficient water, followed by dehydration and hyperthermia. However, the recovery of her body was far from common.

In late June 2005, Lucrecia and her two children, ages seven and fifteen, began a journey she believed would take them to Texas, where her husband still works. They planned to cross the desert, but after a couple of days of walking, Lucrecia became ill. The guide told Lucrecia's fifteen-year-old son to stay back with her, to light a fire to try to get help. Then the guide left with the rest of the group. Within a few hours, Lucrecia became unconscious and died. Dumbfounded, the boy left his mother's body behind. He was later found by Border Patrol and repatriated to his hometown.

In the meantime, Cesario Dominguez, Lucrecia's father, received a call from the smuggler telling him that his daughter had not made it. Unlike Macario García's family, Lucrecia's family had some resources, mostly social, to tap into. Her father had a resident visa from years back when he used to live and work in California. He called his children; they gathered resources; and he left for Arizona promising his wife not to come back until he had at least a tiny piece of Lucrecia's clothing to bury. Before arriving in Tucson, he recruited the help from a New Jersey friend and migrant advocate, Jose Lerma. Together they launched what became a three-week search for the body, involving several government agencies, hundreds of volunteers, dozens of reporters and many hours in the desert.

His search, however, was not limited to the desert. Several mornings a week, Cesario went on the air in a national Spanish radio show where he asked listeners for information regarding the specific location of his daughter's remains. Among the many pledges of support, four anonymous phone calls came in with invaluable information. Based on the description given by Cesario, these callers separately pieced together an approximate location of Lucrecia's body. The final caller told Cesario that an American flag had been placed near the body in hopes that somebody would find it.

In the third week of their search, and after finding four other bodies, Lucrecia's remains were found. The American flag was there. The body was not complete, but Cesario recognized the three gold rings still on the skeletal hand. That day, a reporter from Los Angeles Times had gone out with Cesario and Jose. A full, multi-part story about Cesario and his search would appear over the following days (see Morosi 2005).

It would take two more weeks before the body could be repatriated to Zacatecas. Cesario did not rest. He called the morning show and thanked its listeners. He gathered the many people that helped along the way. Search volunteers and the NGOs involved in the search held a memorial service in Tucson. After the service, Cesario granted quick interviews before leaving to catch a plane to Miami. He had been invited to speak about his experience in *Sábado Gigante*, a variety show broadcast throughout the Americas. Cesario's grief for his daughter's fatal attempt to cross the border had a public. His loss and pain reached people across the hemisphere.

After a final 24-hour delay caused by the airline, which failed to ship the body in its daily flight to Zacatecas the day it arrived in Mexico City, Lucrecia's body was finally welcomed home by the entire village of San Martín Sombrecete. Her family, her

neighbors, the local authorities, national and local politicians, NGO representatives, and members of the media came to witness her arrival. Everyone was there to welcome her... twice. They all gathered in the airport the day her body was missing from the Mexico City flight, and the day she finally arrived. The extended delay provided a platform for those waiting to manifest their outrage at the lack of governmental initiatives to prevent such deaths, and, in the event of their occurrence, to recover their bodies in the speedier and more transparent way. I was sitting across from the Consular Protection chief in Tucson when the phones began to ring. A torrent of angry calls and lengthy accusatory monologues from civil advocates, Mexican elected officials, and Mexico's Foreign Service administrators poured in. It was the last straw in a case that had already proven too public and unwieldy. "*¡Pinche Lucrecia!*" cursed one of the frustrated Protection employees after hanging up the phone. "*¡No se quiere ir!*"

Indeed, unlike most others, Lucrecia's case would not go away. As soon as the nine days of traditional prayer and mourning were over, Cesario was back in the United States, invited to participate in a congressional delegation to talk about his story with politicians and policymakers. In national interviews and congressional testimonies, Cesario related the history of "the most difficult task" he had ever undertaken: the recovery of his daughter's body. Not only did he spend a month's time making sure she would be properly buried in Zacatecas, he deployed every resource available to him—from volunteers, to donations, to media coverage. The search for Lucrecia cost her family over \$17,000 USD, most of which came from relatives and from public donations.

In addition to the cost of Cesario's search were the expenses and combined number of man hours put in by volunteers and officials, as well as the cost of processing

the body materially, legally, and logistically. But as Cesario explained to me the mathematics of recovery costs over breakfast several months after the incident, all of this was secondary—he simply could not afford not to find her. As he refused to surrender the body of his daughter to the desert, this man made visible her death and the complex sociopolitical geography that keeps these deaths secluded and denied. He extracted her body not only literally but also symbolically and politically, as he opened his desert search for her remains not only to those immediately around him, but also to the world. The mass-mediated exposure of Lucrecia's exposure to state neglect, both as a migrant and as a border casualty, demonstrates the political potency of these deaths as a challenge to state sovereignty.

The story of Lucrecia's death is in many ways a typical migrant death story. The story that made the mourning for her death possible, the story of the recovery of her body, however, is not. The story of the father that, in refusing the desert the remains of his daughter, redefined the significance of her death is one of epic proportions and heroic overtones. He forced his way into the public sphere to expose the conditions that make deaths unaccounted for, deniable, invisible, insignificant. This journey represented a fight against the kind of social erasure that the un-recovered bodies of migrants go through—as in the case of those who “disappear” in the desert. This is a story of a man's work to make a death count as a death. It was no small task.

The Politics of Mourning, Visible Suffering & Meaning-Making.

The cases here presented stand in stark contrast of one another. In the case of Macario, the family of the migrant not only lacked the economic means to launch on an effective

search, they lacked both the morbid luck of the Cabrals that at least allowed them to bury their son and the resources and resourcefulness of Lucrecia's father. The Cabrals became compliant state subjects, patiently tolerating the demands and delays imposed by state agencies and their representatives. They accepted all of it with the hope of burying their son and finally being able to achieve closure. "At least we know where he is at. Now we can bring him flowers," Jesús' mother told the reporter (Alvarado 2007c). Cesario, on the other hand, was able to transform his family's loss into a collective event and concern. He tapped into the minds and hearts of a vast audience of readers, viewers, and listeners. He refused to have the death of his daughter not recognized. He refused the border her body. Through Cesario's public appeals and pain, the grievability of Lucrecia's death has become collective. But how could people who had never met Lucrecia or Cesario grieve this death? Why grieve for one death and not others? The dynamics to account for Lucrecia's body, and restore the value of her life through the recognition of her death, extend beyond her kin to reveal the power of collective mourning.

In this chapter, I show how the process and success or failure of body recovery affects the degree to which some of these border deaths acquire a sort of political life or, on the other extreme, remain little more than rumors. The recovery of these bodies and management of these deaths, as these cases illustrate, are both an *expression* of and a *means* through which regimes of social inclusion and exclusion operate, and the political potency of the border as an apparatus of the state can be studied.

The kind of sociopolitical value and potency that is conferred or denied to these deaths is determined by the ways in which a body is seized back from the border as a

space of exception.³⁷ More than proper burial and family closure is at stake in the creation of the conditions of possibility for mourning. To recover the bodies from the desert is to bring them back into the public sphere; it is to recognize those lives as valuable and notable. The public recognition of these border deaths brings with it the possibility for the distribution of mourning as a political tool.

In this sense, the work undertaken by activists to bring and maintain the deaths of border crossers in the desert is deeply political. “To die without your family ever knowing what became of you, as they suffer in anguish of not being able to bury your body and mourn your death, is a tragedy that we must demand be made right,” declared attorney, activist and migrant advocate Isabel García. “Human life is the most precious thing of earth, and we must work to change any government policy that threatens it.”³⁸ The names of the dead are written in crosses to be carried and displayed in public events and protests, printed on stickers to be posted on the border wall, recited weekly, reclaimed constantly, remembered publicly. All of these practices represent efforts to bring the deaths in the desert back from oblivion and thus reassert that the losses in the desert are valuable human lives, worthy of collective noting and grieving. The importance of these acts lies in their intent as continuous (and performed) obituaries for these deaths. Again, Butler suggests that

[...] [T]he obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed. It is the means by which a life becomes, or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy. As a result we have to consider the obituary as an act of nation-building. The matter is not a simple one, for, if a life is not grievable a

³⁷ Chapter 3 examines in detail the border as a space of exception.

³⁸ Coalición Derechos Humanos. Press Release. July 13, 2007. Tucson, Arizona.

life is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already unburied, if not unburiable. (Butler 2004:34).

This is precisely the dilemma surrounding the disappeared: as long as they remain unnoticed, they remain non-recovered, unburiable, and to a certain degree unmourned. But this is not uncontested.

Immigrant advocates and border activists in this region have been, in the words of Isabel García “forewarning, lobbying, begging, cajoling, protesting, shouting, praying” to bring attention to, reduce, and stop these deaths (Sterngold 2001). These efforts are as much about saving and valuing human lives as about the kind of nation these activists propose the United States should be. “Without pulling the trigger each of us is participating in this killing because this is done in our name,” asserted one desert activist, an attorney named Margo Cowan.

This feeling of complicity and powerlessness is counterbalanced with efforts to commemorate and generate public “opportunities” to mourn these deaths. For instance, in 2005 and 2006, at the end of the “Migrant Trail” (a 75-mile, seven-day walk from Sasabe, Sonora to Tucson), walkers and volunteers staged a “die-in” in front of the Border Patrol Offices on Ajo Street. The “die-in” was choreographed by the Christian Peacemaker Team assigned to the border and consisted, in the words of one of the organizers, of “guerilla theater [through which] we are trying to simulate what the migrants are faced with everyday in the desert.” After several days hiking through the desert on their planned walk, what participants saw as they approached the culmination of their trek was a reproduction of the border wall bearing white crosses and crowned with an American flag; then, on the background, the installations of the Border Patrol.

On the sidewalk before them, lay a long stream of still “bodies” with silhouettes outlined in chalk. Next to each body, a “mourner” cried out loud. The collective crying of the performers was soon joined by the quiet sobbing of the approximately four hundred walkers, many of whom had joined in the last few miles of the march.

At the end of the trail, I asked a 38-year old man why he had decided to walk the 75 miles of the trail. “I got both, anger and hope in my heart—for the immigrants, for our policies, for Americans,” he said. These political efforts to bear witness to these deaths and to mourn collectively are a way of recovering them from the Desolation in which they occur. This is the way in which the call to “search the desert for [this border’s] truth[s]” opens up the field of politics over life and death in this border. Through these acts of collective mourning and remembering, a collective awareness of the border violence emerges and strengthens.

* * *

The production and contestation of the legitimacy to intervene on this border are claimed partly in relation to management of human remains, which itself depends on the possibilities, means, and outcomes of search and body recovery practices. Because migrant deaths have the potential to reveal state violence in the form of deliberate neglect, efforts to manage deaths – such that they might be contained or further politically deployed – stand at the heart of border politics. The chapter explores how the structural positions of intervening actors, and the spatio-temporal framework of their interventions on these bodies, shape the terms upon which authority, legitimacy, and accountability are made manifest and challenged.

I explore the strategic separation and deployment of claims that at times privilege the injured *biology* of crossers, and at times their social *biographies*. I argue that the ways in which bodies are made to appear and disappear suggest that this border is a field of relatively open bio/political participation. The chapter advances a decentralized examination of the bio/political and dialogical contentions of border space and explores how inequality is produced even in death. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the constraints and potentials of intervention frameworks that aim to separate the migrants' perceived biology from their biographies, as these interventions seek to exercise authority and navigate the border control apparatuses.

CHAPTER FOUR.

DESERT EVACUATIONS:
MEDICALIZED BODIES, EMERGENCY INTERVENTIONS,
& THE POLITICS OF BORDER RESCUES

Possession of the territory is not primarily about laws and contracts, but first and foremost a matter of movement and circulation.

- Paul Virilio, 2000

A blister can kill you.

- S. Johnson, No More Deaths Volunteer

The summer of 2005 had been relentless, and July seemed unbearable. Tucsonans, in their peculiar appreciation for the local climate, were rooting to break the city's record for the greatest number of consecutive days over 100° F.¹ For 39 days straight that year, there was no respite from the heat. Despite the forecast for yet another insufferably hot day, about a hundred people gathered in the parking lot of a local church, loading vehicles with water and gear to "Flood the Desert" with activists carrying emergency supplies to aid crossers in distress. "Flood the Desert" was the border activist community's response to the arrest by the U.S. Border Patrol of two volunteers as they were "medically evacuating" three migrants from the desert earlier that month. As a

¹ Temperatures dropped just below 100°F on the 40th day, sparing the previous record only to climb past the century mark the following day.

humanitarian protest, “Flood the Desert” aimed to do more than provide emergency aid; it sought “to reclaim this border as a public space,” explained one of its organizers. “No More Deaths must show a stronger presence in the desert to demonstrate our commitment to this life-saving work in spite of the arrests. [...] We must reassert our right to provide help,” she urged the volunteers as they prepared to spend the day trekking in the West Desert, looking for crossers to rescue, and attempting to redraw, with their humanitarian patrol protest, the social geography of this border.

The politics and practices surrounding “the right to save lives” is the focus of this chapter. On July 9, 2005, that right had come under challenge when Shianti Sellz and Daniel Strauss, both 23 at the time, were arrested and charged with two felony counts for conspiracy to transport and transportation of an illegal alien, and faced up to 15 years in federal prison and a \$500,000 dollar fine. It was not the first time they had helped crossers in distress escape the desert conditions, nor were they the only ones doing this kind of work. The college students were among the summer volunteers manning the Arc of the Covenant Camp in Arivaca Valley, an effort to keep a continuous humanitarian presence in the desert during the hottest and deadliest months organized by No More Deaths (NMD), a coalition of border action groups.

During one of the daily survey hikes, Strauss came across a group of 13 crossers who had run out of water. At the camp, three of the men reported nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea – symptoms the volunteers recognized as signs of severe dehydration, a condition that, while easily treatable, kills hundreds of border crossers every year. After consulting over the phone with their organization’s doctors and attorneys, Sellz and Strauss decided the men needed to be “evacuated” – the term NMD emphatically uses to

refer to interventions that involve taking people out of the desert. The men were to be taken to a church in Tucson for treatment and recovery. As the two volunteers and three men drove into the city, they were stopped by the U.S. Border Patrol.

The arrests provided No More Deaths an opportunity to contest the legitimacy and moral authority of a U.S. “border policy that kills,” and to establish a legal precedent that they hope would give the protection of life (i.e., migrant rescues) legal priority over territorial enforcement (i.e., migrant apprehensions). Rather lenient plea bargains that offered the two charged volunteers probation and community service in exchange for their admission to wrongdoing were rejected. Sellz and Strauss proceeded to battle the legal border enforcement apparatus in court, on the media, and on the streets. The activist community saw this as the chance to tell the American public that, in the words of Margo Cowan, an attorney for one of the volunteers, “Without pulling the trigger each of us is participating in this killing because this is done in our name.” Weekly press conferences were held by No More Deaths in the months following the arrests.

The campaign “Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime” was born out of these circumstances. Although the most immediate goal was to persuade Paul Charlton, U.S. District Attorney for Arizona, to drop the chargers, the campaign’s ultimate aims were greater and its work targeted multiple fronts. Locally, NMD activists collected over 30,000 pledges of support and had thousands of homes display yard signs with the campaign’s slogan. For well over a year, the black and white boards commanded the cityscape at the street level. At national and international levels, the activists worked with the media, hoping to raise public awareness of the circumstances that lead to bodily exposure and death in the desert (see Chapter 5). At the legal and political level, the

campaign sought to change the discourse around the arrests from that of lawbreaking (in aiding and abetting unauthorized migration) to one of humanitarian work and life-saving interventions.

In order to achieve this, the activists had to persuasively present a case that rested, first, on a distinction between the migrants' exposed biology—that is, their injured bodies—and their socio-juridical position (their legal status as unauthorized border crossers). They had to convince the legal system and the American public that their interventions in the desert were aimed at saving lives, and not at smuggling migrants or helping them enter the country. Because the “transportation of an illegal alien” and a “medical evacuation” of a crosser in distress look fairly similar, in this chapter I show how the legitimacy to rescue a crosser hinges on a particular separation of his injured body from his unauthorized entrant status. Here, the tension between biology and biography which I begin to explore in Chapter one becomes much more explicit. In order to activists to wage their argument that it is legitimate to intervene in the border/desert in order to save lives, they must strategically objectify the people they aim to rescue. Thus, at the moment of their intervention in the desert, it is fundamentally important for them to be able to claim that they are not aiding a migrant as such, but rather, that they are trying to preserve life. In this chapter I explore how particular understandings of the physicality of the migrant's body are politically constructed and deployed by intervening actors while navigating the border apparatus.

Second, I examine how the priority of the body in framing border interventions becomes increasingly interwoven with the migrants' personal stories as the spatial, temporal, and conceptual distance increases between the actual rescue, the actors, and the

context of their claims. Representing NMD, Cowan argued that, “It is important to say that we believe it is wrong for our brothers and sisters to die for a job.” Evacuating a crosser from the desert requires forefronting the compromised status of his body and the threat to his life in biomedical terms; following rescue, on the other hand, the legitimacy of interventions that contest the mechanism of territorial and migratory control, and the contestation of the legitimacy of the border enforcement apparatus itself, are claimed on the basis of the migrants’ medicalized biographies. Border crossing survivors and victims become indexical of structural inequalities that not only affect the quality of their lives, but may also claim them.

In the following pages, I explore how intervention strategies to rescue migrants are framed, particularly through the deployment of medical discourse. I examine how the ease with which dehydration, hypothermia, and heat exhaustion can be treated facilitates the appropriation of medical terminology, and explore how these approaches serve to legitimize practices and contest authority. Through this discussion, I argue that the medicalization of border interventions reflects a transformation of the border/desert as a sociopolitical field. Medicalized social engagements seek to give primacy to the body and strategically deploy bare life in the exercise of practices that might otherwise be questionable and potentially punishable. To do this, first I first discuss the medicalization of migrants, that is, the processes and discourses through which unauthorized crossers are presented as injured bodies to be turned into patients. Second, in examining the medicalization of activism and border policing, I analyze the articulation of power and of the “right” to intervene on other people’s bodies to save lives. Finally, I provide an ethnographic account of the possibilities and limitations of

these medicalized interventions and claims on the ground. This allows me to close with some observations of the intersection between humanitarianism and biopolitics in the desert.

Medicalized Migrants & Border Interventions.

In the social geography of policing and rescue efforts along the Arizona-Sonora border, a crosser may find his way out of the desert through being politically transformed into a patient. This exit possibility, I argue, depends more on the politics of his rescuers, assuming he finds help, than on the gravity of his physical condition. Whether he feels the early symptoms of heat related illnesses such as headaches and cramps, or experiences major organ collapse, the conditions of his evacuation from the desert will first highlight his physical vulnerability, using his physical distress to launch claims that may discredit those who put the crossers in harm's way. Activists typically point their fingers at governmental policies and economic structures that generate the inequalities leading to migration. Government spokespeople and analysts, in turn, typically point their fingers at the "ruthless smugglers." For instance, Jason Ackleson of the Immigration Policy Center writes in a report on the effectiveness of border fencing that,

While the policy did reduce urban apprehensions, it simply funneled most border crossers into the hands of *ruthless smugglers* known as "coyotes" who take them to the United States through ever more desolate and dangerous terrain in remote rural areas of the southwestern borderlands (Ackleson 2004:4-5).

In either case, through these medicalized interventions actors articulate claims to legitimacy by doing two things. First, by objectifying the migrant and claiming the urgent primacy of his biological condition, actors attempt to momentarily depoliticize

contentions about his migratory status in order to intervene and save his life. This claim to a depoliticized migrant body is itself profoundly political as evidence of the ways in which injuries, death, and other forms of trauma are deployed post-rescue to contest the policies and politics that push migratory flows into the desert. Following this, the second effect of these interventions is a political approach to the contestation and constitution of legitimacy that relies on the appropriation of medical discourse and knowledge.

The term “medicalization” has been used by social scientists to refer to the phenomena by which previously non-medical problems are brought into the domain of medicine, are identified as illnesses or disorders, and treated, managed, or prevented as such (Conrad and Leiter 2004; Clarke et al. 2003; Waitzkin 1996; Zola 1972). Some canonical examples of medicalized phenomena include alcoholism (Schneider 1978), homelessness (Mathieu 1993), child abuse (Pfohl 1977), and the doctor-patient relation (Waitzkin 1991).

Borders are interesting and problematic newcomers to the family of medicalized social problems (see Seremetakis 1998). The subjection of medical regimes is one of the ways in which states manage the movement of populations across boundaries. Scholars have studied the medicalization of asylum claims filed by refugees in Europe (Fassin and d'Halluin 2005; Fassin 2001). Along the U.S.-Mexico border, border crossers were subjected to disinfection regimes during the early decades of the 20th century (Alejandra Minna Stern 1999). These studies have tended to focus on how boundaries are enforced through the imposition of medical procedures or obstacles on those who attempt to cross them. The medicalization efforts I see taking place in the Arizona-Mexico border aim otherwise. In the first instance, the rescue moment, they aim to subvert the border and its

enforcement apparatus. In the second one, the goal is to amass evidence of the physical damages inflicted by the border on those who cross it, and to use this evidence of an unwarranted form of violence, exposure, and neglect to counterclaim the legitimacy of the current forms of territorial control.

Unlike situations that require complex and ongoing medical expertise, such as the treatment of AIDS patients (Biehl 2005) or those exposed to nuclear radiation (Petryna 2002), the nature of border/desert threat and the treatment required to avert or reverse its ill effects are available to just about anyone with only minimal training. This is reflected in the fact that most people involved in performing citizen-based border rescues are young college students and retirees (either newly relocated to Arizona or seasonal “snowbirds”) who have received only the most basic medical training, if any at all. Their life-saving competence comes from reaching out to those who have fallen in despair (see Chapter 2).

The impact of the desert elements – temperature, terrain, flora, fauna – on the human body guides the development of a medicalized intervention framework. Perhaps because at least some degree of dehydration and heat-exhaustion has been experienced by most desert dwellers, locals generally recognize that prolonged desert exposure may cause injury, illness, and even death. In Southern Arizona, this concern is manifested culturally in what the region’s dwellers call “desert hospitality.” Rumor has it that a state law exists making it illegal to refuse anyone a glass of water.² This cultural and legal tendency to envision a direct relation between the desert and bodily distress further

² Although this is repeated by several actors and appears on various websites, I have been unable to locate the actual statute.

makes the case of the physical vulnerability incurred by crossers who have spent several days trekking across the Arizona drylands.

Humanitarian and pro-migrant groups even suggest that their volunteers treat every crosser as a patient. In mandatory training sessions, new NMD and Samaritan Patrol volunteers are cautioned by the organizations' doctors that, "Everyone you encounter will have some degree of heat related illness. The question is, 'how severe?'" This framework allows the positioning of those in the desert not primarily as migrants, illegal entrants, or hikers, but as sick and injured individuals in need of medical treatment.

By the time people make it across the border successfully, or give up and go home, they may have spent entire weeks walking in the desert.³ This chapter examines the experiences of crossers who become "trapped" in the border crossing-detention-deportation cycle. There must be some who are successful in their first attempt – but they escaped the scope of my research. Others enter the desert and disappear (see Chapter 3). Some are turned back by major trauma, in most cases by permanent injuries or organ damage (Magaña 2006). Most crossers I encountered over the course of this project were not deterred by repeated failure or exposure, despite the fact that the physical risks to their wellbeing increased with each crossing.

Potentially life-threatening dehydration and heat-related illnesses are not unlikely under continuous exposure to heat above 100°F, strenuous exercise, and insufficient

³ There is only anecdotal information on the number of attempts individuals may try before a successful crossing. Despite several Freedom of Information Act requests by journalists, activists, and scholars, the U.S. Border Patrol refuses to release the number of actual individuals apprehended on the boundary citing the information is a national security concern. See Chapter 5 for a discussion on apprehension statistics.

water.⁴ Particularly between mid May and October when temperatures commonly surpass the century mark, crossers are at a high risk for severe dehydration and hyperthermia. Dr. Robert Cairns, a physician and member of the Samaritan Patrol Medical Committee, explained during a volunteer training session in the summer of 2005 that, “Some people walk for days, some up to 50 miles or more, [and face] the impossible task of carrying enough water to sustain hydration – a gallon of water weighs about 8 pounds.” For these people, walking across the desert becomes particularly lethal when these conditions coincide with injuries to the extremities, whether these are closed (sprains, strains, contusions, fractures), or open (blisters, cuts abrasions, punctures). Snakebites⁵ and insect stings⁶ pose further complications. “These non-lethal conditions can become life-threatening if untreated,” Dr. Cairns likes to remind his trainees.

Although medical professionals join in on daily desert patrols throughout the year, perhaps their most significant contribution to these groups is in lending their expertise to frame the groups’ practices and understanding of border dynamics in medical terms. Their contributions work on several levels. The most immediately obvious is their own involvement in saving lives and treating patients. Their presence, direct intervention, and medically-oriented statements also help lend legitimacy to the

⁴ During the Cold War, the Department of Defense commissioned studies on the effect of the elements on the body. Some fascinating, if ethically problematic, studies were conducted on soldiers to measure endurance in desert conditions. See for example *The Physiology of Man in the Desert* by Edward F. Adolf (1947).

⁵ Rattlesnake encounters are commonly reported in late spring and early summer.

⁶ In addition to some cases of scorpion and spider stings, Africanized bees were a serious problem in Southeastern Arizona. There were reports of border Patrol Agents and crossers who had to be hospitalized after attacks (see Arizona Daily Star 1999, 2008).

organizations' humanitarian claims before the media and the general public, but also, following the arrests of Sellz and Strauss, before the law.

Still, the medical aspect of the interventions is really quite basic. Dehydration is treated with water and electrolytes, heat fatigue with refreshing rest, desert exposure with desert evacuation. The goal of the volunteer training sessions is to provide this kind of straightforward medical knowledge that, in all its simplicity, saves lives. Each trainee is taught about hydration, hyperthermia, foot injuries, and their effects on the crosser's body and journey. Impaired movement and exposure combine with deadly effects in the cross-border trek.

“A blister will kill you,” explained one 61-year-old No More Deaths volunteer and desert enthusiast. Misinformation, lack of economic resources, and ignorance of the specifics of the journey – duration, terrain, climate, stress – make many migrants ill equipped for the desert. Although things have changed to some degree, smugglers used to tell their clients they would only walk a few hours instead of several days.⁷ Either because the multi-day walk is unanticipated or because better options are not available, crossers enter the desert with whatever footwear is available to them. Abandoned flip-flops, high-heeled pumps, and slippers are found scattered across the scorching desert floor (Marizco 2006c). Even with the latest, anti-friction, moisture-wicking socks and specialized hiking boots, activists and this anthropologist were unable to prevent blisters during a seven-day, 75-mile “Migrant Trail Walk” from Sasabe to Tucson in the summer

⁷ “It’s five hours from here [El Sasabé] to Phoenix” was a refrain I often heard during my first summers of fieldwork (2003, 2004, 2005). First-time crossers who believed these statements would often find themselves ill prepared for the several-day walk, or robbed and abandoned right at the boundary line.

of 2005. Crossers wearing inappropriate footwear will develop blisters sooner rather than later. If not treated, these will expand, open, and become infected; some walkers lose entire dermic layers of their feet.

Not surprisingly, for the injured crosser, keeping up with the smuggler and others in the group can quickly become difficult or eventually impossible. Injured walkers slow down, and are ultimately left behind to fend on their own. For these people, salvation comes in the form of apprehension by U.S. Border Patrol. Apprehension then constitutes a rescue in both the crosser and the agent's view. If these abandoned crossers are not detected and get truly lost, their chances of survival dwindle as their exposure to the desert increases. The longer they rest on the hot ground surface, the more dehydrated and fatigued they become, they more likely they will die. Carolyn Trowbridge, retired RN and manager of the Dialysis Unit at Tucson Medical Center, explained the physical effects of extreme heat exposure to an audience of reporters during one of the "Humanitarian Aid Is Never A Crime" Press Conferences in August 2005,

The human being that is lying in the desert is actually cooking, and their muscles are breaking down rapidly, that is what rhabdomyolysis⁸ means. And when they get to the hospital, their blood is like sludge, and it destroys the kidneys. [...] If they get to the hospital rapidly enough because someone picks them up and brings them in – often one of these humanitarian workers [like those who were arrested] – they are hydrated; they might have a dialysis treatment or two, and their kidney function comes back. If they are lost in the desert, if they are not assessed, if they are not brought to medical aid quickly enough, their kidney

⁸ The U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health define rhabdomyolysis as "the breakdown of muscle fibers resulting in the release of muscle fiber contents into the circulation. Some of these are toxic to the kidney and frequently result in kidney damage." If treated with "early and aggressive hydration [this] may prevent complications by rapidly eliminating the myoglobin out of the kidneys. The hydration needs with muscle necrosis may approximate the massive fluid volume needs of a severely burned patient. This may involve intravenous administration of several liters of fluid until the condition stabilizes" (Mushnick 2005).

failure is permanent, and it kills them. It kills them because we send them back to Mexico, to the highlands in Southern Mexico where there is no dialysis treatment. And sometimes they actually just die because they are so sick, even in our most high-tech ICU because of the condition they are in.

Under this etiological framework, unauthorized border crossing through the desert itself is itself a potentially life-threatening condition.

