Drawing Lines: El Pasoan Identity, Perception and Place in the Context of the Mexican Drug War

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Abstract

The "sister cities" of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua constitute a transnational metropolis of over 2 million people living along the U.S.-Mexican border. Strong economic, political and social ties and the residents' navigation between two national systems and cultures characterize the cities, despite the international border between them. Since 2008, Juárez has been the site of ten- to eleven thousand murders related to clashes between drug cartels and Mexican state forces, becoming internationally infamous as "Murder City." While El Paso was not the spatial site of violence, the traumas in Juárez have had profound effects on the lives of El Pasoans. Drawing from interviews with El Pasoan residents, I show that the drug war represents a critical moment in the historical trajectories of the cities. The violence constitutes a further wedge between the cities, fitting into a historical trajectory of increased social and cultural division. I argue that this fracture has led to three main social changes: a) an anxiety among Chicano El Pasoans as their ability to live their Mexican heritage becomes restricted, b) a change in migration patterns from border crossers to people who stay in one country, and c) to increased awareness of the external gaze of Texas and the United States on El Paso.

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“Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse.
and under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!”
--Carl Sandburg, *Chicago*, 1914

Image A: Map of El Paso and Juárez

Google

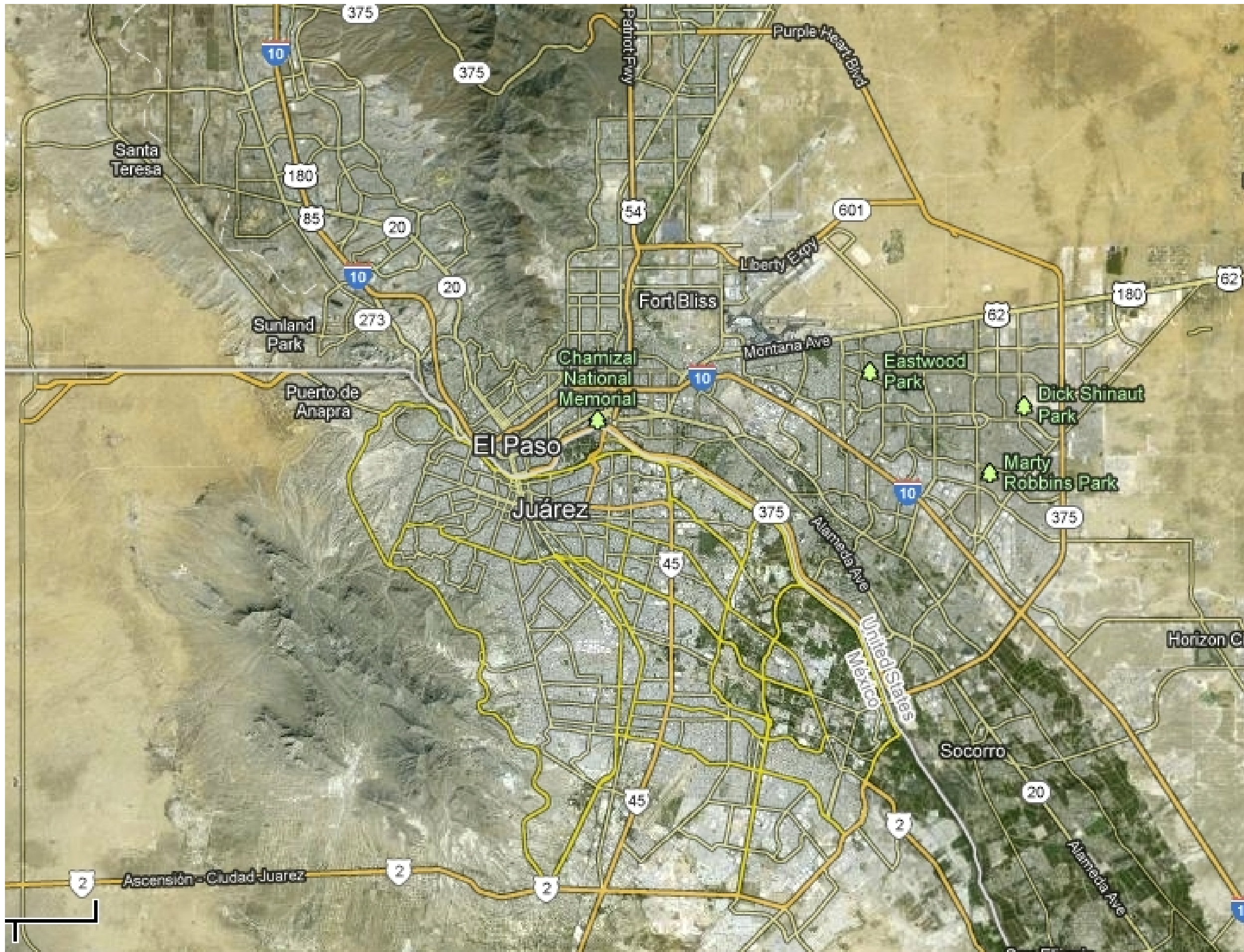

Image B: View of El Paso, the Rio Grande, and Juárez from the old El Paso City Hall (January 2013)

Author's personal photograph

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Borders are to be crossed/contested/re-imagined and/destroyed."
--Robert C. Quintana Hopkins, *Border Crossers*, 2006

We sat at an outdoor patio eating *tostones* and *pica pollo*. It was a holiday in the Dominican Republic that day, and the central park in Jarabacoa was packed with men drinking and shouting. A few women made their way through the crowd, teetering on high heels. As motorcycles zipped by, we began to talk about our lives at home. When Deborah began to talk about her life in El Paso, the conversation settled there for a while. The rest of us were from the North, and knew almost nothing about El Paso (well, I did not, anyway), but we were fascinated by her city. Where the rest of us in the study abroad program found ourselves in a place that felt distant culturally and linguistically from where we grew up, her upbringing was right at the edge of the geographic mass that is called Latin America. When she mentioned Juárez, I responded with disbelief. El Paso is across the border from Juárez? THE Ciudad Juárez? The city famous for being run by drug cartels, for being "the murder capital," for its string of "femicides?"[*] She lived blocks away from it? The Juárez that the media had painted as such a desolate wasteland could not be this close to the United States, close enough that a bullet came over the border and lodged into El Paso City Hall, where Deborah's mother sat engrossed in a meeting. She told us of growing up with trips from one city to the other: dinner in Juárez, a movie in El Paso. Teachers from her high school who lived in Juárez but worked in El Paso. Twin cities, but separated by a line that seemed arbitrary.

That changed in 2008. Deborah outlined for us the violence and chaos that engulfed Juárez. The border became less of a river and more of a sieve, as a flood of Juárez residents went into El Paso, but the flow from the other side almost stopped. Deborah had been there once since 2008, she said. She found it almost unrecognizable.

[*] "Femicide" refers to the gendered killing of women, often accompanied by sexual assault.

She talked for two hours, and our group of friends sat utterly engrossed in her description. None of us could believe that we had gone years without knowing this. We had not an inkling of the war that played out on our own continent and in the country next door.

The second revelation that Deborah taught us that night was how much the violence had to do with drugs. Growing up in an American suburban city, casual drug use among my peers was a constant presence, as were the various institutional efforts to stamp it out that invariably accompanied it. I had never thought to understand how exactly those drugs came to my city--where they were grown, by whom, who flew them north and who sold them. Yet here I was, confronted with a war that was being fought by the country in which I was a citizen.

Pieces began to come together. A few weeks later, a family friend died in the Comayagua prison fire in Honduras. The event led me to recognize the pervasive violence that is occurring in Honduras, with the themes of drugs going north and weapons coming south that were so similar to Mexico. I was shocked when my uncle refused to let my cousin visit Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital where they had lived for years, because the city had become, like Juárez, one of the most dangerous in the world. As I began to learn more about the situation in that country, I saw parallels and patterns to what Deborah had laid before me in Jarabacoa about Juárez. In fact, as I began to become more engrossed in my studies in the DR, I saw echoes of it in that country, in Haiti, and in other Caribbean nations.

As my knowledge expanded, I kept thinking back to Juárez and El Paso. Since that night in Jarabacoa, I was unable to stop thinking about these two cities. The cities rely on each other, but they are not equal. And being on one side of the line or the other can mean the difference between life and death, and does, almost every day. While Juárez had the highest murder rate in the world, El Paso had the lowest murder rate of any US city with over 500,000 residents. While

I could see and understand, at least on some level, how my knowledge of other countries was so limited, what kept nagging at me was how close Juárez was. The US may have a dismal track record when it comes to awareness and engagement with the rest of the world, but what was happening here was next to our country and, in fact, was affecting our residents. It troubled me that even a US American[†] city was ignored in the discourse of international violence. It troubled me that when I read about what was going on in Juárez in the media, its proximity to El Paso and its effects on the people of that city went unmentioned. Although I disagree with it, I found it easier to understand that US Americans may worry little about Mexico, but was stunned that even an awareness of how it was affecting other US Americans was missing.

In this paper, I want to gain a general view of how that violence affects El Paso. Obviously, there are numerous ways that this question can be answered, and this paper is by no means going to provide every answer to that question. However, I do want to begin to answer that question, and perhaps spur future study of this specific case. Beyond that, I want to show how outbreaks of violence can never be seen in isolation. The violence in Juárez is not simply a problem of Mexico. It is also a problem of the United States of America. In looking at the lives at El Pasoans we can learn about how violence in one sector of the world cannot be seen in isolation, but something we must see as connected to us as well.

Overview to this Work

The meat of my original research in this work consists of 12 interviews conducted in El Paso, TX from January 4th to January 12th 2013. These were supplemented with key informant interviews including immigration experts and academic experts on the situation in Juárez. After

[†] I use "US American" instead of simply "American" in order to differentiate the United States of America from the American continent. Residents of Latin America consider themselves "American" (*americano/a/x*) as well and use terms such as *norteamericano/a/x* and *estadounidense* to refer to people of the United States.

this introduction, Chapter 2 of my thesis will lay out my research methodology including research design, subject recruitment and population, interview style, the coding process and various challenges I experienced with each. I also begin to discuss further potential research topics. Chapter 3 contains my literature review—discussing relevant academic works focused on El Paso and Juárez—and the theoretical framework grounding this research in the context of critical border studies. In Chapter 4, I give an overview of the histories of the Paso del Norte cities—El Paso and Juárez—and show how their historical trajectory has been one of continuous, increased separation as a result of outside forces (especially the US and Mexican national governments), despite the ties that exist between "ordinary" residents of both cities. Chapter 5 gives an introduction to the drug violence that has existed in Juárez for the past seven years and outlines the extent and intensity of this violence. This is where I include the findings from my original research. In Chapter 6, I analyze the effects of the drug violence on the identities of El Pasoans, especially Chicanx El Pasoans. Although the violence itself has a smaller impact on identity, the separation between the cities does influence the way these Mexican-Americans experience their connections to Mexico and Mexican cultural objects. In Chapter 7, I show how the violence has made El Pasoans increasingly aware of external perceptions, especially from Texas and the rest of the United States, that paint their city as violent and unsafe. Concurrently, many interviewees showed a similar anxiety about the way that Juárez was being viewed by El Pasoans, and the way they saw El Pasoans viewing *juarenses*[‡] in a stereotypical way that was also tied to the violence. Chapter 8 continues with this theme of migration, and shows how the violence has changed many residents of the cities from border-crossers to border-stayers who must remain on the El Paso side. In Chapter 9, I conclude this work and discuss recommendations for further research.

[‡] *Juarense* is the Spanish word for people from Juárez

Chapter 2: Methodology

"Every artist was first an amateur."
--Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims: Progress of Culture*

The above quote can be amended to "every academic" as well, since the production of this thesis was very much a learning process. In this chapter, I chronicle how I went about researching and writing the work you now hold in your hands to allow for a fuller and more critical look at the results of my study.

Research Design

The field of American Studies has developed a strong emphasis on counter narratives. This is an emphasis on representing the voices of those who have been silenced especially due to their social identities: the poor, people of color, women (to name but a few). Along with this emphasis comes a desire to ground research not in abstract discussions of structures such as political systems, but in the lived experiences of those who are affected the most. For that reason, in planning my research I was most interested in talking to people in El Paso, not experts or those involved in the government (although I talked to some of those people, too), but everyday individuals living their lives on the border. For that reason, this research is a qualitative study designed around interviews with El Pasoans and *juarenses*. Voices that have been ignored in US American discourse about the border and the “Mexican drug war” can emerge to confront the policies that are being created by powerful entities far from their lives.

The meat of my research comes from interviews conducted in El Paso, TX between January 4 and January 13, 2013. I then transcribed the interviews and coded them according to themes that appeared throughout the process of transcribing. Specifics will be described below.

Challenges

Originally, my plan was to interview 10-20 high school students from a specific El Paso high school. I hoped to learn more about the way that living in this particular context affected the coming of age of a group of young adults. Interviews with administrators and teachers would add depth to the project. I wanted to design a qualitative study centered on one-on-one interviews with school community members. However, despite repeated attempts to contact school administrators in order to gain their approval and cooperation in this project, I was unable to gain approval. That, in addition to the stringent procedural requirements associated with interviewing minors imposed by the Institutional Review Board, meant that I did not have the time to plan and execute the research as I had originally envisioned. I decided to switch to a young adult population. While I proceeded with the same premise of the thesis, I shifted my focus to a broader population.

Subject Recruitment

I found interview participants using snowball sampling. I began with three contacts in El Paso: a personal friend and two classmates of my cousin, a student at University of Texas Austin. Through them, I was able to contact a range of El Pasoans.[§] I also contacted "experts"—people with formal education and experience on a specific issue that came up in my research—to provide perspectives on relevant topics such as the violence in Juárez or immigration law. Individuals that I interviewed were also very forthright in passing on names of relatives and friends for me to interview. Although I had few problems in getting names, the nature of the snowball sample meant that most of them came from upper-middle class backgrounds—similar backgrounds to my own. With more time in the community, I could have created networks for a

[§] I originally defined "El Pasoans" broadly as simply "people who lived in El Paso." However, I later divided my population more specifically into "El Pasoans" as individuals who spent most of their lives in El Paso and "Binationals" who lived for significant amounts of time (two years minimum) in Juárez and El Paso.

broader range of individuals for this sample.

