

UNHEARD VOICES AT THE TEXAS-MEXICO BORDER WALL:
FRAGMENTATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND OPPOSITION IN A WAR ON TERROR

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Doctor of Philosophy

by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

UNHEARD VOICES AT THE TEXAS-MEXICO BORDER WALL:
FRAGMENTATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND OPPOSITION IN A WAR ON TERROR

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, a shift has occurred in the discursive framing of undocumented Mexican immigrants who have entered the United States. The federal State has publicly proclaimed a “War on Terror” solidly coupling immigration and terrorism concerns rearticulating “illegal aliens” as would-be “terrorists” through the establishment the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (Chacón and Davis 2006; Newman 2006; Fernandes 2007; Doty 2009; Massey 2009). This shift in the discourse has impacted the U.S.-Mexico border by re-framing this geo-socio-political boundary and its inhabitants as a potential terrorism threat to American National Security. The findings demonstrate that the U.S.-Mexico border does not intrinsically hold definitions of constant “crisis,” “chaos,” and “lawlessness.”

The social construction of people of Mexican-origin and the U.S.-Mexico border region as dangerous by the federal State serves two fundamental purposes: (1) To control and manage a targeted population and; (2) To spread fear among the general population while simultaneously fashioning itself as the knowledgeable expert. This control and management of a targeted population was done through the Secure Fence Act of 2006 – a 670-mile concrete barrier between the U.S. and Mexico. The narratives of border

residents are used to illustrate how the State's barrier impacts their daily lives, subjectivities, and rights.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, a shift has occurred in the discursive framing of undocumented Mexican immigrants who have entered the United States. The federal State has publicly proclaimed a “War on Terror” solidly coupling immigration and terrorism concerns characterizing “illegal aliens” as potential “terrorists” through the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (Chacón and Davis 2006; Newman 2006; Fernandes 2007; Doty 2009; Massey 2009). I argue that this shift in the discourse has impacted the U.S.-Mexico border by re-framing this geo-socio-political boundary and its inhabitants as a potential terrorism threat to American National Security. This research will investigate how the State is presently constructing Latinas/os residing along the Texas -Mexico border via the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA) and in turn how this policy has shaped the lived experiences of Texas border residents. A multimethod approach was used in order to investigate this linkage.

Research Questions

In this study, I propose to examine the following two research questions: 1.) What role does the federal State play in shaping the lives of border residents, in particular, Latinas/os living along the Texas-Mexico border via the Secure Fence Act? 2.) How have Texas borderlanders confronted the federal State and this new material reality? There are two overall goals that I wish to achieve in this project: First, to shift the voices of Texas landowners and residents from the margins to the center in the political discursive field of

national security and the border region. Since the initiation of the War on Terror, the State has both *homogenized* (“America Wants Secure Borders”) and *dichotomized* (American/Foreigner; Patriot/Terrorists; Friend/Enemy), the border region and its inhabitants. Second, to begin to unravel a narrative about what it means to be a living along the TX-Mexico border in a time when the U.S. State is engaged in a War on Terror that primarily focuses on its southern border.

Significance

The social construction of the U.S.-Mexico border as a threat to national security by the State is not an entirely new social phenomenon but rather a work in progress contingent upon the sociopolitical and economic context of the moment. The massive deportations and repatriations of people of Mexican descent in the 1930s were explored by Dunn (1996:13) who argued that, “With the Roosevelt administration anxiously monitoring the development of World War II, immigration and border enforcement came to be considered more as national security issues. Consequently, in 1940, the INS was transferred from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice.” Thereafter, the Cold War ushered in new ideas about democracy, capitalism, nationalism and nation building in the United States, envisioning itself as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) against Communism. During the 1940s and stretching into the 1960s, Mexican immigrants, in particular farm workers and their sympathizers, were constructed and perceived as Communists and outside agitators (Garcia 1980).

With the Cold War in the backdrop, the U.S. took on the “War on Drugs” beginning in the 1980s, whereby states in Latin America were characterized as cartel

driven, drug smuggling, corrupted regions and a risk to America's national security (Dunn 1996). In the 1990s, Nevins (2002) explores the emergence of the "illegal alien," and the State mandated Operation Gatekeeper (a two-tiered steel wall between Tijuana and San Diego) used to keep "illegals" out. Most recently, occurring after 9/11, the State has waged a "War on Terror" initially targeting the Arab/Muslim community regardless of citizenship status and ultimately absorbing the Latina/o community located in the southwestern border increasing its surveillance and enforcement into the interior of the United States as far as the Midwest (Coleman 2007; Naber 2008).

The significance of this study is that it seeks to close a gap in Latino/a sociology, immigration, border studies, and critical race theory whereby I examine both State activities (macro) and citizens on the ground (micro) and the dynamic relationship between the two entities. In order to investigate the impacts on the ground, my fundamental task is to present the (silenced) voices of residents who are directly/indirectly impacted by the federally State mandated Secure Fence Act of 2006. The Act prescribes a 670-mi. physical barrier to separate the U.S. from Mexico. The physical barrier is a material object; however, a plethora of social phenomena are mediated through it as the physical barrier has social/symbolic attributes attached to it creating meaning-making systems that shape people's lived realities. In other words, the barrier becomes a symbolic vessel (social construct) through which interactions, experiences, emotions, conflict, and tensions are channeled, providing a window into the lived realities of residents living along the Texas-Mexico border region. Most importantly, it will shed light on the dialectical relationship between the State and its citizens. These local concerns are linked with broader issues in America (and the globe)

dealing with race, class, gender, culture/identity, State, nation, citizenship, and immigration.