The deployment of a medical framework to alleviate the crosser's condition in the desert pivots on the separation of his body from his biography. This form of "physical reductionism" is one of the central principles of Western biomedicine (Hahn 1982; Manning and Fabrega 1973), in which the preservation of the patient's "physiological integrity" becomes the main objective of the medical practitioner (Hahn and Kleinman 1983). In the environment described, the physical integrity, the biology of the migrant is perceived as being always already threatened. The physical vulnerability of the body in the desert is invoked to defer political and legal complexities and cast the illegal crosser primarily as someone in need of immediate medical intervention. If the crosser is encountered by anyone capable of providing aid, a rescue is performed, and the crosser becomes a patient – a potential desert victim if not.

Border Activism Turned Medical

Although desert medicine may be easy to apply, in order for activists to be able to claim that their interventions are aimed at saving lives and not at aiding and abetting unauthorized crossers to enter the U.S., they have developed a series of strategies and claims intended to render their activities legally persuasive, morally compelling, and socially legitimate. Chief among them is the medicalization of their interventions. This

consists, following Peter Conrad, “of defining the problem in medical terms, using a medical framework to understand a problem or using a medical intervention to treat it” (1992:211). Again, the activists’ intervention on the body of the migrant has the double objective of remedying his condition, and also helping “fix” the border problem. In an interesting turn of the strategy, while the medicalization of the migrants’ bodies allows activists to claim a separation between the migrants’ biology and biography (which can then be sutured together with increased political potential), the medicalization of activist practices enables the contestation of authority by linking together the migrants’ body and the activists’ biography. Here, I discuss how and why border activism has turned to medical.

On June 11, 2000, Humane Borders was formed by a group of citizens concerned about the growing incidence of death in desert,, who joined together with veteran activists from the Sanctuary Movement⁹ (which had helped get Central American refugees into the U.S. during the 1980s). Humane Borders’ mission from the start has been to place water in the desert in order to reduce the number of deaths. Feeling that that the placement of water stations was not enough, in the summer of 2002 the Samaritan Patrol was created to provide direct assistance in the form of food, water, medical aid, and evacuation to crossers in distress. Two years later, No More Deaths emerged as a coalition that not only brought together the efforts of the various border

⁹ In the 1980s, the Sanctuary Movement helped Guatemalans and Salvadorians fleeing civil wars and political persecution enter the U.S. (See Coutin 1995). After an elaborate surveillance and infiltration operation, eleven people were indicted and sentenced. A year after their trial, however, the U.S. began to recognize these refugees and grant their political asylum petitions. Some of the activists involved in contemporary border intervention projects are veterans and ex-leaders of this movement.

action groups working in Southern Arizona, but also set up summer camps in the desert and ports of entry to provide continuous first aid and care to migrants in need.

Both No More Deaths and the Samaritan Patrol met with representatives of the U.S. Border Patrol on several occasions to clear their protocols in an effort to avoid confrontations in the field between agents and volunteers, or subsequent legal problems. Although there was never a written agreement indicating that the agency sanctioned the organizations' practices, volunteers believed that USBP agents understood that their activities were humanitarian in nature and indeed helped save lives, and therefore were tolerated if not openly supported. As the arrests of Sellz and Strauss in 2005 would prove, however, while the distribution of food and water, or the treatment of blisters were not contested, the issue of "evacuations" was altogether different in the eyes of the U.S. Border Patrol.

The volunteers were following a 2004 version of the Samaritan and NMD training manual, which instructs that if someone is encountered whose medical needs cannot be treated in the field, volunteers should do one of the following, (1) "if medical need [is] serious or [there is] need for IVs, transport to hospital: call [Border Patrol's Search Trauma and Rescue, BORSTAR] or ambulance." The manual continues, (2) "if oral rehydration [is] needed, transport to church or clinic for respite care. (3) If rest [is] needed (i.e., sprain or injure ankle severe blisters on feet, etc), transport to church or clinic" (Samaritan Patrol 2004b). Sellz and Strauss were driving the three ill men to a designated church in Tucson when they were detained.

The protocol, in addition of guiding and standardizing interventions, accomplishes a few other things. First and most importantly, it guides the volunteer

through a triage process employing basic assessment techniques to determine the intervention course. To this end, the organizations' medical committee sustains that "*any Samaritan volunteer can be the 'medical person' on a patrol*" because,

In the desert, intelligence; common sense; familiarity with the environment; awareness of the circumstances that bring border crossers into the desert; and, most important, commitment to providing help to border crossers; are all more important to medical decision making than formal medical knowledge and experience. All Samaritan volunteers (so far, anyway) have these skills in abundance (Samaritan Patrol 2004a).

The most important aspect of the encounter with a crosser is to determine if his survival is compromised by bodily illness, since any injuries will likely only deteriorate with more time in the desert, leading to the crosser falling behind, being abandoned, or worse.

The determination of who needs professional medical evacuation via helicopter or ambulance is not always difficult, and is the least polemic. Crossers who have required this service have either been found unconscious, lethargic, or showing signs of severe life-threatening conditions such as cardiac arrest or hypovolemic shock.¹⁰ On the other end of the spectrum, crossers who report no illness or injuries are typically given water, food, and wished Godspeed. The problem lies with those people who are sick or injured, but not badly enough to merit a helicopter. At least in the period leading up to the Strauss/Sellz arrests, humanitarian volunteers erred on the side of caution and "medically evacuated" just about every ailing and limping unauthorized crosser they came across. Most of these were taken to Tucson churches for respite – standard treatment

¹⁰ Hypovolemic shock is caused by a low volume of blood available to sustain organ function. It is typically associated with hemorrhages and diarrhea. It can also result from severe dehydration.

recommended by the organizations' doctors for dehydration and moderate heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat stroke.

Anticipating critiques to such a liberal medical approach, the organizations emphatically worked towards asserting the medical profile of its operations. Licensed medical professionals were recruited as volunteers and spokespeople. Medical language was increasingly adopted to refer to their activities, particularly those in the desert – “medical evacuation” a prime example of such a practice. Medical explanations about the effects of exposure or of particular interventions were discussed in press conferences, training sessions, and newsletters. Volunteers were asked to consult with medical personnel on call during every evacuation.

When the groups' medical training was challenged during the trial and in subsequent meetings with Border Patrol officials, these activists responded by stepping up their game. Members were encouraged to enroll in medical programs and courses, and to keep their certifications up to date. Some volunteers became licensed emergency medical technicians explicitly in response to the legal challenges brought by the trial. Special Wilderness First Responder (WFR) Certification courses were developed in coordination with sympathetic organizations nationwide, in which dozens of volunteers, with ages ranging from 20 to 76 years old learned desert medicine and received ID cards attesting to the knowledge acquired. Certified “WFRers” carried their certification in their wallets, sewed “First Responder” badges onto their backpacks, and acquired personal first aid kits. Some headed for the desert, others drove south to the Mariposa port of entry to practice their wound care skills on repatriated crossers.

Through the medicalization of their persona, activists seek to transform the framework and outcome of their practices. In addition of being able to provide immediate relief by learning medical skills, they have also been able to negotiate access to spaces, places, people, and resources that they would not otherwise have accessed. The medical framing of their practices not only justifies their desert patrols but has also allowed them to negotiate access to migrants under Border Patrol or police custody in the desert, in temporary detention camps, or on deportation buses.¹¹ At least while in the desert, they strive to forefront the medical profile of their actions in an effort to sidestep the always-controversial immigration and border security debates. This emphasis on the migrant's body as the site of their interventions allows these activists to lay a claim to the humanitarian label, which authorizes and stamps legitimacy on their work.

This authorization through medicalization has a long history in Western medicine. As Hahn and Kleinman have pointed out, Western medicine has traditionally been believed to be “a logical, value-free activity” (Hahn and Kleinman 1983:313). Yet, as Foucault has argued in his survey of centuries of change in Western European medical practices (1977, 2003), far from consisting of a value-free activity, medicine in these contexts has absorbed, incorporated, and produced social values throughout its development. Indeed, the *effect* of being “value-free” is one of the medical field's most powerful and persuasive disciplinary techniques. Medical practitioners have in these contexts increasingly been vested with the authority to observe, follow, and intervene on

¹¹ Access to migrants in these conditions became more restrictive in the later part of my fieldwork as some of these law enforcement activities were being outsourced.

their subjects, a privilege stemming from a long history of medical surveillance.¹² The same factors that contributed to making biomedicine a dominant player in Western social organization and institutional reproduction – the replacement of religious explanations with appeals to scientific rationality, the increasing turn to technological approaches to problem-solving—make medicalization a persuasive social process and political strategy (Conrad 1992; Zola 1983). Moreover, as Hahn and Kleinman have argued, “biomedical practitioners believe that their domain is distinct from morality and aesthetics, and from religion, politics and social organization,” despite analyses that argue the contrary (1983:20). In this sense, biomedical practitioners situate their authority outside or beyond politics, which is precisely the incentive behind the medicalization of (controversial) border aid interventions. Just like medical practitioners, these humanitarian activists would like their “life-saving work” in the desert to be perceived as beyond politics, beyond contestation.

This is not to imply activists see their work as apolitical, just the contrary. While they see interventions on bodies in the desert – treating blisters, dehydration, hyperthermia – as globally non-objectionable, legal and political reform are primary objectives on their agenda. They define themselves as being “engaged in direct and symbolic action to save lives, advocate for immigration policy reform, and raise public awareness about the present-day crisis of migrant deaths in the deserts of the Southwest” (NMD 2005). With each pair of feet they tend to, volunteers both reaffirm their vision of the unfairness of border enforcement and immigration policies and renew their vow to

¹² The International Committee of the Red Cross exercises this medical authority when demanding to see political prisoners and combatants held captive throughout the world.

relief human suffering in the desert and save lives. They build their case for reform with each crosser they meet, with each story they hear, with each body they find. Then, they narrate these stories to sympathizers, journalists, policymakers and scholars. Ultimately the bulk of their work is not in the solitude of the desert, but in the eye of the public.

For a couple years, at least, this body-centered approach enabled activists to avoid legal confrontations. As the groups faced growing legal challenges, their activities not only became even more medicalized, but their medicalization became increasingly infused with legal discourse. In a motion to dismiss the case filed on behalf of the two arrested activists, the defense attorneys argued that,

In this case, it is undisputed that the ‘illegal alien’ being transported by the Defendants was being transported solely for the purpose of rendering medical evaluation and assistance. [...] As a matter of law, the Defendants’ conduct was not ‘in furtherance of such violation of the law’ (Walker and Rogers 2005:8).

In order to build their case regarding the medical necessity of these activists intervention, the defense enlisted doctors, nurses, and medical technicians as witnesses. In addition of having the charges against Sellz and Strauss dropped, the hope was to establish a legal precedent declaring that, regardless of context, the provision of humanitarian aid was never illegal.

In tune with this effort, No More Deaths launched a several-month public relations campaign under the mantra “Humanitarian Aid Is Never a Crime.” Through weekly press conferences, public presentations, posters, stickers, and postcards, members and group sympathizers told anyone who would listen that “it is never illegal to provide water, food, and medical assistance to another human being in distress” (Samaritans 2005). Medical professionals increased their participation as spokespeople for the

organization. At one of the above mentioned press conferences, Dr. Norma Price addressed the issue of legality by saying that, “As a medical professional I believe that it is not only legal to treat someone in need but is also my moral and ethical obligation to do so.”

Furthermore, beyond tapping into traditional discourses of moral obligations and humanitarianism, through these public engagements these activists presented their desert interventions as their right. For instance, when asked to explain why Sellz and Strauss turned down the District Attorney’s offer that would have mildly punish them with a one-year probation in exchange of their admission of wrongdoing, one of the organization’s attorneys responded, “I had an impression that they didn’t want to take the plea bargain because it was important to make a stand for the right to provide humanitarian aid” (Pettyjohn and Shepherd 2006). With this kind of articulation, the deployment of medicalized interventions merges the migrants’ biology with the activists’ biographies, in a framework directed at the embodiment of authority to both challenge and appropriate state power over life and bodies.

Desert Evacuations

One of the activists’ main goals is to “reclaim” the border as a public space through their humanitarian interventions. In the process, these activists also claim to have a right to the crossers’ bodies—the right to help these migrants, the right to save their lives. The relation between their claims to space and to the bodies of crossers, and the struggles to uphold these claims can be examined in the practice they refer to as “medical evacuations.” These evacuation practices, I argue, lie at the center of their claim to a

bio/political right to alleviate suffering and ameliorate border space. In this section I explain how medical evacuations from the desert become the spatial articulation these actors' efforts to contest the policies that push migratory flows into remote regions of the desert, flows that disproportionately expose the physical integrity of migrants' bodies to risk. I also explore the spatio-temporal limitations of this medical frame.

For a desert evacuation to be effective, the claim to the separation between his compromised biology and biography must be carefully calibrated, as any interventions are limited to the temporality of the perceivable threat. The careful timing of the intervention is crucial because, as Fassin and Vasquez have suggested, "humanitarianism is always a matter of emergency" (2005:395). In the desert, the urgency to evacuate someone hinges not only on the possibility of death, but also on the period of recovery. On the one hand, if the evacuation takes too long or happens too late, the person may suffer permanent physiological damage and die. On the other, if it happens too early in the progression of the rescuee's condition, his physical improvement can actually jeopardize the medicalized status that would render evacuation a legitimate emergency intervention.

The same factors that facilitate the medicalization of border interventions – the relative ease with which most exposure-related ailments can be diagnosed and the ready accessibility of swift treatment – can work against the political intentions of the humanitarian actors. Cool water, food, air conditioning, and the psychological relief of leaving the desert can work rapid miracles on the dehydrated and heat-exhausted body.

Journalist Ruben Martinez experienced the dilemmas of a migrant's speedy recovery after one of his outings with the Samaritan Patrol. He recounted the incident to

an audience of Tucson activists, and wrote about it for the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*.

As he hiked desert trails searching for crossers and a story, Martinez came across Victor, a diabetic Salvadoran suffering from hypoglycemic shock and dehydration. After a couple of failed attempts to call for help, Martinez reasoned,

The ethical calculation is simple enough. The law might contradict my moral impulse, but the right thing to do is obvious. I also tell myself that in the event of apprehension by the Border Patrol, the truth of the situation will suffice. I am a Samaritan, after all, not a coyote. The truth will suffice at least for me, that is: I will go free, and Victor will be deported (Martinez 2006).

However, after a few water bottles and granola bars Victor's sugar levels came closer to normal. He no longer looked pale, clammy, and sick sitting next to Martinez in the air-conditioned car. Victor's upturn changed things dramatically for Martinez. The reporter was no longer actively saving a life. As soon as life itself, Victor's bare life, was no longer at stake, the potential complications set in motion by the social-legal context of the interaction between the reporter and the unauthorized crosser in his car began to thicken. If Martinez proceeded to Tucson, he could have been charged with aiding and abetting an illegal alien in furtherance of the violation of the law.¹³ Yet, to ask the migrant to get out of the car in the middle of nowhere did not remedy the situation either. If Victor had looked pale, cold, and clammy for most of the 60-mile, one-hour-plus ride between Arivaca Valley and Tucson, Martinez might have taken him to one of the

¹³ U.S. Code (Title 8, Chapter 12, Subchapter II, Part VIII, Section 1324) stipulates that an American citizen breaks the law when "knowing or in reckless disregard of the fact that an alien has come to, entered, or remains in the United States in violation of law, transports, or moves or attempts to transport or move such alien within the United States by means of transportation or otherwise, in furtherance of such violation of law."

humanitarian migrant aid churches. Ultimately, Martinez drove the man to the town of Arivaca, where he was eventually picked up by Border Patrol.

In the context of medical evacuations from the desert, the relation between perceived life-threatening conditions and life-saving interventions has to sustain its visibility in terms of time and movement across space. Medicalization, as a socio-political framework for direct border action, becomes unsustainable the moment that the crosser's biological life is no longer under threat. Although putting the person's life out of danger is the ultimate goal of any medical effort, the characteristics of the space in which border crossing, rescuing, and policing take place adds a layer of complexity to the relation between recovery and threat. Fast recovery may actually prolong exposure to the threats of the desert, by leading the crossers to be repatriated and subsequently initiate repeat attempts.

The limitations of an injury-based medical intervention framework are also rendered visible in the encounter with "healthy" but otherwise vulnerable migrants. One such case presented itself during a "Flood the Desert" patrol. I joined two other women and together we headed for the desert armed with a plastic tub containing a first aid kit, a few pairs of new socks, and some "migrant kits"—individual lunch bags with a drink, crackers, a can of Vienna sausages, a granola bar, and some apple sauce. After driving rather aimlessly for a couple of hours, we spotted a man sitting under a Palo Verde tree, near the shoulder of highway 86. We turned around to meet him conflicted by our own hopes that he might need our help.

He was a tall and strong 36 year-old who had been walking with a group of about a dozen men for a couple of days. After the second night's walk, he woke up to find the

group had left while he slept hidden under some brush (a fairly common incident, judging from my data, particularly among large groups). He decided to walk north by himself and then stumbled upon a trail that led him to Highway 86, where we came across him. A roadwork crew had come by earlier and left him a half-dozen tamales and a large bottle of Gatorade. It was his third day in the desert, but he looked remarkably well. Still, we asked him if he was injured, if he had blisters, if he was thirsty, if he had thrown up or become unconscious. He was a little tired and impatient with our questions, but not sick.

It was his turn to ask. "Is this the United States already? How much longer until I arrive?" How to explain to him that he *was* already in the United States, that he had been indeed walking in the United States for three days, but that he had not yet arrived? He was still in the desert, the extended border, a space that could be considered both inside and outside of the U.S. from the standpoint of these crossers. He needed to reach the city if he was to reach the United States. He asked us if we could take him there, Tucson in this case.

His request prompted a discussion among the two humanitarians and this anthropologist about evacuations, and smuggling, and risks, and the consequences of not doing anything. That morning, the NMD's leadership had asked that volunteers be especially judicious with evacuations. Because of the heightened media attention, they warned that the Border Patrol would show zero tolerance and be on high alert. We determined he was not sick and could not therefore be "evacuated." He had told us he intended to walk all the way to closest city. Marana or Tucson were the nearest options, but either city was at least 60 miles away from where we were, a three to four day walk

to add to his journey. We had ruled out driving him anywhere, but to allow him to continue with his journey without supplies, support, or even basic knowledge of the region was to send him to his death. We told him just that. Reluctantly, he agreed to have us call the Border Patrol.

The first call was placed at around 11:00 am. “We found a man who needs to be picked up. We are east of milepost 141 on highway 86,” I told the operator. “Is he injured?” Her first question inquired about his condition. I described the situation briefly. She told me she would transfer the report to the Casa Grande Station, which was a two-hour drive from where we were. After waiting over an hour, we called again, remembering that less than 20 miles east of us, at the Chevron gas station in Three Points, we had seen about seven Border Patrol vehicles plus the Border Patrol bus that usually parks there. A different operator picked up. “If he is in distress you need to call 911,” he stated, and told us to wait. It was getting close to 2:00 in the afternoon, and we ourselves were beginning to feel the duress of the desert heat. We called again inquiring if we could drive him to Three Points. “Absolutely not,” we were told after confirming to the agent that this migrant did not look sick.

As the midday sun punished all of us, we all questioned the efficacy of the intervention. We grew quiet and grumpy – early signs of heat fatigue setting on. Our rescue water was now warm. I had a headache.

About three hours after our first call, a Border Patrol van and a Tohono O’odham police vehicle arrived almost simultaneously. The agents looked surprised to see us. They were there to transfer three apprehended crossers, not because of our calls. The USBP agent took custody of the man with whom we had shared the last three hours. As

he jumped in the back of the Border Patrol vehicle, we waved a discrete good luck and goodbye. He nodded. There was a profound sense of awkwardness to it all.

The young Border Patrol agent did not know exactly what to do about us. He called someone on his personal phone. He then turned to us and asked us for to provide IDs to file a report of the “incident.” We also had to file our own.

Most of the volunteers had gone out to “Flood the Desert” to make a statement about humanitarian border action in general and desert evacuations in particular. The overall argument was that rendering aid to border crossers in distress should be considered not a lawbreaking or criminal act, but a heroic and commendable one. Yet, that morning we only succeeded at finding the limits of the medical rendering of migrants to legitimate citizen-based border intervention.

If we had come across someone whose life was actually, and not just potentially, threatened by the desert, not only would the group have been able to claim the right to evacuate that person, but other alternatives to get him out of the desert would have been available. After all, even the USBP operator had suggested that we call 911 if emergency help was needed. Alas, this border crosser was not yet injured, sick, or vulnerable enough to merit that kind of action. While turning him over to Border Patrol might have minimized his exposure to the desert during that attempt, it certainly did not allow him to escape the border.

The “Flood the Desert” deployment was given two missions by its organizers. The first was to reclaim the desert as a different kind of border space – one that did not kill – through the spread of humanitarian aid and care. Yet, our intervention that day just affirmed the limited possibilities of interventions that depend on the isolation of the

crossers' physiological condition. We had better luck at achieving the second goal: For better or for worse, we had exercised our "right to help." Feeling ambivalent about the day's events, the three of us got back on our car, and, with the air conditioning system on its highest setting, quietly drove back to the city.

Humanitarianism and the biopolitics of the desert

Humanitarian interventions are a sign of the times. Typically with the objective of improving the condition of people in particular places, humanitarian efforts aim to save lives, relieve suffering, and restore dignity to vulnerable populations (Redfield 2005). Their orientation to improving populations locates them as a prime site of biopower (Foucault 1979). Yet, the articulation of a "right to help" that targets other people's bodies makes humanitarian efforts biopolitical, that is part of a field of contestation in which legitimacy, authority, and right are articulated through claims to the management of life and death. Scholars have argued that as these efforts become more numerous, complex, inclusive, and permanent, the defense of (physiologically defined) life becomes both a means and focus of contemporary politics of the self and otherness (Feldman 2007). This politics of life is part of the fabric of a civil ethos guiding citizen action, as exemplified by the medicalization of political participation taking place in the Sonoran Desert.

Humanitarian border work can be seen as biopolitical to the extent that these actors seek to affect and exercise the power over the migrant's body and life itself. Even as they challenge the policies that have made and would continue to make the deaths and physical distress of some crossers invisible, gratuitous, and inconsequential, these

activists invoke a version of biopower each time they “evacuate” a person from the desert, each time they “save” a life from the border. In part, this comes from their claim to the migrants’ bodies, too. They control not only the immediate fate of some crossers, but also the representation and symbolic deployment of those crossers as bodies and people. As Foucault argued about the relation of power, knowledge, and representations: “[power] produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (1984:205). Through these humanitarian aid interventions, migrants can be transformed by activists into “victims,” “patients,” or “evidence” to be waged against the border apparatus, or used to navigate it.

Thus, it was not by chance that these pro-migrant Southern Arizona activists adopted a medicalized framework for their practices. Precisely because the border-crossers in distress are “outside” of the law, humanitarian activists have carefully crafted their strategies to generate the kind of knowledge and awareness of this border that would best enable them to exercise their right to help them and save their lives. The medical framework enables them to present contentious and potentially lawbreaking interventions as heroic and life-saving. Complementing other practices in which these actors emphasize the personal stories and value of these migrants such as symbolic mourning acts (Chapter 3) and the production of mass mediated accounts (Chapter 5), here they objectify migrant bodies in an effort to minimize the effects of prolonged border exposure and prevent their deaths.¹⁴ When these occur, however, the knowledge derived from such medical forms of border action allows these actors further politicize

¹⁴ Objectification of bodies is not exclusive to activists performing medicalized interventions. It is not uncommon to hear law enforcement agents to refer to crossers as “bodies” when not calling them by their assigned radio code, “10-45.”

the bodies by contextualizing the causes of death not within the individual crosser's decisions, but within a field that operationalizes injury and exposure.

In other words, these activists work diligently to undo the conditions that would make these deaths inconsequential. Through their interventions, they actively deny and contest the transformation of the crosser into *Homo sacer*. My observations of contemporary border dynamics in the American Southwest suggest that the production of biopolitical bodies is always contested, mediated, and in flux. Even as the crosser is objectified, he cannot be simply constituted as *Homo sacer* and be killed or let die. Both his objectification and the refusal of liability for his death are but claims aimed at positioning him and the intervening actors within the border's field of political engagement.

This field is characterized by the continuous invocation of a space/state of emergency at work in the border. Such a situation echoes Benjamin's historical reflections on the, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (1968:257). Agamben expands this observation to include an examination of the contemporary state. "The deliberate creation of a permanent state of emergency (even if not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including those called democratic," he writes (2003:11-12). "Emergency" has more or less characterized social relations on the Mexican-American boundary since its inception (see Martinez 1998; Magaña 2003). In its latest incarnations, "emergency" has justified ever-greater technological, military, vigilante, and humanitarian activity.

Besieged by transborder flows of narcotics, weapons, and people, the governments of Mexico and the United States have taken extraordinary measures in recent years. For instance, in 2005, together with the governors of New Mexico and California, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano declared a state of emergency for all border counties, arguing that “the massive increase in authorized border crossings and the related increase in deaths, crime and property damage justifie[d] [the] declaration” (AZ Declaration No. 081605, 2005). Because the implications of such declarations affect the kind of claims and interventions actors can employ, they merit some analytical attention.

Far from anarchy and chaos, declarations of state of emergency signal not weaker controls, but greater displays of power. “The state of exception, which is what the sovereign each and every time decides, takes place precisely when naked life [...] is explicitly put into question or revoked as the simultaneous foundation of political power” (Agamben 2000:5-6). Scholars have examined the effects of the suspension of the law on bare life in various contexts, including in cases of territorial and ethnic violence (Das 2000, Das and Poole 2004), environmental disasters (Fassin and Vasquez 2005), generalized threats and risks (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), and, in cases in which rights are undermined or left undefined, such as the indefinite detention of designated enemy combatants (Butler 2004).

In the Arizona-Mexico border region, the claims regarding the violation, actual and potential, of the law, life, and property on which the emergency declaration was based, enabled government actors to take especial measures. At the state level these

mostly translated in the dispensation of emergency funds for special projects.¹⁵ At the federal level, it allowed President Bush to sidestep the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the use of military forces for law enforcement purposes,¹⁶ and enabled the deployment of 6000 members of the National Guard to the Mexican border.

Humanitarians and activists who come across migrants in the desert also claim the border is in state of emergency. After all, the channeling of massive human flows to remote and dangerous border regions has meant an increase in migrant deaths and suffering, which motivates humanitarian actions. In an open letter to the *Tucson Weekly*, Sarah Roberts, a Samaritan and member of No More Death's Medical Committee, charges that the border "crisis" is the result of "the United States government's policy that forces people to cross through the most dangerous parts of the desert, simply in search of work to support their families." She adds, "This crisis cries out for all of us to give humanitarian aid to those who are suffering. No one should be left behind to die in the desert" (Roberts 2005). As border actors – from activists to guardsmen, private citizens to the U.S. President – claim and contest the power and the right to change the border and save lives, it becomes vital to ask how such a state of exception operates on this border and its deserts.

¹⁵ During the summer of 2005, governors of the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas declared states of emergencies for their border counties. By doing this, they were able to request federal funds for border related projects. In Arizona, this translated into equipment (the Nogales Sheriff's Department was finally able to purchase night vision equipment after many years of requests) and into maintenance (in Yuma, funds were used to remove weeds that represented potential hide outs for unauthorized crossers).

¹⁶ The Posse Comitatus Act is part of United States federal law, 18 United States Code 18 § 1385. The Act was passed on June 16, 1878, and prohibits members of the federal armed forces and the U.S. National Guard from exercising law enforcement functions unless requested to do so by Congress or when sanctioned by the Constitution.

Although emergency declarations further demarcate the regions along the boundary with Mexico as areas that require exceptional interventions, it is not merely because of these declarations that it can be argued that the border deserts function as a space/state of exception (see Chapter 2). For Agamben, the state of exception is epitomized in the concentration camp, a space of inclusive exclusion where people are stripped of their social and political status, in which biographical life becomes indistinguishable from its biological counterpart (1998:170-171). I do not suggest that desert along the Arizona-Mexico border is a camp in this sense. Rather, through this discussion of medicalized intervention that finds political potential in the objectification of the crossers' bodies and lives, I have underlined the contesting and contentious character of practices that, in claiming the border/desert as a site of exception, attempt to present the crossers as "stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life" (Agamben 2000:41). In this context, the migrant's vulnerability of the physical integrity is both the result of, and the means to, the exercise of power.

In many cases, the objectification that comes from a medicalized intervention becomes a way for crossers to escape the border. This not only takes place through the interaction with humanitarian groups and their claims to medically evacuate crossers from the desert. It is also the case with people who required medical attention after being apprehended or rescued by the Border Patrol. Unless a crosser is classified as a Special Interest UDA (Undocumented Alien), no agents will be assigned to stand guard at the hospital. Additionally, for a series of reasons that include billing procedures, the Border Patrol is seldom present upon discharge so that hospitalized crossers get treated as

indigent people and are simply released.¹⁷ It is unknown how many people have been able to successfully “exit” the desert through emergency rooms.¹⁸

Clear social, political, and structural inequalities enable border actors to intervene on migrants as bodies and not people. Although the long-term implications of such an objectification are not insignificant – chief among them the reproduction of the structural conditions behind the very same inequalities – its immediate effects are also crucial. The longer crossers linger on the border, attempting or waiting to cross, the greater their exposure and vulnerability. The current enforcement policy of “catch and release” – in which “caught” Mexican border-crossers are “released” across the line, in effect creating what has been called “a revolving door policy” – reinforces the effects of the border on their bodies. Barred from the city and delegated to the space of the border/desert, the migrant is put in a position to become, borrowing Judith Farquhar’s reformulation of Agamben, “the exceptional creature – one whose life is a matter of indifference – who must be driven away from the city” (2005:305). Claims to the legitimacy of interventions hinge dialogically on the strategic deployment of the crosser’s biology and biography to negotiate his movement, position, and political potency across border space.