In total, I interviewed 15 people for this project. Interviews ranged in length from 20-80 minutes, and took place at a variety of locations: participants' homes, coffee shops, libraries, even the lobby of a hotel. At times, there were interruptions (some participants had children who would come clamoring for coloring books or iPhone games), but despite the, at times, public settings, I found that participants were open and easily able to talk. Despite the occasionally traumatic subjects at hand, people were more than willing to share their stories with me, an outsider, and I am grateful for their willingness to share their time and their stories.

Interview Style

The interviews were conversational. While I had basic themes and questions that I touched on in each interview (which are outlined in Appendix A), I chose to let much of the direction be determined by what the interviewee chose to share with me, and their own experience. I found that this made for a more comfortable interview, both for the interviewee and me, and allowed me to explore topics that the interviewee felt were most important to share. My decision to conduct such open-ended interviews was influenced by grounded theory methods of interviewing, in which the interviewer tries to keep the focus as broad as possible and the questions open for interpretation. For this reason, many of my questions were quite general, such as "tell me about yourself" and "describe the relationship between El Paso and Juarez." Part of the benefit of asking such general questions are their ability to push the interviewee to choose and prioritize information which can then be analyzed by the interviewer: Why did she bring up cartels here and not the government? Why did he immediately mention restaurants? While I did not follow the grounded theory method exactly (among other things, grounded theory does not

utilize literature reviews prior to research), I utilized the principles and mindset of this methodology.

Some people required few questions and little prompting, while others were more withdrawn. I focused on individual stories and experiences, as well as learning what people saw happening in their community, their perceptions of the cities in which they lived. Some based their observations more on their own experience, and others based it more on media and other second-hand sources. This distinction will be further discussed in the chapter on findings.

The formats of the interviews were as follows: I briefed participants prior to the interviews on the risks of the interviews and promised them anonymity (with the exception of the expert interviews, which were on the record). I then gave them a consent form to review and sign independently. I also gave them a survey to gather identifying information, which can be found in the appendix. From this survey, I collected demographic information, such as age, gender, class and race. All interviews were recorded orally on my smartphone and then transcribed. After transcription, the original audio files were deleted from my phone and computer. During the course of the transcription, I assigned each individual a pseudonym and changed identifying information such as street names in order to further protect their information from others who may be able to identify them based on these personal attributes.

Interview Population

Nine of my interview subjects ranged in age from 19-27, and they make up the main part of the study. There were three interviewees, one in her 30s and two in their fifties, who supplement the twenty year olds. Although my study was originally designed to discuss the twenty year olds, I could not resist talking to individuals who provided a rich source of information. The individuals who grew up in the border region in their twenties provided the lens

of individuals whose conceptions of the border between Juárez and El Paso were transformed over the course of a formative period of their lives. Their sharp memories of this change are intertwined with their own journey of reaching adulthood. While younger individuals may have hazy memories of what things were like "before," twenty-year-olds are able to see the changes against the backdrop of their own turbulent teenage years.

Racial identity, a topic that was touched on in many interviews, was also something I kept in mind when recruiting my research population. The population of El Paso is 80% Hispanic,[1] mostly of Mexican heritage. Of my 12 main interviews, 10 identified as Hispanic and 2 identified as white/Caucasian, for a sample that had 83.3% of respondents identifying as Hispanic, specifically of Mexican descent. Although the population was reflective of the city of El Paso racially, in other aspects it did not reflect the city as a whole.

The participants of my interviews were predominantly from upper- or upper middle class backgrounds. While I had hoped for greater economic diversity, I faced limitations that made that difficult to achieve. The reasons for this more narrow viewpoint was due to my own class status and connections with people of this economic class, which made it easier to meet and gain access to those of my own class location. Had I been able to stay longer in the city, I may have had more success in reaching out to a range of individuals. However, the short nature of my visit meant that there were limitations of whom I was able to talk to. Despite this absence, I still believe that my work is valid, but must be viewed through the lens of the individuals who are coming from this class location. However, I would offer my sincere hope that there will be more work done with the poor and those of lower class statuses. This is an absence that exists in much

of the literature on Juárez and El Paso, and of academic work in general.[**]

In terms of educational backgrounds, the majority of my interviewees were college educated. Of the young adult group, all were either in a four-year undergraduate program or had their bachelor's degree. In a city where only 21.9% of individuals over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree (the national average is 27.9%) this sample was overrepresented by the well-educated.[2] The same caveats that come with the discussion on class above can be applied to educational attainment.

All of my interviewees except one were born in El Paso, and all were U.S. citizens. The majority were citizens of Mexico as well. As stated in the footnote above, I divided them more specifically into "El Pasoans" as individuals who spent most of their lives in El Paso and "binationals" who lived for significant amounts of time (two years minimum) in Juárez and El Paso. When creating pseudonyms for my interviewees, I gave them signifying names to reflect this reality. The names of the binationals begin with the letter "J." While all of the binationals were of Mexican heritage, I further divided the El Pasoans by ethnicity/race, with the names of those of Mexican heritage beginning with the letter "M" and those of Anglo/white heritage beginning with "S."

Coding Process

Throughout my time transcribing interviews, I kept note of the major themes that I noticed recurring throughout multiple interviews. From those notes, I created a codebook of the themes I identified as most interesting.[††] I then went through the transcripts, underlining the phrases in each interview that fit with the theme. I then divided the quotes by theme, and used

[**] This is a structural problem and to change it would require increased access to higher education for the poor, more attention paid to the border region, funding for this research, time for researchers to talk to the poor, etc.
[††] see Appendix

them to analyze my findings. I found five major themes: the violence itself, implications for identity, perceptions of Juarez and El Paso, relationships with the border itself, and economic effects. After consolidating my quotes by theme, I began the analysis that is found in the Discussions chapter.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout my work, I found the cities of El Paso and Juárez as sites rich with locations for further examination. My original research design involving high school students still would make for a quite edifying research project. In addition, the ongoing (though decreasing) drug violence's effects have yet to be fully seen and realized. For those who wish to continue with this work, the Paso del Norte cities remain intriguing places that have much for us to uncover. I would especially advise those interested to look for opportunities to work with marginalized groups who have not often been present in academic work, such as the poor or migrants. Juárez and El Paso have much to offer the researcher and the world, and there is much we have left to learn from them.

Chapter 3: Border Studies: A Theoretical Framework

"The lines of demarcation has [sic] gotten fuzzy."
—Cody, *Lone Star,* 1996

My first introduction to borders was as lines and shapes. As a child, I had a puzzle version of the United States that I did obsessively; taking apart and re-forming the country through simple shapes organized along the cardinal directions. West—Pacific Ocean, North—Canada, East—Atlantic Ocean, South—Mexico.

Later, I became more aware of the legal ramifications of borders. My family moved from Chicago to Costa Rica for a year when I was twelve years old. As US citizens, we received the privilege of tourist visas that lasted for three months, and we also received the privilege of lax enforcement. When our visas expired, we ducked over the border to Panama or Nicaragua for a weekend and then returned, fresh stamps allowing us to remain another few months.
While the weekends were a reward, the border crossings themselves were a time of stress. "Do not make jokes while you are in the line," my parents warned. "Do not say anything in customs at all." The officials made me nervous, and it was not hard to follow their advice. I still thought of those borders as absolute lines, despite the evidence to the contrary in front of me—the people crossing back and forth daily, the buildings that looked the same on both sides. It was not like taking a plane, where airports stood as spaces that clearly delineated one cultural space from another. But Panama was a different country from Costa Rica, so despite the lack of obvious differences between one side of a fence and another, that made it completely different in my mind.

It was when I spent my junior spring semester abroad in the Dominican Republic that I began to understand that borders were powerful but also fluid. Learning about the history of that country's border with Haiti, I was exposed to the idea of a border as a zone—a social space that

extended out into the territorial sovereignty of each country. I visited markets where Haitian citizens were free to pass over the border without documents in order to participate in the sale of goods on certain days, creating a border that was temporal as well as spatial. I spent time in an area of the DR, Pedernales, which was isolated from the rest of the country, but also strongly linked to a Haitian town, Anse-a-Pitre. The border there consisted of a dried-up riverbed, a gate, and a bored Dominican border security guard. I was able to come and go almost as I pleased.

Of course, all of these borders existed, or did not exist, for me as an upper middle class white, US American, cisgendered woman. My ability and access to crossing them was and is completely tied to these identities that I presented to the world. My identity is foundational to my ability to cross the borderline.

Border Studies is the dialogue about these various borders: the spatial/geographical, the political, the social, the imagined and the symbolic borders that we create around ourselves. It questions why and how they exist and for whom they operate—who has the power to create those borders and cross them, and who is limited by them. It is the idea that borders present us with not only a space, but also a lens through which we can view the world.

The founding mother of critical examination of the US-Mexican border is Gloria Anzaldúa. At times it seems that every work written about the U.S.-Mexican border must include her most famous quote from her seminal work *La Frontera/Borderlands*.

> The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta – an open wound – where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two countries merging to form a third country – a border culture.[3]

Through her poetry and writings drawn from her experiences growing up a queer Chicana woman on the border, Anzaldúa re-defined the border. While her work, a combination of personal narrative and history, written in both poetry and prose, has influenced the lives of many

on a personal level, what I am discussing here is its academic, theoretical sense. Anzaldúa moved the idea of a "border" from the geopolitical sense of lines on a map, drawn as a result of conquest, toward a conception of it as constructed through the lives of the residents[4], their language, music, art and literature. Her conception of *mestizaje*, the hybridity of the border culture, led to a revaluation of how and for whom the border works. While *mestizaje* in Mexico carries racial connotations of the combined indigenous and Spanish European heritage of the majority of the country, she broadened this definition to refer to a wider conception of hybridity. Her metaphor of the border as a gaping wound incorporated the difference in power between two nations and the pain it has caused, but also the potential for healing.

In her conception of the *mestiza*, Anzaldúa also opens up what it means to be an American. The term "American" itself is a politically loaded term. While commonly used in English to refer to citizens or residents of the United States of America, the Spanish "americanx" refers not to a country, but a continent. Where the United States divides North and South America into two continents, in Latin American discourse there is just one America. Therefore, everyone who lives on this great landmass, north to south, is an American. Residents of the US are *estadounidenses*, or if they require less of a mouthful, *norteamericanxs*, or the informal *gringo/a/x*. Along the border, it is not enough to simply define an American as a U.S. citizen, or even a legal resident. To study the border is to study the heart of what it means to have an American identity. Small moves are emerging in the political discourse that the definitions of being "American" are beginning to change, especially in light of the post-2012 election discussion of the "emerging Latino majority" and the activities of organizations like "Define American" which encourages immigrants to "come out" as undocumented in order to make their status visible and start a national discussion on immigration.[5] Undocumented immigrants have

thrown a wrench into the dominant discussion of what it means to belong to and partake in the United States of America. We often talk about the border in this context, but we must move beyond that. In his 2013 State of the Union address, Barack Obama concluded with this paragraph:

> We are citizens. It's a word that doesn't just describe our nationality or legal status. It describes the way we're made. It describes what we believe. It captures the enduring idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations; that our rights are wrapped up in the rights of others; and that well into our third century as a nation, it remains the task of us all, as citizens of these United States, to be the authors of the next great chapter in our American story.[6]

The president's definition of what it means to be American—beyond nationality or status—is a welcome discursive shift, but to study the border means to question whether this nationality and legal-status caveat is even necessary. It is to become, as Anzaldúa urges us, comfortable with ambiguity and unclear lines. To study the border is to examine the intersection of where legal power meets identity; where the laws made by governments clash with the lived realities of those who live them out. The residents of the border are constantly negotiating these realities, and those of us who live in the interior have much to learn from them about the wobbly foundations of our own identities as citizens. In the rest of this framework, I will outline a schema of various ways of theorizing borders, especially the U.S.-Mexican border.

Border as a line

The common definition of a border is that of a line. The representation of that line varies: from invisible, as in regions where there is no physically marked border; to two dimensional, as when a simple line is drawn or painted on the ground but is otherwise unobstructed; to the extreme that increasingly makes up the U.S.-Mexican border: a militarized border.[78] The militarized border is characterized by the construction of fences or walls; crossings through

checkpoints guarded by state officers; the presence of weapons, including guns; surveillance technology including watch towers, infrared scanning technology, and potentially drones. Militarization is characterized by the curtailing of individuals' ability to cross freely between borders, especially "low-value" individuals, whom sociologist Saskia Sassen defines as those who have less access to power and opportunity in a globalized, neoliberal world.[9]

Related to this is the idea of the border as a container. In the North American context, the racialized discourse of keeping the Mexicans out is present in conservative political discourse. It can also be seen in the specific El Paso—Juárez context with the constant invocations of the threat of "spillover violence," violence that comes as a result of actors from Mexico who bring it into the United States. Spillover violence has been a concern of US American lawmakers in looking at the US Mexican border.[10] A more specific form of spillover violence is when bullets cross over the literal borderline from Juárez and kill people in El Paso. However, sociologist Patricia Fernandez-Kelley and Doug Massey point out that the border as a container is also classed, containing "the most vulnerable sectors of society while they become more permeable for those in power."[11] In other words, those of a higher-class status have a greater ability to move between countries and national borders, whether through the ability to pay for transportation (such as a plane) or visas, or through restrictions like the necessity of a higher educational status in order to obtain residency.[12]

Border as a region

A dominant theme of border studies is the idea that the border constitutes a separate region, although the extent to which that region manifests itself remains a point of contention. Some suggest that the U.S.-Mexican border is a separate geopolitical entity with El Paso—Juárez as its "capital city."[13] Others have extended this to suggest the border constitutes a distinct

culture from the Mexican and American interiors, with its own language, music, arts and history.[14] Some scholars have chosen to further complicate this "border as a region" idea, cautioning us to keep the existence of asymmetrical power structures as a result of national power dynamics between the United States and Mexico in mind and avoid essentializing the border region as a homogenous group or culture.[15]

Border as a tool

It is useful to view the border not only as a culture or a space, but as a tool, as well. While the border can be detrimental to the lives of the *fronterizadxs*, as one of my interviewees said, "people are resourceful" and figure out ways to use it for their own means. Flaws in the system of one country may be remedied through the protection of the other. For example, parents utilize the two health care systems in order to maximize the quality of their children's health care. They may go to El Paso for what they believe to be a more accurate diagnosis and then Juárez for cheaper treatment.[16] In this way, I wish to conceive of the border as a region, but also as a tool that those who live on the border manage to negotiate for themselves, struggling for their own quality of life despite politically constructed obstacles.