Project Roadmap

This project consists of ten chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction of the research topic, research questions, and the overall significance of the study.

Chapter 2 will provide the study with a historical and contextual background of the south Texas Rio Grande Valley and its relationship with northern Mexico. Chapter 3 discusses prior research that focuses on Latinas/os, Mexican Americans, U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and U.S.-Mexico relations. In Chapter 4, I introduce the six major theoretical frameworks that have served as an analytical lens and guiding compass for the project.

Chapter 5 features the methodological and methods used in collecting the data, while also addressing the limitations of the study. In this study, the findings are separated into three chapters beginning with Chapter 6 and ending with Chapter 9. Chapter 6 concentrates on the State agent's experiences of working and living along the Texas-Mexico border. In Chapter 7, County/City Commission officials in the Cameron County, TX and the surrounding areas share their accounts of negotiating with the State's actions. Texas Rio Grande Valley landowner experiences in confronting the State and the border barrier are discussed in Chapter 8. The reaction and activism of community members toward the barrier are the focal points of Chapter 9. Finally, Chapter 10 is comprised of a comprehensive discussion and final conclusion of the research study.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

In order to fully grasp the complex history of the U.S.-Mexico border region and its inhabitants, I provide a brief historical summary of the interactions and relationship between Mexicans and Anglo Americans colonists as they began to colonize the southwest with their ideas of Manifest Destiny in the 1820s. Secondly, I examine the relations between Anglos and Mexicans with the creation of the Texas Rangers, changes after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, and the emergence of the Border Patrol in 1924. Finally, I investigate social and legal changes between the U.S. and Mexico in a post 9/11 era, terrorism and immigration policies, and the dilemmas of “securing the border.” In this chapter, I analyze the State’s control of the Mexican American and Mexican populations living in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Lastly, the purpose is to illustrate the beginnings of an oppressive relationship that has changed only in form over time.

Mexican Americans in the Southwest

Waves of white southerners began making their way to Tejas¹ in 1821 after Mexico granted American immigration rights in the province to a Missouri entrepreneur named Moses Austin who then brought several hundred people to the northern frontier of Mexico (De Leon 1983: 2; Gomez 2007). There were two important stipulations for the

¹ I specifically utilize the term Tejas since it was the original name of the city in the Coahuila state of Mexico. I will refer to it in this manner until after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848, when Mexico was subjected to annex Texas to the United States.

American immigrants such that these settlers had to become naturalized Mexican citizens and convert to Catholicism. Many of the Americans were not pleased with the stipulations, ignored them, and in effect became illegal immigrants. Further, as these Americans confronted Mexicans, they developed feelings of racial superiority and hatred for all that was non-white. These southern whites had two example “races” of non-white races to use as a blueprint for their perceptions of Mexicans - American Indians and Africans. Most Anglos in Tejas were adamant that, “whiteness meant not only *black*, but also not *Mexican*” (Foley 1997: 5). The conventional wisdom was that the Tejas landscape needed to be saved from the beastly savages that resided in it. Most importantly, the land needed to be taken by force from Mexico. As one white Texas Frontiersman William H. Wharton declared,

The justice and benevolence of God, will forbid that the delightful region of Texas should again become a howling wilderness, trod only by savages, or that it should be permanently benighted by the ignorance and superstition, the anarchy and rapine of Mexican misrule. The Anglo-American race are destined to be for ever the proprietors of this land of promise and fulfillment. *Their* laws will govern it, *their* learning will enlighten it, *their* enterprise will improve it. *Their* flocks will range its boundless pastures, for them its fertile lands will yield their luxuriant harvests: its beauteous rivers will waft the products of their industry and enterprise, and their latest posterity will here enjoy legacies of ‘price unspeakable,’ in the possession of homes fortified by the genius of liberty, and sanctified by the spirit of a beneficent and tolerant religion. This is inevitable, for the wilderness of Texas has been redeemed by Anglo-American blood and enterprise (quoted in De Leon 1983: 2-3).

This statement speaks to the type of racism espoused by whites who were either traveling through Tejas, Coahuila, the former city and state of Mexico at the time. This type of contact was similar to their attitudes, behaviors and confrontations held toward the American Indians and African Americans.

Beginning in the 1830s, Anglos had their first significant contact with Mexicans in Texas (De Leon 1983). Many of the White colonists came from areas of the south and into Texas which provided them with only two kinds of experiences with people of color: Africans and Native American tribes. The Mexican (and later Mexican American) was initially a quagmire for the colonists since they were not considered as “black” or “Indian” (De Leon 1983; Gomez 2007). It was also a time when whites aggressively began publicly sharing their views about Mexicans in regional and local newspapers. Political elites and community members alike debated the phenotypical traits of lighter-skinned Mexicans – were these individuals more “White” or more “Indian” – this colorism hierarchy was also linked with notions of race(s) and created ideologies based on skin tone (Hunter 2005). Ultimately, Whites agreed that Mexicans were an impure stock or blood of people with their Spanish, Indian and African racial origins

At this time, whites were fixated on color or skin tone and also in racial stock. The fact that the Spanish Conquistadores had intermingled and produced mixed children created a new racial group designated as *Mestizas/os* that in some cases were light-skinned troubling the racial waters for Whites (Gomez 2007). The Spanish also brought African slaves into Mexico and in time these slaves also intermingled with the indigenous Indian women producing a racialized group known as *Zambohijos* (Gomez 2007). Overall, miscegenation was considered a reprehensible moral, social, and religious abomination if it was between Europeans (Whites) and non-whites.