* * *

In this chapter, I have investigated the relation between the medicalization of activist approaches to aid migrants and the reappropriation of border space, exploring the

¹⁷ See GAO Report 04-590 (2004).

¹⁸ Doctors who work in border communities in Sonora and Arizona foresee many of these crossers developing diabetes and kidney disease in the future. A Nogales doctor said, “These people have basically boiled an organ or two, and gone ahead with their lives without seeing a doctor... It is very likely their border experience is not over yet” (Dra. Gamero, personal communication 2006).

articulation of the “right to help” claimed by humanitarian groups in the Arizona-Sonora region. Through an analysis of efforts that medicalize migrants, activists, and their operations, particularly around in the performance of “desert evacuations,” this chapter critically explores the spatio-temporal nuances of claims and interventions that render migrants’ exposed bodies as separate from the sociopolitical significance of their personal biographies. In order to navigate border space, medical interventions frequently objectify the migrant, fore-fronting his body as their target of rescue. These medical/ized intervention frameworks uphold the primacy of the protection of human life, while they simultaneously reveal the constructed social and political nature of this “bare life”. In examining the strategies to politicize the perception of threats to, and the protection of, bodies and life at the local level, the chapter also opens the discussion of border representations and mediation practices explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BORDER, THE DESERT & THE BIOPOLITICAL IMAGINATION:
MEDIA PRACTICES AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION FOR THE
RECORD, OFF THE RECORD, AND ON THE RECORD

The media transforms the great silence of things into its opposite. Formerly constituting a secret, the real now talks constantly. News reports, information, statistics, and surveys are everywhere.
- Michel de Certeau (1983:185)

“This is a big story.” The words of Marc Cooper from the University of Southern California Institute of Justice and Journalism, echoed in my head. Cooper was speaking to a room full of national reporters in a Tucson resort in the spring of 2006. They had all come to Arizona as part of the second Border Justice and Journalism (BJJ) fellowship. The room was full of smart, articulate, and well-intentioned media professionals—yet another crop of reporters out to discover for themselves and uncover for their audiences the “truths” of this border. These BJJ fellows had managed to convince their editors and producers to support multi-part project proposals that presented the everyday happenings of this border as newsworthy events. Not a hard sell when the result promised to be award-classic projects, and the tab was on someone else, in this case mostly the Ford

Foundation through the Institute for Justice and Journalism. Indeed, the conditions were set for these journalists to capture and produce *their own* big border stories.

This chapter focuses on the production of such stories mostly through the field practices of American media.¹ It offers an ethnographic examination of media practices in the Arizona-Sonora region, and of how border and desert stories mediate and shape each other. As I describe the coverage, production, and circulation of border-based issues, I explore the idea of the development of a collective biopolitical imagination, an imagination that conjures up visions of the body and its biological processes as a site of political production. I argue that the border is discursively fixed on the media-exposed bodies of those who cross in ways that enable its sociopolitical production and deployment anywhere these images and stories circulate.

In other words, I use this chapter to examine the practices and politics that allow the image of the migrant to be seen as the embodiment of the border. The object of this chapter is not an analysis of media representations in and of themselves (Chavez 2001; Berg 2002; Huebner 2003), nor of their reception by audiences (Lester and Ross 2003; Lozano 1996). Rather, my goal is to explore how media projects are proposed, produced, and circulated; and to examine through these processes both the effects such mediation has on border dynamics, and the sociopolitical imaginaries such dynamics engender. As this ethnographic study of journalistic production unfolds, it emphasizes the blurring lines between media producers, consumers, and protagonists (Peterson 2001; Abu-

¹ Although Mexican media outlets do assign border stories with some frequency, their coverage of the border tends to rely on Associated Press wires. Local reporters see immigration as an everyday border dynamic and, according to an *El Imparcial* bureau chief, typically not a news worthy one unless it involves a major event such as a significant enforcement operative, pattern change, or a particularly compelling story.

Lughod 2004; Dornfeld 1998). To do this, I approach the mediation of the border and its dynamics *for* the record, *off* the record, and *on* the record, thus providing a rudimentary sketch of the “regimes of truth” constructed around the depiction and mobilization of the unauthorized border crosser’s body.²

The border’s desert is a site of journalistic pilgrimage. Media professionals descend on it from all around the world, in search of its truths and the material for a few good news features or, with sufficient support, maybe even an investigative project. These seekers of the “big story” also arrive year-round, but particularly during the summer, dubbed “the season of death” by former Border Patrol Commissioner Robert C. Bonner—a description quoted repeatedly and with relish by scholars and journalists alike (e.g., Egan 2004; Nevins 2005; LoMonaco 2004). Far from news breaking or novel, on paper, these dramas depict classic variations on the overarching theme of human exodus and vulnerable nations, the common stories of exposed biologies and exposed national geographies. The border story is not new, but it is a good one, one that continues to compel a wide range of audiences, a story that has rewarded many a journalist with prizes, book contracts, and speaking engagements. The image of the border is transposed onto the crosser in the process of all of this media production. This fixing of the border onto exposed bodies involves a threatening process and invokes a threatening premise.

² Following Foucault, I examine the regimes of truth emerging from this border to the degree that they are characterized by five factors: they rely on institutional and expert discourse; they are “subject to constant economic and political incitement”; they are the object of diffusion and consumption; they are produced and transmitted under the influence of “great political and economic apparatuses”; and they are at the center of intense “political debate and confrontation” (Foucault 1984:73).

To unpack such dynamics, this chapter traces three domains in the production of visual and discursive border representations to parse out the relationship between media practices and imaginaries that separate the migrant's body from his personal story. First, I analyze a prototypical border story to introduce some of the elements, politics, and practices that characterize media coverage of the Arizona-Sonora border and migration issues. A discussion of the border as spectacle and the kinds of imaginaries it engenders follows. The second and larger part of this chapter offers an examination of the reproduction and circulation of border representations for the record, off the record, and on the record. Mediation practices for the record are approached through an analysis of events designed for journalistic consumption by activists and governmental agencies. Then, I explore factors that constrain, influence, or dictate reporting practices, but remain unspoken or "off the record." Lastly, I turn my attention to representations that stay "on the record" and become part of official and authoritative knowledge about this border. In this section, I focus on the production and use of *statistics* of border enforcement and migrant fatality. Ultimately, this analysis uncovers how "the big story" that arises from these narratives centers on the public's perception, anxieties, and hopes for the media-exposed border bodies.

Part 1. Border Wars and the Media Siege

Much like the cities of Tijuana or El Paso in decades past, the Arizona-Sonora region has become the public face of the U.S.-Mexico border in media depictions of unauthorized migration and border enforcement in the first years of the twenty-first century due to a combination of factors. Chief among them are the demands produced by the conflation

of immigration and border enforcement concerns in national debates, combined with the region's media accessibility. The region is logistically easy to navigate for outside observers, while still maintaining a particular air of remoteness and exoticism. In addition, it showcases a variety of institutions and organizations ready to facilitate the media's production quests. As this discussion will show, the myriad media projects produced each year about this area results as much from the combination of those conditions and the imaginaries engendered by existing border stories themselves, as from any investigative journalistic endeavor itself. The line that separates media production processes from the effects generated by border stories has become increasingly blurry.

Compelled by their own exposure to border stories, journalists arrive with the mission to fulfill the promise for spectacular projects made to their bureaus and editors. Typically intended to offer snapshots of human dramas, these projects dialectically reproduce *grosso modo* popular understandings of what is at stake at the intersection of border control and unauthorized migration; the life of the crosser and the security of the nation are, more often than not, the narrative focus. Yet, the potency of these projects derives from their capacity to reach a global audience, a public composed of citizen spectators who, through their very own media consumption, stake their involvement in the operational framework of this border.

Among hundreds of news clippings, business cards directing to Web-based projects, interview transcripts, and field notes collected during my transborder trips with journalists, an e-mail caught my attention: "Explorer: Border Wars premieres Wednesday, March 26 at 8pm." Intrigued not by the bellicose rhetoric, which is among the most common metaphors used to describe this border (see Payan 2006 and Dunn

1996), but by the idea of a border “premiere,” I incredulously follow the link. The image of a young U.S. Border Patrol agent frisking an indigenous-looking man against the blue mountains of the Sonoran Desert appears on screen. A disembodied, baritone voice with perfect diction declares, “McClafferty takes us on a mission.” Professional narration is the trademark of big-budget productions; this feature for the National Geographic Channel opens with a movie-trailer-quality voiceover: “The trail begins with a simple clue...” On cue, the camera zooms in on a faint mark of human movement left behind on the desert sand. “A footprint!”

Border Wars is yet another stereotypical enforcement account. Like most media consumers, I have seen various incarnations of the genre from the comfort of my own home, but I also witnessed their production in the Altar-Sasabe-Desert-Tucson-Nogales circuit multiple times, for every media format, in several languages, and for audiences from across the world. Although the overall story of human movement across this border does not change much, it now also speaks to the concerns of a global society struggling with issues of human mobility and vulnerability brought about by twenty-first century socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions (Tamas and Palme 2006; Guild and van Selm 2005; Freilich and Guerette 2006). Knowing how these stories are produced in the field, I decided to sit through and analyze the preview of this bellicose border rendition.

Border Wars unfolds as expected. Aerial shots of the region are shown as the omnipresent narrator describes “the rugged, harsh wilderness, [a place] with no highways, no houses, no water for miles.” It comes not as a surprise, either, that McClafferty is no regular agent, but a member of the Border Patrol’s Search, Trauma, and Rescue (BORSTAR) team. Through their presence alone, BORSTAR agents are a

public relations statement. Known for their friendly disposition and their celebrity-perfect tans and smiles, they double as the field face of the agency.³ In Arizona, those granted a ride along with the Border Patrol—from the media to politicians—will most likely have the opportunity to interview and photograph a BORSTAR agent.

On camera, McClafferty examines the found footprints; they betray the travels of a group of “three-booted men” who had passed through in the three hours prior. Estimating the walkers’ pace at about three miles per hour, and with knowledge of the trails in the region, McClafferty approximates their location; the enforcer/rescuer and his media entourage go in pursuit. In a region where hundreds and even thousands of migrants are detained on a daily basis, such an elaborate chase after such a small group almost seems not worth the trouble of a national-television production crew,⁴ but desperate journalists will take whatever action shots come their way. With the promise of footage depicting the interception and arrest of transgressing bodies in the near future, for this TV crew the wait must have seemed to have finally paid off.

Unlike print journalism, image-bound media producers rely on witnessing live action to produce their stories. Depending on their luck and the time of year, the opportunities for “action shots” can be few and far between. Long drives, long walks, and long waits characterize most border-enforcement and crossing action, and “none of that [waiting] makes for good TV,” a producer for a foreign TV conglomerate once complained. The National Geographic Channel crew also had done their share of

³ The good looks of BORSTAR agents were a common topic of conversation among consulate employees and some border activists. Even migrants being processed for repatriation often commented on the stature and charm of these men. There were fewer female BORSTAR agents.

⁴ There was a time in which, as a law-enforcement old timer put it, “you [could] throw a bucket of balls out [in the desert] and hit a few migrants,” (Marizco 2008, personal communication).

waiting; according to their production notes, they spent seven days filming with the Border Patrol alone. This pursuit with McClafferty was a promising moment, the action-based footage of a story to be delivered to their bosses and audiences.

If the story needed more than the three men who had spent four days and nights walking in the desert just to be captured on film, the Border Patrol put on one of their best performances, presenting an image of consistent technocratic efficiency. After driving a few miles north, McClafferty reappears on screen, studying a newfound footprint trail.⁵ The voiceover announces that the pursuers are “one to two miles behind the *fugitives*” (emphasis added). Just like that, in the lapse of a minute and by the producers’ command, the “three-booted men” are now actively running away from the law. At this point, instead of continuing on foot, McClafferty returns to his BORSTAR vehicle and radios in a helicopter request. The narrator described the unfolding scene:

Within minutes, a chopper shows up and starts to survey the area ... The chopper spots one man, then loses him in the brush ... Two agents set out on ATVs. Everyone else sets out on foot ... Our camera crew is instructed to stay back in case the men are armed ... Then, two unarmed men are discovered hiding in the bushes. A third man is picked up moments later ... None of them is carrying drugs or a weapon. They are just another group of men looking for work.⁶

But in the framework of *Border Wars*, these three crossers are much more than “just another group of men”; they are the crux of this story. Journalists chase after migrants because their narratives often depend on capturing and exposing them as a sort of border *corpus delicti*. That is, there is *no border story without the body, present or*

⁵ *Border Wars* production notes place two film crews were on the ground, which means at least two cameramen, two producers, and two anchors, not counting translators and fixers were around.

⁶ The narrator states these men paid 100 pesos to a smuggler to drive them to the border, though they traveled alone. In the smuggling business, drivers, guides and smugglers stand separate.

missing, of the border crosser. This is another instance in which the border is set to work through the selective juxtaposition of the crosser as a body, vis-à-vis the migrant as a person. The closer the media's depictions get to the border, literally speaking, the greater the emphasis placed on the crosser's body, its movement, detection, management, or vulnerability.

In the case of the project for the National Geographic Channel, if the encounter with the three men described above is the best that a well-supported, internationally renowned television crew can come up with to illustrate whatever a "border war" might look like, America's urge to barricade itself ought to be reconsidered, together with the war-based language attached to the boundary region and its migration issues. The three men were not belligerent. They resisted neither arrest nor interview. When asked to display their injuries for the camera, one of them carefully cuffed his pants compliantly revealing a coin-size scrape on his knee. The men spoke softly and briefly of children to feed, families left behind, and hopes for wages. The patrol agents on camera were courteous, skillful, and professionally detached. From the footage, it is possible to account for seven USBP agents, including one pilot and at least one medic, as well as a helicopter, two ATVs, a Humvee and another four-wheel drive vehicle, plus the background investment of other human and material resources assigned to help in the production of the show. Had it been a different day, one in which no national television crews were out hunting for border stories, these three crossers might have completed their journey. However, their luck that day was to play the role of "fugitives" in a dramatic show of force intended to illustrate a "border war" for mass-mediated consumption.

In this process, the mediation of border enforcement tends to make the migrant's body—the body that is sought and found by the Border Patrol, and that can be described, photographed, and filmed—the object of their narrative. However, stories about migration emphasize the humanity of these crossers; they are described as people with agency, volition, and complex reasons to cross the border. These two emphases converge in the narratives produced about this place, thus conflating the issues. As the migrants' biologies and biographies are separated, rewoven, and selectively portrayed and employed, they generate interesting possibilities for the contestation of authority, the legitimating of intervention practices, and the production of space. The construction of threats and priority concerns that may legitimize exceptional interventions depend on how these migrants are contextualized. Some narratives posit them as a threat to the border, others as threatened by the border. The interventions are designed, in either case, to target the crosser's body—to detain and deport him, or to rescue and treat him. Their justification depends, in part, on how, when, and to what audiences these tropes are played. Ultimately, at the center of this political field and its production is not the individual migrant, but the legitimacy of claims to control people and space.

Mass Mediation and the Bio/Political Imagination

In earlier chapters, I argue that the crafting of this border takes place partly in relation and reaction to the physical exposure of desert crossers (Chapters 2 and 3). Here, I discuss how the crafting of this sociopolitical space can be accomplished through mediation practices by examining the images, accounts, and tallies through which border phenomena are neatly compacted, put into circulation, and avidly consumed far beyond

their geopolitical confines. Throughout, I follow the shifting moments and effects of the media's emphasis on the border's legal, physical, and affective markings on a crosser's body, and the narration of his or her personal stories, struggles, and plans.⁷ In tracing this tension, I seek to examine the relationship between the imaginaries and reactions produced by these accounts and the constitution of legitimacy.

The imaginaries aroused through the representation of the U.S.-Mexico border dynamics are not only political (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Hansen and Stepputat 2001) and geopolitical (Agnew 2006). Rather, I explore the extent to which they are active components in this biopolitical field. In other words, I am interested in tracing the possibilities and limits of the production of a *biopolitical* imagination as part of efforts that, in strategically separating and reweaving together exposed biologies and biographies, seek to legitimate the control of people, their bodies, and the space they occupy. This argument examines the hegemonic conditions that allow the continuation of widely discussed policies that result in death.

Because the media helps shape the collective imagination, its role is fundamental in giving legitimacy to the border's operations. The interweaving of the image of the crosser and this space is infused throughout its regimes of truth giving. What we see in these practices is akin to what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest when they posit that, "the communication industries integrate the imaginary and the symbolic with the

⁷ Appadurai has suggested that at stake in the intersection of mass mediation and migration is indeed the very production of "modern subjectivities," due, in part, to the rapid flow of information and the constant movement of people throughout the globe, which combine in a contemporary moment "not as technically new forces, but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination" (1996:4).

biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power, but actually integrating them into its very functioning” (2000:33).

Based on my ethnographic work with journalists, and in an effort to reconsider the divide between mediation and perception (Dornfeld 1998; Abu-Lughod 2005; Spitulnik 2002), I suggest that those in the communications industries not only reproduce biopolitically based claims, but are also their consumers. Through their practices, an unauthorized crosser is portrayed as the embodiment of both a threatened and a threatening life. Were it not for the extensive management of these deaths (see Chapter 3), their exposure to the media could constitute a threat to the state claim to the monopoly of legitimate violence and control of space. When the crosser’s broken body is offered to viewers as the manifestation of border policies, the legitimacy of such controls is open to scrutiny. However, when the body of the migrant is presented as a transgressor, the state apparatus of border control reaffirms its (moral) authority, even more so when it presents itself as his savior—as is the case with BORSTAR.

Amid media narratives about unauthorized migration and its control, the border arises as a project in flux, a field of opportunities and challenges for the articulation of the state, civil society, and the political imagination, particularly in relation to powerful contemporary security and safety anxieties. The political implications of such mediation cannot be underestimated. As Benedict Anderson (1993) so famously argued, the rise of the mediation of knowledge in the form, for instance, of the newspaper and the map, created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of “imagined communities,” and hence the nation-state. For others, the power of the media lies in its relation to public opinion, the foundational component of a rational democratic society (Habermas 1991).

Yet others have cautioned about the potential of mass media to frame hegemonic social understandings, to weaken social ties, and the capacity of a population to think critically and independently (Adorno 1991).

Among the developments affecting the production imaginaries about the border/desert region, three closely related factors have caused fundamental shifts in mediation practices in the last few decades. The first is the rapid and pervasive expansion of “mediascapes,” defined as the “distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information ... and ... the images of the world created by these media” (Appadurai 1996:35). The revolutionary spread of real-time information is a second factor (Virilio 1998). A third aspect centers on the rise of consumer-produced and consumer-circulated representations. In the contemporary global geographies of mediation in which a resourceful citizen or spectator-turned-activist can reach as many viewers as a reporter, and command the attention of as many reporters as a press secretary, indeed, “the medium is the message—the sender is the receiver...” (Baudrillard 1994:84). However, even as the field of mediation expands and shifts, one aspect remains constant: the exposure of the migrant’s body. Without the crossing bodies to trigger biopolitical imaginaries, narratives of border risk, policy assessments, and intervention strategies remain unanchored.

Capturing the Border

In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), French philosopher Guy Debord declares that, “spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (1995:12). In approaching the mediation of the border

through such a lens, I explore the implications of the power of the mediated spectacle to delineate the social by privileging certain kinds of discourses and language, while excluding others from the field of representation. The power to determine what enters the domain of visibility is key; as Hannah Arendt suggested, “In the realm of human affairs, being and appearance are indeed one and the same” (2006:88). Thus, when the image of the migrant is deployed to illustrate the abstract notion of a vulnerable border, by that act, he is made to embody the source of vulnerability. By playing the crosser’s biology against his biography, media accounts effectively transpose and fix the border onto his body.

Furthermore, it is much easier to convey in a snapshot the condition of a crosser’s injured body, or his position in relation to the border, than to capture the nuances of his personal life. Still, media professionals will go to great lengths for good images and footage. Some of them work openly, but others resort to desperate measures. Documentary maker Jean-Marc Patnoe made quite an impression on the border activists with whom he was working after he tried to film an injured migrant being treated in an emergency room by hiding his camera with a T-shirt.

Still others plan months in advance to procure their material while subjecting themselves to rigorous standards, such as Border Justice and Journalism Fellow Rayner Ramirez (2004), who tried to produce a feature for NBC’s *Dateline*. He recounts the conditions under which his project proposal for the news magazine show had been approved: One, he had to find a crosser who spoke English “to accommodate [...] viewers.” Two, despite the repercussions, that person had to be willing to appear on national television identified as an unauthorized crosser. Three, his smuggler had to

consent his journey being filmed. Four, since NBC's legal protocols banned the producers from breaking the law themselves, they could not cross the border with the group. Instead, there would be two production crews, one that would follow the group to the boundary, and one that, with the help of GPS technology, would meet up with them in the United States. Ramirez found a smuggler who was initially interested, but this last point led to stalemate. Still enthusiastic about the project, he conceived of a way around the problem: If he could not do the filming himself, he would have a crosser do it. All he needed was to find a person that would fit the four above-mentioned criteria *and* who knew how to shoot video.

Surprisingly, he managed to find exactly such a candidate. Victor, an immigrant who had been living in New York, was heading back north after visiting his parents in Mexico. He not only spoke English, but also had taken a documentary filmmaking class at a community center. Together, they documented his journey. When Ramirez got back to his New York office, *Dateline* "had lost interest [...] [because] there was not enough of a dramatic arc in the story." He later sold the piece to Telemundo, a TV corporation that caters to Spanish-speaking audiences in the United States.

In a separate instance, a cameraman for a Southern European TV crew was not willing to take chances with his footage, as he was aware of the limited opportunities to capture the dramatic element of that initial jump over the border fence. Lying on the ground, he documented the men and women as they moved carefully, but swiftly, through an opening in the barbed-wire railing. As they advanced on the trail, he jumped up and began gesturing and shouting for the crossers to turn around. Startled, they rushed back into Mexico. "The take was no good," he explained to his translator.

Beyond what is readily made visible on the page or the screen, a complex set of power relations frame the images that capture the crossers' bodies as part of the border for mass-mediated consumption. The media, just like other actors in this social geography, intervene in the spatial production of the border by laying claim to the migrants' bodies and stories. If law enforcement stakes a right to act on these bodies in the name of national security, and if activists stake their right to save them on the basis of their vulnerable biologies, the media in turn claims a right to capture and reproduce visions of these the crossers for the sake of the information, the viewing pleasure, anxieties of the citizen-consumer in the *polis*.

The Border as Political Spectacle

The spectacle of the migrant's body—the blisters, the teary eyes, the swift feet maneuvering fences—as the media centerpiece, weaves together the various elements of the typical border news feature. The expert's commentaries, the humanitarian worker's actions, the Border Patrol statistics, and the local resident's frustration, all join in discursively affixing the border to the figure of the crosser. Even through indirect invocation, these border bodies are conjured in complaints about cut fences and the littered desert, about Arizona's emergency-room deficits and law-enforcement insufficiencies. In these discursive productions for mass consumption, the media offer these bodies to viewers and readers as proof of a broken border and a vulnerable nation. Politics of fear and of pity tensely meet in the imaginaries aroused by the mass-mediated depiction of migrants moving slowly, painfully, but surely, across the desert. On the one hand, at work in the depiction of border-broken bodies and threatened lives is more than

a perverse spectacle of suffering; rather, it is a politics of pity (Arendt 2006; Boltanski 1999). Different from compassion or sympathy, the politics of pity creates and works on the basis of social distance derived from the “observation of *unfortunate* by those who do not share their suffering, who do not experience it directly, and who, as such, may be regarded as fortunate or *lucky* people” (Boltanski 1999:3, original emphasis). Even in this regard, the workings of the border are made manifest on the body of the unauthorized crosser; his exposed biology serves to further demarcate him as an outsider, as separate from those who view his image on screen and paper.

Boltanski suggests that public speech in this context becomes the minimal form of subjective action. Whether this takes the form of a shared lament or a full-on denunciation, “it is by speaking up that the spectator can maintain his integrity when, brought face-to-face with suffering, he is called upon to act in a situation in which direct action is difficult or impossible” (Boltanski 1999:20). Framing these interventions under a politics of pity allows an examination of citizen spectators while bracketing the condition of the suffering and the impact of such interventions on them. Among humanitarian activists in the Sonoran Desert, public pronouncements are a form of direct intervention. Throughout the development of the “Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime” campaign, one of the main objectives of these activists was to assert their “right to save lives” (Chapter 5). This form of action, its objectives, and effects are tightly linked to the biopolitical imagination; in other words, as they develop, they reaffirm understandings of the subjection and exposure of bodies as part of an exercise of power over people, relations, and space. In this sense, the biopolitical imagination and public

pronouncements on border-induced suffering and migrant exposure inform and constitute one another.

On the other hand, and none too distant from the politics of pity, the politics of fear also rises from the images coming from the border and desert. “The society of spectacle,” argue Hardt and Negri, “rules by wielding an age-old weapon. Hobbes recognized long ago that for effective domination, ‘the Passion to be reckoned open is Fear [sic]’” (in 2000:323). If, however, as Baudrillard (1981) suggests, a contemporary society of spectacle cannot be, and the very condition of the position of the spectator is no longer possible, then depiction of suffering is no spectacle, and all that is left is the hyper-reality of exposure. “Fear is the direct perception of the contemporary condition of possibility of being-human,” proposes Massumi (1993:12). To the extent that images of border-exposed bodies expose viewers to the effects of their nation’s territorial policies, their circulation has the potential to saturate the social space with discourses of fear and anxiety that further demarcates the separation between the viewed and the viewers, the unauthorized crossers and the recognized dwellers of the *polis*.

Much like the politics of pity, the politics of fear brings with it discursive action. In recent years, Southern Arizona has become a hotbed of activity propelled by fear and anxiety. The power of volunteer groups “massing along the border, is forcing the country to notice that there is a problem with illegal immigration,” said Glen Spencer, of the citizen-based American Border Patrol, when interviewed by the *Arizona Daily Star* about the first month-long Minuteman “border defense project” in 2005. “You have a *verbal warfare* going on along the border,” he continued (Marizco 2005b, emphasis added). Behind the desire and capacity to wage “verbal warfare” lurks the power of the

biopolitical imagination. At stake in this battle, fought from the border's trenches on the minds and hearts of anyone who would listen, are not only the value of life and death, or political regulation of space, but also the very constitution of the sociopolitical collective, the *polis*.

By looking at mediation processes and representational narratives advanced by prototypical media approaches to the coverage of this border and its migration tropes, I have argued that in the ways they are presented, the border and the crosser become indexical of each other. Such representational conflation or transposition of the transgressed border onto the moving, injured, or simply media-exposed body of the migrant reflects the work of the biopolitical imagination, which I see as the politics emergent from collective imaginaries impelled by the perception of the human body and its biology in relation to the sociopolitical space. After having examined the politics of spectacle in which border coverage is anchored, this discussion now turns to some of the more specific factors and prerogatives that shape the knowledge, sociality, and politics resulting from the mass mediation of this border.

Part 2. An Ethnography of Mediation Practices

The second part of this chapter examines the conditions that affect media coverage of border and desert issues. Through an ethnographic discussion of practices for the record, on the record, and off the record, I explore how the border is reproduced in relation to the circulation of knowledge on-site and beyond. Through these, I analyze the image of the border that emerges from the attempt of competing actors to shape what is explicitly intended to be made visible, what is allowed to remain and become part of the permanent

record, and what is kept hidden, intentionally or not, from public awareness. Two main points are emphasized in the discussion that follows: (1) the reliance on the media to create and re-create border phenomena, and (2) the reliance on the body to convey such phenomena across space.

The Border For the Record, or “the Media Circus” Comes to the Desert

Much of what the public knows about the Arizona-Mexico border comes from activities and information designed *for* the record. One morning, I curiously followed a volunteer doctor making his rounds among a dozen men who were recovering from their desert wounds in a church room that had been transformed into “hospitality center.” The doctor inspected blisters and swollen ankles, and reminded the men to keep their injuries clean, maintain icing regimens, drink water, and take their anti-inflammatories.

The injuries, which could have been lethal in the desert, seemed rather benign in the cool shelter of the church, particularly since the men were considerably more engrossed in the *Copa América de Fútbol* semifinal on the television than on the ministrations of the good doctor. That is, until the doctor got to Roman: he had saved the worst for last. The heavily bandaged feet of the 40-year-old stood high above the line of cots and sleeping pads on the floor. Despite his enthusiasm for the soccer match, it was evident he was in some physical pain. “This is the worst case of blisters I’ve ever seen,” the doctor explained as he dexterously removed the bandages. “I’m treating them as burns,” he added. Only the area around the foot arches looked remotely normal.

Reading perhaps the expression on my face, Roman said, “*Está cabrón caminar así, ¿verdad?*”⁸

A few minutes later, a woman came in to snap a photo of Roman’s soles. I did not pay much mind to the photo-taking moment until weeks later, when I saw the glossy print at a press conference, causing a chain reaction of shrieks, frowns, and disapproving head shakes. As the image circulated, it developed a social life of its own. The photo had been taken for the record; it was captured with the specific intention to be put into circulation because of its perceived potential to convey the border’s effect on flesh.