An example of this can be seen in the way the Mexican newspaper *Zeta* uses the border to provide security for its editors and reporters. Mexico is ranked 8th of all nations on the Committee to Protect Journalists' impunity index, which means that the Mexican government's response to anti-press violence against Mexican journalists is the 8th worst in the world.[17] Journalists, editors and staff are threatened both by cartels and by forces of the state, and are under pressure to present the official story only the way the powerful present it to them. *Zeta* is printed in California and in the small hours of the morning, exported to Mexico where it is distributed.[18] Although a Mexican newspaper controlled by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans,

the border is the site that makes its existence possible. The border provides an escape route for some of these writers to write against those in power.

Border as an identity

While the idea of the *mestiza*, a border resident, is one of Anzaldúa's most important legacies, the "borders" that she is referring to are not simply those of geography. She states, "…the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy."[19] While Analzadúa's working can be misinterpreted as arguing for a primary border identity, as a queer Chicana woman, she was, in fact, pushing for a blurring of the differences between different identity facets, and looked at *mestizaje* as just one aspect of this intersectional identity.[‡‡] In a similar vein, anthropologist Pablo Vila cautions against a scholarly essentialization of a border identity that is privileged over other aspects of identity, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, disability or many others. In other words, he argues that these other identities are just as salient on the border as in any other context—they exist at the same time and influence how a border identity acts on individual bodies. [20]

Implications for This Work

Border theory promotes the questioning of identity. Using this lens, it is difficult to say that there is a "Mexican" perspective or an "American" perspective when the residents of El Paso and Juárez have such a combination of both. There are two themes that are essential to keep in mind when studying the individuals who live on the border: "the uniqueness of their

[‡‡]One of the most important ideas to emerge from third wave feminism, intersectionality is the idea that individuals are a part of multiple identities, and that there is a complex interplay between them. As Kimberlee Crenshaw put it in a spring 2004 interview, "if you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both" (Perspectives Magazine).

perspective and the paradoxical nature of their narratives."[21] The residents of borders live in contexts that may appear unfamiliar to those dwelling in the interior of a country. Their lens contests the idea of nations, yet the paradox is in how, while perhaps more cognizant than others about the socially constructed nature of the border, that same construction affects their lived realities more strongly than those same interior residents.

The idea of a border culture is very much alive and vibrant, as evidenced by the rise of *ruidoson*, a musical genre that combines traditional Mexican *norteño* with globalized electronica or techno music that developed in the past few years. However, the influence of national governments and economic trends is constantly interacting with and shaping this culture, and at this point, seems to be causing a split between the two sides. Meanwhile, the border residents continue to find ways to challenge, negotiate and navigate between all of these flows, using the border as a tool.

Literature Review

As one of the largest metropolitan areas on the US-Mexican border, with a combined population of 2 million people in 2010[22], both Juarez and El Paso have been studied by US American, Mexican, and international scholars. Interest has been especially acute in recent years because of the increased importance of globalization theories in the social sciences. As the site of juncture between one of the most powerful high-income countries and a poor nation, the US-Mexican border in general and El Paso-Juárez has been a site for the study of free-trade policies like NAFTA, immigration, violence, the effects of globalization on identities of nation, race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other facets of identity, and other related topics. The region is reflective of the world as a whole, as a microcosm of the power flows that exist between what used to be called the First and Third Worlds in a spatially condensed area. Examples of this type

of literature include Melissa Wright's *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*[23] and Leslie Salzinger's *Genders in Production*[24], both of which focus on the experience of *juarense* maquiladora workers. Victor M. Ortíz-González's *El Paso: Local Frontiers at a Global Crossroads* uses theories of globalization to focus even more explicitly on El Paso.[25] Ortíz–González examines the interplay of local democracy in El Paso in the context of a globalized world and the tensions between local and global interests.

The literature on the cities can be, for the most part, divided geographically. There are the works that focus on El Paso, those that focus on Juárez, and those that are interested in the border, whether as a reality, a symbol, or through some other lens. Works that focus mainly on one or another city can, at times, fall into the trap of ignoring the impact of the other. In the case of Juárez, this often figuratively places the city further away from its location on the border, treating it as a Mexican city that is representative of the Mexican interior. This happens more rarely in the case of El Paso.

The literature examining the history of the cities rarely makes the combination of the cities its explicit focus, yet the two are so intertwined that it is impossible to write about one without also exploring the role of the other. However, it is often clear from whose "side" the author writes. Works on El Paso can, at times, pathologize Juárez as a site of violence and vice, while those focused on Juárez can paint El Pasoan residents, state representatives and businesses as set on destroying the interests of Juárez. These dynamics are often at play in the two main histories of the cities: Wilbur Timmons's *El Paso: A Borderlands History*[26] and Oscar Martinez's *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848*[27]. They each have a distinct mode of portraying the cities often in opposition to one another. Oral histories may serve as a way to balance this adversarial approach by representing the lived experiences of people who move

between the two cities. Howard Campbell's *Drug War Zone*[28] offers us a model through his careful collection of testimony of drug smugglers and law enforcement throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

In recent years, there has been more attention paid to treating the two cities as a single metropolitan region, rather than separating them along the borderline. As a volume, *Cities and Citizenship on the U.S.-Mexican Border*[29] offers a move towards this integrated approach. While the work is "centered" on Juárez, it does not look at the city in isolation, but rather, integrates study of El Paso, Las Cruces and Sunland Park, New Mexico in what it calls the Paso del Norte region. Featuring essays from a variety of scholars in a variety of disciplines, the work allows for an exploration of the complexities of the region and better reflects the reality of life for its residents.

While there is often discussion of how one city affects the other, it is rarely the explicit focus that it is in my thesis This is especially true in the light of the recent violence in Juárez. There has been a great deal written on the violence in Juárez in the US American mass media, and some works even take the effects on El Paso as their focus, most notable the New York Times Magazine in a long-form essay.[30] However, the effects of drug war violence on El Paso have not received much attention in academic circles, especially its influence on the day-to-day realities of border residents. My hope is that my work can be a valuable addition to a body of knowledge examining the Mexican drug war and the U.S-Mexican border.

Chapter 4: El Paso del Norte: a History of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez

"It is the story that survives dust storms and little rain."
--Ray Gonzalez, *Memory Fever*, 1993

Ten miles outside of El Paso, it is hard to believe that there is a city anywhere in the immediate vicinity. Short, scrubby brush dominates the landscape, which goes and goes in endless configurations of soft browns. Tumbleweed—the famous symbol of Wild West isolation—often rolls across the highway in front of unsuspecting drivers. As one drives closer, waves of cattle emerge from the landscape, providing a splash of black and white against the tan textures of the landscape, and filling the car with an unpleasant smell. Then suddenly, the city begins to form around the highway, buildings spread both horizontally and vertically, but mostly horizontally, creeping up towards the mountains.

El Paso is the last outpost of Texas on its far western border with New Mexico. Juárez sits across the Rio Grande, its concrete banks so dry even a puddle is cause for comment by residents. But these two cities exist in isolation. The closest city to the east of any size is Odessa, population 102,106, which is 284 miles away. It takes 4 hours to travel from El Paso to Odessa by car. The driving journeys to the major cities to the north, west and south of El Paso—Albuquerque, NM; Tucson, AZ; and Chihuahua City, Mexico—take 4, 4½, and 4½ hours respectively. El Paso and Juárez serve as an axis point between these other cities yet they remain isolated, two places that are seen by people from the interiors of their respective countries as a place to pass through, and nothing more. When I told a friend from Tucson about my plans to go to El Paso, his response summed up what many outsiders see in the cities. "You are going to El Paso? Why?" he said. "There is nothing there. I only go there on the way to somewhere else."

El Paso and Juárez sprawl across the desert in a seemingly uniform mass of houses and factories and cars. Seemingly uniform, but soon the distinct textures of the cities differentiate

themselves—the uncluttered blocks of El Paso meet the concrete banks of the Rio Grande and become the denser urbanity of Juárez. The two cities are both joined and separate. The cities are officially and colloquially called "sister cities," and a sibling relationship describes them well: forever connected in a bond distinct from any other, but, at times, jealous and squabbling and fighting in the car.

If the cities are sisters, the two countries of Mexico and the United States can be seen as their parents—parents with a difficult relationship, who are constantly playing one child off the other. The histories of these cities are full of tensions, the push and pull of a variety of conflicting interests and needs.

Despite their isolated location, the two cites, known as the "Paso del Norte" cities, have occupied an important place in the histories of both Mexico and the United States. The cities are nestled at the base of the Franklin Mountain Range. The mountains themselves are sparsely populated; the only signs of human development are a few cellphone towers, the giant illuminated Texas Lone "Star on the Mountain" on Franklin Mountain in El Paso, and the large statue of Jesus that stands at the top of Mount Cristo Rey at exactly the point where the two cities meet. The location of the cities as the most passable site through the mountain range gave the region its name. Spanish conquistadors from southern Mexico christened it the "pass to the north." However divided they are now, for the first two centuries of the European presence in the Americas, the cities of Juárez and El Paso were one, a town located on the southern bank of the Rio Grande: Paso del Norte.

One City: El Paso del Norte from 1659-1846

Although Spanish colonizers moved through the pass after first encountering the region in the 1540s, Fray Garcia de San Francisco, a Franciscan friar, did not found the mission of Paso

del Norte until 1659. He built the settlement on the southern side of the Rio Grande in what is now Juárez.

The Franciscans saw Paso del Norte as an enticing site for settlement. The Mansos, the indigenous tribe native to the region, were semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers. Their lack of an agricultural tradition led the Spanish missionaries to see them as particularly "wild" and in need of "civilizing." Perhaps more importantly, the mission would also serve as a base to protect the safe passage of the Spanish through the mountain pass, and as a center for the further development of mining camps and ranches (the Spanish also perceived the Mansos as a ready source of labor).[31] Fray Garcia describes the founding as follows:

> Having descended, with no little labor, to El Passo del Rio del Norte [present-day Rio Grande], on the border of New Spain, and in the middle of the custody and province of New Mexico, and having congregated most of the rancherías of the Manso heathen on said site; and having offered them the evangelical word and they having accepted it for their catechism, and permitted me to build a little church of branches and mud and a monastery thatched with straw…I took possession of this conversion of the Manso and the Sumanas, and all of the other surrounding heathen which might be assembled or might be called to our or to whatever evangelical preacher, in name of all our sacred religion…and I named and dedicated this holy church and conversion to the most holy Virgin of Guadalupe with the above name of El Passo.[32]

The legacy of its religious founding remains visible in Juárez today, where large white letters written on the side of a mountain read "CD JUÁREZ: LA BIBLIA ES LA VERDAD, LÉELA."[§§]

The settlement remained small until 1683, when the Spanish founded a presidio, or fortified military base, in the city.[33] The increased need for a military presence was due to the Pueblo Indian uprising in Nuevo Mexico[***] that occurred in 1680. Spanish residents of Nuevo

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[§§] In English: "Ciudad Juárez: The Bible is the Truth, Read It!" The letters were painted in 1987. The words can be seen from any high point in El Paso as well.
[***] I use "Nuevo Mexico" to refer to the province of Spain and later Mexico that encompasses the contemporary state of New Mexico and sections of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas,

Mexico fled to El Paso during the conflict and used it as a base for their successful re-conquest of the territory.[34] Conflicts arose between the *paseños*, who were mostly Christianized members of the Manso, Suma and Jano tribes, and the Hispanic refugees from Nuevo Mexico, but even after the uprising was quashed many of the new arrivals remained.[35] The location was ill suited to agriculture and it was, at times, difficult for the settlers to survive—to the point where they repeatedly petitioned the governor for permission to leave or resettle the community at a site more conducive to agriculture and more protected from the Pueblo and Camache tribes that were at war with the Spanish.[36] The Spanish crown denied these requests; the strategic importance of the location made them hesitant to move the settlement.[37] As a way to encourage residents to stay, the Spanish government began sending gifts of maize, meat and horses to the settlers, and eventually giving them a gift of 2,500 pesos.[38]

Their efforts succeeded. El Paso del Norte remained the center of the Spanish state of Nuevo Mexico due to its location in the midst of Spain's Mexican colony. In those days, "Mexico" encompassed much more territory than it does today, stretching north to what is now the southern border of Oregon. Cattle, sheep and goat ranching and the production of wine and brandy became the city's economic base, although the arid climate and scarcity of water meant that their success was limited at times.[39] War continued with the Camache and Apache throughout the eighteenth century, especially in times of scarcity such as drought.[40] In 1778, the Spanish government developed citizen militias to defend the city, introducing a military culture that remains in El Paso with the presence of Fort Bliss.[41] They also attempted to force the farmers to build fences around their farms as a defense mechanism, however the response was less than positive.