Due to the hype about the racial inferiority of Mexicans, in the early 1830s, Anglos began calling Mexicans the racialized term *greasy inferior laborer*. This label

characterized Mexicans as dirty, filthy, indolent, inferior, depraved, and as putrid people (De Leon 1983; Montejano 1987; Gómez 2007). Whites constructed the term greaser because they believed that Mexicans were descendants of Indians and these indigenous tribes allegedly used oils and grease to anoint their bodies (De Leon 1983: 16). This was conventional knowledge among whites at the time.

In fact, due to the racialization of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Whites engaged in mob violence such as lynching spectacles in order to keep “Mexicans” silent and fearful. For example, Carrigan and Webb (2009: 71) in their study found that “Between 1848 and 1928, mobs lynched at least 597 Mexicans.” The state of Texas held the highest number of lynchings of people of Mexican descent numbering two hundred and eighty-two; California was second with one hundred and eighty-eight; Arizona ranked third with fifty-nine total lynchings. Many of the lynchings took place for purposes of social control but also due to economic competition and land appropriation. Rubio’s (1986) book on land dispossession by Texas Anglos against Mexican Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides a window into how land appropriation and capitalistic greediness played out in south Texas, as his ancestors were brutally coerced off their Mexican land grant.

The obsession for land by Whites, known as Manifest Destiny, was also rooted in “Western” expansion and the access of resources, minerals, and gold. As Rubio (1986: vii) noted, “Nothing was more important to an individual’s place in Texas society during the nineteenth century than land, either for agricultural pursuits or for speculation. It formed the basis of most individual empires and underscored personal security for a

family and its descendants.” In Rubio’s case, having the familial land grants passed down from generation to generation was cut short by land-grabbing Texas Anglos who conspired to dispossess Mexican Americans of their land. As Rubio (1986: xx) poignantly stated, “The story is nothing less than the rape of a Mexican land grant.” Rubio was the direct descendant of Spanish colonist Manuel Becerra who had petitioned for a land grant from the Mexican government in 1834. The land tract was then given and divided between his two only daughters and later a grandson named Antonio De La Garza. By the late 1870s, this land mysteriously come into the hands of an Irish *empresario* named Thomas O’Connor with no conveyance by Antonio De La Garza of his land (Rubio 1986: 132). Rubio (1986) had conducted intense historical research and uncovered the family’s Mexican land grant in Refugio, TX. Many of Rubio’s ancestors had been killed by greedy land-grabbers and his grandfather Antonio De La Garza was the final target,

Finally, early in July of 1875, Antonio’s barns and corrals were deliberately burned to the ground by raiders. Some days later, mounted horsemen returned and gave him the ultimatum: *remain and you will surely be killed; vacate the ranch and land and your life shall be spared*. They gave the young Antonio twenty-four hours to remove himself and family from the ranch and land.

The story of Rubio’s stolen land grant provides a counter-narrative to the hegemonic narrative of the emergence of Texas and Texas Anglo land empires amassed by land-grabbers such as Richard King and his business partner Mifflin Kenedy (see González 2000) has been that Whites from the south and Midwest came to Texas (originally called Tejas when it was a part of Mexico) for settlement purposes and grew restless with their Mexican neighbors and government. Initially, these immigrants had to follow certain laws in order to live in Tejas such as becoming a Mexican citizen, converting to

Catholicism, and other such policies (Gómez 2007). In the end, many White colonists decided to make Texas into a predominantly White Republic and later annex with the United States.

Thus, as these exaggerated and racialized stereotypes became common knowledge, the informal and formal policy of segregated schooling in Texas emerged. Montejano (1987) mentions that in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries residential and school segregation were commonplace in Texas. By 1930, “90 percent of South Texas schools were segregated. By the early 1940’s, separate schools for Mexicans existed in at least 122 school districts in 59 representative counties” (Montejano 1987: 160)

Through educational segregation, people of Mexican descent were kept “in their place” and out of the “White” schools. As one White rancher’s wife declared, “Let him [Mexicans] have as good an education but still let him know his is not as good as a white man. God did not intend him to be; He would have made them white if He had” (Montejano 1987: 221). Similarly a White Superintendent from a rural south Texas school declared that whites would, “drop dead if you mentioned mixing Mexicans with whites” in the school system (Montejano 1987: 225). Narratives of the “dirty greaser” were deeply embedded in discussions of “race, work position, and living conditions, as well as hygiene” (Montejano (1987: 228). This type of belief system was a reflection of popular beliefs and discourses of the time. In having racially segregated schooling for Whites, Blacks, and Mexicans, Whites were able to teach non-whites that they were an

inferior group of people and not up to par with the Anglo “racial stock”. Montejano (1987: 230) exemplifies this,

The truth about Anglo superiority and Mexican inferiority was taught to the youngest generation of the farm towns. Newcomers into this world, those who migrated as well as those born into it, were taught the morals and rules of living in a segregated society...Anglo and Mexican children ...understood that separate schooling meant separation of superior from inferior. ...The Mexican school was physically inferior, Mexican children were issued textbooks discarded by Anglo children, Mexican teams were not admitted to county athletic leagues, Mexican girls could not enter beauty contests...The Anglo children readily understood the catechism of segregation: Mexicans were impure and to be kept in their place.