At its most basic level, the reproduction of border knowledge, images, and discourses *for* the record reflect deeply embattled politics. In the words of immigration control activists Glen Spencer, it is a media-enabled “verbal warfare” intended to capture the collective imagination, shape public opinion, and affect government border policies. I was often surprised not only by the number and frequency of authors, journalists, and filmmakers covering the region, but by the savvy ways in which local actors attracted and managed them. Following their activities, it soon became evident that the line separating media production and consumption is indeed blurry. Scholars have suggested that people construct themselves as simultaneous media users, consumers, and owners (Appadurai 1996; Abu-Lughod 1997; Ginsborg 2002; Spitulnik 2003). These dynamics offer a prime example of such phenomena.

In essence, it is through mediation efforts that civil and governmental actors stake out their claims to intervene across border space and on migrants’ bodies. The media-oriented activities of most of these actors could be divided into two main categories:

⁸ “It’s [expletive] to walk in this condition, right?”

accommodations to allow journalists to witness direct border interventions, and the production of events exclusively intended for media consumption aimed at affecting domestic American public opinion.

A case in point is the Samaritan Patrol—a desert aid organization with a membership that includes scholars, medical professionals, attorneys, and veteran activists—which has carefully discussed and delineated their media protocols. While some activists believe that tending to journalists should take second place to their migrant rescue work, all agree that by drawing media attention, they have a chance to affect public imagination about this border and shape public opinion. While it is a priority, their efforts paled in comparison to the media success of the Minuteman Project.

In September of 2004, Chris Simcox, a former kindergarten teacher turned newspaper editor and founder of the Civil Defense Corps, together with Jim Gilchrist, a Vietnam veteran and retired accountant, issued a call to “all Americans” to protect the nation’s borders, starting in Arizona. Promoted as the “largest neighborhood watch program ever put together by Americans, with the direct claim of challenging the President of the United States to do his job” (Schwartz and Gaynor 2005), the Minuteman Project was a media phenomenon from its very announcement. By January 2005, their Web site had received millions of hits, and was a topic of conversation among locals, media, and government officials in both the United States and Mexico. “I want YOU to protect America’s borders,” the Web site welcomed its visitors. The finger-pointing image of Uncle Sam, the iconic American call to patriotic duty, floated on

screen. The organizers hoped that many “patriots” would respond to their call for 30 spring days of citizen-based border policing.⁹

Both attention and nervousness snowballed in the months preceding the group’s deployment. In Mexico City, federal migration officials nervously monitored the group’s Web site for any developments or clues about the activities to come. Some expressed a mixture of consternation and disbelief that thousands of angry armed men with military expertise would patrol the border with Sonora to “hunt down” Mexican nationals trying to cross.¹⁰ President Vicente Fox called them “*cazamigrantes*,” migrant-hunters; President Bush denounced their project and labeled them vigilantes (Lakely 2005). The American Civil Liberties Union designated full-time personnel to oversee the Minutemen outposts. The Border Patrol deployed 500 additional agents to the region that month. Mexico summoned its northern Beta Agents to the Agua Prieta office, south of Douglas. Rumor had it that even the *Mara Salvatrucha*, the infamously violent transnational Salvadoran gang, had deployed to the border to “welcome” the Minutemen. Captivated by all the talk of “blood on sand, heads on spikes” (Marizco 2008), media outlets from all over the world sent some of their best reporters. Adding to the expectation of violence, in the early 2000s, there had been much coverage of “border militia activity” emerging in

⁹ The fact that April was selected as the month for the civil deployment is significant both in terms of attracting volunteers—it would have been a more challenging to do it in the heat of summer—and the possibilities of running into border crossers. Migratory flows reach their annual peak in spring.

¹⁰ In Mexico, gun possession is severely restricted by the federal government. Permits are difficult to obtain and must be requested directly from the Department of Defense, which is also the only entity authorized to issue non-sport firearms. In Arizona, on the contrary, just about anyone may have and carry a weapon as long as it is in plain sight. Rural Arizona’s gun culture, in combination with concerns aroused by the Minutemen, was as a reason of alarm among some of these functionaries on the Mexican side.

the region. Groups such as Ranch Rescue, based out of Texas, and the American Border Patrol, headed by Glen Spencer, captured public attention with their angry language, mediated images, and their call for direct civilian action.

Ranch Rescue's military-quality gear, use of dogs, and performance of civilian arrests had caused consternation from civil protections and liberal groups throughout the United States. The group gained notoriety through the electronic circulation of photos of some of its members, posing in full gear and armed with hunting rifles showcasing their drug seizures and detained crossers. Then, in June of 2003, *Leiva v. Ranch Rescue* was filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, charging the organization with assault and false imprisonment of a group of Salvadoran migrants.¹¹ Simcox's first citizen patrol, Civil Homeland Defense Corps, was seen as a spin-off of Ranch Rescue. Its sudden spike in membership intensified concerns about its violent potential, which in turn made covering the organization even more appealing to the media. "It all sounds rather explosive even before you add the illegal immigrants and their criminal smugglers," noted a *Los Angeles Times* (2005) editorial, further adding to the expectations the day before the big meet in Tombstone.

Everyone expected trouble, including the Minutemen. Although they repeatedly insisted that the civilian patrols were to serve as merely "extra sets of eyes" for the Border Patrol, it was everyone's eyes that were on them. In the days preceding the event,

¹¹ On March 18, 2003, Ranch Rescue associates clothed in camouflaged uniforms accosted a group of Salvadoran immigrants traveling on foot through Sutton Ranch. According to the migrant's account, "They were interrogated, threatened with death and otherwise terrorized by Sutton before finally being released" (*Leiva v. Ranch Rescue*, 6/23/2003). In 2005, the plaintiffs received Sutton Ranch (worth about \$1.5 million) in compensation. The settlement made national news.

instead of the promised 10,000 civilian corps, organizers reported amidst pressure 956 registered volunteers, 40% of whom were supposedly women and people of color (Marizco 2005c). No evidence was ever provided to back up such enrollment statistics.

When April 1 rolled around, there was not a single hotel room available in all of Tombstone, Bisbee, and Douglas. It was a windy Friday morning, and well-equipped photographers and TV crews could be spotted roaming among the cowboy impersonators in the dusty streets of Tombstone, the “Town Too Tough to Die.” As the volunteer orientation time approached, the media gathered outside Scheiffelin Hall. Estimates vary of total number of participants. Some said there were as many Minutemen as media men, others insisted that the ratio was as much as three media observers per Minuteman volunteer. Minutemen were seriously outmanned by the press corps, with only about 100 to 150 volunteers responding to the call, a far cry from the furious civilian battalion of 10,000 men the leadership had once predicted, and which the media had repeated so anxiously.

Armed with binoculars, lawn chairs, and myriad American flags, they were excited to be there, and it showed. A man with a scooter planned to celebrate his 76th birthday standing guard on Border Road. Another participant dragged around an oxygen tank and wore a pistol, eliciting plenty of commentary among reporters during the after-hours. For the most part, the Minutemen volunteers were retirees who looked no more dangerous than the thousands of other “snowbirds” Arizona receives each winter.

The tremendous political impact of the Minuteman Project did not come from brute force or raw numbers, but from the organization’s ingenious capacity to summon the media and manage their message. Despite the low turn out, the organizers declared

project a success. “We have already accomplished our goal a hundredfold,” Gilchrist declared during the orientation. “We got our message out to public” (Carroll 2005b). Local border reporters, more familiar with Simcox’s history of press announcements that yielded minimal volunteer turnout, had already critiqued the “media circus” that formed around the Minutemen affair. “Media circus” and all, they continued their coverage of the events.

The fact that the Minuteman kickoff rally took place on a Friday was part of the media brilliance of the project. Newspapers expected three to four days of front-page stories, including a Sunday paper special, when readership is at its max. A Friday project launch gave reporters a couple of days to cover, photograph, and produce the story.¹²

Aware of the importance of images, organizers urged participants to bring their state flags *with* poles so they could be continuously displayed. Signage for the protests, the organizers emphasized in their instructions, must not show “anger towards Mexico”; rather, “our messages must be directed at [the U.S.] government, as they are the only ones who can solve the problem.” With flags and signs on hand, and a few members wearing caps and T-shirts that read “Undocumented Border Patrol Agent” (designed by a clever local entrepreneur and pre-ordered for the event), the small civilian contingent divided into smaller groups following their site assignments.

¹² Showing a similar understanding, the organizers of the Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime Campaign (Chapter 4) scheduled their press conference on Wednesdays at noon, thinking their recurrence would probably not attract continuous Sunday paper coverage, but knowing that Thursday’s circulation was the weekdays’ highest because of the weekend guide insert. “Activists need the media to provide that coverage, just as the media depend on activists and other sources for news to report” (Best 2001:15); yet, as communication channels open up with new technologies, they are doing more of the reporting themselves.

The expectation of conflict and the potential of violence that had brought the media to these Arizona border towns bound them to the Minutemen throughout the weekend. “There was the hope that someone would get shot,” explained former Arizona Daily Star and independent border reporter Michel Marizco. However, the event ultimately proved none too dramatic. By the second day, the reporters had no doubt that they were the actual target of the project. Journalists had come from as far as France and Spain, from all over Mexico and the U.S. to cover the border militia. Rick Loomis, senior photographer for the *Los Angeles Times* explained to me, “Of course we were going to come! They told us there would be thousands of angry men with guns heading for the border!” Although the story turned out to be not quite what everyone had anticipated, they were expected to produce great writing and visual material. It was time to show their cunning.

The coverage in the *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, is exemplary. On the eve of the meet, the border war drums had rolled an editorial entitled “A Dangerous Line in the Sand.” On April 1, columnist Steve Lopez warned about the problems of social and racial relations in his, “Posse is Headed for the Wrong Roundup” opinion piece. On April 2, David Kelly’s first report from Arizona appeared, “Minutemen Prepare to Lay Down the Law; Civilian border patrols rally troops in Arizona. And they’re making their presence known” (2005a).¹³ The enthusiasm about the coverage of the story began to deflate by Sunday, April 3. The headline for Kelly’s story read, “Citizen Border Patrols Hurry Up... and Wait: As their month-long mission gets going, the Minutemen, armed with enthusiasm and often more, catch sightings of little besides wildlife” (2005b). It

¹³ Editors write headlines, not reporters, although they can often propose language.

was a Sunday-paper quality story, with great prose and complete with color photos but, much to Kelly's disappointment, it did not make the front page, appearing instead on page A20.

In an unexpected act of divine intervention that denied the Minutemen the media thunder they had been hoping for, the long-ailing Pope John Paul II died the evening of April 2. Newspapers throughout the world ran the same wire story on their front pages that Sunday. The Pope's "untimely" death was also bad news for the border-embedded journalists, whose expected stellar front-page bylines had been suddenly downgraded. "Had he lived just one more day," a Colorado reporter lamented as he checked his newspaper's Web site during breakfast.

Kelly filed two additional stories from Arizona. On Sunday, we had spent the day with Grupo Beta and ran into a group of migrants who were waiting for the Minutemen to pack up so they could cross (Chapter 2). The headline for the story that came out of that day's work read: "A Roadblock, Not a Barrier for Migrants: Amid the campaign of the Minuteman patrols, arrests and illegal traffic have dropped. Many border-crossers say they'll just try again" (2005c). Kelly's byline finally make it to the paper's A1 that Thursday: "Border Watchers Capture Their Prey—the Media" (2005d), which was his final story on the group. He had met Gilchrist for breakfast to ask him a few questions about the group's success in attracting "more than 200 journalists from all over the world." Gilchrist was surprisingly candid.

This thing was a dog and pony show designed to bring in the media and get the message out, and it worked. ... Look, I struck the mother lode of patriotism by using the Minuteman theme. ... Then I used the theme of Martin Luther King's nonviolent action, never let up and *keep getting the message out*. To me, the

illegal aliens are economic refugees. They are not an invading army. It's a silent Trojan horse invasion that is eroding our culture (in Kelly 2005d).

The group's mission "to bring serious media and political attention to [their] event" (Gilchrist in Biesada 2005: np), had been accomplished beyond expectations.

Before long, Minutemen chapters began to appear throughout the nation. Three years after that April 1, 2005 performance, the Minutemen claimed to have sighted 30,671 "illegal aliens" and rescued 326 of them during 279 days on watch at the U.S.-Mexico border (www.minutemenhq.org 3/30/2005). The organization now has hundreds of chapters in all 50 states.

In many ways, the media success of the Minutemen derived not only from their own profile construction and image management, but also from the social relations and practices that shape the media *off* the record. The next section explores the aspects of knowledge production that shape the mediation of the border and determine the contours of journalistic perception while remaining largely outside of public view.

The Border Off the Record: Politics & Practices of Story Making

The stories that are picked up by the media, and the angles with which they are presented, result from a complicated combination of business practices, social relations, financial constraints, and individual imaginaries and aspirations that, while being powerful factors in the process of mediation, remain off the record. The power of these unspoken factors is best illustrated with an example.

Among the recurrent hate mail, and the few congratulatory messages received by border and immigration reporters, tips arrive with certain frequency. "Did you hear about

the drug bust in [some place] this morning?" anonymous callers ask rhetorically. Because verifying the information takes a couple of phone calls and generates copy for the next day's edition with minimal effort, reporters tend to follow up. "It's a win-win-win situation," a reporter said mockingly once. The reporter's respectability gets a boost by making him come across as having access to insider knowledge to the feds, and productive to his bosses. The newspaper gets a 35-word brief. The federal agency involved gets to look efficient. Finally, the anonymous caller, whom journalists believe is probably the person who lost the load in the first place, avoids trouble by having proof that the drug was indeed confiscated.

On the record, the border's social geography represented in these stories appears straightforward: demand for illegal drugs leads to criminal drug smuggling, which leads to greater law enforcement that keeps the border under control and America safe. Off the record, the dynamics around such phone calls reveal richly complex geographies of interests, power relations, and knowledge flows brought together into action by the power of the media. One of the main differences between this case and those who produce events for media consumption and delivery, like the Minutemen, is that the complicated relation media-border actor is kept off the record while the story it produces enters into public discourse and shapes or reaffirms the public imagination of this border as a site of transgression and policing. On the surface, the media is typically taken simply as the bearer of news. However, by taking a closer look at the everyday practices that shape journalistic activity, it is possible to begin to distinguish the complex web of social and political relations in which it is embedded, and thus begin to sketch a more revealing approach to its social location and production.

All border coverage, from the multi-series special investigation project to the three-sentence news brief, is unavoidably embedded in thick politics on multiple levels. Certainly, border coverage affects political debate by introducing stories, language, and “facts” into the public domain. In this process, there is no element or actor that is politically neutral or disinterested, and this includes the media itself. As the anonymous tippers show, people are as much users as they are producers, mediators, or originators of these news stories. The basic social and political relations around this mediation dynamic would have remained the same even if the information about the drug bust had come in the form of a press release from a state agency, as is more usually the case,¹⁴ or if the reporter had been on a ride-along when the seizing agents had made their catch.

Behind every one of these stories, there is a complex series of information exchange and power plays tensely set around the production of this border’s regimes of truth. Typically left unmentioned and unexamined, the conditions of possibility that delimit reporting activities are key to understanding the kind of representations emerging from the border and the imaginaries they conjure wherever they circulate. What happens off the record at the border goes beyond the idea that “to speak off the record is to have the opportunity to speak without being discursively responsible for the truthfulness of one’s words,” as others have argued (Peterson 2001:202). To appear on record involves a potential vulnerability brought about by exposure, but to shape what goes on the record while remaining off it implies power. Although I am interested in the constitution of power and social relations engendered by anonymity and confidentiality in information

¹⁴ Press releases have a privileged place in everyday border mediation practices. Journalists sometimes jokingly refer to their colleagues who rewrite press releases for publication as the “voices of the state.”

exchanges with and among journalists—the prototypical “off the record” comments—the bulk of this section examines a much more benign, but still potent dynamic: the structural constraints of reporting practices. First, I examine how social, financial, and political structures of the media shape the experience of the journalist on the border, and how that translates to the depiction of the border on the screen and on the page. Through this analysis, I explore the factors that shape the reporter’s reliance on depicting bodies—the body of the crosser, the civilian volunteer, the patrolling agent—and how it differs from their treatment of people’s biographical stories to understand, investigate, and illustrate the border in their stories. Looking at how journalistic projects are proposed, produced, and circulated, it is possible to sketch the capillary power of the biopolitical imagination as an intricate component and operational framework of this border.

As a site characterized by transgression, risk, and human dramas, the border continues to be an ever-present concern. Yet, business priorities in the communications industries are increasingly forbidding of nuanced journalistic investigations. Not insignificant in the list of constraining factors, financial concerns fundamentally shape the mass mediation of the border. The negative effect of the Internet on newspaper profits has had a paradoxical effect on border coverage: it has generated more, but reduced its scope. “In 2003, there were eight reporters exclusively assigned to the border beat in Southern Arizona,” explains Marizco. “Now there are only two, [...] and [the one who works for] *The Arizona Republic* covers it from Phoenix, which is 150 miles away from the border, so there is technically one” (Marizco 2008). As newspapers themselves break news with massive layoffs, cost-cutting measures behind closed doors affect the kind of stories reporters can pursue and how they may go about it. In 2004, the *Arizona*

Daily Star gave Marizco three full months to work exclusively on “Smuggling Children,” a multi-part investigative project that kept him and photographer Kelly Presnell traveling between Tucson, North Carolina, and various Mexican towns, eventually earning them and the *Star* several awards.¹⁵

The fact that the story focused on the journey of children added to its award potential. Aware of this factor, Sonia Nazario set out to find a minor that would fit the story she wanted to craft. In the introduction to *Enrique’s Journey*, the book based on her 2002 series for the *Los Angeles Times*, Nazario writes,

The average child the Border Patrol catches who comes alone over the U.S.-Mexico Border is a fifteen-year-old boy. I wanted to find a boy who was coming for his mother and had traveled on trains. ... In May 2000, I scoped out a dozen shelters and churches in Mexico along the 2,000-mile-long U.S. border that help migrants, including minors. I visited a few. I told each priest or shelter director what I was after. I called each place day after day to see if such a child had arrived (Nazario 2006:xviii).

Nazario’s approach is a good example of contemporary border coverage practices. With a story idea already in mind, she set out to reconstruct the boy’s journey earning a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, the George Polk Award for International Reporting, and the Grand Prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards. *Enrique’s Journey* was preceded with uncanny similarity in style and approach by Ignacio Ibarra’s “Marvin’s Journey” (2000) and Marizco’s “Smuggling Children” (2004a and 2004b) for the *Arizona Daily Star*, as well as Susan Carroll and Gabrielle Fimbre’s “Desperate

¹⁵ The story earned Marizco and the *Arizona Daily Star* recognition from the Casey Medals for Meritorious Journalism 2005, Casey Journalism Center 2nd Place; Best of the West, Words, Editing and Design, 2nd Place 2004; Lee President’s Awards for News and Innovation 2005; Beat Reporting, Arizona Press Club 2004; Sustained Reporting, Arizona Press Club 2004; and Enterprise Reporting, Associated Press Managing Editors 2004.

Journey: Women and Children at the Border” for the *Tucson Citizen* (2002). All were award-winning stories.

As newspaper budgets for investigative projects shrink with measures intended to maintain profit margins, receiving awards as indicators of “journalistic excellence” becomes ever more important. Also, because the possibilities of undertaking prolonged assignments have diminished, so-called “special projects,” which are speedier and more formulaic in their approach, are becoming more popular. Special projects do not necessarily shed new light on the topics on which they focus, but by providing a quick “snapshot” composed of a few great photos and an assemblage of quotes on readily identifiable issues, media outlets maintain their image as public watchdogs (Peterson 2001). This has veteran journalists disillusioned and upset. Writing for the *Washington Post*, ex-*Baltimore Sun* reporter David Simon alerts readers that,

[E]ven the more serious newspapers in most markets, high-end journalism doesn't take the form of consistent and sophisticated coverage of issues, but of special projects and five-part series on selected topics—a distraction designed not to convince readers that a newspaper aggressively brings the world to them each day, but to convince a prize committee that someone, somewhere, deserves a plaque (Simon 2008).

As a proven topic of award-committee approval, the Arizona-Mexico border has become a target of special projects and their recycling of stories.

Typically constrained by budgets, deadlines, and their own knowledge of the region and the issues, reporters working on these special assignments turn to the work of their colleagues for inspiration. With an “I can do that better” approach, reporters for national media outlets continuously take stock of locally produced work to frame their own. Sometimes national media will even contact local reporters and ask them for

contacts and directions. For example, a couple of weeks after Marizco had filed a story about tactics used by smugglers in Sasabe,¹⁶ he got a phone call from a correspondent from a weekly national magazine. “Hey, my editors want me to do your story,” she said over the phone. “How do I get to Sasabe? And, how do I get a hold of this smuggler guy you talk about?” Marizco just rolled his eyes. It had taken him several trips over the course of a month to gain the trust of this group of smugglers.

At least when it comes to Arizona-Mexico border coverage, the recycling of stories, the practice by which different reporters reproduce an older story with a slightly different angle or with a different regional audience in mind, obviously limits coverage to a small number of issues and places, and to an often self-selecting set of actors and institutions. Reporters land in the Sonoran Desert ready to claim their stake in its overall narration, encouraged by the proven possibility of recognition that special projects on this border typically earn, the ever-present human theater of unauthorized crossing and enforcement, the ever-heated national debates on border-related issues, and the growing visibility of migrants throughout the nation (Massey 2008).

With widely available and searchable news archives, it only takes a few minutes to find out the main places to visit, the organizations that are in favor of and against migration, and the key interview-granters within the major agencies and institutions involved. A few more clicks yield the contact information of media liaisons and information gatekeepers; interviews are scheduled; statistics and other data requested. A few e-mail exchanges later, the fieldtrip agenda is set. In most cases, it includes outings with the Border Patrol, a pro-border-control organization, and a humanitarian group;

¹⁶ “Sasabe, Sonora, has turned into a smugglers' haven” (Marizco 2005f).

interviews with the Mexican Consulate, hospital representatives, the medical examiner, and law enforcement; visits to shelters or a day out in Nogales or Altar to interview aspiring crossers,¹⁷ and, if a contact is secured, one or two ranchers or other locals.

As the media turns to itself as a source and guiding framework for the production of what appears and circulated as “news,” it reasserts dominant discourses, in the process solidifying public imaginaries while erasing more complex, nuanced, and grounded views of social phenomena. As exemplified by these off-the-record factors, border mediation is shaped by the position, desires, and capabilities of actors intimately interwoven in the complex set of social, legal, and political relations that characterize border space.

The production of special projects in the Arizona-Sonora region unfolds in its annual cyclicity. In winter, the stories are about *paisanos*, long-established immigrants, heading south to spend the holidays with their families. In spring, we see the production of mass migration and insufficient border enforcement. In summer, “the season of death” is a media favorite. As fall rolls around, the stories center on numbers, statistics, and budgets—on records—mostly in tune with the fiscal year used by the Department of Homeland Defense, which ends on September 30.

The reproduction of these slightly altered, so-called “perennial stories” perpetuates existing narratives in a way that allows for the border to be rendered dramatically anew, and yet the same, with each repetition. Insecurity and vulnerability

¹⁷ Frequently, American reporters neglected Mexican visa requirements, an oversight they attributed to the American angle of their stories. It takes three to four weeks to obtain a Mexican FM3 visa authorizing work in the country for several weeks. A day visa, an FM1, can also be requested from the Instituto Nacional de Migración at most ports of entry, but the process takes a full day—precious time when reporters have only a few days to work on the border.

tropes are typically deployed for this purpose because they conjure notion of crises, which are, by definition, always-momentous matters. The pairing of such discourses with images of crossers makes these stories understandable, compelling, and identifiably dramatic. In this way, through the recurring coupling of migrant bodies and narratives of border danger set in place by a wide array of factors that remain off the record (journalistic practices among them), a biopolitical understanding of this border reaffirms its place in the collective sociopolitical imaginary.

The Border on the Record: Explanations, Statistics & Performance of Truth

In examining border coverage, it is crucial to understand how practices *off* the record and *for* the record shape what stays *on* the record and becomes historical precedent, a source of authoritative knowledge, and part of the official registry of this border's regimes of truth. What remains on the record is in many ways determined by the political relations and social processes that frame the production and circulation of knowledge in the first place. In this last section, I examine how particular data, interpretations, facts, and narratives manage to become part of this border's official records.

Statistics offer an excellent example of how information on the record comes to shape and be shaped by politics, as "a medium of communication *and* a species of commodified knowledge, one whose veracity accumulates as it circulates (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006:209-210). Numerical representations are often presented in ways that obscure or minimize their limitations, as social constructs, to convey phenomena accurately and comprehensively. Because of the privileged position statistics play in the constitution and operation of domains of knowledge and regimes of truth, they are often

(mistakenly) presented and taken as objective and neutral representations, and become evidence of sorts. Statistics regarding U.S.-Mexico border phenomena represent a prime site to demonstrate that the exact opposite is at work. Numeric representations, much like any other form of representation, are essentially political; they reflect the cultural and structural contexts in which they are compiled, interpreted, and mobilized.

A typical case demonstrating the sociality and politics behind the production of statistics emerges when we examine the constant effort to estimate the unauthorized border crosser population. The September 20, 2004 issue of *Time* provides a good example. The cover reads, “America’s Borders: Even after 9/11, it’s outrageously easy to sneak in.” The 13-page special investigation by Pulitzer Prize winner duo Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele is the typical award-winning story in many ways. The story portrays images of migrants jumping over barbed-wire fences, border patrol agents amidst desert fields of discarded migrant belongings, ranchers upset by broken fences, as well as cost-benefit analyses of unauthorized migration and criminality rates.¹⁸ And yet, once beyond the third paragraph, the story—of the varied characters that people the desert—becomes more or less irrelevant. The power of that third paragraph lies in its *statistical* picture of border transgression and vulnerability.

It’s fair to estimate, based on a *Time* investigation, that the number of illegal aliens flooding into the U.S. this year will total 3 million—enough to fill 22,000 Boeing 737-700 airliners, or 60 flights every day for a year. It will be the largest wave since 2001 and roughly triple the number of immigrants who will come to the U.S. by legal means (No one knows how many illegals are living in the U.S., but estimates run as high as 15 million.) (Barlett and Steele 2004:52).

¹⁸ “America’s Border: Who left the door open?” by Barlett and Steele won the 2004 Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for the Magazine/Specialty Reporting Category.

Here I want to focus on the social mathematics behind the three million figure, and set aside, at least for now, the 9/11 airplane allegory. The quantitative analysis and projections produced by the *Time* investigation were based on detention numbers by the U.S. Border Patrol for fiscal year 2004. The *Time* reporters state that the agency “had apprehended nearly 1.1 million illegals” with still a month to go before the end of the fiscal year (53). An agent with Border Patrol must have told the reporters that, “for every person [the agency] picks up, at least three make it into the country safely” (53).

Barlett and Steele do not attribute the 1:4 projection, but these sorts of estimates are not uncommon in the region’s culture of border interventions.¹⁹ From this agent’s comment to reporters, it is quite easy to see how investigators went on to conclude that 3 million “illegals [would flood] into the U.S.” that year. Had they taken a look at the number of apprehensions reported in the annually issued *U.S. Handbook of Immigration Statistics*, they might have factored into their calculation that U.S. Border Patrol apprehension totals have steadily hovered around the one million mark since 1977. Had they multiplied the cumulative number of detentions reported for the last quarter century by a factor of 3, like they did for the 2004 statistics, the result would have yielded a figure equal to about one quarter of the U.S. population. Such an elevated number might have appropriately raised their suspicion about the accuracy of their own calculations and

¹⁹ Ratio-based estimates of this kind are quite common in the region. They are typically used to convey that border problems and phenomena are much larger and complex than can be accounted for visually and/or systematically. For instance, I have been told several times that for every body recovered from the desert, 10 are left abandoned, or that 9 out of 10 women experience some form of sexual harassment while crossing. These numbers are not based on any kind of hard data; rather, they reflect the conveyer’s perception of the magnitude of a particular issue and should be examined as such (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2006).

the implication of the term “apprehensions” as a qualifier attached to the 1.1 million Border Patrol statistic.

Despite the hyperbolic implications of the numeric projections, these statistics spread like wildfire, arousing along the way the public’s imagination not only about everyday dynamics along the border, but also about the make up of the population. Estimates about the number of people who cross into the United States every year vary significantly. On one end, as mentioned before, some suggest that about half a million unauthorized migrants add themselves to the American population each year, either by overstaying visas or entering illegally. This figure also accounts for some rough estimate of those who leave. The three million figure provided by *Time* falls on the opposite side of that spectrum, but its endorsement by the magazine enhanced its circulation.

If the estimate were accurate, and before accounting for death rates, the illegal entrant population would have increased by roughly 1% the total U.S. population for 2004, which would have meant that illegal immigration accounted for the total population growth of the country for that year.²⁰ Discussing the impact of *Time*’s investigation to illustrate Arizona-Mexico border dynamics, Marizco explains,

This [three million] number was being thrown around, but it now had street cred[ibility]. First, you had *Time Magazine* reporting this number; then, you had U.S. senators repeating this number; then, you had the viruses—the low-end media, the small papers and TV stations. They are now quoting the senators. ‘Senator Jon Kyl said it... he’s a senator, he would know.’ Well, no (personal communication 2008).

²⁰ The Central Intelligence Agency 2007 *World Factbook* provides a slightly lower growth rate although its estimates are based in U.S. Census data. It places net population growth in the U.S. at a rate of 0.894%. This is calculated based on a birth ratio of 14.16 births per 1,000 people; a death ratio of 8.26 deaths/1,000, and an immigration growth ratio of 3.05 migrant(s) per 1,000.