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including El Paso and Juárez. While it is also referred to as New Mexico, using the Spanish allows me to more clearly delineate the province from the US American state.

> Smoldering antagonism to [New Mexico Governor] Anza's decree soon erupted into public protest. Colonists claimed that construction of the required barriers would force many in the district to neglect their vines. The people complained they could not afford to waste precious time on the governor's demand since most of them depended on the production of grapes for their livelihood.[42]

The barriers were not built—one of the first attempts at government-mandated fence building had failed. At the same time, the Spanish government began to develop a route south from Santa Fe, through El Paso del Norte and then west and south through modern-day Mexico.[43] Peace treaties with the Camaches and Hopi tribes signed in 1779 and 1786 helped to secure the route for the Spanish inhabitants and cemented Paso del Norte's position on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, one of the most important trade routes of the Spanish empire.[44]

Mexico fought for and gained its independence from Spain in 1821, and El Paso del Norte was incorporated as part of the new nation. In 1823 the Mexican government divided the Spanish department of Nuevo Vizcaya into two sections: Durango and Chihuahua, creating the state that contains Juárez to this day. At this time, Chihuahua contained a population of 100,000.[45]

The lack of natural resources in El Paso del Norte led to the increased importance of its location on a trade route to its economy. However, despite the necessity of the city as a stop-by on trade routes, the city was isolated. The Rio Grande is difficult to navigate and attempts to utilize it as a trade route were met with little success. In a letter "from a highly respectable source to a US Senator" (both unnamed), an 1826 trader states:

> From all I can learn of this famous river, I am much disposed to believe, that it can never be of any use for the transportation of commodities upward, and very little indeed downward. In truth, there seems to be but little necessity for navigable streams here, while mules and labor are so very cheap. The regular and fixed price of transportation from El Passo [sic] to Taos, (370 miles) is $7 for a load of 300 lbs.[46]

Mules became the main form of transportation into and out of the city. Cattle and sheep

moved through the city as well. El Paso del Norte became a major thoroughfare for these herds, with 200,000 sheep passing through between 1839 and 1850.[47]

El Paso del Norte remained a part of Mexico during the Texas Revolution in 1836. The newly created Republic of Texas was less than half its modern size, encompassing eastern Texas. El Paso del Norte was not even close to the battles of the Texas Revolution, rather, the main source of military conflict during this period was in battles against native tribes.[48]

The Border Lands in El Paso: 1846-1880

Paso del Norte held strategic importance for the Mexican Army during the Mexican-American War, which began in July 1846.[49] It was used early in the war as a place of retreat and regrouping by the Mexican army.[50] Later in 1846, an American army first occupied the city when Colonel Alexander Doniphan seized the city on his way south from Santa Fe.[51] By September 1847, the US was in Mexico City.[52] Treaty negotiation began in January 1848, and the treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo was ratified later that year by both the US and Mexican Congresses.[53]

The treaty re-defined the border as the Rio Grande, the "Great River" that flowed on Paso del Norte's northern border. The new location of the international border led to social, spatial and economic changes in the city. *Paseños* found themselves in the position of having to re-evaluate and complicate their identity. No longer were they simply a Mexican city, but rather, they were now *fronterizados*: border residents. The process was a gradual one that would take decades to show dramatic change, but the lines were drawn. The town was divided, with the settlements on the northern side of the river becoming part of the United States. 4000 people emigrated from Paso del Norte across the river and founded five settlements that became the basis for what is now El Paso.[54] Although in the early years the settlements were called Franklin (especially in

order to avoid confusion with Paso del Norte), the newly US American city was no longer "the pass to the north." It was just "the pass," and it was now the gateway for the country's southern border.

Mexican citizens from Nuevo Mexico, which was now in the United States, moved south to Paso del Norte. The Mexican government supported these migrants by providing them with plots of land and financial support to make the move.[55] There were also changes on the northern side of the river. Institutions of importance for El Paso were founded. Fort Bliss was established as a military post in 1854, although the modern site of the military base was founded in 1893.[56]

It was in these years that the first traces of the border dynamics developed. The 1850s in El Paso saw the arrival of a stagecoach line, a plan for a railroad, and a population increase to 428 by 1860.[57] The source of much of that increase was the immigration of Mexican citizens from across the river who saw opportunity in the newly forming city.[58] That changed as a result of the U.S. Civil War. Although El Paso had few social or cultural ties to the Confederacy and slavery was a small presence that had little economic pull, the ruptures in trade routes had a depressing effect on the city. As El Paso's economy fell, Paso del Norte reaped the benefits, with merchants moving across the border.[59] It was a dynamic that continues to the present day: as one city falls, the other rises.

Railroads, Trade and Revolution: 1880-1920

1884 saw the arrival of the railroad in El Paso, and with it came a booming economy based on high-speed trade. Characterized as a "boom town," El Paso saw its population grow from 1000 in 1880 to 80,000 by 1920.[60] El Paso developed more institutions: its first public school in 1883, its first bank and a streetcar service, including a line that crossed the river back and forth to Paso del Norte.[61] The increased connection with the interior led to cultural shifts as

well. El Paso went from a city that was described in 1858 as a town in which "all the features were Mexican: low, flat adobe buildings, shading cottonwoods under which dusky, smoky women and swarthy children sold fruit…habitual gambling, from the boy's games…to the great saloons."[62] The new connections with the US American economy led to the increased presence of Anglo-American[†††] culture. The founding of an opera house was meant to combat El Paso's "Sin City" image and the opera house excluded prostitutes from entering.[63] Mexican and Anglo-American cultures were developing as a binary: the Anglo-American culture seen by the United States as civilized, clean, and elite, while Mexican culture was increasingly associated with vice and sin.

Paso del Norte had a less dramatic expansion during this time, but it too saw change. On September 16, 1888, the name of the city was changed to Ciudad Juárez, in honor of the former Mexican president Benito Juárez. Juárez's name change showed an aspiration; as Wilbert Timmons points out, "it was elevated from a 'villa' to a 'ciudad.'"[64] Juárez's attempts to compete with El Paso were mixed. High tariffs on imports to Mexico pushed commerce to El Paso, where residents of Juárez went to buy cheaper goods. The residents of Juárez pushed to be part of a free trade zone that would extend in a radius from the border and would make their economy more easily connected to El Paso. However, the reality of this zone was inconsistent—the Mexican national government changed its policies depending on who was in power. During the era of the railroads, the scales were tipped in El Paso's favor.

Conditions in Juárez further deteriorated during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20. El Paso was a strategic place to plan and regroup, as the border provided a protective barrier against other groups. Pancho Villa, the famous *campesino*[‡‡‡] leader, used Juárez as a base, and Juárez

[†††] "Anglo" or "Anglo-American" refers to white US Americans.
[‡‡‡] peasant

was the site of a major battle in the spring of 1911. This was just the first of a series of battles that took place in the border city. The Mexican Revolution was devastating to the Mexican people, with an estimated death toll of 250,000 people, half of whom were civilians.[65] Juárez was a popular site of gun smuggling from the United States into Mexico by various revolutionary groups[66], but as guns came in, people went out. During the ten years of the revolution, 23,000 people immigrated to the US through Juárez.[67] The immigrants came from all social classes, and many of those in the upper classes founded businesses. However, the fear of immigrants, especially of the poor, led to increased border security. The immigrants were characterized as bringing disease, especially after a tuberculosis outbreak, and the migrants were required to bathe in gasoline and vinegar.[68] In the mid 1910s new immigration requirements—taxes, literacy tests, passport possession, and conscription in the US army—were passed by the US Congress to limit the arrival of these new citizens.[69] For the most part, they succeeded in limiting the flow of immigration. In 1920, Álvaro Obregon Salido became president of Mexico and the political situation stabilized, signifying the end of the Mexican Revolution in Mexico and contributing to the minimization of violence in Juárez.[70] With the return of peace, another shift was about to take place in Juárez, and this time it was because of alcohol.

The High of Prohibition, the Hangover of the Depression: 1920-1939

Wherever there are humans, they will find a way to utilize intoxicating substances, but because of their location Juárez and El Paso are unique in the outsize influence of intoxicating substances on their economies, politics, and the daily lives of their residents. The cities' location as an entry point to international markets make them a prime location for the transportation of all goods, and the differences in legal structures makes them particularly likely to be used for illicit substances.

Many of the foundations of the modern drug war were built during the Prohibition era, when Juárez became a center for US Americans looking to legally obtain alcohol in a place conveniently located just over the border. Heightened zeal for temperance developed in the United States in the early 20th century, and as early as the 1900s citizen reform groups called for El Paso to become dry.[71] The 18th Amendment went into effect in January 1920 and caused a major shift in Juárez's other goals such as stopping the southern flow of chemicals and laundered money and U.S.-made arms, as well as US American goals like increasing border security and helping the expansion of Mexican law enforcement. Tourism developed as the major industry in Juárez, with two thirds of the city's business catering to tourism in some way as casinos, restaurants, hotels, brothels or racetracks. From July 1919- July 1920, 20% of all tourists to Mexico entered through Juárez.[72]

Meanwhile, El Paso benefited from the increased traffic for US Americans who used it as a base from which to explore the other side of the border. The El Paso Chamber of Commerce put forth a major effort in promoting the city to tourists and conventioneers with a large-scale advertising campaign.[73] The governments of the two cities cooperated in the development of the tourist industry through a variety of policies; for example, the Juárez government issued ID cards to US American tourists and promised not to prosecute them for all but the most serious crimes.[74]

The influence of tourism meant that Juárez was "pulled deeper into the economic orbit of the United States."[75] By 1926, two thirds of commercial and service businesses and one half of industrial business centered on tourism from the United States.[76] Tourism in Juárez was not simply because of the "vice" industries of gambling and alcohol consumption. The city was also an attraction to US Americans looking for a taste of "Old Mexico" in the Juárez mission and

market.

But in Prohibition we can find the roots of the current drug trade. The expansion of alcohol smuggling would lead to the development of networks that evolved to include other illegal substances.[77] New drugs, like opium, appeared in northwest Mexico in the 1920s.[78] In Juárez, two rival gangs developed to control drug smuggling in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Fernandez and Quevedo gangs began as rivals in the gambling industry, but expanded to take on the narcotics trade as well. Both groups obtained political power through both formal—obtaining representative positions in governmental bodies—and informal—bribes to officials—means, and established close ties with government representatives, a connection that would become further established throughout the century.[79] One individual, La Nacha, would become an integral part of the development of the drug trade until her death in the 1970s.[80] As Prohibition ended in the United States with the ratification of the Twenty First Amendment on December 5 1933, the networks and smuggling methods remained and instead of alcohol, gangs smuggled marijuana and heroin across the border.

While Juárez boomed, the Mexican government was solidifying its post revolutionary structure. The political groups that would evolve into the Partido Revolucionario Independiente (PRI), or Independent Revolutionary Party, emerged during the 1920s and would run the country practically unopposed for the next 71 years. An authoritarian regime, the party had complete control over the Federal government of Mexico. Presidents were invariably elected from the PRI, with each president appointing his successor through the use of the *dedazo* or "big finger." The chaos of the Revolution was transformed into stability under this regime. Plutarco Elias Calles was elected in the aftermath of Obregón's assassination in 1924 and with that election, the era of the PRI began, a few years before the world economy went into free fall in 1929.[81]

The Great Depression devastated the economies of both Juárez and El Paso. The decline of US American tourism led to depression in Juárez, and the repeal of Prohibition was the final blow. El Paso's economy was not left unscathed. The amount of manufacturing establishments dropped by 21% from 1929-1939.[82] The US Federal government responded with protectionist policies intended to keep capital within city limits. US Immigration and Naturalization Service agents began rounding up *juarenses* who commuted across the river to work. A major motivating force for this new policy was lobbying from El Pasoan labor organizations that painted these Mexican commuters as responsible for the closing of businesses, lower wages, increased taxes, and lower standards of living.[83] In an especially egregious example of how anti-Mexican stereotypes influenced migration habits, El Paso's medical representative from the US Public Health Service asserted that 95% of Mexicans were carrying venereal disease, and therefore must be limited from entering El Paso.[84] Immigration became increasingly difficult, especially for the poor, whose passports were stamped with an "AC" if they received assistance from Associated Charities.[85] In response, ideas of Mexican nationalism became increasingly popular in Juárez, with municipal officials urging their citizens to "buy Mexican" and educate their children about Mexican culture.[86] The cities, which had moved closer together during the 1920s, were pulled apart as a result of the contraction of economic opportunity.

Midcentury Prosperity: 1940-69

World War II brought about greater economic prosperity to the US, to El Paso and, because their economies were so intertwined, to Juárez. As the site of Fort Bliss, a major military base, the influx of soldiers was a godsend to Juárez's tourism industry. The soldiers also became a large consumer base for the fledgling drug market.[87] In general, the post-war years proved economically successful for both countries and their population growth followed accordingly.