Frantz Fanon [1963] (2004) called this the colonization of the mind and it ties in well with the intentions of the segregated schooling. By teaching the Other that he or she is not a person of value, or human being for that matter, makes it much easier to control him/her mentally, physically, and economically.

In this case, it is clear that Anglos in society as well as State actors adhered to racialized labels in order to keep Mexicans in their place. South Texas towns exhibited a severe expression of residential segregation with Mexicanas/os living on one-side of the railroad tracks and their White counterparts on the other. The Mexican side demonstrated shabby and shanty *jaca*les or shacks without any restrooms, kitchens, floors, running water or electricity. The white side was comprised of nice homes with all the amenities such as running water and electricity (Navarro 2005).

Most importantly, the term *greasy inferior laborer* was a label that was used as a tool to subjugate and control Mexicans. For instance, many White farmers racialized Mexican workers as inferior labors who were biologically engineered to be agricultural due to his/her height, dark skin, and ability to pick cotton at an incredible speed (Acuña 2000). By constructing the label *greasy inferior laborers* and treating the Mexican, as if

she/he were sub-human, made it easier to convince Mexicanas/os that they were only destined to work in the fields as cheap and inferior laborers.

As Mexicanos began establishing a visible presence in the southwestern agricultural fields among rural predominantly White citizens their visibility tapped into White's racial fears of the Other. This fear was expressed in the deportation and repatriation policies of the former Republican Administration of President Herbert C. Hoover and overlapped into President Hoover's successor Franklin D. Roosevelt. For example, "Depression-era Mexican repatriation from Texas began in 1929, gained momentum in 1930, and peaked in 1931. In the last quarter of 1931 repatriation reached massive proportions" ("Mexican and Mexican American Repatriation" Texas Historical Society Online).

As the State transitioned from President Hoover to the Roosevelt Administration in 1933, many qualitative changes took place,

Following the massive deportation and 'repatriation' campaign against Mexicans during the 1930s, the INS underwent a major change. With the Roosevelt administration anxiously monitoring the development of World War II, immigration and border enforcement came to be considered more as national security issues...in 1940, the INS was transferred from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice. Over time the INS came to take on the character of other Department of Justice Agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Dunn 1996: 13).

During the 1930s, Mexican immigrants were beginning to be perceived as a threat to national security. They were believed to be "invading" the United States. Despite having the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) under the purview of the Department of Justice, Mexican immigrants were only considered a threat because of their increased migration numbers and visibility in the U.S. Also during this time, unauthorized

immigrants were stigmatized with labels such as “undesirables” and “wetbacks.” At this juncture, the term “illegal” had not emerged as Nevins (2002: 96) noted that the term “illegal” was not part of any judicial decisions prior to the 1950s. During Operation Wetback (1954-1958), approximately 500,000 to 1,000,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were deported to Mexico due to the heightened hysteria culminating from their increased numbers and visibility (Garcia 1980; Calavita 1994; Bosworth 2005). In 1965, with President Lyndon B. Johnson and the passage of the Immigration Act that same year national origin quotas became quite lax (as compared to race-based quotas from 1790-1952, see Lopez 2006) inevitably leading to increased numbers of Mexicanas/os.

The rise of the “illegal” as noted by Nevins (2002) gained a stronghold within the contours of the Republican political platform in 1984 with President Ronald Reagan it became a major concern for political elites once again, although the context was different (Dunn 1996). The political context was different because the U.S. had voiced its concerns over nations such as Colombia and El Salvador with regard to the drug cartels (narco-trafficking) and the violent civil unrest. In turn, this impacted people from Mexico because as Chomsky (2007) declared many Americans perceive all brown-bodied people as being from Mexico despite immigrants coming from all regions of Latin America. Various economic push and pull factors were taking place in the late 1980s and 1990s and fears about Mexicans were gaining momentum. Mexicans migrants were portrayed as parasites and parasitic in nature toward the U.S. labor market, public services, and educational system (Inda 2000; Chomsky 2007). Political elites and anti-immigrant groups described them as a drain on the U.S. economy and public services. This hate and

fear manifested itself in initiatives such as Proposition 187 a.k.a as the Save Our State (SOS) initiative, a sign of a state in dire trouble.

By the 1990s, Mexicans were being called *parasitic illegal aliens*, a definition synonymous with the following perceptions - extra-terrestrial, criminal, and sub-human (Mehan 1997). This reflects the common “Us v. Them” tactic, whereby Mexican immigrants are constructed as criminal and parasitic causing fear among the public, which in turn causes people to support initiatives such as Proposition 187. As former Governor Pete Wilson declared, “If we ignore the flood of immigration, we’ll erode the quality of life for those who live here legally...Our classrooms are bursting, our public health-care facilities are swamped, [but] the budgets for our parks, beaches, libraries and public safety will continue to suffer while California spends billions to incarcerate enough illegal aliens to fill eight prisons. It is hard working legal immigrants who suffer the most from our failure to deal with illegal immigration” (quoted in Mehan 1991: 258).