Local reporters, immigration experts and immigrant-rights activists rushed to disprove the special investigation's social calculus, but even if they had had the data to do so, the effects of the circulation of *Time's* figures could hardly be reversed. A month later, Ben Winograd, a reporter with the *Tucson Citizen*, gained access to USBP apprehension numbers that allowed him to claim that they accounted not for people, but for events. His story, "Crossing the border, again and again and again" (Winograd 2004) circulated mostly locally.

As with other notions of the border, the construction and circulation of inflated unauthorized migration statistics has a way of reappearing every few years under slightly different guises. In the spring of 2007, apprehension event totals re-entered the public domain as if they were, in the words of ex-Immigration Commission Doris Meissner, "the true barometer of the story" (in Winograd 2004). Writing for the *Associated Press*, Alicia A. Caldwell offered an analysis of the prosecution rates for unauthorized border crossers set against USBP apprehension data. She writes,

Ninety-eight percent of those arrested between Oct. 1, 2000, and Sept. 30, 2005, were never prosecuted for illegally entering the country, according to an Associated Press analysis of federal data. *Nearly 5.3 million immigrants were simply escorted back across the Rio Grande and turned loose.* Many presumably tried to slip into the U.S. again. The number of immigrants prosecuted annually tripled during that five-year period, to 30,848 in fiscal year 2005, the most recent figures available. But that still represented less than 3 percent of *the 1.17 million people arrested that year.* The prosecution rate was just under 1 percent in 2001 (Caldwell 2007, emphasis added).

Here, Caldwell performs another series of basic mathematic computations to support her claim of a legal system deficient in the application of immigration law.²¹ However

²¹ Under federal law, unauthorized border crossing can be considered a misdemeanor, which can land first-time offenders in jail for up to six months. At least until recently, as Caldwell's article

legitimate her point, her inaccurate interpretation of the federal data served to reinforce border phobias by presenting a grossly inflated picture of transgression and law enforcement insufficiency or indifference.

Border and immigration reporters, who are intimately familiar with the numeric slippery slope of these data, immediately took action, as Marizco recalls,

I remember calling the *Associated Press*, and sending them an e-mail about the problem with [Caldwell's] story. They told me, 'Well, you need to talk to the reporter.' [...]. She had already received a call from another reporter and told me what she told that person. 'Well, I understand what you're saying but the data is so insignificant that the point remains the same.' That pissed me off. So I checked Google News for that story and found out that it had been reprinted hundreds and hundreds of times. [...] I sent an e-mail to [the major papers] and told them 'you got this story, and this is what they report, and this is why it's wrong. They're really overstating the problem by a magnitude of four.' I didn't hear back from most papers. I believe it was the *Boston Globe* who talked to me. 'If this is an error, it's an error committed by the *Associated Press*, so go talk to them' (personal communication 2007, 2008).

In an effort to assess the circulation of the miscalculation, Marizco entered the story's entire first paragraph (in quotations) into the Google News search engine that same day the story was published. The search returned more than 180,000 hits; the article had spread virally in the matter of a few hours. Marizco wanted a correction, but the *Associated Press* would not budge. Corrections weigh heavy on the profiles of journalists, and are unsightly dents in the trustworthiness of their news outlets. "I understand the government frolicking. I understand the media falling for a good one, that happens. I cannot understand the media falling for it again and again and again," he said.

Statistics, as "numeric statements about social life" (Best 2001:13), trigger the political imagination by capturing and systematizing phenomena in ways that facilitate

shows, it is a punishment reserved for only a few crossers. The expansion of Operation Streamline seeks to prosecute all first-time offenders subjecting them to at least a few days in jail.

the circulation of narrative explanations. Contemporary audiences are so used to seeing these forms of systemized shortcuts that the numbers are often simply taken as fact without a real understanding of their implications. Certainly, the mediation of information that becomes or is part of the record is highly political, and numerical representations are no exception. Journalists, despite their claims to non-intervention, are squarely at the center of this political production.²² The erroneous interpretation of apprehension numbers leading to outrageous analyses, like in the special investigations discussed above, are due to a certain degree of mathematical incompetence or “innumeracy” (Paulos 1998).

When it comes to dealing with border numbers, however, innumeracy can only be in part to blame for the production and circulation of misconstrued quantitative analysis; the rest can be attributed to politics. Joel Best reminds us that the precursor to statistics was “political arithmetic,” a phrase that more candidly suggests social maneuverability and fluidity. A prime example of the political aspect of data is the “spin” with which U.S. Border Patrol data is presented. In the case of apprehensions, if totals increase, it is a sign the agency is being successful at intercepting illegal crossers; if numbers drop, they are an indicator of the overall success of their strategy. Commenting on the maneuverability of these numbers, Arizona Senator John McCain stated in an interview with the *Arizona Republic*, “Whatever the arrests numbers are, they will demonstrate that Washington is doing the right thing. The question is: Are law makers and citizens and outsider observers sophisticated enough to detect the spin?” (Carroll 2005c).

²² For a discussion on the effect of various statistics’ presentation styles used and recommended by journalists, see Justin Pritchard’s “Story Behind the Story” report to the Institute for Justice and Journalism (2004).

For all the play border statistics get, and the continuous governmental investment in making border phenomena more visible and manageable, border statistics stand as deeply flawed and methodologically problematic. Migrant death tolls are a case in point.²³ Despite the potential political volatility of the subject, or perhaps because of it, the process and politics of accounting for migrant death tolls have been far from consistent, transparent, and systematic.

The first challenge encountered in quantifying border crosser death tolls in the Arizona-Mexico border region is the lack of available data. The federal government in Mexico has no record of aspiring migrants dying on its side of the border, and the few that can be accounted for in recent years have been reported to local authorities and treated as indigent deaths. Bodies found on the American side of the Sonoran Desert were treated in a similar manner prior to the late 1990s. Two decades later, after the death of the Yuma 14 in 2001, migrant death tolls became part of the border vernacular in the Arizona-Sonora region. Discourses about these deaths during were at first expressed in terms of “record-breaking” relationality. Few questioned the quality or reliability of USBP data. The deaths were bad in and of themselves.

Border actors, including the media, did not focus on the quality of the numbers and the methods by which they were produced, until the agency began to interpret and deploy them in favor of a border-enforcement strategy. Whether the agency admitted it, “the Border Patrol was undercounting the deaths; they were cooking the books as to indicate their strategy was a success” (Marizco 2008). The local media began to suspect the underreporting practices in 2002. Again, Marizco explains,

²³ See Appendix B for chart with migrant death tolls available for the Arizona-Sonora region.

[Underreporting] was also happening because they weren't asking other law enforcement to include their numbers. So let's say, you're hiking and you find a body—which happens a lot. What do you do? You don't call the Homeland Security Department; you call 911. So, the sheriff arrives and takes care of it and moves on. The problem was that no one bothered to ask the sheriff how many bodies they had. No one was counting them from the sheriff until 2002, when my colleagues at the [*Arizona Daily Star*] started talking to the Mexican Consulate. And in 2002, someone must have talked to the Consulate from Mexico City, because they stopped giving [us] the numbers. But the case is that their numbers were much higher [than the ones the Border Patrol was reporting] (Personal conversation 2008).

Thus began a general hunt for a comprehensive death tally. The *Star* consulted the Mexican Consulates in Southern Arizona for their body repatriation totals. Susan Carroll, first at the *Tucson Citizen* and later at the *Arizona Republic*, contacted the local medical examiners. In the summer of 2003, Claudine LoMonaco, then an intern with the *Tucson Citizen*, gathered and compared information from the Border Patrol, the medical examiner, the Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran consulates with jurisdiction in Arizona, as well as activist groups that kept their own databases. The totals offered by this collection of numbers could not have been more different.

A dual and productively conflictive view of the border emerges from this diverse numeric landscape constituted by contradictory migrant death tolls records compiled between 2001 and 2004, which reflected the situation at the Arizona-Mexico border. On the one hand, these statistics present the border as a highly regimented domain framed by governmental control and manageability. On the other, a view emerges of a domain that evades the most intricate regimentation strategies, and in so doing, opens up a field for intervention propelled by the collective biopolitical imagination.

The numbers reported for fiscal year 2001 were the least questioned. With a death toll at 102 (Rozemberg and Carroll 2002), the story centered on the death toll spike

itself, and numbers provided by the Border Patrol were simply taken as evidence of the dynamic at work. By 2002 the numbers began to prove elusive. The *Tucson Citizen* reported 145 migrant deaths, but KVOA-TV later reported that the Mexican Consulates showed records for 153 cases (Busch 2005). A year later, a *Tucson Citizen* special investigation reported that the range in the migrant death totals reported by various agencies for 2002 was actually much larger. While the Border Patrol accounted for 119 bodies, Southern Arizona medical examiners had processed the remains of 147 border crossers, and the Consulates of Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador showed a combined caseload of 171 migrants who had died in the Arizona-Mexico region (LoMonaco 2003). This was only the start of the numerical warfare that would follow.

The records of the U.S. Border Patrol on migrant deaths indicated there had been a drop in the number of fatalities from 2003 to 2004. According to the agency, there had been 136 deaths recorded in its Tucson Sector in 2003, compared to 118 for 2004. The apparent drop was lauded as proof of success of the Arizona Border Control Initiative, until Susan Carroll called into question the Border Patrol's counting policies and politics. A starker view of the border emerged from her combination of death tolls recorded in the Tucson and Yuma Border Patrol Sectors to provide a number that would include all border crossing fatalities for the state of Arizona. In 2003, the combined tally added up to 151 deaths. The total for 2004 presented by Carroll rose to 164 (2004).²⁴

If the strategy's success was to be measured in these bodies, as the Border Patrol had suggested, their undercounting practices not only raised questions about the

²⁴ The analysis Carroll provides is based in numbers compiled until the second week of September. With two weeks still remaining in the fiscal year, and summer temperatures soaring well into early October, the numbers she provides for the 2004 death toll are not the final ones.

effectiveness of the new investment, but also suggested politically darker statistic-gathering practices. Even the Border Patrol Sector Chief Michael Nicley recognized the political fallout that the exposure of the agency's counting methods would have. "It looks as though we provided numbers that made the situation look more palatable than it is. I don't believe for a moment there was anything sinister involved, but I understand ... how it looks" (in Carroll 2004). The unreliability and partiality of the data looked like an open field of opportunity to define and contest what was happening in the region.

By the end of fiscal year 2004, all interested actors who could access some data produced their own public records and representations of the annual migrant death tolls. Coalición Derechos Humanos, an immigrant rights organization, began requesting records from the medical examiner's offices and posted the list of names on their Web site. In Tucson, Humane Border filed requests through the Freedom of Information Act to obtain Border Patrol GPS data, to create regional death maps. With a little more access, reporters from the *Arizona Daily Star*, launched a searchable "Border Death Database." Andrew Satter explains,

[We] realized that there was no official record-keeping system for the exact number of illegal immigrants who died crossing into the United States illegally through Southern Arizona. We started compiling information in order to present an accurate tally, complete with the deceased name, age, hometown, cause of death, location of death and any other relevant information available. The database has received attention from *Editor and Publisher* and the Arizona Press Club, among others, and has been cited by Sen. Bill Frist in speeches assailing the lack of accountability for the deaths of people dying along the border (2008).

While these efforts succeeded in making migrant deaths more visible, the records used to construct "an accurate tally" were sewn together more by political will than by numerical reason. As reporters and activists studied border-crossing death statistics from the Border

Patrol, medical examiners, and Mexican Consulates in the region, it became apparent that the federal agency was claiming but a fraction of the deaths taking place along the Arizona-Mexico border region. Bodies were left out of the official rosters for all kinds of reasons. U.S. Border Patrol statistics did not account for remains found by other agencies such as the county sheriffs, the various police departments (particularly the Tohono O'odham Police), and fire departments who answer 911 calls reporting bodies found or migrants in serious distress.

Further complicating the possibilities for a comprehensive account, until recently, the federal tally did not include vehicular accident deaths, nor skeletal remains. Initially, it was argued that their inclusion in any given year's border deaths statistics was problematic because of the uncertainty of the date of death for skeletal remains or an unclear forensic connection to border crossing. Another reason for quantitative exclusion is the suspicion that the deceased might have been a guide, a smuggler, or involved in drug trafficking operations—an argument that introduces the distinction between “border-crossing deaths” from “migrant deaths.” Additionally, hospital deaths only appeared in consular repatriation records.

In the compilation of numbers, differences between administrative calendars and territorial jurisdictions are bracketed for the sake of presenting a wide array of readily commensurable records. If death totals from different agencies are examined by year instead of by month, gross discrepancies are immediately visible. Records follow fiscal years, and fiscal years vary. The calendar used by the Border Patrol starts on October 1, while the Mexican federal government starts its annual cycle on January 1. The medical examiner's offices follow the state government's year, which starts on July 1. This

creates a situation in which only the bodies found between January 1 and June 30 may appear in the same fiscal year for all three institutions.

Territorial jurisdiction adds another layer of issues. Although the media commonly presents border death tolls by state, there is no easy, error-proof way of encapsulating the information in such terms because data collection on this matter falls on institutions that follow different boundary lines. To start with, the U.S. Border Patrol does not keep death tolls by state, but by sector. In Arizona, this implies undercounting deaths by not including records from the Yuma sector, or overcounting by adding the half of that sector that is in California. Medical examiners, on the other hand, abide by county lines. Most medical examiner statistics used in these combined tallies include data from Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Cochise counties. Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix and its vicinity, is excluded, although the Mexican Consulate in Phoenix reports migrant deaths each year—most resulting from vehicular accidents or taking place in hospitals, but also at the hands of smugglers and from exposure.

The issue of jurisdictional inclusion brings up an interesting effect of these counting practices. The issue remains that migrants who die from exposure outside of the temporal or territorial reach of these institutions are not recognized as border-related deaths. National Public Radio (NPR) reporter Claudio Sanchez (2007) tells the story of a Guatemalan man who died upon arrival in Massachusetts after walking across the Arizonan border desert. It is likely that the fatal, but slightly delayed, effects of border-crossing have been taking place over the last few years, but the mechanisms of accountability that would make them visible and traceable to desert exposure are lacking.

Thus, the death tallies on the record, through their very temporal and spatial delimitations, produce an equally limited understanding of the phenomena.

In this discussion of the articulation of border “on the record” I have emphasized how numerical representations are used to capture social aspects of this border. Much like practices for the record or dynamics off the record, the deployment of information on the record in the production of border stories for mass consumption centers on a particular kind of treatment given to the body of the border crosser. I have discussed how, for instance, the statistical projections made based on apprehension statistics serve to paint a picture of a border continuously transgressed despite the national security apparatus. Meanwhile, the rise in the migrant death toll and its multiple, competing tallies highlight not only the vulnerability of the crosser, but also a growing emphasis on the politics of life as part and parcel of citizen-based political engagement. Statistics about phenomena that by their very nature remain outside of the purview of the state—such as human smuggling and unauthorized border crossing in this case—can never provide complete and accurate representations. Such limitations, however, render border statistics interestingly compelling and productive in their own right. Because they are ultimately about bodies—detained bodies, dead bodies, border bodies—they powerfully elicit the biopolitical imagination of the audiences they reach. Through the very uncertainty surrounding their production, border numbers contribute to the political imaginaries triggered by this place.

* * *

Before closing, I would like to go back to Marc Cooper's remark, and agree with him. This is indeed a big story, partly because it has been made into one. This ethnography on the politics surrounding the death of migrants in the Sonoran Desert would have been incomplete without an analysis of the politics and practices of mediation through which the border and its problems are defined and rendered visible to national and global audiences via the crosser's body.

Through images, statistics, desert excursions, and expert commentary, media representations interweave border space and migrant bodies, presenting border socialities as fundamentally connected to national and global audiences. I have argued that the deployment of the crosser's body acts as a visual token of the border, eliciting a kind of biopolitical imagination in which the human body and its biological processes serve as the site and means for sociopolitical production. In pursuing this argument, I have provided a study of media production practices and politics in the Arizona-Sonora region. In the social geographies of this border, story producers, consumers, and sources coalesce under the biopolitical imaginaries manifested in border representations. By examining how border narratives are affected by dynamics taking place for the record, off the record and on the record, this chapter has explored a diversity of social, economic, and political factors that dictate production practices and processes. With their focus on migrant bodies, media stories – numeric, discursive, visual, or otherwise – shape the collective imaginary of the border, its problems, and its possible interventions. Hence, the big story, the mediated story, reproduces how the border operates through the consumption and exposure of bodies. Here, in narration as *in situ*, the border acquires its bio/political dimensions.

CHAPTER SIX

CODA

By way of closing, I would like to go back to where this project began in some ways. The morning of September 11th, 2001, I awoke in my newly rented graduate school studio in Hyde Park to the broadcast of the now-iconic images of rubble and smoke, panic and anger. As news about the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. unfolded, American viewers were told the hijackers, all foreigners, had entered the country on a combination of student and tourist visas, and had either landed on U.S. airports or come across ports of entry along the border with Canada. Not insignificant details, I thought; had they entered through Mexico, the National Guard would have been promptly deployed. A few years later, the Guard eventually made it to the border,¹ and so did I.

Initially, I was interested in pursuing research in India, but a series of personal incidents in 2002 made me look for a research site closer to my family. After a preliminary research trip along the border that summer, I decided to make the Arizona-Mexico region the focus of my doctoral work. It was clear to me then that the desert

¹In the summer of 2006, President George W. Bush announced “Operation Jump Start” authorizing the temporary deployment of 6000 members of the National Guard to the U.S.-Mexico Border until that number of new hires was added to border enforcement agencies, increasing their total manpower to 18,000 agents.

intensified some of the social phenomena that I had seen throughout the boundary—migration, smuggling, enforcement, etc.—but the specific ways in which it did and its effects seemed both elusive and intriguing.

Back in Chicago that fall, I dove into the Congressional Records archives and read everything I could get my hands on involving contemporary dynamics in the region. This was the time of “Smart Border” proposals. With the aid of technology, America’s borders would become more effective and efficient, self-regulatory, secure. Not surprisingly, the events of 2001 placed, yet again, the “vulnerability” of U.S. borders at the center of public concern with such a compelling force that security proposals that had been sluggishly moving through Congress were fast tracked.

Citing security concerns, the Bush administration brought the private sector and commercial defense developers into the fold of border enforcement planning, development and maintenance, dynamics currently manifested in ongoing bids and contracts on border security infrastructure and technology implementation. The anxieties produced by the 2001 events also brought about bureaucratic and systemic restructuring. The Immigration and Naturalization Service was dismantled and its pieces rearranged into various bureaus under the Department of Homeland Defense. With the formation of this new Department, most border matters shifted from being affairs of the Department of Justice to becoming part of the field of internal defense. The talk of the day was “security,” and I joined in.

The summer of 2003, I arrived in Tucson for my first preliminary field season on what I thought would become a project on the impacts of a growing border security apparatus on transborder communities and their sociality. After all, border security

concerns were a regular coverage staple in the national and regional media, which I had closely followed throughout 2002 and 2003. I wanted to hear about the impact of sensors, and drones, and the doubling of the border patrol ground force, but the closer I got to the border, the further away the “border security” paradigm, as I had understood it, seemed to be. That certainly didn’t stop me from asking border residents and activists about what I perceived to be a rapidly growing security apparatus. Until one day, a Humane Borders volunteer turned to me with more than a little exasperation and said, “if you really want to know about border security, you are just going to have to go somewhere else. Don’t you get it? People are dying here!”

I stayed.

The project turned to the intersection of border security and migrant safety. My object of the analysis became the political field emerging around migrant deaths and the operationalization of exposure as a component itself of border enforcement. The project’s emphasis shifted from national concerns regarding border security at large, to the kinds of politics revealed by control strategies that employ bodily exposure and risk. In examining the conditions and context of these deaths, my interest has been in exploring the politics triggered by the employment of “deliberate neglect,” which in the border manifests in the tactical use of exposure and the calculation of endurance, and response capabilities as part of enforcement dynamics. The miscalculation of these result in lethal abandonment, and offers an interesting vantage point to the contestation of such state policies and the reframing of state authority. Hence. the resulting ethnographic account developed around the study of competing struggles to control border space, migrant populations, and “intervenable bodies.”

In summary, this study examined competing claims to life, its exposure and protection through an analysis of the politics surrounding the management and recognition of the deaths of unauthorized border crossers in the Sonoran Desert. The dissertation, throughout its five chapters, has been concerned with the fluid articulation and contestation of power over people, their bodies, and the space they occupy. This study makes two major arguments through which it seeks to contribute to the understanding of power relations, territoriality and violence.

First, I proposed that among other forms of border-making processes vis-à-vis migration, the current dynamics in the Arizona-Mexico region suggests a transposition of sorts of the border onto the crosser's body. In Chapter 2, I explored the manifestation of this permutation by looking at the ways in which the tactical focus of enforcement practices seen along border cities shifts in the openness of the desert from the erection of spatial barriers and barricades to an emphasis on the physical exertion of the crosser. This enables a discussion of what I called deliberate neglect, the operationalization of physical exposure as a border enforcement tactic justified by the state and space of legal and social exclusion (or Desolation) crossers may find themselves in while in the desert.

Chapter 3 examines what happens when deliberate neglect turns deadly. I argue that, precisely because the deaths of these migrants bear the potential to reveal the violence at the center of this security strategy, the management of these deaths becomes central to the production of authority. By looking at the protocols and politics of body recovery through various cases, I trace how state efforts seek to turn the deceased migrants into objectifiable bodies through which state authority is not weakened but reified. Through the medicalization of these deaths—achieved for instance through

forensic recovery efforts, the examination of the bodies, as well as their subjection of hygienic processes, standards, and documentation—the state presents itself not as the taker of these lives, but as the force facilitating the retrieval of bodies so families can mourn them and achieve closure.

It is as I examine the political stakes of body recovery that the second major argument of the dissertation becomes evident. I argue that claims to authority to intervene in the desert either to protect the border from these migrants or these migrants from the border are waged by privileging the crosser's biology or his biography in accordance to spatial border dynamics. In the case of body recoveries, for instance, while both Mexican and American state agencies emphasize the biological aspects of these deaths—cause of death, biometric data, etc.—civilian actors tend to emphasize the deceased's personal story—who they were, why they were migrating, who they left behind. In both cases, selective positing of the migrant as a person or a body is done to justify the continuation of these actor's efforts in the desert, whatever these might be.

Chapter 4 discusses an interesting reversal of the dynamic, which tends to happen when the crosser to be intervened upon is found alive. State agencies see these crossers not as bodies but as social beings in a social context, that is as unauthorized entrants that must be detained and removed from U.S. lands, or, if in Mexico, as aspiring migrants looking to make a living and citizens in possession of full mobility rights. Yet, as Chapter 4 explores, pro-migrant action groups seek to medicalize these crossers by upholding the threat to their lives posed by the extreme conditions of the desert in order to “evacuate” them from the border. Without the compromised biology of the crosser to justify the legitimacy of their interventions as humanitarian and life-saving, an

“evacuation” could simply be taken as a form of aiding and abetting unauthorized entries in furtherance of the violation of the law. Certainly, the grounds of claims to a right to help, a right to protect life, be it national or individual, are being tested in the Arizona-Sonora border, which makes these tensions and articulations of a politics of life rich and fluid.

Chapter 5 weaves these two claims together: the transfixing of the border onto the crosser and the politics enabled by the strategic emphasis on their injured bodies vis-à-vis personal stories. It does so by taking a step away from the immediate spatiality of the border and looking instead at the practices and effects of its representation by the media. Here I argue that this border is at its most politically productive and volatile through the production, deployment and circulation of its representations. In building this ethnographic analysis of this region, I explore how the border is reconstructed in media narratives and the impact these have on the border’s local dynamics, its regimes of power regimes, its multiple competing actors and publics.

In exploring these intersections linking the border, its crossers, and intervening actors, this dissertation contributes an examination of the articulation of power over bodies, populations, and space. In this regard, it accomplishes three tasks in particular. First, it provides an account of the blurring divide and tension between the policing and rescuing of migrants all the while offering a fresh examination of the social and political dynamics that characterize migration across the United States-Mexico border.

Second, the dissertation develops an ethnography of the politics and sociality of border making and maintenance by focusing on the efforts of those who seek to aid, apprehend, or politically profit from the physical, social and media exposure of these

crossers in the broadest sense of the term. This also contributes an interesting discussion to the structural difference and inequality associated with bounded spaces.

Third, it offers a reflection on biopolitics not as an uncomplicated analytic pointing to absolute moments or sites of control over biological life, but rather as an open and contested field fluidly framing not only the management of population or the regimentation of bodies but also the valuation of lives and recognition of deaths.

Over all, by looking at the management of migrant death and trauma, this ethnographic account discusses a politics of life that reimagines contemporary claims to authority, legitimacy, and right. What I have offered here is the initial sketch of an analysis of this border as a field in which biophysical neglect and the exposure of life are operationalized to constitute and contest authority. The implications of this development go beyond the notion of people transgressing fences, walls or geopolitical lines, but rest at the center of one of the most basic social contract principles—the protection of life.

APPENDIX A.

ARIZONA-SONORA BORDER DEATHS

This list includes those whose bodies were recovered from the Arizona border region between October 2001 and April 2008. The list is based on data compiled by Coalición de Derechos Humanos, which offers the most inclusive body count. Their lists can be accessed at www.derechoshumanosaz.net. The list does not account for all the dead. There is no centralized data on those who die beyond the jurisdiction of the Arizona Border Patrol Sectors or on Mexico territory.