In his book *Drug War Zone*, anthropologist Howard Campbell collected oral histories of individuals who were involved in the drug trade during this era. Individuals contrasted the scale and tactics of the smugglers during this time with those that exist among contemporary cartels, suggesting that the early smugglers were more involved with the local community. Describing the tactics of La Nacha, lifelong El Paso resident Robert Chessey says, "She never left the Bellavista barrio [a working-class neighborhood in Juárez]…She sponsored an orphanage. She was involved in a free breakfast program for children."[88] Drug dealer David, who was active in the 1960s, describes the protections that the community formed around the young dealers. "This type of drug dealing was very open, but no one would talk to the police…They encouraged us to stop. Our parents would call one another to find out where we were."[89]

The 60s also marked the beginning of Juárez's development into an industrial manufacturing center with the appearance of the first maquiladoras, assembly plants owned by multinational corporations that produce consumer goods such as car parts. Juárez was able to provide easy access to the U.S. consumer market while providing cheaper Mexican labor and more lenient labor policies, which would allow for the goods to be produced much more cheaply. Maquiladoras developed as a direct result of the Border Industrial Program, a Mexican federal policy developed in 1965 that allowed multinational corporations to import raw materials duty-free and pay export duties only on the value added in production.[90] The policy led to an expansion in the number of maquiladoras from 57 in 1967 to 89 in 1974.[91] The work in maquiladoras is characterized by low wages and long hours. Turnover is high, with labor practices designed to promote a high turnover rate. The average worker works for only two years at a time.[92] The development of maquiladoras is significant not only for the influence that it continues to have on the Juarez economy, but for the way it influences the social world of the

city. The majority of workers in maquiladoras, historically and presently, are women. This contributed to a re-structuring of familial and gender roles among working-poor *juarenses*. The second major influence of maquiladoras has been their role in attracting migrants from southern Mexico and Central America to work in the maquiladoras.[93]

The First Phase of the War on Drugs: 1969-1992

While the United States had a longstanding tradition of attempting to limit the amount of drugs entering the country, it was under the administration of Richard Nixon that the present day "War on Drugs" developed. In a message to Congress in June 1971, Nixon declared that the problem of drug abuse had "assumed the dimensions of a national emergency" and that it would require a combative response.[94] As he made clear in a press conference that same week, one of the main battles of the new "war" would be "a worldwide offensive dealing with the problems of sources of supply."[95] In other words, it would be fought outside the United States in supplier countries like Andean South America or Afghanistan as well as in trafficking countries like the Caribbean nations and Mexico. The first inkling of the major effects that this set of policies would have on the border came through Operation Intercept. In September 1969, the US Customs and Border Patrol attempted to search all vehicles moving north from Mexico. Although the volume of vehicles that moved throughout the border was much lower than it is now in our post-NAFTA economy, Operation Intercept caused delays of up to six hours for vehicles crossing the border[96] and had a detrimental effect on the border region's economy. It lasted two weeks. The Mexican government was upset that the US had barely consulted with them about this ambitious project, but nevertheless the two attempted to form a bilateral agreement to eradicate drugs in Operation Cooperation. Under this policy Mexico committed more resources to drug eradication, but the agreement's weakness and changes in the broader

economics of the drug market led to its failure. [97] It was the last attempt at a bilateral attempt to interdict and eradicate drugs between the two nations for quite a while.[98]

NAFTA and Operation Blockade: Opening the Border to Capital, Limiting It to People: 1992—2001

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) represented a triumph for business on both sides of the border and assisted in the further economic integration of border communities. However, while it would appear that the bilateral agreement would bring the communities of El Paso and Juárez together, external factors, especially US American antipathy toward Mexican workers, ensured that the border would remain open to goods and capital, but the passage of people would become formally limited forcing migrants to move informally. The paradox of NAFTA is that its "freedom" applies solely to objects, and, in fact, it curtails the rights of individuals in both the United States and Mexico.[99]

NAFTA was passed in 1992 by the federal governments of the United States, Mexico and Canada. In the Mexican context, the act was supported by Mexican business and political elites. Then-president Carlos Salinas hoped the act would bring about increased economic opportunity after the debt crisis of the 1980s, therefore cementing popular support for the PRI and its economic agenda.

During the debates over NAFTA, political rhetoric on both sides emphasized the "globalizing" impact without recognizing the effects the policy change would have on localized economies, such as that of Paso del Norte.[100] Ruth Buchanan, a scholar of globalization and the law, argues that NAFTA "exacerbated differences between the two sides of the border."[101] Instead of creating a more integrated community, NAFTA created a further separation between El Paso and Juárez.[102]

The Threat of Terrorism and the Militarization of the Border: 2001—2006

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, carried out by non-US citizens, caused a reevaluation of US border policy and ushered in a new atmosphere of anxiety about all borders. The federal government introduced a slate of new laws designed to severely limit who was permitted to enter the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security was created, bringing together the US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Over the next decade, the United States increased the amount of resources for all three of these agencies. From 2002-2010, CBP's budget more than doubled with a 565.6 % increase in the amount of Border Patrol agents over the same period.[103]

The increased presence of law enforcement provided jobs to the community, but also had deleterious effects on the city's way of life. In 2004, the passage of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act changed the entry requirements from a driver's license to a passport in order to cross the border.[104] This created a dramatic change for the daily lives of Paso del Norte residents and limited who was able to cross due to the cost of obtaining passports.

2006—present: Political Upheaval and the "War on Narcos"

In July 2006, Felipe Calderón was elected to succeed Vicente Fox as the second non-PRI president. Also a member of the PAN party, his election was one of the closest in Mexican history, with Calderón's margin of victory coming in at 0.58%.[105] Supporters of the challenger, Andrés López Obrador, protested the election throughout the transitional period between the election and Calderón's inauguration on December 1. A vocal sector of the Mexican public held the election to be a fraud—in a poll conducted by the newspaper El Universal in November, 42% thought it was an "electoral fraud" while 46% held it as legitimate.[106]

In the wake of Calderón's political challenges he decided to show a strong face to the rest of the world by declaring war on drug cartels. In this war, he found a strong ally in President George W. Bush. The two leaders met in Mérida, Mexico in March 2007 to negotiate the terms of an agreement that would come to be known as the Mérida Initiative. The main objective of the initiative was to "confront the illegal flow of narcotics as well as violence and organized crime that it has spawned."[107] Other goals included stopping the southern flow of chemicals, laundered money and U.S.-made arms, increasing border security, and helping the expansion of Mexican law enforcement.[108]

The legacy of the Mérida Initiative has been mixed. The US Government Accountability Office found that its outcomes were unclear and that the policy lacked clear goals.[109] While the Mexican government points to the captures and killings of several high-level cartel operatives as successes, the "war on cartels" is widely seen by the people of Mexico to have been a failure. Estimates place the number of murders during Calderón's term from 95,646 from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) to 125,000 from the National System of Public Security (SNSP).[110] The election of 2012 was widely seen as a repudiation of Calderón. His party, the PAN, was in third place in the elections with the ultimate victory going to the PRI—the same party that had ruled the country during the majority of the twentieth century. The new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, inaugurated December 1, 2012, promised to focus more on reducing violence than on fighting cartels. While it has yet to be seen how much the Mexican government can influence the crime rate, analysis of the murder figures seems to show a downward trend. Although US American media is beginning to put forth a narrative of Mexican economic and social rebirth[111], the scars that have made their mark on Mexico over the past six years are not easily healed, and while improving, violence is still a major issue for the country.

Emulating and Breaking Symmetry

The Mexican artist Elena Climent has a series of oil paintings of altars. She finds these altars arranged in churches and homes, and then paints them in a rich, ripe, realistic style. In *Santiago* (2003), a statue of a saint sits on a donkey with two vases on his left and right. Each vase contains a rich floral arrangement with slightly different flowers. Each vase is painted with a blue flower, but one is placed lower on the vase and one higher. Discussing her work, Climent explains her interest in these arrangements. “As I looked at the arrangements, I found the people emulating symmetry and breaking symmetry.”

This idea of asymmetrical symmetry is applicable not only to the arrangements of religious altars, but can be extended to the cities of El Paso and Juárez as well. Although upon first glance they appear as twins, they have never been symmetrical or equal. Instead, they are pushed and pulled by the whims of their respective nations, and the nation with the greater force is the United States. As this historical examination of the two cities shows, they have been and continue to be pulled further and further apart, two siblings growing older and growing more separate.

Chapter 5: Beyond “Murder City”: Violence in Juárez

“A trauma is something one repeats and repeats, after all…”
—Zadie Smith, *White Teeth,* 2000

In discussing the violence in Juárez, the first challenge for the writer is to know where to begin. The conflict has been massive, sustained and encompasses nearly every facet of lived reality for the city’s residents. Its messiness makes it difficult to write neatly about. Statistics are suspect—underreported, undercounted, changed depending on the agenda of the person reporting them. The perpetrators are difficult to pin down: is it the cartels? The police? The army? Other residents of the city who are taking advantage of the situation? Among my interviews, I found that when my subjects talked about who was responsible, they were referred to as “they,” but nobody named the group responsible until pushed.

> Jeselin: My mom received a call and they said they were going to come in and bomb the house…

The newspapers and television shows, and by extension most outsiders, begin with the murders. The headlines scream "World's Deadliest City"”[112] or “Welcome to the Murder Capital.[113] And there have been many, many murders. 2008 was the first year that Juarez claimed the title of the city with the most murders per capita globally. That year it was the site of 1623 homicides. That averages to 4.4 per day, but, of course, death does not spread itself out evenly over a time period—for example, 228 people were killed in August 2008—7-8 murders a day[114]. The violence peaked in 2010 with 3622 murders and then the rate began to fall. In 2011, there was a slight decrease (2086) and in 2012 violence plummeted with 584 murders (as of December 2012).[115][§§§]

[§§§] All of these numbers come from Molly Molloy of Frontera List, a research librarian at New Mexico State University, who bases her numbers on reports from Juárez's daily newspapers. These numbers are often disputed by official sources, and may be underreported as well due to the various challenges that reporters in Juárez face in providing the story and the secretive nature of many killings.

While these numbers may give a sense of the scale and reach of the homicides, they do not accurately encapsulate the brutality of the killings. On the one hand, I do not wish to sensationalize the crimes in a city that has already been sensationalized. On the other, it is difficult not to provide a dramatic representation of the violence when the murders themselves are designed to be sensational, to sow fear and to make the covers of the tabloids that are sold on the streets of Juárez to commuters.

The murders may be straightforward or brutally creative in their gruesomeness. The bodies are arranged in ways designed to send a message to the public—the more grisly the better. The official US government report on Mexican violence highlighted an incident in which a pig's head was sewn onto a male torso.[116]

> Maria: We're not talking just things that you hear about and they don't see. We're talking like cold blood - in the middle of the day, in the middle of the night…

In Colombia during the civil war known as La Violencia, which began in 1948, the Conservative faction used murder as a language. The anthropologist María Victoria Uribe calls it the "semantics of terror."[117] Different messages are sent depending on the arrangement of the murder. In Mexico, similar semantics are manifest. "El Sicario," an anonymous cartel assassin interviewed in the documentary film Room 27, asserts, for one example, beheadings signify traitors.[118]

The violence is not limited to murders, however. The terror takes many forms. Kidnapping is one of the most common crimes committed in Juárez, and was the one with which my subjects had the most personal experience. 5 of my interviewees had a family member who had been threatened with kidnapping or, in the case below, had been kidnapped:

> Jorge: My uncle actually got kidnapped on his birthday right outside of my grandmother's house…they pulled up in a van with guns and they used his own

belt and used it as a form of handcuffs and they threw him in the van, covered his face and they took him to some safe house out in the boonies…we first realized he was kidnapped because it was his birthday, and everyone was searching for him trying to wish him a happy birthday. We saw his car, the keys were still in the ignition… they had called my aunt in with the ransom…"we need this much money or else your husband will die"…The kidnappers had left him…in the bombed out house, and fortunately because it was his birthday he had a brand new belt, so the belt hadn't been worn in, so they didn't do a really good job of tying his hands together…and he managed to chew through the belt, and pretend that he was still handcuffed…he finally broke free and he overpowered one of the members and he went outside…he just started screaming for help. The kid that he was fighting with got a gun, got back off the ground, and then he hit my uncle with the gun and tied him back up…the kid had bit part of my uncle's pinky off and part of his arm off. And like skin, like a chunk of skin, and when he was screaming outside a neighbor called the authorities. And it was actually really surprising; we were really lucky, because typically, at the time, the authorities wouldn't do anything.

Martin: The death threats are also a constant threat, and are heavily associated with class, at least at first. Yeah cause I mean, back there they were kidnapping people, doing it to wealthy families, and holding them ransom for—they knew they had money, so they would kidnap their kids.

Many of these families have now migrated across the border. As wealthier targets leave, several of my interviewees suggested that the threats go toward the lower classes.

Jeselin: So now you have the people who are not able to…even…my maid. I pay my maid. You know she has, she crosses over and she cleans my house and everything. But the thing is…I pay her $60 for her to come and clean my house, you know? She told me that they target her dad. Her dad is a construction worker in Juarez. And they were asking him for $2000 dollars, the equivalent. It was 20,000 pesos, or 25,000 pesos. But they were asking him for $2000. The man doesn't make more than maybe $40/week. She makes more by coming and cleaning my house in one day…than her dad makes over there as a construction worker…She had to borrow money from her husband's company so they can pay this amount that they were asking.

An aspect of the violence that has had less attention paid to it but was mentioned by several of my interviewees was the *quota*. As Magdelena describes it:

Magdelena: And then you have to pay a quota sometimes, if you have a business. Its been known that the drug cartels will come in, and say, "Hey listen. You want your place to stay open, you want to be safe, you have to pay me a quota." And they all pay the quota. If they don't pay the quota, they get killed.

The *quota* is a form of economic violence that was a major motivating factor among the *juarenses* as they moved from Juárez across the border to El Paso. Businesses that could not afford to pay the *quota* had to then flee across the border.

Much has been written outlining the violence in Juárez: where it comes from, who is responsible for it. This is not what I am most interested in. I have been thinking of it as a dark cloud that hangs over the lives of the people I spoke with and affects their lives in varying ways. Not all of the people I spoke with were or are directly affected like the victims of violence, but they all have been affected in some way. It is the secondary effects that interest me, the effects that are less commonly attributed to the conflict but are nevertheless just as real.

Chapter 6: Identity in a Time of Crisis

"I mean, we're all trying to find out who the hell we are, aren't we?"
— Robert Ludlum, *The Bourne Identity*, 1980

In the 2010 US Census report, 80.6% of El Pasoans identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. This is compared to a (US) national average of 16.7% and a Texan average of 38.1%. This is a very Hispanic city. While the US Census does not break down ethnicity by national origin, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of these El Pasoans are Mexican-American, or in the term I will be using, Chicanx. The Chicanx identity is a unique one. Although the majority group in El Paso, they still live in the context of the United States, a country in which Latinos face discrimination and are subjected to the policies designed to privilege majority culture that the United States has had inscribed in its laws and practices.[119] A Hispanic face is still not the face of an "American" as it is popularly conceived.