In 1994, the United States and Mexico established the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) opening up the southwestern border for trade. However, two years later in 1996, under President Clinton’s Administration Operation Gatekeeper was enacted to keep “illegal aliens” out of the country (Nevins 2002; Bosworth 2005). Scholars researching the lives of Latina/os and people of Mexican descent have characterized the United States as having a schizophrenic attitude about Mexican immigration and Mexican Americans since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 (Chacón and Davis 2006; Cobas, Duany, and Feagin 2009). It is clear that the United States is economically dependent on the cheap labor of the undocumented immigrant.

When NAFTA was crafted the United States was eager to move raw materials, resources, and capital into the U.S. homeland, but was not in full support of the movement of people. After NAFTA was implemented, Mexicanas/os began to migrate to the United States because of the negative impact U.S. agribusinesses had on peasant rural farmers and their families (Gonzalez 2000).

The political context and overall immigrant social climate was transformed by the 9/11 terror attacks era and I argue that Mexican immigrants (and Latin Americans in general) have been strongly characterized as potential terrorists with the propensity to cause harm to America. Due to the increased fear after 9/11 and with the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA), things became much more difficult for Mexican immigrants and their American counterparts living along the border. These Texas landowners particularly people of Mexican descent have experienced intense scrutiny from the State in particular the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). They are being forced to relinquish their property in order to build the border wall. This has outraged many Texas Borderlanders as many have raised families, tended to the terrain, and have undergone financial struggles to keep their lands. This study seeks to find out what the wall represents for border residents and city officials as a material object externally imposed by the State. Historically, Mexicanas/os have been shifted along a racialized continuum - *greasy inferior laborers* and *parasitic illegal aliens*. Following the 9/11 attacks, they have now been constructed as potential *terrorists* converging upon the National Security of the United States. Political elites then crafted and passed the Secure Fence Act of 2006. All these processes did not occur in a social and historical vacuum,

but have been in the making, continuing to demonstrate American's ideas about people of Mexican descent and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Policing the "Frontier" for Over 175 Years

The White Man and the Red Man cannot dwell in harmony together. Nature forbids it.
Republic of Texas President Mirabeau Buonaparte 1838-1841

The real Ranger has been a very quiet, deliberate, gentle person who could gaze calmly into the eye of a murderer, divine his thoughts, and anticipate his action, a man who could ride up to death.

Walter Prescott Webb 1935

The Texas Ranger always carries a rusty old gun in his saddlebags. This is for use when he kills an unarmed Mexican. He drops the gun beside the body and then claims he killed the Mexican in self-defense and after a furious battle.

Américo Paredes 1958

Texas Rangers

The Mexican state of Coahuila was violently transformed into the Texas Republic in 1836. Just one year shy of being a Texas republic (1836-1845), a militia of men was created in 1835 and their duty was to protect the Texas frontier and ensure Texas sovereignty. The famous historian Walter Prescott Webb in his book *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* Texas Rangers asserted that they emerged as a fighting force against both Native Americans tribes and Mexican depredations (Webb [1935] 1965). Their primary focus was to protect the Republic of Texas boundary. Webb ([1935] 1965: 11) provides a vivid picture of the conflict between all three groups – Texas Anglos, Indians, Mexicans,

By the opening of the [Texas] Revolution the three races that were to struggle for supremacy were all present in Texas. The Indians held undisputed possession of the Plains; the Mexicans held the southwest with their line of occupation resting on the Rio Grande; and the Anglo-Americans, henceforth called Texans, had virtual possession of the timbered portion of the then Mexican province. Since the three races were to wage constant war one with another, it was necessary for each to produce its representative fighting man. The Comanche had his warrior brave and the Mexican his *caballero, ranchero, or vaquero*. To meet these the Texans created the Ranger, who, since he was the latest comer, found it necessary to adapt his weapons, tactics, and strategy to the conditions imposed by his enemies. In spite of the fact that each of these fighters influenced the other, each remained the true representative of the customs and ideals of his respective race, a symbol of the fighting genius of his group.

The mentality of a lonesome “frontier” waiting to be cultivated by Euro-Americans has been a part of our U.S. and Texas historical memory. Webb ([1935] 1965) does not directly call this coveting of the Texas “frontier” a manifestation of Manifest Destiny. It is described as a matter of “differences” and “friction” laden in – “race, language, religion, and in governmental ideals” (Webb [1935] 1965: 21). However, Webb ([1935] 1965: 22) admitted to the fact that, “From the first the Texans exhibited a disposition to do only what pleased them. They nominally became Catholics – as required by law – but remained Protestant. They came to a land where slavery was prohibited by the [Mexican] constitution, but they brought their slaves and kept them.”

Mexico had abolished slavery legally in 1820 and many of the American southerners, now Texas Anglos, did not want to comply (Webb [1935] 1965; Gomez 2007). Mexico had passed General Colonization Laws beginning in the mid 1820s that provided permission to predominantly American southerners and others such as Moses Austin and his son Stephen F. Austin to bring family settlements into the Mexican province (Webb [1935] 1965). In time, the Mexican government realized that the Anglo

Americans were not respecting the citizenship policies. An immigration law in 1830 was passed in Mexico to curtail American immigration (Gomez 2007).