October 2001 - September 2002

Lorena Chávez Martínez	Esteban Bulmaro Olvera Albarrán
Heriberto	Unknown
Mauro Antonio Grados Miramontes	David González Sonano
Unknown	Claudio Martínez-Cortez
Unknown	Alfonso Hernández Hernández
Unknown	Victor Díaz Acevedo
Casimiro Torres	Unknown
Unknown	Martín Moreno Montero
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Alonso Caloca Vergas
Demetrio Rico Cruz	Juana González Ramírez
Maria Luisa Leticia Rosano-de la Rosa	Unknown
Héctor Saucedo Hernández	Jose Lara Avila
Tomas Molina Pérez	Simeon Díaz de la Cruz
Gerardo Rubén Jiménez Martínez	Rene Resendiz Rodríguez
Carmelo Monárrez Ramirez	Salvador de la Paz Macedo
Gerardo Ramón Jimenéz Martínez	Unknown
Wenceslao Torres Torres	Rene Rodríguez Ramírez
Rafael Alberto Palma Salas	Francisco Javier Trujillo Ruíz
Mario Bustillos Sallet	Norma Rodríguez Amado
Martín Martínez-Grijalva	Raúl de Anda Lopez
Carlos Gracia Aguirre	Margarita Ríos Rodríguez
Castulo Salazar Ontiveros	Sofia Rubio Chávez
Mondragón Alvarado	Jaime Rodríguez Gutiérrez
Miguel Fructuoso-Hernández	Antonio Vargas Torres
Miguel Ochoa González	Paula Hernández Tapia
Artro Heras-Espinosa	Santiago Arcos Mota

Jose Manuel Raygosa Gil	María Mancera Rojas
Rogelio Cruz Cervantes	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Alex Sosa Coba	Unknown
Maria Guillermina Sánchez Salto	Unknown
Atruro Luciano Gómez Castro	Francisco Cueva Ochoa
Unknown	Federico López
Victor Galindo Torres	Carlos García
Unknown	Dionicio Chilel
Margarito Escorcía Franco	Cordoba Roblero
Arturo Ruíz Gutiérrez	Maria Ruíz García
Maria Elena Lopez Moreno	Oscar Irenio Santilán
Adilene López Moreno	Zenaida Colmenero Dircio
Unknown	Unknown
Santos Fabian González Paredes	Ema Mercedes Quintal Parra
Unknown	Jorge Antonio Gene Cervantes
Angeles Contreras González	Gevasio Andrés Estrada
Erais Quintana Martínez	Jaime Arteaga Alva
Felipe Hernández	Adalerto López
Unknown	Unknown
José Luis Hernández Aguirre	Mirabel Muñoz Bustos
Unknown	Elizabeth Hahuatzi Martínez
Saúl Segura Oliveros	Roberto Rodríguez Rodríguez
Domingo López-López	Unknown
Gonzalo González-Saldaña	Mari Carmen Serapio
Arnulfo Jacobo Rosa	Alejandrina de la Soledad Felix Sánchez
Rogelio Sánchez Santoyo	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Blanca Estela García Reyes	Jose Alonso Pulido
Unknown	Juana Santacruz García
Mauro Santos Tolentino	Conrado Negrete Venegas
María de Jesús Candelario Rodríguez	Unknown
José Salazar Velarde	Unknown
Rubén González Miranda	Unknown
Blanca Salinas Espinoza	Eugenio Reyes Gonzalez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Alma del Delia Cruz López
Christina Librada Domínguez	Unknown
Máximo Barrera Esquivel	Unknown
Mario Pastrana García	Luis Bernardo Rodríguez Tuyub
Unknown	Erik Olvera Aguirre
Raul Estrada Frias	Hipolito Hernández Santiago
Agustina López Vargas	Gilberto Menéndez González
Oswaldo López	Alraro Márquez Campos
Manuel Escandón Morales	Cecilio Cabrera Pedro
Eledi Sánchez Cirilo	María de la Cruz Magaña Hernández
Unknown	Unknown

Maria Elena Morales Sierra
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Omar Sánchez Guevara
 Victor Manuel Talavera Figueroa
 Unknown
 Janet Mata Méndez
 Unknown
 Juan Sánchez
 Gerardo Rosas Martínez
 Frankie Silva
 Unknown
 Salvador Mendoza Guizar
 Abel Martínez Faustino

October 2002 - September 2003
 Carlos Garcia Bravo,
 Marco, last name,
 Jose Guadalupe Juarez-Lopez, 40
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Armando Saldivar-Flores, 38
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown, 26
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Rosa Mercedes Dominguez Cano, 30
 Oscar Borbon Mendoza, 34
 Unknown, about 25
 Jorge Becerril Cruz, 19
 Jose A. Perez Rubio, 16
 Unknown
 Unknown, estimated age 18-25
 Unknown
 Lorna Celeste Robles Enriquez, 5
 Carmen Alejandra Robles Enriquez, 11
 Felipe Antonio Villafana-Rosario
 Reyna Mercedes Peguero-Sanchez
 Ricardo Ibarra-Tellez, 42
 Amalia Ortiz-Lincona, 22
 Elia Perez-Ramirez, 38
 Cesario Ruiz Cortez, 54

Unknown
 Unknown, estimated age 30 to 40
 Albino Montes Campos, 41
 Rogelio Juárez Torres, 31
 Antonio Mora-Martinez, 38
 Unknown
 Mariano Duran Saucedo, 40
 Pedro Bautista, 27 weeks
 Maria Dolores Vera Mendoza, 27
 Palemon Avilex Gonzalez, 21
 Efrain Salinas Sagal, 31
 Unknown
 Gabriel Torres-Alcala, 47
 Maria Del Carmen Infante Hernandez, 22
 Octavio Lopez Feliz, mid-20s
 Unknown
 Amparo Gonzalez Cifuentes, 35
 Unknown
 Noé Álvarez Lopez, 22
 Unknown
 Jose Lopez Cardenas, 35
 Jose A. Aguayo Contreras, 30
 Jose Luis Rodriguez Tavarez, 38
 Azucena Ortiz, 26
 Federico Medina Rodriguez, 20
 Miguel Angel Rodriguez Esparza, 25
 Miguel Angel Rodriguez Ortiz, 4
 Unknown, 50
 Unknown, in his 20s or 30s
 Jose Refugio Del Angel Ferral, 42
 Josefina S. Martinez Sanchez, 38
 Fidel Velasquez Perez, 21
 Francisco Chávez Mujica, 28
 Walter Arturo Sanchez Menjivar, 23
 Jose Avila, 64
 Martin Gallegos Perez, 28
 Guillermo F. Sanchez-Lomeli, 27
 Jose I. Sanchez-Chaparro, 43
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Avelino Andres Cabrera Gonzales, 43
 Teresa Vela Velasquez, 16
 Genaro Rosales-Martinez, 26
 Juan Matias Garcia Zavaleta, 27
 Roberto Torres Ramirez, 28
 Unknown

- Unknown
 Rene Olvera Medina, 60
 Unknown
 Ricardo Olivares Martinez, 22
 Elias Hernandez Hernandez, 26
 Hermina Fuentes Sanchez, 29
 Mario Gonzalez Hernandez, 45
 Unknown
 Elizabeth Sanchez Acosta, 25
 Manuel Hernández Martínez, 41
 Unknown
 Maria Christina Hernandez Perez, 20 months
 Unknown, 25
 Clemen Aguilar Izaguirre, 24
 Jose Cardoso de Silva Neto, 29
 Jorge Aburto Zamorano, 38
 Sergio Mejia Perez, 26
 Carlota de Leon Maldonado, 37
 Juan Tovar Hernandez, 41
 Zita Uribe Islas, 29
 Adriana Aparicio Ortega, 25
 Unknown, age 30 to 50
 Unknown
 Adrian Diaz Dionocio, 35
 Keila Velazquez-Gonzalez, 16
 Antonio Alvarez Soloranzo, 50
 Isabel Lucrecia Paxtor Morales,
 Nivercino Rodrigues Da Silva,
 Pedro Xochicale Tlapalcoyoa, 20
 Antonio Aguirre Bustamante, 39
 Magdalena Antonio-Perez, 20
 Maria Alejandra Orea Guzman, 26
 Javier Gabriel Valdez, 25
 Leticia Villagran Flores, 21
 Nora Huertas-Hernandez, 19
 Maria Florinda Xum Chan, 30
 María Teresita Galvan-Avila, 39
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Rocío Quintero Ramírez, 39
 Teodormiro Vazquez-Marcos, 47
 Antonio Rolon Hernandez, 27
 Efrén Gutiérrez-Hernandez, 39
 Juan Miguel Cano Elvira, 26
 Maria Guadalupe Cayetano Cornelio, 29
 Patricia Cortazar-Espitia, 37
 Carlos Valentín Bahena, 18
 Ermeri Martinez Matias, 35
 C. Elonia Lopez Alfaro, 32
 Carlos A. Morales Rojas, 24
 Maria de los Angeles Contreras-Rojas, 18
 Delia Herrera Atilano, 45
 Unknown
 Maria G. Vazquez Saavedra, 20
 Saul Dominguez Lujan, 20
 Fortino Vazquez Garcia, 41
 Unknown, 20s to 30s
 Unknown, teens to early 20s
 Unknown
 Sergio Benitez-Hernandez, 39
 Hector Romero-Correa, 19
 Blanca Elizabeth Aleman, 31
 Esteban Rojas Sanchez, 29
 Sergio García González, 32
 Juan Carlos Lopez-Hernandez, 30
 Martin de Jesus Bernabe, 19
 Marcial Perez Alvarez, 26
 Unknown
 Mauricio Salas Guerra, 38
 Agustin Hernandez Jimenez, 23
 Amado de Jesus-de Jesus, 28
 Unknown, 37
 Ofelia Maria Garcia-Chavaloc, 26
 Unknown
 Abel Aleman-Cabrera, 41
 Irene Ayllón Velázquez, 31
 Miguel Rodriguez Marentes, 56
 John or Unknown
 Unknown
 Ernesto Ramirez-Blancas, 23
 Flora Maria Reyes Cruz, 16 or 18
 Zenaida Gonzalez-Roblero, 33
 Alfredo Fabian Gudino Ruiz, 22
 Cruz Fabela Munoz, 44
 Jose Fernando Martinez Fuentes,
 Juan Reyes Luna,
 Juan Miguel Velazquez Navarro, 22
 Manuel de Jesus Sanchez Rodriguez, 25
 Wilmer Hermain Quintamilla,
 Alma Rosa de la Torre, 40
 Hilda Roblero Roblero, 23
 Jose Manuel Gomez Cruz, 16
 Nicolas de Jesus Garcia Ventura, 56

Antonio Garcia Gomez, 27
 Ruben Garcia Gamino, 20
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Victor Manuel Placencia Basilio, 27
 Lorenzo Lopez Diaz, 21
 Florencio V. Garcia, 56
 Pasqual Carbajal Maya, 25
 Lucio Hernandez Hernandez, 25
 Efrain Castro Ramirez, 49
 Carlos R. Bejarano Canez,
 Gilmar Alvas dos Santos, 37
 Miguel Diaz Garcia, 28
 Transito Guzman, 45-55
 Unknown, 25-35
 Unknown, 25-35
 Jose Antonio Ruiz Campos, 41
 Nahum Martinez Solano, 24
 Otate,
 Unknown, 16
 Juan C. Rico Orihuela, 19
 Unknown, 30
 Santos de Jesus Mazariego Sanchez, 29
 Unknown, 34
 Unknown, 22
 Rosa Maria Arriga-Castillo, 22
 Martin Corral Chaidez, 52
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown

October 2003 - September 2004

Atancio Ramos Castañeda
 Unknown
 Edgar Puc ek
 Unknown
 Miguel Angel Velazquez Hernandez
 Hilda Hernandez Baltazar
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Faustino Berneorayon
 Daniel Haro
 Nocholas Padilla Reyes

Agustin Rita Santos
 Isidro Gutierrez Reyes
 Jose Alcon Villa
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Pedro Zárraga
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Ciro Vega Velázquez
 Valentin Estrada Bejarano
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Altagracia Tapia Guillen
 Carlos Francisco Casanova
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Carlos M. Larios Requeno
 Tiburcio Us Chan
 Unknown (JD #3)
 Unknown
 Unknown (JD #5)
 Unknown (JD #7)
 Jose María Espinoza Martinez
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown (JD #6)
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Florencio Monroy Rocha
 Unknown
 Adrian Garnica Altamirano
 Eulalio Guzmán Hernández
 Unknown
 Óscar Chávez Torres
 Unknown (JD #19)
 Unknown
 Leopoldo Alvarado Sánchez
 Adelfo Rosales González
 Sotero Gómez Viveros
 Unknown
 Maria Rodrigues
 María Lucía Martínez Nava

Daniel Alvarado Patiño	Unknown
Rosendo Rosales De Reyes	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Antonio Ávila Cortes	Unknown
Unknown	Norma Moreno Hernandez
Unknown	Francisco Javier Acosta Sandoval
Unknown t	Unknown
Rolando Perez Vazquez	Unknown
Carlos Castro Ilescas	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Concepcion Anfreas Garcia	Unknown
Unknown	Tomas Soto Granados
Unknown	Reyes Campos Zalazar
Unknown	Carlos Molina Torres
Unknown	Unknown
Saúl Estrada Hernández	Unknown
Unknown	Fidelina Bravo de Marzan
Juan Lizarraga Vizcarra	Unknown
Leopoldo Vazquez Hernandez	Mario Rodriguez Perez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Jaime Gonzalez Pablo	Alvaro Ramos de Castilla
Gabriel Ortega Flores	Maria Paloma Resrios
Antonio Irado Rodriguez	Francisca Flores Guifarro
Unknown	Jose Pacheco
Unknown	Unknown
Margarito Aguillares Hernandez	Unknown
Jose Paz Arriaga Mercado	Aurelio Torres Soto
Unknown	Unknown
Maria Del Carmen Sabino Garcia	Unknown
Dagoberto Solís De Coss	Unknown
Unknown	Carlos Gonzalez
Raul Chavez	Unknown
Unknown	Armando Mendoza
Rosario Muñoz Berrelleza	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Jose Quintanilla
Unknown	Arnelio Portillo
Unknown	Unknown
Reynael Cortinez Roblero	Unknown
Jesus Esquivel Santiago	Unknown
Rodrigo Miranda Rivera	Welton Divino Feliciano
Fortino Soto Armenta	Unknown
Unknown	Manuel Ramirez Herrera
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Mario Soto Trejo
Unknown	Unknown

Unknown	Rosa Pena Ocampo
Jose Miranda Escobar	Unknown
Julian Mayor Arbelaez	Francisco Sanchez Aguilar
Olivo Martinez-de la Cruz	Luis Cisneros Ventura
Rosa Torres Corona	Albertano Herrera Liborio
Emelia Perez Santiago	Unknown
Leopoldo Mendez Murrieta	Maria Cortes Portillo
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Madilio Cutierrez Perez
Manuel Ramirez Herrera	Manuel Batalla Gonzalez
Jaime Ortega Orellana	Gustavo Gonzalez Cruz
Angel Lizarraga	Unknown
Isaac Melo Mejia	Jose Adame Zavala
Adalberto Bello Encarnacion	Aurora Cuamba Magallon
Unknown	Jose Garcia Martinez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Enrique Morales Flores
Jovita Martinez Agudo	Unknown
Wilma Rebieiro Machado	Telesforo Santos Arroyo
Ismael Gomez Herrera	Unknown
Maricruz Faris-Amador	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Blanca Ferreyra Vidal	Leonardo Plata
Paulina Morales-Exiquio	Unknown
Nancy Navarrete Hernandez	Abel Salinas Cortes
Maia Flores Martinez	Humberto Hernandez-Hernandez
Librado Tolentino-Velasco	Jose Hernandez-Ledesma
Unknown	Usterlin Mazariesgos Vazquez
Oscar Belerrabano Hidalgo	Unknown
Julio Romero-Espargo	Unknown
Marcos de la Cruz Sandoval	Alejandro Rangel Luna
Luis Cataldo-Escorza	David Orozco Romo
Unknown	Miguel Dominguez Juarez
Salvador Gonzalez Leyva	
Unknown	October 2004 - September 2005
Sergio Cabrera Hernandez	Francisco Geronimo Flores
Ofelia Vincente Ixmay	Joel Esteban Martinez
Omar Ortiz Camacho	Unknown
Unknown	Gregorio Martin Garcia-Cardenas
Jesus Lopez	Unknown
Unknown	Maria del Pilar Hernández Espinoza
Unknown	Mauro Guadalupe Mecedal Hernández
Veronica Dueñas Ramirez	Eric Sanchez Dominguez
Unknown	Jesus Sanchez Rincon (fetus)
Unknown	Unknown

Unknown	Antonia Moran Aviles
Edgar Omar Ramos Villarreal	Unknown
Felipe Yanez Gonzalez	Unknown
Unknown	Michelle Acosta Gonzalez
Unknown	Roberto Viguerillas-Valenzuela
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Maurilio Piceno Garcia
Leobardo Contreras Rodriguez	Julio Cesar Yanez Ramirez
Juan Luis Veja Ruelas	Unknown x Unk Unknown 2/27/2005
Rosalba Castillo Lopez	Tucson, AZ Dehydration
Fernando Rodriguez Flores	Francisco Chavarria Zamora
Jose Salamon Lopez	Vicente Medrano-Montes
Octavio Ortiz Martinez	Faustino Sinos Hernández
Unknown	Leonardo Ruiz Bautista
Nicolas Romero	Unknown
David Gonzalo Castillo Castillo	Angel Rafael Calixtro-Celaya
Araceli Estrada Lopez	Rolando Estrada-Lamas
Emilio Solis Trinidad	Rigoberto Cifuentes Arredondo
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Alfonso Paredes Gaspar
Unknown	José Luis Figueroa Orellana
Unknown	Abdon Vera Serna
Unknown	Heriberto Echeverria Caballero
Miguel Hernandez Hernandez	Jose Antonio Paredes Leon
Reyna Antonio Perez	Unknown
Leonel Trujillo Beltran	Moises Rojas-Laparra
Savador Diaz Lopez	Estela Tenorio
Martin Perez Morales	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Maria Varela Dominguez	Miguel Angel Guerrero Amezquita
Raul Abelard Martinez	Georgina Yaneth Barragan Mazariegos
Unknown	Ana Rosa Solorio Lemus
Unknown	Jose O. Benavides
Unknown	Unknown
Oralia Soto Madrigal	Unknown
Ramon Perez Urrea	Agustin Maldonado Cazarez
Unknown	Viridiana Herrera Aguilar
Julio César Moreno	José Matin Elias Juárez
Sostenes Torres Moya	Ulises Martinez Segundo
Lorena Estrada Ayón	Maria del Carmen Ramirez
José Luis Ortega Garcia	José Edgar Garduño Cortez
Leticia Viveros Tobillas	Marcela Cruz Gonzalez
Andrés Vizcarra Samaniego	Unknown
Raziel Elhui Bolaños Sánchez	Margarita Guerra-Escalera
Rosendo Martinez Ramirez	Unknown
Unknown	Juan de Jesus Cota Rivera

Mario Alberto Esquivel Lopez	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Simon Pacheco-Calvario
Marco Antonio Nuñez Tapia	Unknown
Unknown	Hector Carbajal Martinez
Juan Sotelo Martinez e	Laura Rios Garcia
Luis Arturo Justo Tapia	Natalia Nicolas Martinez
Carlos Morales de Jesus	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Beatriz Adriana Sanchez
Jose Ramiro Nicolas Francisco	Carlos Ortiz-Dominguez
Dionisio Cristobal Candelario	Joel Cruz-Mendez
Melchor Barcenas Mariscal	Virginia Mejia Mejia
Unknown	Luis Miguel Morales Hernandez
Unknown	Jose Alberto Lopez-Lozano
Unknown	Unknown
Eduardo Zamarripa Olivas	Jose Gabriel Gaytan Vazquez
Sergio Martinez Ramirez	Unknown
Francisca Badillo	Luz Maria Galindo Castrejon
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Ana Maria Rojas
Manuel Perez de la Cruz	Unknown
Ricarda Macedo Zaragosa	Benjamin Molecio Ramirez
Patricia Morales Calderon	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Pablo Texana Polito
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Estela Bautista Vasquez
Unknown	Maria del Carmen Martinez Dominguez
Unknown	Otilio Perez Juarez
Unknown	Jesus Hernandez Hernandez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Patricio Perez Perez
Carmen Agustine	Unknown
Unknown	Edilberta Anzures Rivera
Unknown	Unknown
Abraham Gonzalez-Gamboa	Unknown
Unknown	Jorge Javier Roldan Ortiz
Jose Luis Zacarias de La Cruz	Erica Rojas Garcia
Unknown	Pedro Basilio Marcos
Jaime Zamora Venegas	Unknown x Unk Unknown
Unknown	Eunice Diaz Velazquez
Unknown	Delfina Coatl Osorio
Unknown	Moises Marquez Flores
Abel Ramirez Franco	Maria Rudy Aguilar Santiz
Unknown	Juan Pablo Dominguez Borgez
Ruben Carrera Trejo	Sandra Guadalupe Apricio-Rojas

Luis Arturo Martinez Lorenzana	Unknown d
Isidrio Hernandez Navarro	Unknown
Unknown	Rafael Arturo Bojorquez Lopez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Alfanza Delfino Tapia	Unknown
Unknown	Cruz Ramon Cabrales-Quiñones
Unknown	Pedro Gonzalez Vargas
Unknown	Unknown
Jose Victor Calderon Morales	Enrique Alejandro Gilbon Gonzalez
Unknown	Alejandro Paz Nava
Maria Velasco Bautista	Unknown
Unknown	Reginaldo Mendoza Perez
Yesmin Francisca Diaz Perez	Unknown
Rigoberto Garcia Romero	Enrique Gutierrez Rosas
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Lucesia Dominguez Luna	Maria de la Cruz Ramirez-Garcia
Unknown	Marco Hugo Hernandez-Tellez
Jose Savedra	Cristian Rene Felix Arvalo
Eduardo Cruz	Jose Antonio Hernandez
Jessica Elizabeth Jimenez	Jaime Vega Torres
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Gerardo Moreno Cisneros	Gregorio Mariano Dolores
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Fausto Donaciano Bernal Lemus
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Rafael Fidencio Ortega
Unknown	Martin Garcia Garcia
Carlos Armando Cortez Pena	Eduardo Corrales Vega
Luis Alberto Juarez Perez	Unknown
Juan Perez Santiago	Unknown
Unknown	
Rafael Curiel Flores	Sonora, México Deaths 2004-2005*
Isidro Ledesma	Unknown
Unknown	Benigno Plaza Aria
Unknown	Juan Estrada Rojas
Unknown	
Paul Muñoz Morales	
Hector Alonzo Romero-Carrillo	
Unknown	
Justino Mendez Ramos	
Unknown	
Ana Elia Honorato Rodriguez n	

* “[These] migrants died on the Sonora, México side of the border. As casualties of failed border policies, we include them in our annual count” (Coalicion Derechos Humanos 2005).

Other**

Alejandro Camacho Velez
 Rogelio Ordoñez Sanchez
 Jorge Carballo Orozco
 Santana Carabantez Zamora
 Juan Gabriel Garcia Gallegos
 Juan Carlos Rodriguez Olivares
 Rusbel Cano Lopez
 Alejandro Palomar Campos
 Odalis Alfaro Garcia
 Joel Alfaro Lopez
 Fernando Limas Garfias
 Esteban Salazar Hernandez
 Hugo Rodriguez Ramirez
 Rosaura Hernandez Rojas
 Alonso Mendez Giron
 Sergio Martinez Ramirez
 Gerardo Espinoza Marroquin
 Reynaldo Olivares Gonzalez
 Jose Alfredo Martinez Juarez
 Salvador de Jesus Rodriguez Resendiz
 Rene Mejia Andres
 Roberto Valenzuela Gonzalez
 Javier Juarez Perez
 Sergio Ramirez Cipriano
 Mauricio Cabrera Hernandez
 Martin Resendiz Panzo
 Jose Luis Estrada Morales
 Nicacio Perez Lopez
 Jose Guadalupe Navarro
 Sergio Mungia Hernandez

October 2005 - September 2006

Unknown
 Fulgencio Montalvo Mendez
 Ester Saldana-Rubalcava
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown

**“[These] names appear on the Mexican Government list, but do not appear on any medical examiner list. They are assumed to be unknown entries in the above list, but until that can be confirmed, and in the interest of accuracy, we have separated them here” (Coalición Derechos Humanos 2005).

Ramona Pozades-Melendez
 Constantino Vasquez Alvarez
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Milka Lopez-Herrera
 Unknown
 Francisco Javier Bracamontes
 Ruben Garcia Lopez
 Ismael Gamez Diaz
 Jose Manuel Casimiro Juarez
 Unknown
 Francisca de la Cruz Lopez
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Ismael R Silerio
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Celso Casio-Cavala
 Unknown
 Aracely Cervantes
 Jose Ayala
 Unknown
 Juan Cespedes-Roque
 Adolfo Sanchez
 Deniel Jose Francisco Robles Perez
 Antonio Dominguez-Callejas
 Simon Rios Tirado
 Jesus Partida x
 Lourdes Cruz Morales
 Enedino Aguirre
 Maria Eusebia Vazquez-Cerezo
 Flora Carillo Carmona
 Maria Guadalupe Solorzano Villafana
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Miguel Angel Martinez Soto
 Vicente Flores Rojas
 Francisco Brindiz Chalte
 Mario Alberto Torres Gonzalez
 Vicente Brindiz Hernandez
 Jose Antonio Ramirez Navarro
 Unknown
 Unknown

Unknown	Felipe Romero
Unknown	Adolfo Mares Ruiz
Jaime Trujillo Rocha	Maurilio Hernandez Perez
Sergio Eduardo Chavez Samano	Ignacio Flores
Unknown	Alma Lidia Nanez Guzman
Unknown	Martin Cortes Lopez
Patricia Trinidad Patino	Unknown
Unknown	Pedro Palestino de Jesus
Unknown	Esael Morales Escobar
Lidia Frasco Garcia	Fausto Rodriguez Lopez
Manuel Avalos Arroyo	Remigio Rutilio Aguilar
Arturo Gonzalez Gonzalez	Juan Aburto Aguilar
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Maria del Carmen Torres Castellanos
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Rafael Teran
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Omar Elifaz Juarez Juarez
Fabian Guadalupe Chavez Romero	Cindy Erica Lourdes Noriega Loaiza
Claudia Valenzuela Vasquez	Cesar Tehintle Panzo
Victor Morales Castillo	Silvia Juarez
Unknown	Carlos Alcantara
Crishanto Covarrubs Garcia	Adauro Otero Rangel
Alfredo Mejia Garcia	Unknown
Unknown	Rosalio Garcia-Xicara
Reymundo Beltran Aispuro	Candelaria Sanchez Ramirez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Juana Mendez-Cruz	Unknown
Unknown	Rafael Garcia Dominguez
David Audiel Rodriguez Reyes	Wilbur Hernandez Landero
Mario Diaz Bermudez	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Ramon Zamora Solano	Jorge Barahona Barahona
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Salvador Sanchez Trinidad
Unknown	Mateo Martinez Hernandez
Unknown	Unknown
Hugo Noyola	Silvia Tolentino Lopez
Unknown	Genoveva Perez Villa
Unknown	Josue Zamano Lopez
Unknown	Unknown
Ancelmo Ekpato	Eliseo Hernandez
Jose de Jesus Salmeron Murrillo	Pablo Ortiz Fuentes
Edmundo Barranco Hernandez	Unknown
Unknown	Antonio Hernandez

Martha Palomino Velarde	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Olivia Elizabeth Luna Noguera	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Bernabe Moran	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Rufino Hernandez	
Octavio Sanchez Jarvio	October 2006 - September 2007
Unknown	Unknown
Paolo Carmargo	Unknown
Reina Ramirez Bartolon	Ramon Enrique Paz Ramirez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Maria Guadalupe Cruz	Unknown
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Unknown	Adolfo Hernandez Ramirez
Unknown	Rey Portillo Valenzuela
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Maria Elena Rojas Nieto	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
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Cesar Garcia Torres	Unknown
Rosalba Rivas	Unknown
Jose Daniel Mejia Vazquez	Ramiro Esquivel Esquivel
Graciela Morales	Unknown
Stephany del Toro Hernandez	Unknown
Laura Rodriguez	Unknown
Lucia Vaez	Braulio Huitron-Mayen
Alejandro Genichi	Maria Araceli Cortez
Arely Aguilar	Santos Pelico Sontay
Gloria de Quintanilla	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Enriqueta Celia Mora Peña	Sandra Esther Avante Molina
Maria Santa Lopez Camacho	Unknown
Pedro Escalona	Unknown
Gabriel Pacheco	Unknown
Alfonso Salas Villagran	Unknown
Melchor Dolores Romualdo	Francisco Dominguez-Rivera
Unknown	Lucio Santiago Gonzalez
Victoria Ascencion	Gilbert Corrales-Silva
Unknown	Jose Manuel Arballo
Bernabe Palasios	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Benito Acevado Castañeda	Antonio Huaxtitla de los Santos
Victor Baldez Torres	Miguel Becerril-

Unknown	Jesus Alberto Cabral Lopez
Fausto Nido Bacasehua	Unknown
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Fernando Mares Fernandez	Luis Latorre Bernal
Noel Diaz Ramirez	Gustavo Palacios Peña
Camilo Luis-Mendez	Unknown
Eduardo Guillen-Cortes	Gildardo Solis Olmedo
Cesar Mora-Lopez	Filiberto Velazquez Angeles
Rudy Raxuleu Castro	Unknown
Juana Juarez-Gonzalez	Unknown
Unknown	Blanca Fidelina Delgado Galdamez
Guadalupe Quintana Morales	Edgardo Bracamonte-Macias
Amada Valencia	Juan Carlos Vasquez Juarez
Fidel Santiago	Carlos Guizar Cárdenas
Ricardo Aguilar Cruz	Guadalupe Perez Garcia
Unknown	Unknown
J. Enrique Vasquez Reyes	Unknown
Isidro Rivera Betanzos	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Jose Gabriel Alvarez-Hernandez	Jose Francisco Rodriguez
Unknown	Edgar Antonio Castor Romero
Manuel Ruiz Garcia	Unknown
Unknown	Irene Camacho Lopez
Unknown	Unknown
Consuelo Perez Roman	Francisco de Jesus Mendez Alvarez
Jose Antonio Perez	Gustavo Cervantes
Nicolas Alvarez Sanchez	Jose Agosto Dominguez
Veronico Campos Esparza	Aurelio Carrillo-Casares
Marco Antonio Rosales Barraza	Reymundo Martinez Rosales
Unknown	Maribel Perez Gomez
Unknown	Maribel Gonzalez Jimenez
Jose Herrera-Lopez	Manuel Martel
Julia del Carmen Osorio Jacome	Jose Alfredo Acuña Aranda
Unknown	Marco Antonio Garcia Trejo
Pedro Soberanes Lopez	Maria de Los Angeles Villela Ibarra
Baudel Galvez Lopez	Felipe Reyes Bernal
Fernando Valenzuela Gamez	Mirian Ximena Riera
Guillermo Primero Lopez	Jose Eduardo Gallegos Martinez
Unknown	Noe Rivero Roblero
Juan Mendoza-Estrada	Elna Lazaro
Julio Dominguez Cortez	Jose Armando Rodriguez Zecada
Unknown	Jose Francisco Tuyubpech
Jose Gerardo Rodriguez	Horencio Hernandez de la Cruz
Eusebio Ortiz Amaya	Alfredo Hernandez
Jacinto Vargas	Jesus Anaja Longoria
Unknown	Ambrocio Romulo-Reyes
Unknown	Antonio Ramirez Serna
	Aracely Paulina Tohomcaxaj

Felix Francisco Sanchez Cruz	Maximo Cortes
Eugenio Guerrero Gutierrez	Unknown
Ruben Plancarte Ochoa	Margarita Araceli Lopez Mendoza
Asusena Arzate Cortes	Unknown
Francisco Martinez Rivera	Unknown
Jose Luis Ramirez Rosales	Damien Lopez
Unknown	Ruben Acosta Castro
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Maria Juanita Resendiz Perez
Unknown	Unknown
Judith Margarita Nicolas-	Unknown
Jose Gerardo Martinez	Lucia Sebastian Diego
Maria Tellez Concepción	Hector Alfonso Estrada Figueroa
Juan Antonio Alvaro Lopez	Jose Armando Martinez Miranda
Vicenta Anastacia Crisforo Garcia	Unknown
Marta Gonzalez-Pireda	Noe Duran Romero
Joel Espinoza Solis	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Yesenia Blancas Rosete	Jose Manuel Bringas
David Velasco Zabaleta	Unknown
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Unknown	Unknown
Blanco Naranja Lopez	Unknown
Unknown	Zeferino Sanchez Luciano
Evodio Mencia Mendoza	Unknown
Esperanza Antonio Paz	Yolanda Perez
Unknown	Unknown
Antonia Morales Garcia	Felipe Gutierrez de Leon
Felicitas Martinez Barradas	Unknown
Prudencia Martin Gomez	Unknown
Ana Nolasco Luz	Juan Bernardo Gastelum Moreno
Ana Edith Rodriguez Nuñez	Jorge Flores Rodriguez
Jaime Pascual Gomez Ruiz	Unknown
Ruperto Jimenez Monterrosas	Ilder Perez Melgar
Unknown	Honorio Cristostomo Quintas
Blanca Lilian Martinez de Alfaro	Lillian Ramirez Garcia
Carlos Rafael Montero de	Blanca Carpio
Javier Cruz Jimenez	Seferino Silva Parra
Unknown	Erasmus Jose Martinez
Unknown	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown
Juana Lopez Perez	Unknown
Unknown	Ana Maria Yaxon Chavez
Unknown	Maria del Carmen Sanchez Hernandez
Omar Lopez Mendiola	Sonia Alvarado Soriano
Rosalía Mejía Ayala	Juan Montes Mendez
Juan Manuel Ramirez Quiroz	Unknown