The Chicanxs of El Paso live across the border from Mexico, yet they carry US passports. While they may identify as culturally Mexican, the fact of their citizenship is a privilege that creates a separation between them and those that are not. As you will see from their words, many appear caught in-between an identity as a member of the majority US American culture and a Mexican culture.

One way that Chicanxs have navigated this identification is through their access to Mexico. They have been able to cross at will, and this provides a means for them to re-immerse themselves in Mexican culture. Whether through shopping at the Mercado (a market that sells traditional Mexican goods), eating at a taco stand, listening to mariachis, or celebrating a holiday tradition, the access to Mexico provides a cultural connection. The violence and perceived danger of Juárez have acted as a limitation upon that ability to cross. While still able to visit family and friends, the public space as a site to explore and live out Mexican identity has been

severely curtailed. In this way, the limitation of the ability to cross has extended into the symbolic realm.

The individuals I interviewed were all born in El Paso, and were, therefore, American citizens. Due to their American citizenship, they were able to cross the border much more easily than their Mexican counterparts. In addition, their American citizenship made them look to Juárez as a place where they could connect to their Mexican roots as opposed to the more Anglo-dominant context of El Paso.

As I discuss in the Perceptions section, El Paso and Juárez are caught in a hierarchy of identity. El Paso is more “Mexican” than the rest of the United States, but is “American” when positioned next to Juárez. Juárez is “Mexican” compared to El Paso, but it is “American” compared to the Mexican interior. For Chicanx El Pasoans, Juárez is an authentic part of their Mexican culture that enables them to assert their identities as Chicanxs. Mariana, a 27 year old Chicana woman who now goes to school in New York, said this explicitly in her interview.

> I think for me just culturally, I think I have been so far removed from what’s really important to me as a Chicana on the border. Something that is so closely entwined in my identity has been someplace that I can’t belong to anymore, so my identity’s been removed—it’s been barred and prohibited, basically.

Other interview subjects were not as explicit, but still showed regret and loss over their “prohibition” from the Mexican side of the border.[****] In various ways, Juárez operated as an identity marker for El Pasoans, a place where they could reconnect with Mexican cultural identifiers like food, music and language, among others. Now that place has been taken from them. Although Mexican-Americans are the majority in El Paso, the broader state and national

[****] It is important to note at this juncture that the US American citizens represented in this paper are not “prohibited” from crossing due to a state policy, or some other exterior barrier, but rather chose not to return due to safety issues. While in no way to I wish to diminish the seriousness of these concerns or doubt the prudence of their decision not to travel into Juárez, it is important to note that Mexican citizens are much more limited in their ability to cross into the United States for safety and are forced to stay in a perilous situation in Juárez due to state policies.

contexts of Texas and the United States are predominantly white Anglo-American and its institutions are structured in ways that privilege Anglo-Americans over Mexican-Americans. [120] Mexico has its own white supremacist legacy, but the fact remains that El Pasoan Chicanxs, when they go to Mexico, are in a social context that is designed around Mexican identity. Therefore, without access to Juárez, El Pasoan Chicanxs have lost the ability to live out Mexican culture in a place where they feel that they belong.

Ways of Expressing Culture

Culture was an important aspect of my interviewees' lives. I am defining culture in the way that most of my interviewees seemed to refer to it. They spoke of culture as how they related to both objects like food and music as well has people. Many of them spoke of things like food and music as ways of connecting to Mexican culture. They also brought up other aspects of culture, such as family traditions. The predominant ways of expressing cultural identity by my interview subjects were through food and alcohol/party life. The legacy of Juárez's tourist economy can be seen clearly here.

The Loss of the *juarense* "Public" and its Effects on Chicanx Identity

The loss of the public sphere of Juárez and its subsequent effect on Chicanx identity can be seen in the distinction between when and why El Pasoans choose to cross the border. Familial relationships are important. Martin is a 27-year-old Chicanx who has lived in El Paso his whole life. He used to go to Juarez mainly to shop at the Mercado, eat at restaurants and enjoy the nightlife. He has not crossed since 2006. He compares his experience to his students (he works as a teacher) who cross to visit family members, saying, "I mean, I don't have family over there. So I really have no purpose to go anymore." In this can be seen a shift developing in Chicanx conceptions of Juárez. Rather than looking it is a place where they belong because of

their national and cultural identifications, the cross-border relationships have become increasingly dependent on familial relationships.

To contrast with Martin, we can look at someone who continues to cross the border. Jimena is 28 years old and is "binational" who was born in El Paso, grew up in Juárez and now lives in El Paso. She considers herself, "from Juárez rather than from here since I was brought up with the culture over there, like Mexican and all that." She crosses the border almost every weekend to visit her husband's family in Juárez. While she is still able to enjoy time with her family in Juárez, she also discussed the loss of the public space in Juárez and its effects on her behavior.

> Jimena: We don't go out at night as much. I mean, it's gotten better but it was one of the first things that I noticed… I would go but it was mainly to houses. It wasn't to like clubs or anything out because I mean you get iffy about it. And it's sad but you do. You do get iffy.

Jimena still has places to go and spend time due to her close interpersonal relationships, but she is still limited to those private spheres. The public spaces in Juárez have been curtailed to the point where they are no longer effectively public. This is an abrupt shift for a city that has until recently been known for its party atmosphere of bars, restaurants and tourists, all activities which are usually designed to take place in the public sphere.

However, despite this loss of public spaces, *juarenses* are finding ways to continue to celebrate and live within these constrictions. Jeselin, a Chicana woman in her mid-50s, describes how her friends in Juárez are continuing their traditions.

> Jeselin: So all the parties and all like the things are private, everything is like, if you're having a wedding, the wedding is going to be
> come a house wedding. Instead of having a big hall wedding or a big glamorous wedding, like they're known for, now you don't do that because you're going to call attention to yourself, that you are able to throw that kind of party, and that you're going to become a target. So that's how I see people living. Just with a lot of second-guessing, a lot of caution, a lot of--ok wait, if I'm going to do this then I

need to think about this.

Binational residents like Jeselin and Jimena are able to maintain these traditions because of their strong interpersonal ties. However, individuals without that social capital are unable to maintain their connection. In other words, while Chicanx El Pasoans may have had the cultural capital to move within Juárez, they do not have the social capital to go back and visit relatives. The loss of public space leads to a loss of value for that cultural capital.

Although the public spaces of Juárez, represented by restaurants and bars, have been limited, they have not been totally lost. Instead, many of these spaces have moved across the border. Although I discuss this further in Chapter 8 on the border, the movement of restaurants from Juárez to El Paso represents a recreation of this public space in a different location. This movement can be read as a form of resistance to what has been lost in Juárez. The individuals who move their restaurants across are reclaiming the cultural legacy of Juárez and reasserting it in El Paso. However, as I discuss later, the ability to pick up and move to a new city is not as easy as it would seem, and attempts to recreate this community are difficult. For now, I will get back to the concerns of El Pasoans over their new disconnection from Juárez.

Future Generations and Anxiety of Loss

Part of this loss manifests itself as anxiety for future generations. Multiple interview subjects expressed that one of their major worries was that their children would be unable to experience Juárez in the same ways that they had. For example, Marco, a 27 year old Chicanx El Pasoan, argued with his wife Michel about their young son. They disagreed over whether or not it is a good idea for him to cross the border.

> Michel: I think my brother's been over the border once. And there is absolutely no way now that he'll even go by the border. It's not even questioned.
> Marco: If things get better we will.
> Michel: …No, I don't think I ever want to.

Marco: If things get better we will.
Michel: You could but—
Marco: We will. And this is an argument that we will forever have.

While Marco will not bring him without Michel's permission, he did express a desire for his son to be connected to a *juarense* culture.

> Marco: I want my son to eat a *colita de pavo* [roasted turkey sandwich] out of a bag and have a lemonade and wear wrestling masks with a cape. Those are things that I grew up and those are things that I cherish and those are things that I want him to have and I can't find those things here.

This stands in contrast to what he described as the way he interacted with Juarez as a part of his own upbringing.

> Marco: I remember just going with my dad, my brother, and myself and just buying araz lemonades and stuff like that and just walking around…Just going to get our haircuts. It was just a thing to do on Sundays or Saturday mornings.

Marco's idyllic memory ends when he thinks about the current state of Juárez.

> Marco: You wouldn't be able to do that- you couldn't dream of doing that anymore. I'm pretty sure now you can but I have a hard time doing it because of my son.

While Marco wants his son to learn about Juarez and to maintain the traditions of his youth, he also places his safety first, and it prevents him from taking his son across the border.

Jimena also has close ties across the border with her husband's family, and she continues to cross as often as once a week. However, she also worried about her daughter's safety.

> Jimena: Even though my husband would say, "Oh come on, let's go!" I would go but I wouldn't enjoy it as much as I would before. Or at night, I would be just like, "Let's go home." And even more so that I have my daughter now. I don't want to do anything to risk her security, her life I guess. Even though it's gotten better, I still, I mean, it's not just me. It's not just me anymore. I have to think of my daughter and everything so…there're a little bit more precautions to take.

While she did not mention what the precautions she took were, later in the interview she mentioned how she would only go directly to family homes and not spend time in the city. While

she, like Marco, worried about the safety of her daughter, she chose to take that risk because of the benefits she saw to bringing her to Mexico. She describes one of the benefits:

> Jimena: There's more sense of family in Mexico—family's first—than here. I've seen it more. Not that there isn't some families here that are more about being together and everything but here it's just—you hit 18 and you're off to go wherever. There's no sense of coming back to your family.

Unlike Marco, who mourned a more public sense of traditions like drinking lemonade in a park, Jimena's relationship to Mexico and Juárez was one of family. Therefore, for her the more appealing choice is to bring her daughter and allow her to experience these close ties.

The Border as a Rite of Passage

Chicanx El Pasoans who are in a generation between Marco and his son—in their late adolescence or early twenties—also expressed this anxiety over the loss of access to Juárez, and the loss of what was an important rite of passage in their social and cultural lives. A common theme among interview subjects was El Pasoan teenagers crossing the border in order to drink alcohol and party in Juárez due to the lower drinking age. This was mentioned in the majority of interviews. Those on the older side (older than about 23 years old) talked about how they would cross over in the past. Although the legal drinking age in Mexico is eighteen—as opposed to twenty-one in Texas—anecdotally, ID enforcement was much laxer in Juárez's bars. Stacy, a 27 year old Anglo El Pasoan who now lives in Washington D.C., reminisced about her experiences crossing the border as a teenager:

> Stacy: Young people went up there to drink, cause most of the time you could drink if you were 18 and even if you were younger, they really didn't card people like you could be 15, 14, as long as you looked old enough and you could say "American" to come back, to cross the border, you were good.

Many of my relatively older interviewees, those in their late twenties, were nostalgic for

the times of crossing. For another example, we can look to Marco again.

> Marco: It was a lot of fun, no one felt at risk…I was really comfortable just walking out of the bar…finding the first hot dog stand I could find and munching down on a hot dog and I had a great time doing it.

An interesting note on this is to show how Marco uses a hot dog as his example for what food he would gravitate toward on his visits to Juárez. Often thought of as an "All-American" food, his appreciation for the hot dog shows how blurry the culture is between "Mexico" and the "United States" on the border.

Interviewees younger than Marco who were unable to take advantage of the ability to cross the border during their later teenage years expressed regret at an experience that they felt they had missed out on. As Marisa, a 22 year-old Chicana who grew up in El Paso and now goes to school in northwest Texas puts it, "…the years before us everyone would go party, that was the thing to do. I've never been. I'd like to go."

There were few other subjects that were expressed with the frequency of this one. Therefore I wish to look at these adolescent border crossings not simply as the deviant behavior of adolescents, but as a way of asserting their independence. As an act of teenage rebellion, the ability to cross the border allowed them to rebel with less threat of consequences. El Paso has many actors who can be said to represent "the law"—border patrol, city police, the Texas Rangers, the military presence offered by Fort Bliss. Going to Juarez therefore gave border residents an opportunity to remove themselves from that presence and spend time in a place with little oversight of its alcohol policies. It was a way to escape the stricter policies and to rebel, but with little risk.

Crossing the border also allowed teenagers to explore their own emerging identities. They could reimagine themselves in a different context. In the film *Glory Road*, which follows

UTEP's legendary 1966 basketball team, its first integrated team, there is a scene in which the basketball players, mostly black Northerners, travel south to Juarez on their first trip over the border. While they have been isolated and marginalized in their time at UTEP, in Juárez the same strict binaries do not seem as applicable to them. Instead, they are welcomed into the bar they happen upon. This same fluidity is perceived by young El Pasoans today who choose to travel across the border to Juárez. Instead of having to follow the set roles of their day-to-day lives, young El Pasoans move across the border as a means to explore their developing identities.

Now that access has been cut off. This is a limitation on both Chicanx and Anglo El Pasoans, as the potential for fluidity that comes from a change in social context is now gone from them. The loss of this ability is something that is greatly missed by the people I spoke with. It would be interesting to talk to younger El Pasoans (those in high school now) to see how they are renegotiating these coming-of-age rituals today.

Social Networks and Interfamilial Bonds

Much of my discussion above has focused on public spaces, but I do not want to minimize the importance that the violence has had on social networks. The violence has led to the fracturing of these networks. Jorge is a "binational" *norteño*[††††] who has spent time living in both cities, and was living in Juárez until his family moved following his uncle's kidnapping. As he puts it, there were several people whom these families, the ones who fled Juárez, were unable to say goodbye to, who they do not know what happened to at all. These disappearances are not benign. That lack of closure is another form of trauma.