Border conflict between the Anglo Americans and the Mexicans continued and ended violently in the Battle of the Alamo and more than a month later in the Battle of San Jacinto. The Battle of San Jacinto was integral for the Texas Anglos as they gained nearly a million square miles of land (Navarro 2005). The Mexican state became the Republic of Texas in 1836 until U.S. annexation in late 1845-46. The Texas Rangers played a crucial role in the shaping of the Texas and ultimately the United States.

The Texas Rangers emerged in 1835 until approximately 1918. However, during their reign they managed to instill terror and violence among the Mexican community. In fact, Paredes ([1958] 2006: 31) emphasized that not all Texas Anglos were in agreement about the existence and/or duty of the Texas Rangers,

In 1913 State Representative Cox of Ellis attempted to eliminate the Ranger force by striking out their appropriation from the budget. Cox declared ‘that there is more danger from the Rangers than from the men they are supposed to hunt down; that there is no authority of law for the Ranger force; that they are the most irresponsible officers in the State.’ John Garner future Vice President of the United States, was among those who early in the twentieth century advocated abolishing the Ranger force.

Webb (Webb [1935] 1965: 478) himself had admitted to a certain degree the violence of the Texas Rangers inflicted upon the Mexicans,

The Murder Map presents with fair accuracy the loss of American life there, but it tells nothing of the economic losses or of the death of hundreds of Mexicans, many of them innocent, at the hands of the local posses, peace officers, and the Texas Rangers...The number killed in the entire valley has been estimated at five hundred and at five thousand, but the actual number can never be known. The situation can be summed up by saying that after the troubles developed the Americans instituted a reign of terror against the Mexicans and that many innocent Mexicans were made to suffer.

This “orgy of bloodshed” (Webb [1935] 1965) has not been excavated very well from the Mexican American perspective except for accounts such as Américo Paredes’ *With His Pistol in His Hands*, Abel G. Rubio’s *Stolen Heritage: A Mexican-American’s Rediscovery of his Family’s Last Land Grant*, and Juan González *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*. As the era of the old Texas Rangers came to its end and a new one emerged with new duties that entailed detective work similar to a peace officer,

The Frontier Battalion was abolished in 1901. As the frontier disappeared, Ranger activities were redirected towards law enforcement among the citizens. The Ranger Service was reorganized under a new law. Each Ranger was considered an officer and was given the right to perform all duties exercised by any other peace officer... The Texas Rangers had served officially for more than a hundred years under the Governor, the Secretary of State, and the Adjutant General of Texas. On August 10, 1935, when the Texas Legislature created the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Rangers and the Texas Highway Patrol became members of this agency, with statewide law enforcement jurisdiction. The true modern-day Ranger came into being on September 1, 1935. The Texas Rangers are the oldest law enforcement organization on the North American continent with statewide jurisdiction (Texas Department of Public Safety “Texas Rangers: Historical Development” 2010).

Today, the Texas Rangers consists of 144 commissioned Rangers that handle: “major incident crime investigations, unsolved crime/serial crime investigations, public corruption investigations, officer involved shooting investigations, and border security operations” (Texas Department of Public Safety “Texas Rangers” 2010). Protecting the entire “frontier” was handed over to the federal government via the U.S. Border Patrol.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Border Patrol)

The Bureau of Immigration emerged on March 3, 1895 within the Treasury Department and in 1903 transferred to the Department of Commerce and Labor. The United States Border Patrol was created on May 28, 1924 within the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization under the Department of Labor (U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Online Timeline). At the time, the U.S. Border Patrol was responsible for upholding immigration laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924.

Prior to the U.S. and Japan coming forward with the Gentlemen's Agreement, there was not much immigration from Mexico. But, after 1907, the U.S. labor market experienced a disruption and employers from sectors such as agriculture, construction, and the railroad went in search for Mexican workers (Massey 2009). Legal immigration from Mexico was detailed at "near-zero in 1907 to reach 16,000 in 1909 (Massey 2009: 16). As Massey (2009: 16) pointed out, "From the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907 to 1930, the number of Mexican-born persons in the United States more than quadrupled, going from 178,000 to 739,000 in a little over two decades and making Mexicans a visible minority in cities throughout the Southwest, Midwest, and Pacific regions."

By the time the United States engaged in WWI, it had excluded Asians from entering the U.S. and southeastern Europeans leading agribusinesses to go south of the border for recruitment purposes (Chacón and Davis 2006; Masse 2009; Lytle Hernández 2010). The increased visibility along with the anxieties of the stock market crash in 1929 justified the Border Patrol's mass scale deportations from "1929-1937, some 458,000 Mexicans were arrested and expelled from the United States without due process, including many legal resident aliens and their U.S. citizen children" (Massey 2009: 16). The cyclical pattern of entering and deporting seemed commonplace along the U.S.-Mexico border during this time. However, the tide changed once again during the U.S. participation in WWII, as Mexican workers were needed to replace predominantly White workers in the fields (Foley 1997). The scope of the Border Patrol in the Southwest had

changed since its emergence in the 1920s, primarily keeping Chinese immigrants from crossing the border, to focusing on Mexican migration. Historian Lytle Hernández (2010: 101) described the transformation “By the end of the Great Depression, Border Patrol work in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands was almost entirely dedicated to the project of policing unsanctioned Mexican immigration. The project had a massive social impact, rescripting the story of race in America by binding Mexicanos to the caste of illegals.”

After Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, U.S. military men were summoned to war, leaving behind crops that needed to be harvested. U.S. farmers primarily in the Southwest needed replacement workers during this time. Beginning in August 4, 1942, the U.S. and Mexico became involved in a bilateral agreement whereby contract laborers from Mexico to work in the agricultural fields. The Bracero Program ended in 1964 after twenty-two years of cheap and exploitable labor. The United States never fulfilled its promise to not mistreat the Mexican immigrant workers. Instead, they were subjected to terrible working and living conditions as well as paltry wages (Richardson 1999).

It was in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack that the U.S. Border Patrol transformed from localized, yet dispersed de-centralized to a more centralized federal law enforcement force. As Lytle Hernández (2010: 104) described,

World War II did not touch U.S. territory until the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, but fears of invasion and subterfuge produced new anxieties regarding border enforcement and immigration control. In particular, the poorly guarded U.S. land borders came into focus, and concerns of sabotage by enemy aliens heightened during the 1930s. In 1939, the commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service argued that ‘the international situation which is developing in Europe furnishes strong reason for strengthening the Border patrol without undue delay.’ In 1940, Congress transferred the INS from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice and supplemented the U.S.

Border Patrol's budget with a \$2,000,000 appropriation for 712 additional officers. Overall, the Border Patrol's appropriation doubled from \$1,735,000 in 1939 to \$3,883,400 in 1941.

During the 1950s, people of Mexican descent were targeted again by Border Enforcement agents via Operation Wetback (1954-1958), whereby hundreds of thousands of people were deported to Mexico including their U.S. born children. During mid 1960s, the Bracero Program came to a close in 1964 and in October of 1965 former President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act primarily for re-uniting families. Most importantly, it was an overtly symbolic ending for racialized quotas for immigrants seeking to come to the United States from Latin America, Africa, and Asia and Southeastern Europe. From 1790 to 1952, the United States used racialized bars – “Whites Only” as a prerequisite for naturalized citizenship (López 2006: 31). As President Lyndon B. Johnson stated in 1965 during the signing of the act in 1965,

This bill that we will sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives, or really add importantly to either our wealth or our power. Yet it is still one of the most important acts of this Congress and of this administration. For it does repair a very deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American Nation (Johnson 1965).

This speech by former President Johnson was truly far from accurate as the bill was revolutionary as it banned the racialized quotas of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, it did affect the daily lives of millions of Americans and immigrants, while gaining much wealth for the United States neoliberal political economy. Although we do not know the true intentions that President Johnson had at the time, it was clear that the law was primarily symbolic with unintended consequences as the number of less desirable immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia increased after the passage of the law. It was symbolic in that the U.S. had to maintain to the rest of the world that it was truly a

leader in democracy and the “free world.” The U.S. prior engagement in World War II and the antagonisms of Nazi Germany proved to be futile if the U.S. was continuing to demonstrate its own domestic racial recipe.

The “problem” of immigration, particularly from Latin America, again became a major national security concern during the 1950s and took different, yet aggressive forms as time passed on. The U.S. Border Patrol had traditionally been paramilitary in orientation as former U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell appointed a “recently retired U.S. Army man, Lieutenant General Joseph Swing, as commissioner of the INS in May 1954. Interestingly, Swing’s lengthy military career included participation in General Pershing’s ‘punitive expedition’ into northern Mexico against Pancho Villa in 1916.” In appointing General Swing as head of the Border Patrol, it set the tone of the patrol and their tactical ideas for combating unauthorized immigration from Mexico. These policy matters continued in the 1970s through the 1990s under the former Presidents’ Carter, Reagan, and Bush (Dunn 1996). During this time frame, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection borrowed from the U.S. Army due to its military leadership and took on more aggressive military strategies, tactics, language, and procedures becoming paramount in its everyday operations. Sociologist Timothy Dunn (1996: 20) elaborates on the Border Patrol borrowed Army strategy and tactic called “low intensity conflict” (LIC),

Low-intensity conflict is a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and rangers from diplomatic, economic, and psycho-social pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence.

LIC was first introduced in the 1980s during former Ronald Reagan's term as a method of countering the "War on Drugs" against Latin America (Colombia and El Salvador among others). President Reagan described this War on Drugs as a "significant threat to national security" (Dunn 1996: 103). The plan was to stifle illegal drug trafficking into the country as well as unauthorized immigrants from Latin America. The low-intensity conflict doctrine was used throughout the 1980s and 1990s shaping U.S.-Mexico border relations through militaristic terms.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on U.S. soil, the script of U.S.-Mexico border relations and the U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement has been restructured once again. The Immigration and Naturalization Services amongst a myriad of other agencies were became sub-agencies under the Department of Homeland Security (as noted by the Homeland Security Act of 2002). Custom and Border Protection (CBP) was created in 2003 to "prevent terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States" (USCBP Snapshot 2010: 1). The U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mission statement is as follows,

We are the guardians of our nation's borders. We are America's frontline. We safeguard the American homeland at and beyond our borders. We protect the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror. We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States while fostering our nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel. We serve the American public with vigilance, integrity, and professionalism.