Unknown
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 Miguel Angel Zamora-Resendez
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 Juan Antonio Martnez-Venegas
 Maria Graciela Hernandez-Escobedo
 Abimael Blanco-Mariscal
 Unknown
 Margarito Prieto Tepo

October 2007 - April 2008

Unknown
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 Robert Carlos Lopez- Moreno
 México
 Unknown
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 Patricia Flores
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 Gumaro Reyes Lopez
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 Yolanda Muller Blanco
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Unknown
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 Agustina Perez Garcia
 Consuelo Odilia Oxlaj Sacche
 Unknown
 Francisco Eduardo Fuentes Dominguez
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 Arturo Cortez-Rodriguez
 Santos Elias Damian-Felipe
 Probable hyperthermia
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 Josseline Janiletha Hernandez Quintero
 Hugo Alberto Lozoya-Larrea
 Angel Del Valle-Sanchez
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 Miguel Jimenez
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 Ana Garcia de Monje
 Blanca Estrada Cortada
 Unknown
 Unknown
 Maximino Tecuapacho-Aguila
 Abel Herrera Medina
 Unknown
 Josue Galeano Obdinorellana
 Unknown
 Jorge Rodriguez Torres
 Teodoro Rodriguez Murguia
 Unknown
 Mayra Valencia Pacheco
 Victor Alfonso Cruz Santos
 Unknown
 Leopoldo Neria Romulo
 Mario Chavez Covarrubias
 Filemon Garcia Garcia
 Victor Valencia Valencia

APPENDIX B

DEATH TOLL COMPARISON CHARTS

Competing Arizona Border Crosser Death Tallies for 2004

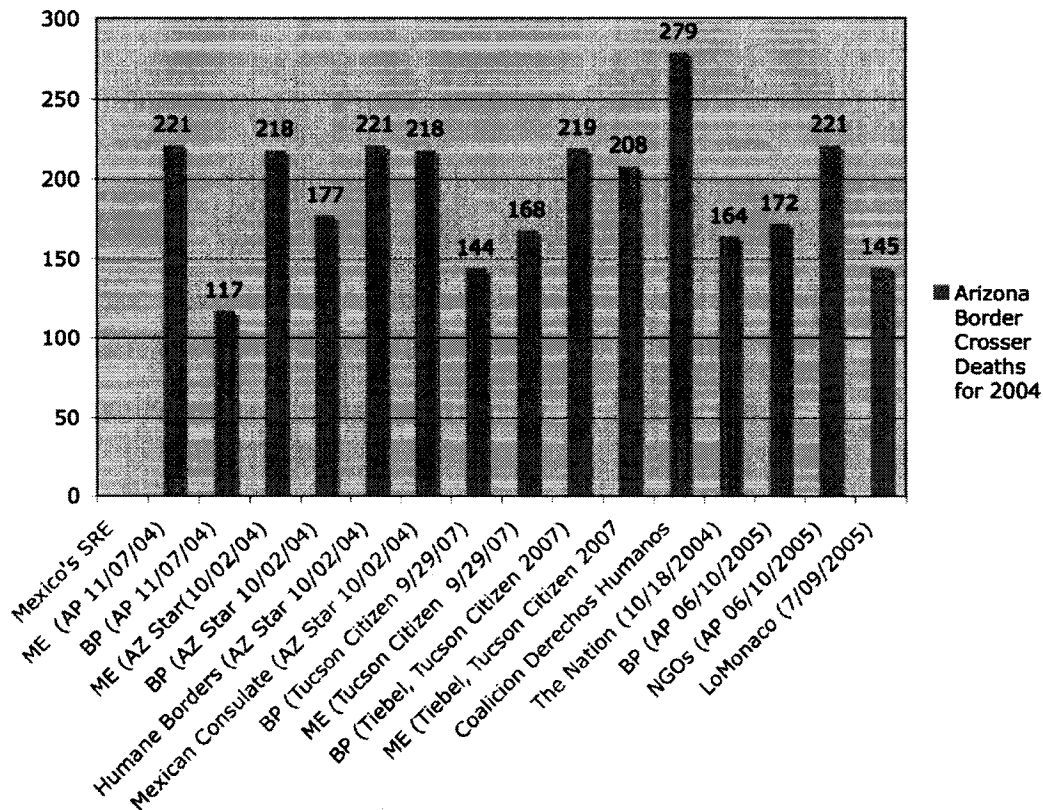


FIGURE B.1. COMPETING DEATH TOLL TOTALS FOR 2004.
(Data compiled from media stories, reports, and sources as noted).

Migrant Deaths Along the Border, Center for Immigration Research Data

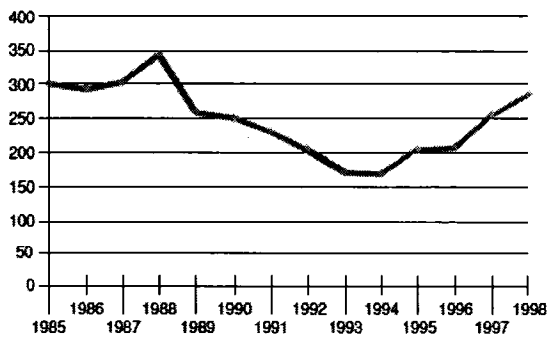


FIG. B.2. CIR DEATH TALLY, 1995-2005

Migrant Deaths Along the Border, USBP Data

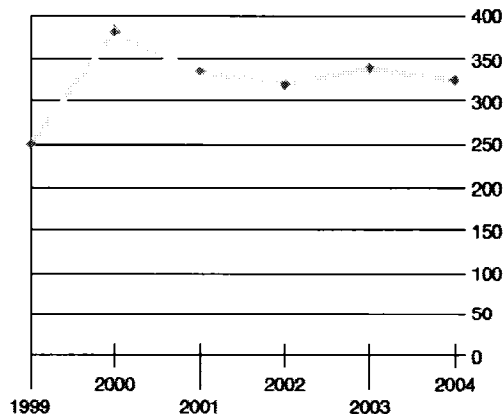


FIG. B.3. USBP DEATH TALLY, 1999-2005

(Source for both charts: Nuñez-Neto 2005:24, Congressional Research Service).

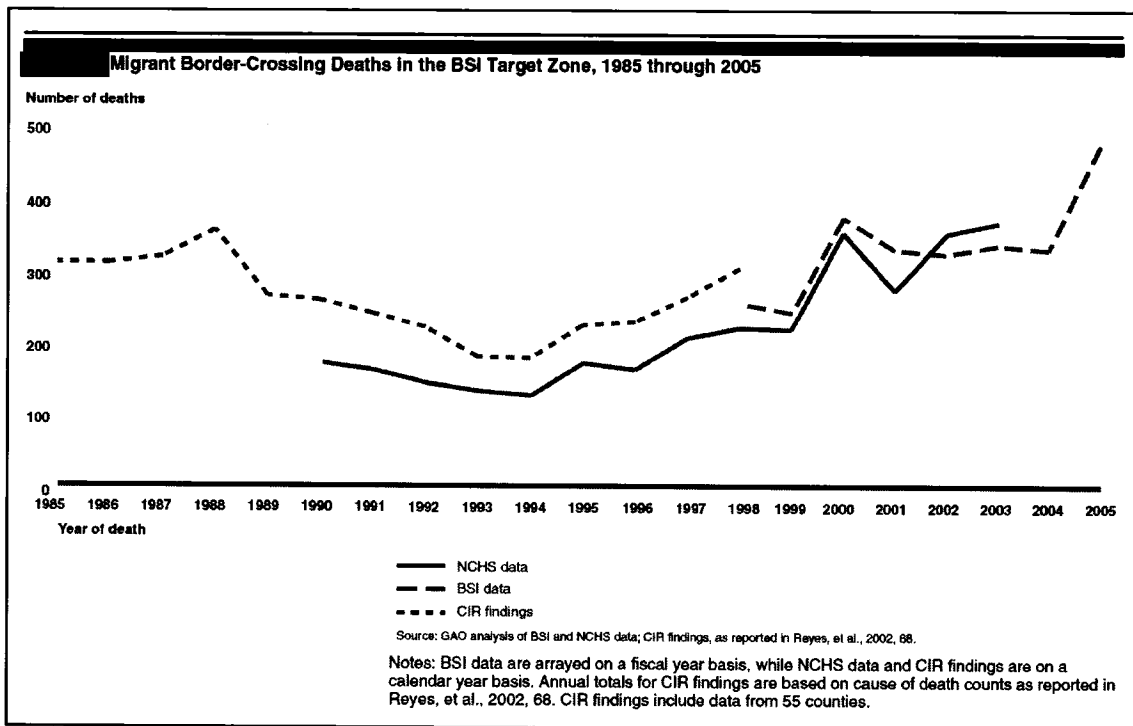


FIGURE B.4. BORDER-WIDE MIGRANT FATALITIES REGISTERED BY THE U.S. BORDER PATROL, 1985-2005 (Source GAO 2006:16, Figure 3).

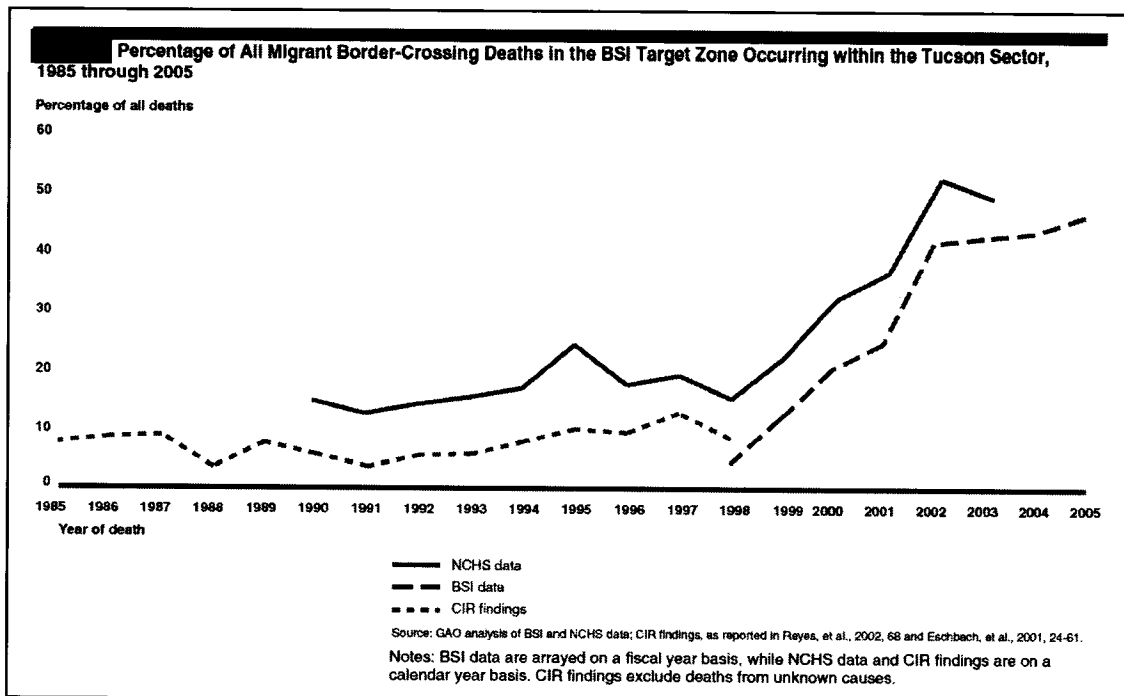


FIGURE B.5. TUCSON SECTOR MIGRANT FATALITIES REGISTERED BY THE U.S. BORDER PATROL, 1985-2005 (Source GAO 2006:19, Figure 4).

APPENDIX C

APPREHENSION DATA

TABLE C.1. ANNUAL "ALIEN" APPREHENSIONS, 1925-2006			
DEPORTABLE ALIENS LOCATED: FISCAL YEARS 1925 TO 2006			
Year	Number	Year	Number
1925	22,199	1966	138,520
1926	12,735	1967	161,608
1927	16,393	1968	212,057
1928	23,566	1969	283,557
1929	32,711	1970	345,353
1930	20,880	1971	420,126
1931	22,276	1972	505,949
1932	22,735	1973	655,968
1933	20,949	1974	788,145
1934	10,319	1975	766,600
1935	11,016	1976*	1,097,739
1936	11,728	1977	1,042,215
1937	13,054	1978	1,057,977
1938	12,851	1979	1,076,418
1939	12,037	1980	910,361
1940	10,492	1981	975,780
1941	11,294	1982	970,246
1942	11,784	1983	1,251,357
1943	11,175	1984	1,246,981
1944	31,174	1985	1,348,749
1945	69,164	1986	1,767,400
1946	99,591	1987	1,190,488
1947	193,657	1988	1,008,145
1948	192,779	1989	954,243
1949	288,253	1990	1,169,939
1950	468,339	1991	1,197,875
1951	509,040	1992	1,258,481
1952	543,535	1993	1,327,261
1953	885,587	1994	1,094,719
1954	1,089,583	1995	1,394,554
1955	254,096	1996	1,649,986
1956	87,696	1997	1,536,520
1957	59,918	1998	1,679,439
1958	53,474	1999	1,714,035
1959	45,336	2000	1,814,729
1960	70,684	2001	1,387,486
1961	88,823	2002	1,062,279
1962	92,758	2003	1,046,422
1963	88,712	2004	1,264,232
1964	86,597	2005	1,291,142
1965	110,371	2006**	1,206,457

* Includes the 15 months from July 1, 1975 to September 30, 1976 because the end date of fiscal years was changed from June 30 to September 30.

** Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) data are included beginning in Fiscal Year 2006.

Note: Deportable aliens located refer to apprehensions. Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Border Patrol (OBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations (OI) and the Office of Detention and Removal Operations. (Source: Table 34, 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, DHS Office of Immigration Statistics).

Total Deportable Aliens Located, 1925 to 2006 National Figures

(Chart designed with data from the 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics)

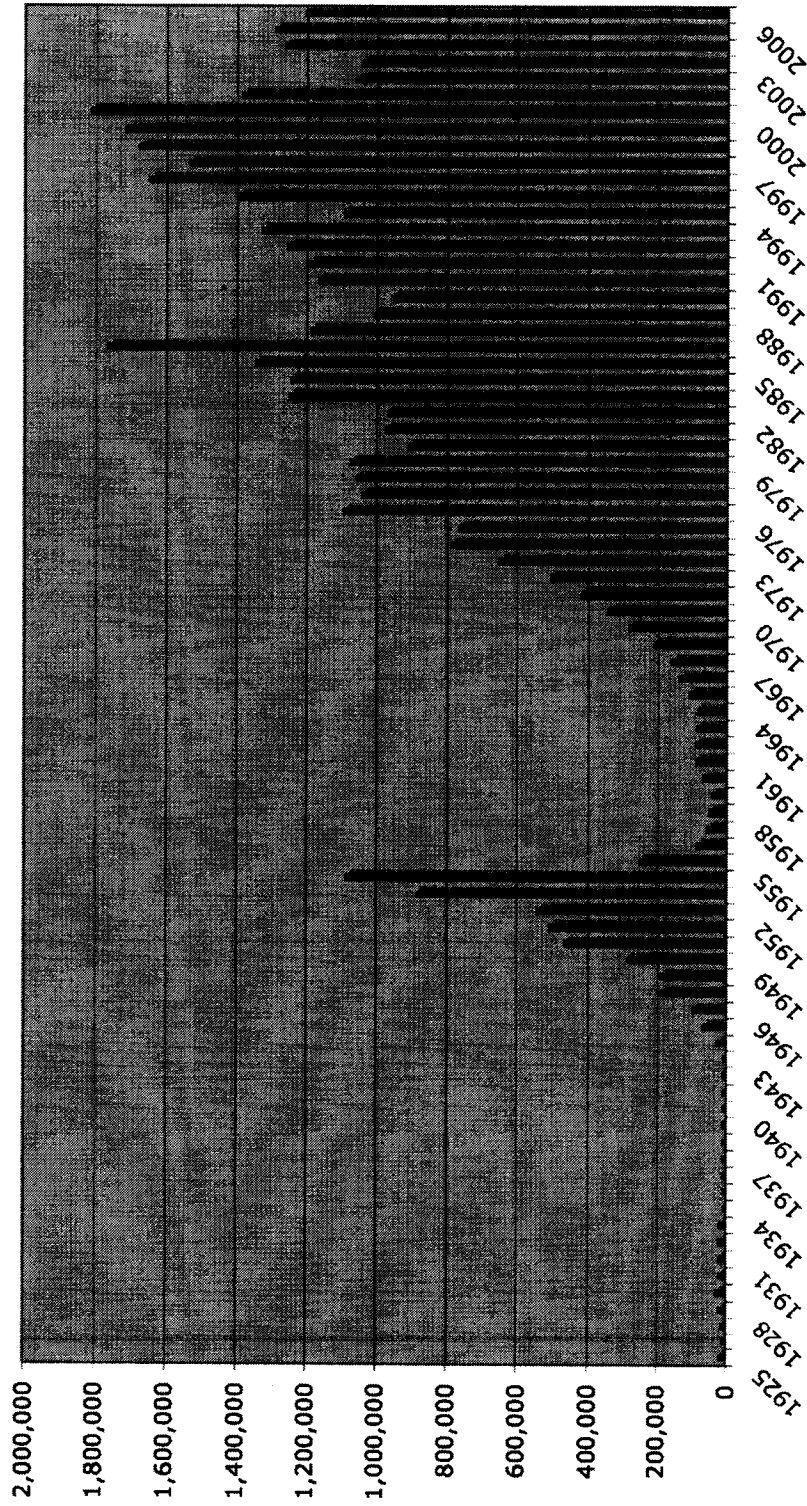


FIGURE C.1. CHART OF ANNUAL "ALIEN" APPREHENSIONS, 1925-2006

YEAR	TOTAL USBP APPREHENSIONS	SOUTHWEST BORDER		TUCSON USBP SECTOR	
		APPREHENSIONS	% OF TOTAL	APPREHENSIONS	% OF TOTAL
1997	1,412,953	1,368,707	96.9%	272,397	19.3%
1998	1,555,776	1,516,680	97.5%	387,406	24.9%
1999	1,579,010	1,537,000	97.3%	470,449	29.8%
2000	1,676,438	1,643,679	98.0%	616,346	36.8%
2001	1,266,214	1,235,717	97.6%	449,675	35.5%
2002	955,310	929,809	97.3%	333,648	34.9%
2003	931,557	905,065	97.2%	347,263	37.3%
2004	1,160,395	1,139,282	98.2%	497,771	42.9%
2005	1,189,108	1,171,396	98.5%	439,090	36.9%
2006	1,089,136	1,071,972	98.4%	392,102	36.0%

USBP APPREHENSIONS, FISCAL YEARS 1997-2006

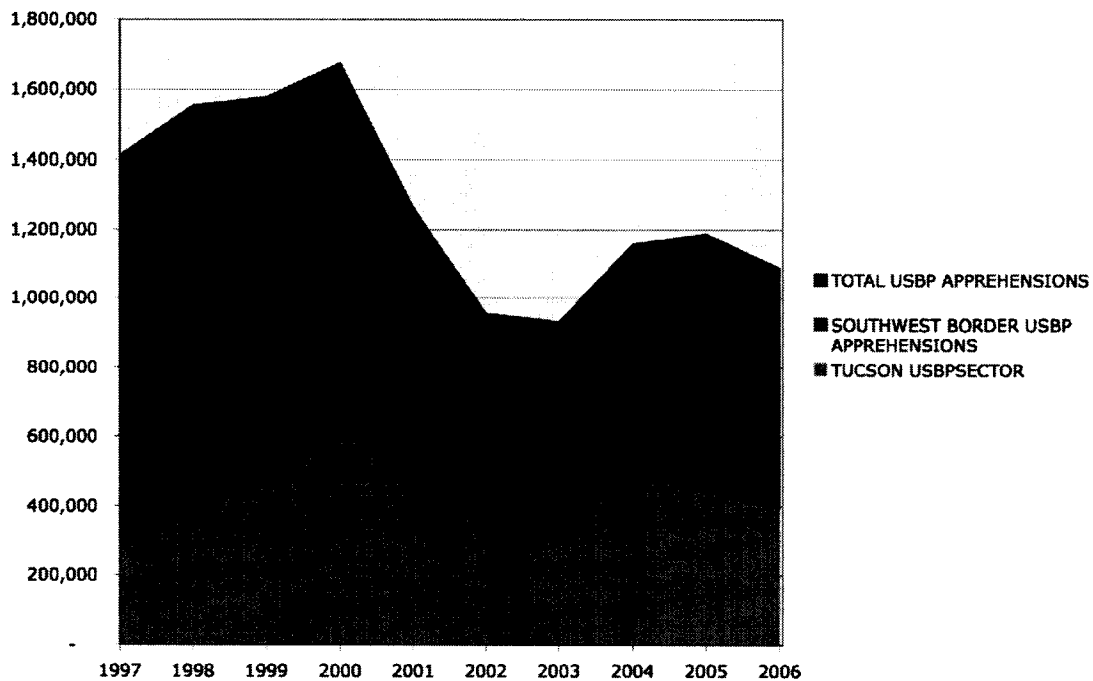
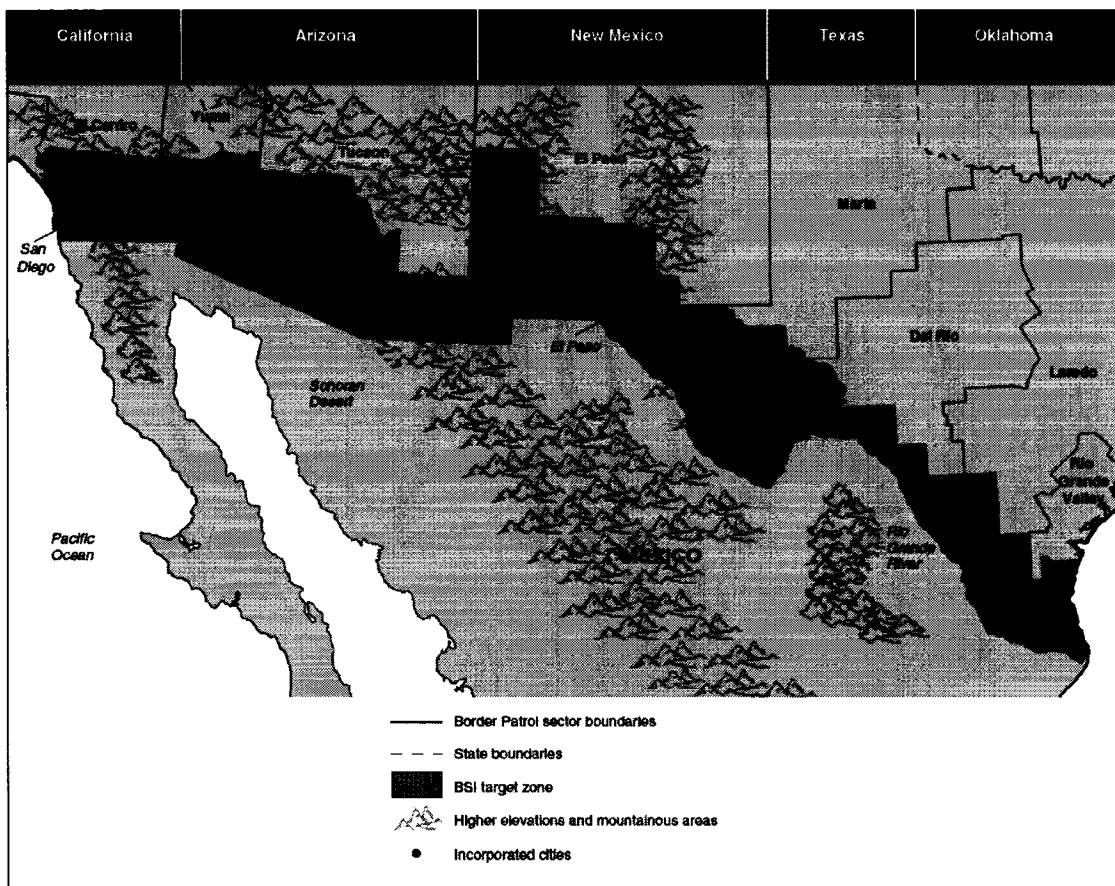


FIGURE C.2. USBP TUCSON SECTOR, SOUTHWEST BORDER AND NATIONAL APPREHENSIONS, 1997-2006

APPENDIX D

MAPS



Source: GAO; U.S. Border Patrol.

Notes: Solid lines are used where state and sector boundaries overlap. The Rio Grande River flows south through New Mexico, along the border between Texas and Mexico, and into the Gulf of Mexico.

FIGURE D.1. BORDER PATROL SECTORS ALONG THE SOUTHWEST BOUNDARY (GAO 2006:12)

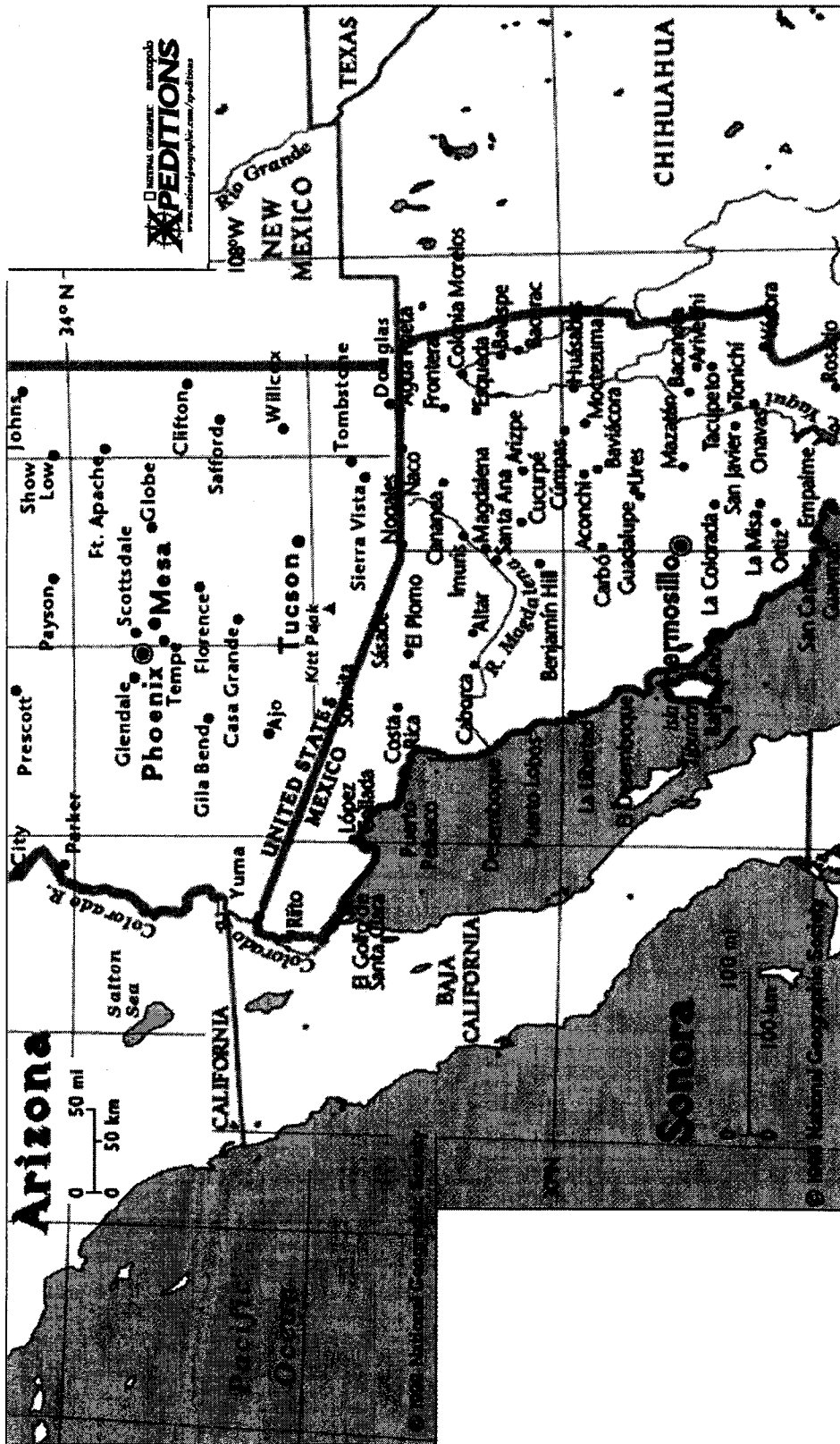


FIGURE D.2. ARIZONA-SONORA REGION TOWNS AND CITIES.
(Map adapted from "Arizona" and "Sonora," National Geographic Society, *Xpeditions Atlas*, 1998).