> Jorge: A lot of them didn't have phones so I couldn't come keep in contact and to this day I still don't know what happened to some people. I don't know if any of my family over there had time to say good bye to their relationships over there, they just fled as fast as they could away.

[††††] Different from the musical genre, *norteño/a/x* refers to a person from the Paso del Norte region

Familial bonds become even more important when discussing the impacts of the violence. Several of the El Pasoan Chicanxs drew my attention to this distinction when I asked them about whether they were affected by the violence. For example, Martin talks about how his cousin's father was decapitated by cartel members.

> Martin: It doesn't affect me because he's not part of my family but I see how my cousin - I mean he is a different person because he lost his father in that way.

Martin carefully draws lines between who he lets affect him and who he doesn't, creating a clear delineation between primary effects of the violence, on the bodies of his family members, and the secondary effects on their psychological losses. Mariana also created this distinction between the effects of having family members in Juárez and not having them around.

> Mariana: 'Cause El Pasoans are so like varied there are still people who have like a deeper connection to across the border than I would because of like family relations or things like. I am fortunate enough to have family that lives in a different part of Mexico where I wouldn't even like go through the area.

The loss of families is so present in Juárez that Mariana sees herself as "fortunate" for having family members who do not live in Juárez but instead live in other parts of Mexico. This allows her to avoid this threat, and to maintain her familial ties across the border without spending time in Juárez.

It is not only familial ties, but ties of personal connection as well, that influence how El Pasoans talk about the violence in Juárez. Samantha is an upper middle class, Anglo El Pasoan twenty two year old who goes to college in east Texas. For her, the violence is not extremely salient in her daily life.

> Samantha: I don't really think there's much difficulty for me, personally… Unless people go over there. I don't really go over there so I don't think it's that difficult for me. Unless it's people I know.

The exception for her is her housekeeper and her housekeeper's family. Samantha talks about her housekeeper as a member of her family ("she practically raised me"). She goes on to say:

> Samantha: The violence I mostly notice through her family. Like her daughter Carolina was held at gunpoint earlier this year trying to steal her computer. So weird things like that happen. And they threaten the family; someone will call them and threaten them, and tell them to wire money. I think one time they thought it was real and tried to pay them, and then it turned out it was fake, so they try to ignore those things. But all these things that you don't think actually happen, they happen to them. Besides that, that's pretty much how I'm affected by it. That's pretty much it.

Although I will discuss the role of *juarense* domestic workers further in Chapter 8, Samantha's words point to an important distinction between Anglo and Chicanx El Pasoans. Samantha does not have the same familial or cultural ties to Juárez, and therefore, she herself says, "that's pretty much it," minimizing the influence it has on her. In a way I wonder if she does not feel *allowed* to experience the effects of the violence in the same way that Chicanx El Pasoans do. I read her attempt to minimize the influence as an attempt to respect the varying levels of impact that the violence has had on other *norteños*. In this way, she is showing respect to the traumas that the people around her have experienced.

The separation affects El Pasoan identity in a plethora of ways, only some of which I have explored above. Each individual has their own relationship to the way their identity has changed due to the wedge between the cities, whether it is youth who are unable to participate in the party culture the way their elders were, parents concerned that their children will lose their connection to a Mexican heritage, or the loss among El Pasoans of the ability to explore Juárez as a public space. While they negotiate between the cities, El Pasoans are also aware of the distinct power dynamics between the cities

internally and the external context in which they live—specifically, the state of Texas and the United States. In the next chapter, I will discuss my interviewees' awareness of these external perceptions and how they see their influence in the life of the cities.

Chapter 7: Border Perceptions and Border Perceived

"Forget the Alamo"
—Pilar, *Lone Star*

The individuals that I spoke with had strong opinions about how they felt outsiders perceived the cities—both El Paso and Juarez. The violence in Juarez has garnered a fair share of media attention, and many worried that this negative perception was extending to El Paso as well. This worry was deeper in those who identified more strongly as El Pasoan and US American. Many of them discussed feelings of isolation from the rest of Texas. They also expressed the idea that this contributed to a lack of funding and attention from the state government.

Those who identified more with Mexico and Juarez, however, expressed concern about the El Pasoan gaze on the city across the river. They talked about the challenges of having to navigate the transition from a city, Juárez, with which they strongly identify—despite its connotations of violence—and integrating themselves into El Paso, where Juárez is in some ways pathologized as criminal.

Both El Paso and Juárez are receivers and perpetrators of gazes, but the extent varies. By "gaze," I do not mean simply the act of looking, but rather, the conceptions and the power dynamics in how the "gazers" imagine the "gazed." Power dynamics play an important role. The reason that El Paso can be said to be "gazing" at Juárez, and not the other way around, is due to the power imbalance between the two. The idea of "the gaze" was developed in feminist theory drawing on psychoanalysis, such as the work of Laura Mulvey.[121] It involves "stealing" an image and using it outside of the control of the group that is being gazed upon. It not simply the act of looking, but rather, the act of looking from a position of higher to lower power based on systemic oppression, both historical and social, such as a white person to a person of color, or a

man to a woman. In this way, the gaze of Texas can be seen on El Paso, and the El Paso gaze on Juárez.

The Texan Gaze

Many of the people I interviewed suggested a high awareness of the way El Paso is perceived by the rest of Texas specifically and the rest of the United States generally. Many said that they saw their image as a negative one. As Samantha described her experience with her classmates at UT Austin:

> Samantha: They say there's nothing to do there. I think they just think we're totally out. And once they know we're on the border they just like think we're pretty much part of Mexico, which I mean, I feel like we are like this big community…and then people that have heard about the violence, they obviously think that it's not really safe to be here.

As Samantha suggests here, when the connection is made to Mexico it is also made to the violence happening in Juárez. In some cases, subjects expressed hints of resentment for being perceived in this way. Martin describes how he sees eastern Texans' views of El Paso in the specific case of the Sun Bowl, a yearly college football bowl game held at University of Texas El Paso (UTEP).

> Martin: But some people do have different views, like they think it's dangerous in El Paso and they don't want to come to El Paso…a couple years ago, Oklahoma or something like that came for a bowl and some of other fans were concerned for their safety. And that's not the case at all.

Once Martin brought up the perceived safety issue, he was quick to refute it. This was the case for others who brought up similar issues, like Samantha who continued after I asked her if she saw El Paso as a dangerous place:

> Samantha: You see nice people, and it's safe. Yeah, I mean I like it. I think it's a good place to raise a family. Good community life and stuff. It's been a good place.

Those who brought up the perceived safety issue were quick to point out that while outsiders linked El Paso to the high rates of violence of Juárez, El Paso itself was very safe. Many repeated the statistic of how El Paso was ranked one of the safest cities in the United States.

> Martin: The city itself is very safe. And there hasn't been any violence or anything in the city that's been a direct result [of drug trafficking]. Not that I know of at least.

Magdelena is a Chicana social services representative who grew up in El Paso.

> Magdelena: I don't know if you knew this, but I know last year, the previous year we were the safest city in the country, the number one safest, when Juarez was the murder capital of the world. I think last year, I don't know if we were number one – we might have been number two. I don't know who beat us.

When I asked where she thought the (mis)perceptions came from, Marisa gave me an interesting response.

> Marisa: Going to school in Lubbock, it is a predominantly white place, and they don't really know anything about Hispanic culture, about Mexico or anything, so when you're telling them you're from El Paso they're like, "Oh, Juarez? No, that's a different country." And everyone associates the two, and even when they hear about the violence in Juárez they assume that's how El Paso is too and its nothing like that. I don't know where it comes from.

While Marisa begins to hint at a racial component to this perception of Juárez/El Paso with her discussion of how her white classmates do not understand Hispanic and Mexican culture, she then distanced herself by saying "I don't know where it comes from." This suggests that she was avoiding the impact that race may have had on these conceptions of Juárez and El Paso. When I asked her explicitly about the role of race in what she had mentioned between Hispanic and Anglo populations, she said:

> Marisa: I haven't seen that personally…a lot of my friends are white…my experience I haven't seen things like that.

She responded to my question as a matter of interpersonal racism, or racist actions between individuals. While she recognizes broader, more systemic aspects of racism, she

was unable to address this in an explicit way. Instead, it remained just below the surface of the conversation.

Most of the interviewees who discussed the lack of attention from the rest of Texas were quick to correct these perceptions, not only in terms of the public safety but also in terms of El Paso's size. Martin, again:

> Martin: I just feel like we're not respected. And we are a pretty big city. It's just that we're so far west. I mean I would say that this is the biggest city say, from here to Phoenix. El Paso's the largest city. 'Cause I think we even have more people than Tucson. And Albuquerque. But yeah. I don't know. It's weird.

In this way, Martin tries to equalize the perceived power imbalance between El Paso and the rest of Texas through an assertion of its size. In a way, this is a very Texan assertion—as the saying goes, "everything's bigger in Texas." While it is a large city, El Paso is the sixth most populous city in Texas and is, in fact, smaller than Juárez. Therefore, Martin's assertion of its size suggests his frustration with being seen as a small city in the context of "bigger is better."

Martin also pointed out that the isolation of El Paso from the rest of Texas lead to a lack of power in state politics, which then translates to the material loss of resources like state funds. "I don't know exactly how it works but we tend to get forgotten in the sense of like funding and budgeting," he said. Stacy, who hopes to be involved in politics in El Paso, also did her best to reassert El Pasoan power, this time economically.

> Stacy: I think that we're a really often-overlooked city and I think that we are a really powerful one. We're on the biggest port of entry I think in the country but we're you know, its a booming, its a multinational multistage economy and it could be a really beautiful thing right?

These El Pasoan residents showed a great pride in their city, and spoke defensively to correct what they saw as the way it has been misrepresented among outsiders. Personally, I saw signs of this several times when, after my interviews, the

subject thanked me for “taking an interest in their city.” As a northerner, it seemed often that people did not quite understand how I got there or why I was interested in being there, but appreciative that I was and interested in sharing their experiences.

Race and culture were a component in determining who talked about which concerns as well. I found that these perceptions were brought up and discussed more often by El Pasoans with weaker ties to Juárez—those with less of a familial connection, such as Martin and Marisa, and those who were Anglo (white) such as Samantha. Those who identified strongly as *juarenses* or binationally were more concerned with how El Pasoans were viewing Juárez, than with how Texas was viewing El Paso, especially *juarenses* who were migrating across the river to El Paso.

The El Pasoan Gaze on Juárez and *juarenses*

While the individuals with stronger connections to El Paso were concerned about how they were viewed by the rest of Texas, those who had spent more time in Juárez and had stronger connections there were more critical of the way they saw El Pasoans treating Juárez, both as an idea and a community. For example, Miriam, a Chicana El Pasoan whose father travels to Juárez daily for work, describes the way she sees the dominant discourse in El Paso:

> Miriam: It’s kind of that stereotypical thing of, you know, poor Mexicans that take jobs and all that nonsense. I’ve always kind of felt like people think that way here. Now it’s like, “Oh well, corrupt Mexico with drug violence, with poor people, causing trouble and bring it closer to us.” I feel like it’s very negative. I’ve always felt like people talk about Juarez in a kind of negative tone.

Miriam points out the transition she sees taking place in El Pasoan discourse from an idea of Mexicans as an economic threat to a violent one. The obsession with “spillover violence,” which can be seen in US national political discourse, is a similar social imaginary. The migrants who move from one side to another are seen as a threat.

Jimena agreed that El Pasoans had not been welcoming to those moving across the border from Juárez.

> Jimena: What I would hear, here and there, was that "Oh, they're just bringing their violence to us. They're just bringing their—whatever," like it was kind of disturbing to the environment—not the environment, but the ambiance…A lot of negative feedback.

She pointed out how a daily interaction which was especially relevant in light of the interview being held in January.

> Jimena: During the holidays, there's a lot of complaints about, "Oh, here come the people from Juarez," or even the people from Chihuahua. "Here they come buying and this and that and just crowding up the stores."

Just as Miriam did, Jimena continued with a defense of the visitors that was rooted in their economic value.

> Jimena: In a way it's helping the U.S. economy. So I don't get why they're upset. I mean yeah, there's more people, but in a way it's helping you out. I personally think it's kind of sad but it's just my opinion.

Conclusion

El Paso is caught in between two gazes. The first, which appeared more salient to people who identified as El Pasoan, Texan and US American, was the way they identified the perceptions of El Paso held by other Texans: that of an other, violent, "Mexican" town. It is important to note that the idea of this violence is empirically false; the crime rates in El Paso consistently rank among the lowest among US American cities.[122] Many of my interviewees expressed a level of resentment toward these perceptions, and some noted how it influenced their material realities, especially through the limitation of funds from the state government.

For *norteños* with closer ties to Juárez, however the more important perception was how El Pasoans saw *juarenses*. They noted how linked these were to racist perceptions of Mexico and Mexicans, especially the existing discourse of "Mexicans-as-takers." They also noted the

inaccuracy of this idea, arguing that it is because of the flow of money and labor across the border that El Paso could sustain some sort of economic growth, or at least ensure that its losses were lower than what they otherwise might have been. In one of these gazes, El Paso is the party with less power; in the other it is the powerful. As a border city, it is unsurprising that it is caught in this dialectic.

Chapter 8: Changes in Migration

"It is a simple truth: we no longer cross the Rio Grande in vain."
--Ray Gonzalez, *Memory Fever*, 1993

Violence in Juarez has changed the relationship between the two cities and how individuals interact with and use the border. Prior to this new violence, residents saw the cities as interrelated and in a way, as one. Now there is a sharp distinction between the two. This change from the border as a gateway to one of a wall is another moment in a series that has been progressing throughout the history of the cities as a result of international forces.

The privileged—in US citizenship, or higher-class status, or some other way—were always better able to use the border in an advantageous way. It used to be that the desired relationship was mobility and the freedom to come and return. Now the flow is one way—the ability to leave Juárez is most important.

Citizenship, the legal fact of it, is more important than it ever was before. Indeed, it is becoming a matter of life and death. For many Chicanx El Pasoans, the ability to cross was a supplement to a certain extent—it meant that they could have access to their culture and could get the food that they wanted. For *juarenses* it could have meant their livelihood in the original sense of the word—their actual ability to live, to eat, to pay for shelter, to pay for clothing. While the violence adds a new and frightening element to the presence of death, to a certain degree, it was always life or death—the ability to earn a living was dependent on the place of citizenship.

"Vagabond Lives"

Elite *juarenses* and El Pasoans are accustomed to passing between the two cities, but in light of the recent violence this mobility has taken on a darker connotation, forcing binationals residents to change their behaviors in what Jorge called their "vagabond lives"

> Jorge: I know that for my family, it's probably bleak that we'll go over there as often as we did, in terms of the houses we had over there its not looking great, but

> some people have managed to live their vagabond lives there where they move back and forth, back and forth…

While his family was threatened by his uncle's kidnapping, prior to that experience they spent time on both sides of the border (as he said, he "frequented EP and Juarez often" and the majority of his family lived in Juárez). However, the perception of the violence has out an end to these mobile lives.

> Jorge: Anyone I know who has anything to do with Juarez is like 'we cant go over anymore, it's just too bad, we had to lose some of our business over there, we can't do it anymore'.

Jorge told me that he hasn't been back to Juárez since 2008 or 2009, a marked change from before the violence. Martin told me a story that demonstrates what is happening in Juárez:

> Martin: I have a friend who used to live in Juarez. She had a house over there and a house over here. And since things started getting really bad they sold that house. But it's funny because the house the live in now is the exact same thing as the house over there. It's just on this side. But the interior and everything is the same. It's crazy. Yeah. It's weird.

Juarenses who cross to El Paso do what they can to rebuild and replicate Juárez. One example is having the same restaurants. However, there are other ways in which these migrants form community as Jeselin explains:

> Jeselin: They're building a community but more in the social scheme…More like, going out to eat, more like the ladies from the country club type of thing.

Jeselin's analysis of the *juarenses* who are moving to El Paso is one heavily viewed through the lens of their class. Speaking of the *juarenses* who are moving to El Paso, Jeselin says:

> Jeselin: The classes, the social classes…the ideal is that you're going to grow up and you're probably going to go to school, and the thing you have your degree, but you're probably going to marry somebody and be a housewife. And you're not a working mom, the husband brings the bread to the table, and moms stay home, and they go socialize and then they have tea, and…they take care of the kids when the kids get home from school and they take care of the husband, this and that. So they want to bring that here to El Paso, that way of living. And very…I guess high class, not really the working class.

Although Jeselin was born and raised in Juárez, she discusses some of the dilemmas associated with how the groups are interacting. On the one hand, she is talking about how the high-class *juarenses* bring more conservative cultural values, especially in terms of gender roles. On the other hand, she later shows a great deal of compassion towards these newcomers using her own experience as a *juarense* who migrated across the border to El Paso.

> Jeselin: I can see that in the people who are moving back. Who are moving from Juárez over here. That apprehension. That *no*. That fear to lose your identity because you're now part of a different country. And I can see that because it happened to me.

While she relates to their experience, Jeselin also talks about how they are not yet integrated into the community of El Paso.

> Jeselin: The people living over here…miss home. And it's like, "oh, remember when we used to hang around with her? Those were the good old times." So they live, they're making their way of living. They're living. But it's not really changing their mindset…I honestly do not think they see EP as home yet. And because of that, they don't really belong.

It is interesting that in describing whether or not the new *juarenses* belong in El Paso, she puts the onus on them. Because they do not feel like they belong, they do not belong. In this way she paints it as a choice for them. If they want to belong they can, but she is also understanding of the fact that they do not always want to belong. From her own experience, she shows a point in which, perhaps, these migrants can at some point view the United States as home.

> Jeselin: And it does take time. And I can see it because it took me a long time to do that transition, and to feel proud to be an American, to get goose bumps when I heard the American national anthem. And I can cry when I hear the national anthem the same way I cry to hear the Mexican national anthem. And it excites me to watch the Super Bowl and it excites me to watch the World Cup when Mexico's playing. But it has taken time to do that.

Jeselin shows us what an endgame might look like: an equal dynamic between two groups. The use of the Super Bowl and the World Cup act as symbols for this idealized world, each representing their respective cultural milieu.

Picking up on the generational thread from above, generational differences also appeared to influence the desire and willingness to move across the border. Javier is a nineteen year old "binational" *norteño* whose family predominantly in Juárez, though he has lived in El Paso since the third grade. He describes how his grandparents reacted to the idea of moving to El Paso.

> Javier: My grandma was at home. And this was my freshman year, this all happened during that time. My grandma was at home. They both lived in Juárez. They were stubborn, the same, they both didn't want to move, "Juárez hasn't changed" they were shielded. They didn't want to see their hometown become what it was becoming.

This idea, of a stubborn older generation, is similar to what Jeselin described about her elderly father's resistance to moving to El Paso, and his insistence on returning to Juárez to finish his university degree there despite his family's protests.

> Jeselin: We're scared to death, we're like, "Dad, you can't go back! Dad, you can't, I mean something's going to happen to you!" And he's like, "No I need to finish what I started."

This suggests a generational difference in terms of flexibility, as younger *norteños*, with less prominent roots and connections, are more able to reconcile their decision to move. There were also practical difficulties associated with migration specific to the elderly, such as health concerns.

> Jorge: And if my grandfather, as terrible as this sounds, if he hadn't died, it would have been an even more difficult process. Because in the process of him losing his mind he was irrational…just ridiculous Alzheimer's related acts. And so, he wouldn't have been able to come to the hospital here in El Paso…my grandmother wouldn't have been able to move.

The challenges of movement applied not only mentally and emotionally, but physically as well. In this way, the differences in generations influenced the ability to adapt and cross between the two cities.

"Fronchis": Elite *juarenses*

The group described above occupies a distinct social and economic space, drawing from the *juarense* elites. Magdelena provided me with words to describe this group. One word is *fresa*, which is a common Mexican word for a rich person (it is also the Spanish word for strawberry) and the second is one that seems more specific to Juárez: *fronchi*. Magdelena discusses below:

> Magdelena: But if you hear that term "*fronchis*," "He's a *fronchi*, she's a *fronchi*," that means they're from Juarez, or from Chihuahua or any part of Mexico, and they're here and they have money.

Fronchis have been compared to the Cuban expatriates who fled Fidel Castro's government in the 1960s.[123] The movement of *fronchis* across the border offers one example of the changing relationships with the border and there are other groups that also participate in this crossing.

Domestic Workers

Some of the most interesting figures in navigating this international border are the domestic workers, predominantly women, who live in Juárez and work in El Paso. Crossing daily or a couple of times a week, they are sometimes the only connection for El Pasoans to connect with people in Juárez. The interpersonal relationships between these workers and their families are often very close. They may be considered "family" by their clients. However, the stark divisions in class and citizenship between them and their employers are often a point of confrontation, not between the actors themselves but between the upper or middle class El

Pasoans and their own class status. An example of this negotiation came from Michel when she discussed her hiring of a *juarense* housekeeper to look after her young son.

> Michel: …the lady that takes care of [her son's name] - she comes from the border and she takes care of him. I was very concerned in paying her because I was discussing it with my father and he wanted to pay her 90 or 80 dollars a week. And I was like that's not enough - 80 dollars a week? That's like…
> Martin: [her husband] That's exploitation.
> Michel: Yeah that's very bad. And I said at least minimum wage.

Michel's insistence on paying her housekeeper minimum wage shows her way of navigating her higher status compared to the woman who works in her home. Her husband expands their reasoning for this pay increase by appealing to ethnic solidarity as a reason to provide her with the pay, which is actually much higher than is paid by others in their social world.

> Martin: Just the fact that I'm Mexican and I'm hiring someone Mexican. I had to sit and think morally and ethically how do I feel about it and we sat down and we talked about it and just made sure that we weren't taking advantage.

Martin specifically talks about how his ethnic background presents him with a moral and ethical dilemma in how to proceed. The fact that he's hiring someone Mexican gives him a certain amount of anxiety about his choice. One could read between the lines to see that this is an anxiety of assimilation, an anxiety that comes from feeling disconnected to his Mexican heritage. If, as Pablo Vila says, "all poverty is Mexican," that suggests a correlation between ideas of wealth and ideas of Angloness. Of course, that also must be seen with the understanding that there are known wealthy Mexicans. However, national privileges ensure that El Pasoans tend to have a higher income than *juarenses*[‡‡‡‡], and US American national identity can be tied to wealth. The anxiety for middle- to upper-middle class Chicanxs may be especially salient in light of what I discuss in the "identity" section, in which I talk about how Chicanx El Pasoans lack of connection to Juárez has made them increasingly anxious about their ethnic identity. This

[‡‡‡‡] The Mexican minimum wage is $4.66/hour and the US minimum wage is $7.25/hour as of 2013.

interplay between the feelings of Martin, Michel and their housekeeper can be read in that light as well.

Business on the Border

An important facet of the changes in migration in the Paso del Norte cities is the economic effect on the cities. Commonly mentioned among my interview population, the movement of businesses from Juárez to El Paso has been an evolving trend as a result of the violence. Susanna Visconti, a lawyer from El Paso summarizes what happened:

> In 2008, we saw a jump [in the crime rate] to the point where a lot of people were scrambling and coming over. I know for a period of two years—2008-2009—I had a number of appointments, people who were desperate. And I'm talking desperate. They had a horrible experience—family member kidnapped, family member killed—and overnight they grabbed their things and they came over. And they came to see, "How can I be here legally?" Sometimes they would wait months and then they'd come and see me. Sometimes they'd come the day after…a lot of store owners got tired of paying the quotas and they'd come over here…as a consequence, after the economic downturn, our economy suffered but not as greatly. I was really busy because I was representing a lot of people opening a business…At the very beginning, because of the lack of time and the lack of information of these people who were fleeing, I really couldn't help them because they wanted something fast so they could get a visa.

When I asked about the effects of the violence, many of my interviewees mentioned the economic influence of *juarenses* coming over to El Paso. They mainly talked about the highly visible businesses moving across: restaurants. Says Magdelena:

> Magdelena: A lot of those businesses have opened up in El Paso. A lot of restaurants. It is amazing, where you can take a drive at one of our major streets—which is Mesa street—you see so many restaurants now that are from Juarez, that are from Juarez. And they are booming here. Business has picked up here actually.

Restaurants that have moved from Juárez to El Paso include Villa del Mar, a popular seafood restaurant, and The Sushi Place.

My interviewees often mentioned the growth of business as a counterpoint to the narrative of Mexicans-as-takers discussed in the perceptions section.

> Jeselin: People who have had businesses, and lives, and things going over there [Juárez]. And now they're bringing it over here [to El Paso]. So it's not that they're becoming a burden to El Paso, as the common knowledge seems to be. They're not.

Their responses suggested that my interviewees used the presence of business as a corrective to the lens they found questionable. The movement of businesses continues to be an important facet of how the war in Juárez continues to affect El Pasoans and is creating a new urban landscape.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

"But we aren't a united country, and we never have been. If we are to be saved, it is through heterogeneity."
--Glora Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza*

Mariana called Juárez a "wounded city," and it is an apt description. Yet what I wish to show is that both Juárez and El Paso are wounded—Juárez is openly bleeding from an artery and El Paso is slowly bruising. The effects of the drug war are deep, and the issues discussed above merely scratch the surface of effects on both cities. The violence and traumas inflicted on these places will not be erased easily. Juárez has lost thousands of citizens—murder victims, but also those who have fled the city whose homes still sit empty. The violence in Juárez reverberates in El Paso, affecting the lives of these El Pasoans in multiple ways. Whatever their level of connection, El Pasoans cannot escape the implications of the Juárez violence.

To return to the idea of the border, we can see through this violence that the idea of the border as a line does not fit. It is something much more complicated and permeable than that. What I have hoped to show in this thesis is that violent trauma has multiple and far-reaching effects, some seemingly benign and some more pernicious, but all that linger in lives and change them. These secondary effects are worthy of study and understanding just as the primary ones are. They affect individuals differently depending on several identifying factors—their class status, their race and ethnicity, their gender, their age, their health and ability status—but they do affect all of them, to varying degrees.

As the Anzaldúa quote that begins this chapter suggests, the hybridity and blending of the border is a gift for Mexico and the United States. When that ability to blend is taken away, it is a loss. Yet despite all that has been lost, the ability of residents of Juárez and El Paso to maintain that blending remains. Connections to friends and family remain. They hold on to their appreciation of the culture and traditions they grew up with. When I asked them what they saw

happening in the future, there was a mix of responses. Some were hopeful that things were improving. Others were certain they would never return to Juárez. They continuously negotiate the relationship.

I would like to conclude by bringing this work back to its earliest inception. When I first hoped to write this, I was not sure if it would count as an American Studies project, because of its focus on Mexico. As I began the work, one of my goals, and a reason to justify its inclusion in American Studies, was to expand on the definition of "American." What I realized later is that the fight over "American" is really a fight over whose lives matter and are worthy of attention. As I conclude, it is difficult to say if it is a worthwhile goal to pull more people under the label of "American." The border is a place that promotes constant questioning, especially of nationality. One thing it makes abundantly clear, however, is how much these lives matter, American or not.

APPENDIX: CODEBOOK

Cultural Identity
- Food
- Tradition
- Family
- Race
- “us” vs. “them”—who uses what word, and to refer to whom?

Business
- Development in El Paso
- Decline in Juárez
- Tourism to Juárez

Perceptions of place
- Of EP
    - From the rest of Texas
    - From the rest of the US
    - From the media
- Of Juarez
    - From the US
    - From the media
- By individuals of various social locations within the cities

Relationship between cities
- Border itself
- Separation
- Migration to EP from Juárez
- Schools

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