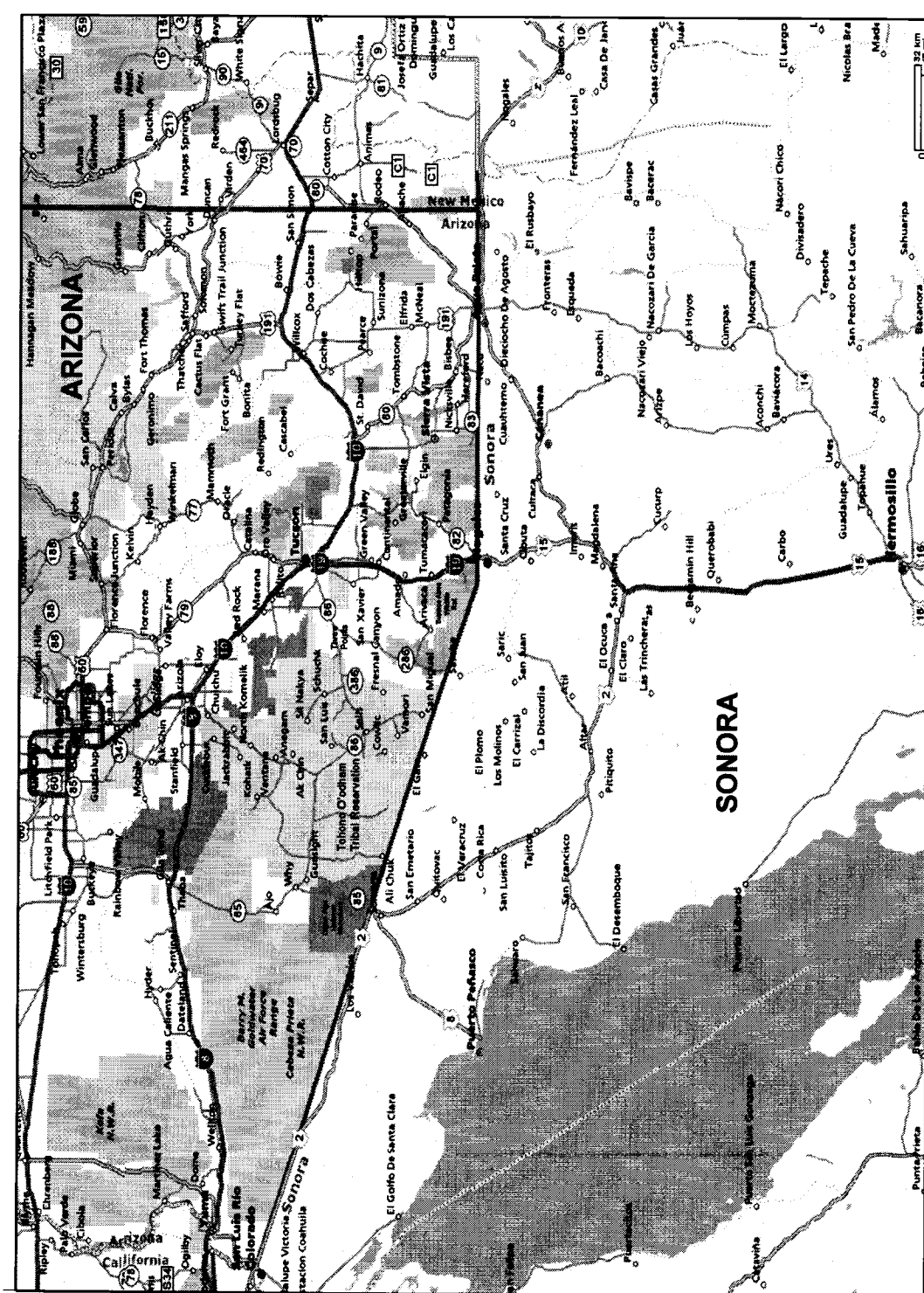


FIGURE D.3. MAP OF MAJOR ROADS IN THE ARIZONA-SONORA REGION
(Map adapted drawing from Mapquest images).

MIGRANT DEATHS, WATER STATIONS, AND RESCUE BEACONS FY 2000-2004
 Revised January 2006

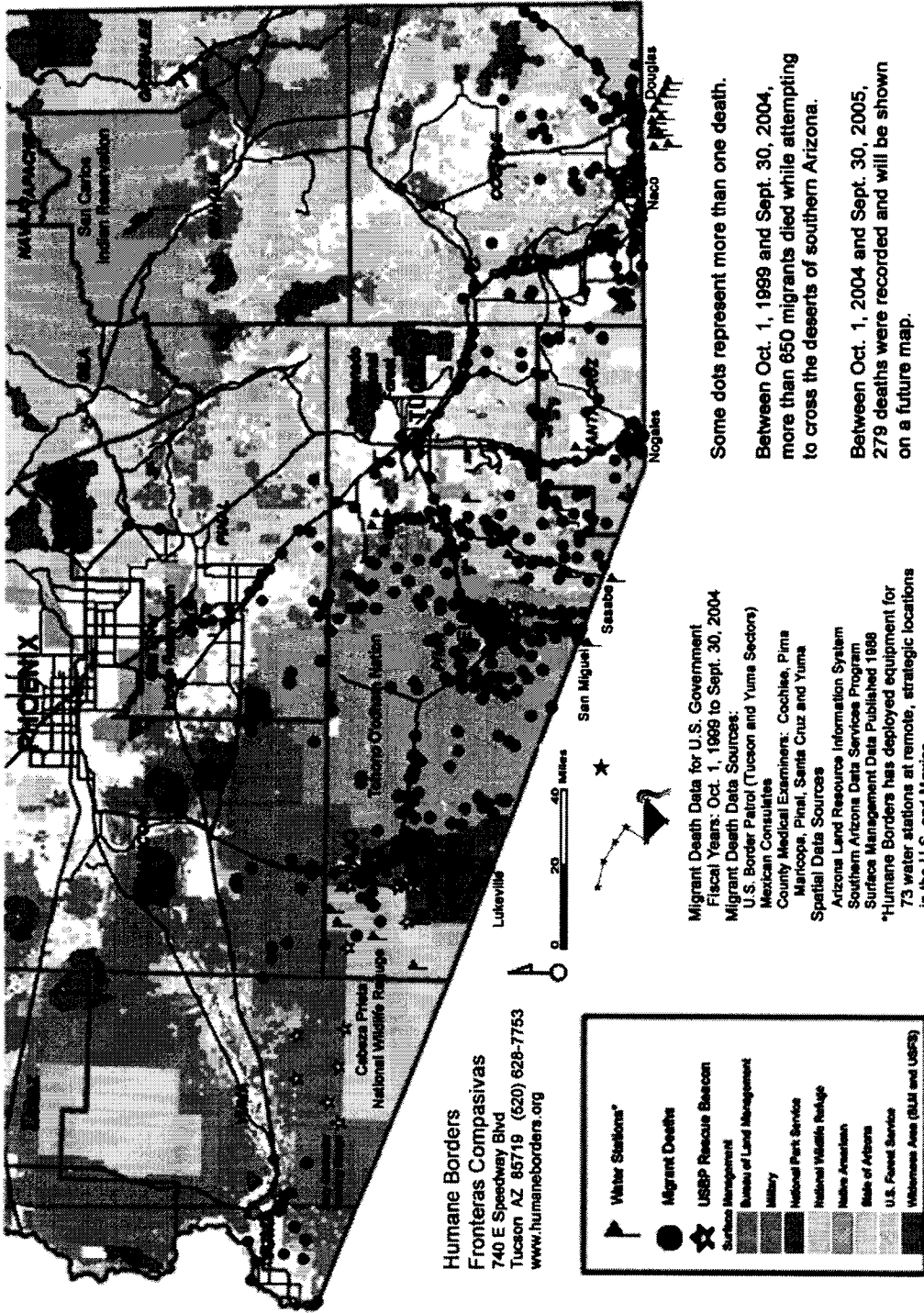


FIGURE D.4. HUMANE BORDERS' MIGRANT DEATHS MAP

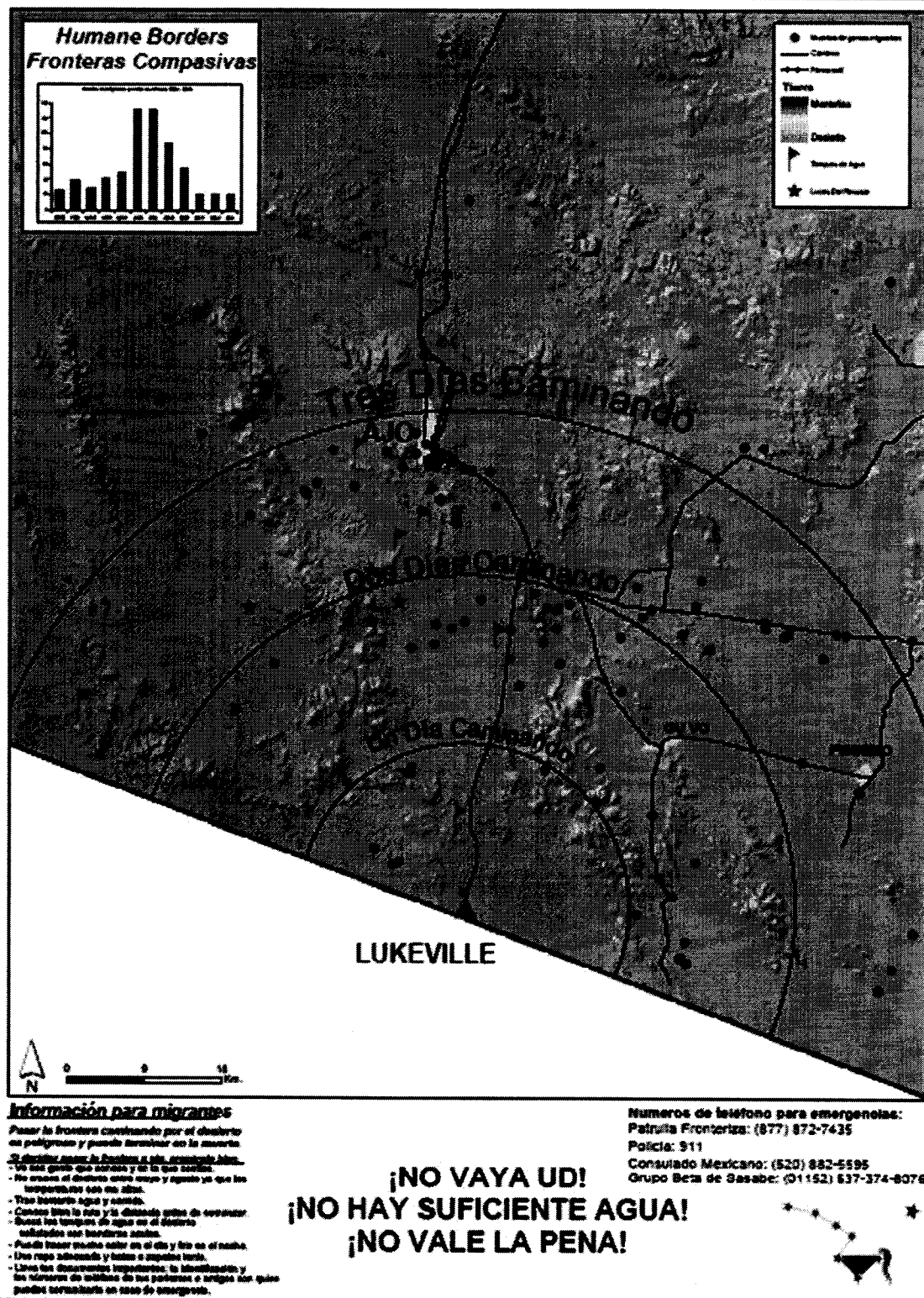


FIGURE D.5. HUMANE BORDERS' LUKEVILLE/SONOYTA WARNING MAP

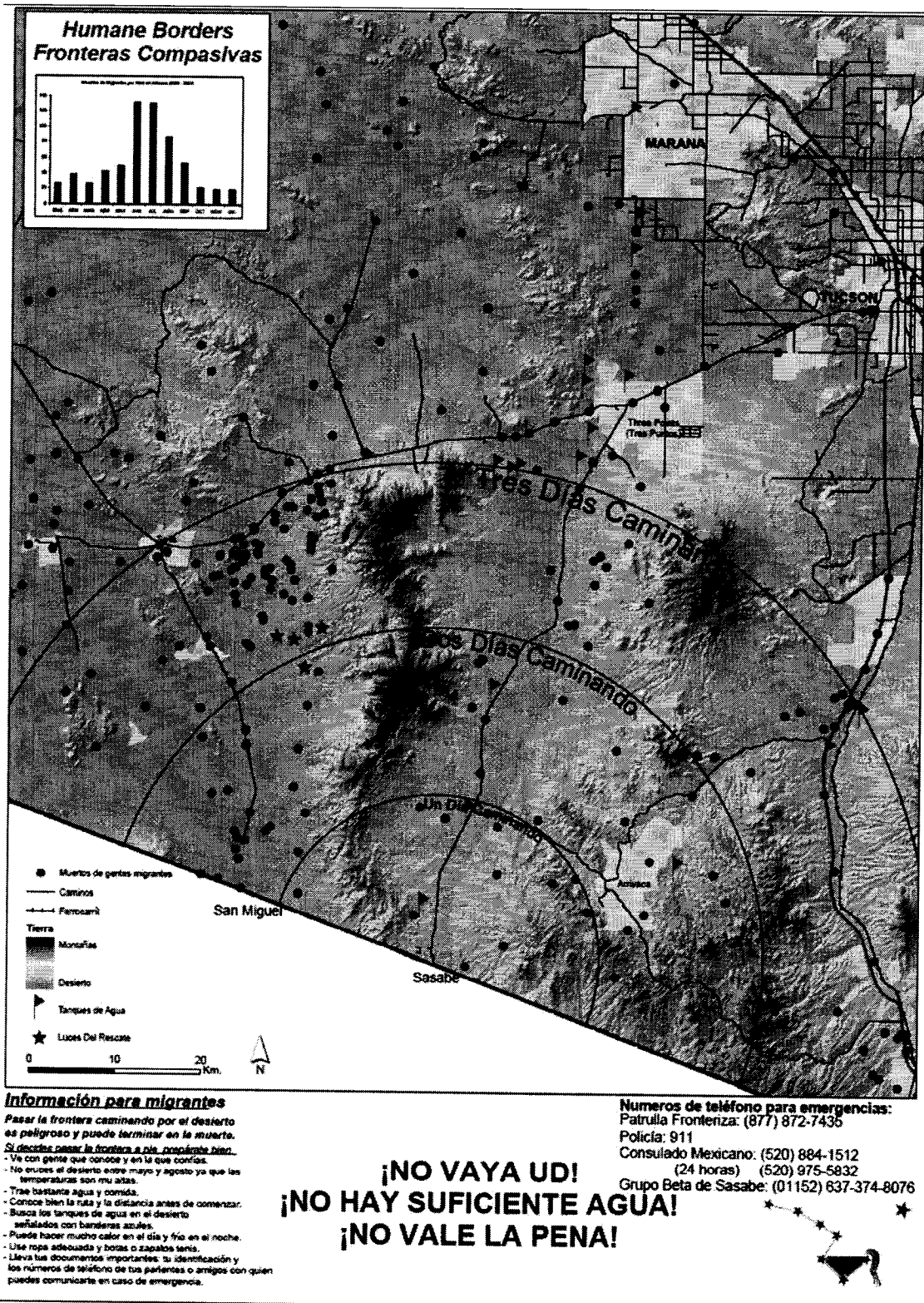
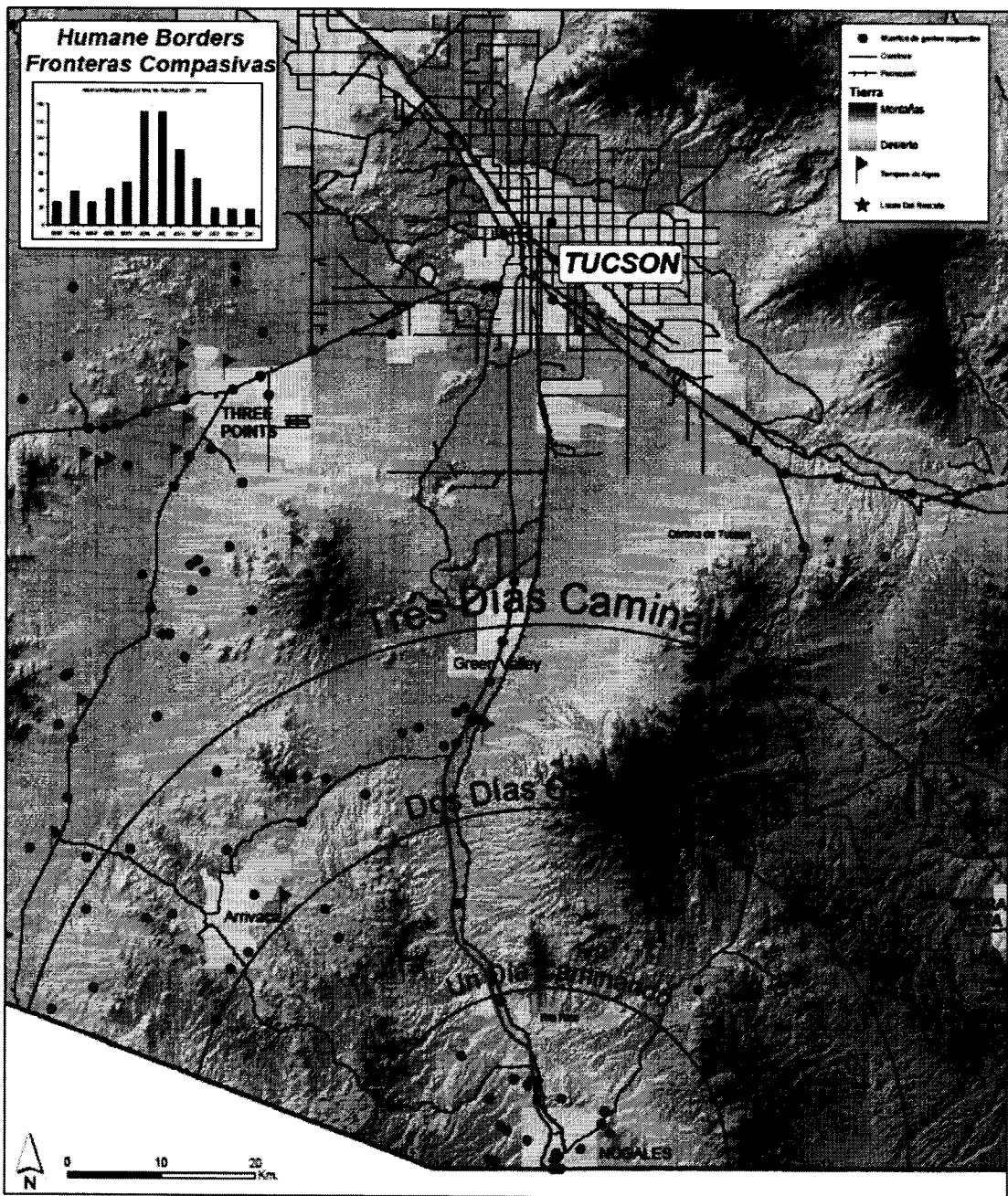


FIGURE D.6. HUMANE BORDERS' SASABE CORRIDOR WARNING MAP



Información para migrantes

Pasar la frontera caminando por el desierto es peligroso y puede terminar en la muerte. Si decides pasar la frontera a pie, prepárate bien.

- Usa con gente que conoce y en la que confías.
- No cruces el desierto entre mayo y agosto ya que las temperaturas son muy altas.
- Trae bastante agua y comida.
- Conoce bien la ruta y la distancia antes de comenzar.
- Busca los tanques de agua en el desierto señalados con banderitas azules.
- Puede hacer mucho calor en el día y frío en la noche.
- Usa ropa adecuada y botas o zapatos lentis.
- Lleva tus documentos importantes: tu identificación y los números de teléfono de tus parientes o amigos con quien puedes comunicarte en caso de emergencia.

Numero de teléfono para emergencias:
 Patrulla Fronteriza: (877) 872-7435
 Policía: 911
 Consulado Mexicano: (520) 287-2521
 Grupo Beta de Nogales: (01) 631-312-6180

**¡NO VAYA UD!
 ¡NO HAY SUFICIENTE AGUA!
 ¡NO VALE LA PENA!**

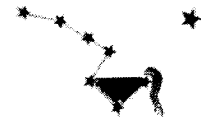


FIGURE D.7. HUMANE BORDERS' NOGALES AREA WARNING MAP

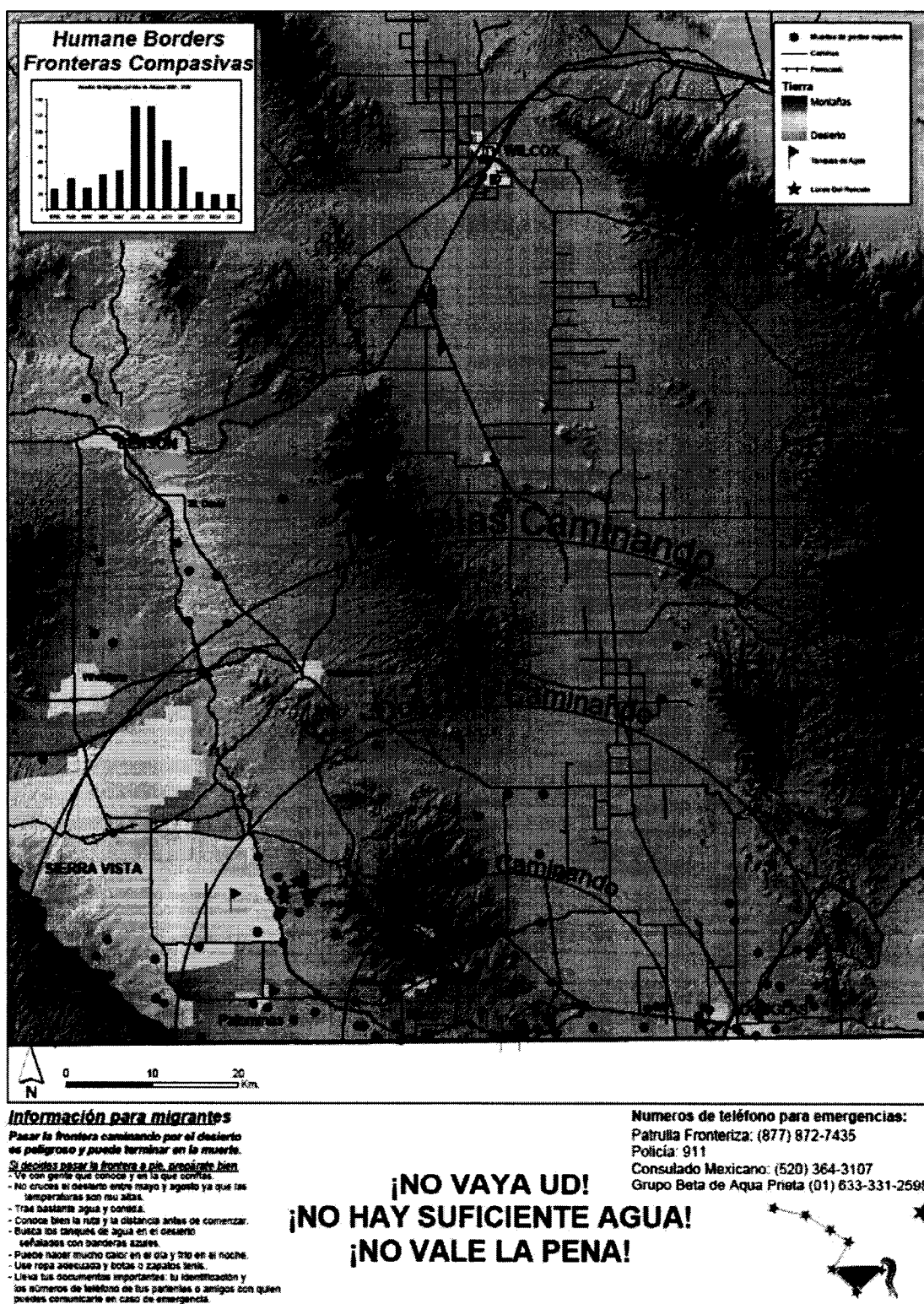
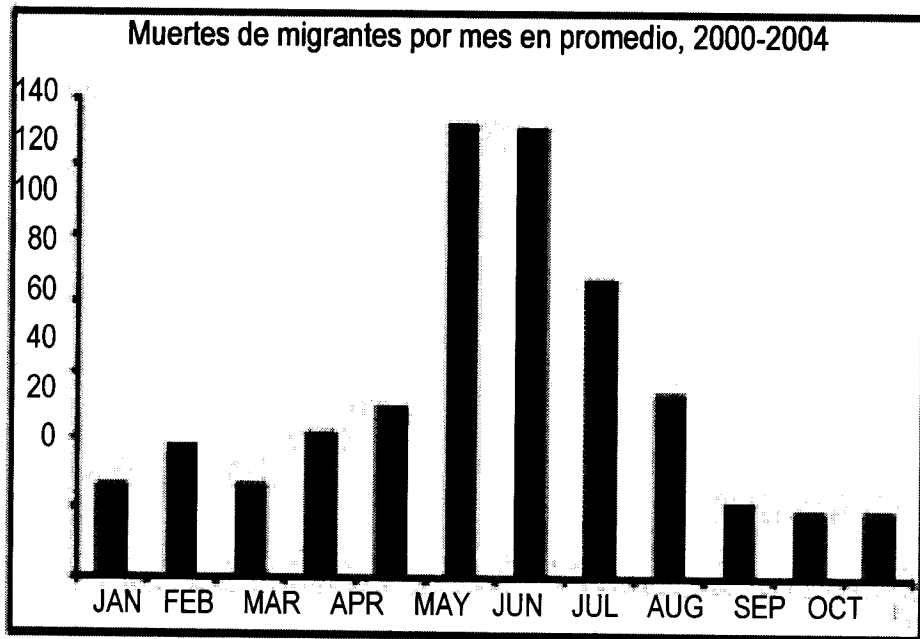


FIGURE D.8. HUMANE BORDERS' NACO-DOUGLAS AREA WARNING MAP

AMPLIFIED KEYS & TABLES, HUMANE BORDERS' MAPS



(Average migrant deaths per month, 2000-2004)

FIGURE D.9. AVERAGE MIGRANT DEATHS PER MONTH (Warning Map insert)

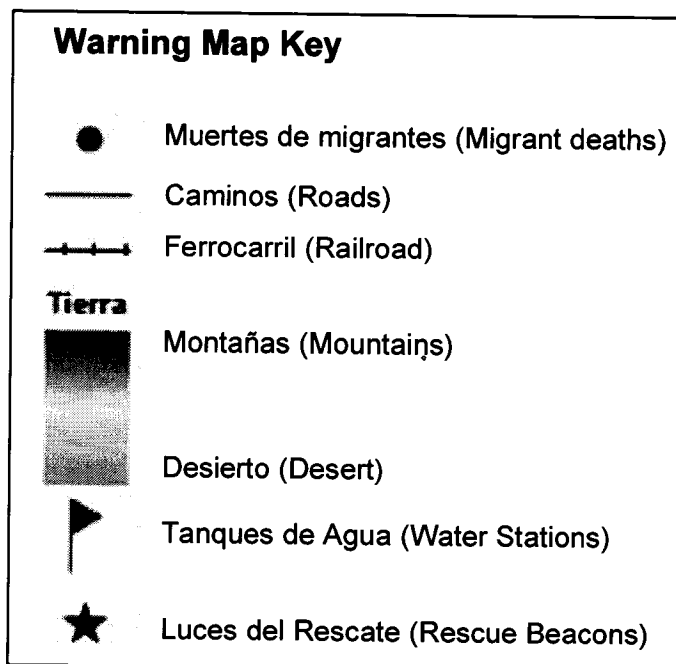


FIGURE D.10. WARNING MAP KEY

<p><u>Información para migrantes</u> Pasar la frontera caminando por el desierto es peligroso y puede terminar en la muerte. <u>Si decides pasar la frontera a pie, prepárate bien</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ve con gente que conoce y en la que confías -No cruces el desierto entre mayo y agosto ya que las temperaturas son muy altas. - Trae bastante agua y comida -Conoce bien la ruta y la distancia antes de comenzar - Busca los tanques de agua en el desierto señalados con banderas azules. <p>Puede hacer mucho calor en el día y frío en la noche.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Usa ropa adecuada y botas o zapatos tenis. <p>Lleva tus documentos importantes, tu identificación y los números de teléfono de tus parientes o amigos con quien puedes comunicarte en caso de emergencia.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">¡NO VAYA USTED! ¡NO HAY SUFICIENTE AGUA! ¡NO VALE LA PENA!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teléfono para emergencia Patrulla Fronteriza: (877) 872-7423 Policía: 911 Consulado de México: (520) 884-1512 (24 Horas): (520) 975-5832 Grupo Beta Sásabe: (01152) 637-374-8076</p>	<p><u>Notice to migrants</u> Crossing the border on foot is dangerous and may result in death. <u>If you decide to cross the border on foot, prepare appropriately</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go with people you know and trust - Don't try to cross the desert between May and August, when temperatures are high. - Bring enough water and food - Familiarize yourself with the route and distance before you begin - Look for the water stations marked with blue flags - It may be very hot during the day, but cold during the night - Wear appropriate clothing and boots or tennis shoes - Take important documents with you [like] your identification card and the phone numbers of family or friends to contact in case of an emergency. <p style="text-align: center;">DON'T GO! THERE ISN'T ENOUGH WATER! IT'S NOT WORTH IT!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emergency phone numbers Border Patrol: (877) 872-7423 Police: 911 Mexican Consulate: (520) 884-1512 24 hours: : (520) 975-5832 Grupo Beta Sasabe: (01152) 637-374-8076</p>
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FIGURE D.11. WARNING MAPS' LEGEND AND TRANSLATION

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