Before 9/11, the Border Patrol was primarily responsible for immigration concerns and their responsibilities changed, with more of a focus on keeping Americans safe from terrorists (Tumlin 2004). In fiscal year 2005, there were 11, 156 Border Patrol agents on the ground and by 2006 it increased to 12, 185 (USCBP "2006: A Year of

Accomplishment” 2006). By July of 2010, Border Patrol Agents on the ground were comprised of 20, 119 with a grand total of 45, 995 Customs and Border Protection officers working in the department as a whole, and a fiscal year total of \$10.1 billion dollars in direct appropriation (USCBP Snapshot 2010: 1). A portion of the \$10.1 billion dollars generated from border security (between ports of entry) – \$3.6 billion, border security (at ports of entry) – 2.7 billion, and border security, fencing, infrastructure, and technology – \$0.80 billion dollars (USCBP Snapshot 2010: 1). Due to public outcry and political steadfastness, terrorist concerns led to State laws with the intention of fighting terrorism.

State Laws Against Terrorism

In response to the attacks, the U.S. congress passed key legislations in the fight against terrorists or as George W. Bush declared, “The United States’ War on Terror.” The first legislation that passed was the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA Patriot Act) on January 3, 2001². This law provided tremendous leverage to the White House in establishing *what* is a terrorist act, *who* is a terrorist(s), and the power to decide *how* the perpetrator(s) would be handled. Two years after the USA Patriot Act was enacted in

² (A.) Involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State; (B.) appear to be intended – (i.) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii.) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii.) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping and (C.) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.

2001, the state created the Department of Homeland Security January 23, 2002³, which became the umbrella entity for a myriad of departments including – the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Secret Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Coast Guard (Department of Homeland Security Organizational Chart Online). The U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement also known as the U.S. Border Patrol will be the primary focus of this study. The Department of Homeland Security (via the Homeland Security Act of 2002) was created with a specific design in mind, which was to prevent, detect, and dismantle acts/activities deemed as terrorism.

The threat of immigrant “terrorists” as mentioned before is not new especially as former President Reagan declared that terrorists were coming from south of the border (Dunn 1996) and that we needed to protect America. However, it becomes highly salient both legally and socially with the creation of DHS and the directive of having the three main agencies associated with immigration under its purview (the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Both immigration and terrorism were wedded once and for all.

³ Former President George W. Bush noted, By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows: Section 1. *Establishment*. I hereby establish within the Executive Office of the President and Office of Homeland Security (“the Office”) to be headed by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security. Sec. 2. *Mission*. The mission of the Office shall be to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. The Office shall perform the functions necessary to carry out this mission, including the functions specified in Section 3 of this order. Sec. 3. *Functions*. The functions of the Office shall be to coordinate the executive branch’s efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States

Immediately preceding the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the State focused its attention on Arabs/Muslim noncitizens (Akram and Karmely 2004). A crucial point to keep in mind is that legal scholars Akram and Karmely (2004) pointed out that Arabs/Muslims were singled out before 9/11 for “terrorist” activities as labeled by the State. In fact, looking back to former President Nixon’s Administration through George W. Bush’s final days, people from the Arab/Muslim community regardless of citizenship have been targeted – Nixon’s “Operation Boulder,” Carter’s bout with Iranian students, Reagan’s attempts at maintaining that terrorists were crossing the border, George H.W. Bush’s directive with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to fingerprint U.S. citizens and immigrants of Arab descent, and Clinton’s 1996 passage of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) law whereby “secret evidence” was used by the State to detain and remove Arab/Muslim non-citizens (Akram and Karmely 2004: 614-615). The attacks of 9/11 changed the tactics, processes and handling of people from the Arab/Muslim community. Thereafter, an investigation dubbed PENTTBOM had two main objectives,

Identify the terrorists involved, as well as any possible accomplices, and coordinating all levels of law enforcement to prevent subsequent attacks against the United States or its interests abroad. On order by the Attorney General to use ‘every available law enforcement tool’ to arrest person who ‘participate in, or lend support to, terrorist activities,’ law enforcement focused on using federal immigration laws to arrest and detain noncitizens suspected of any terrorist ties. More than 1200 citizens and noncitizens were detained for interrogation within the first two months of the attacks (Akram and Karmely 2004: 621).

After the attacks, it was clear who was at the center of suspicion and investigation – Arabs/Muslims citizens and noncitizens (Akram and Johnson 2002). After the USA

Patriot Act of 2001 and the Homeland Security Act of 2002, a few years later January 4, 2005 the Real ID Act⁴ was passed.

The REAL ID Act of 2005 (Section B of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005) set the stage for the Department of Homeland Security (former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff) to waive all legal laws to ensure the building of structured fencing/barriers along the southwest border region. The REAL ID Act was initially unsuccessful, but was later slipped into a bill entitled the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005. The stage was set for the Secretary of Homeland Security to waive federal laws to build the barrier. The next section illustrates the dynamic and complex relationship between the State and border residents as well as the impacts on the resident's lived experiences.

⁴ Real ID Act - Sec. 102. WAIVER OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS NECESSARY FOR IMPORVEMENT OF BARRIERS AT BORDERS; FEDERAL COURT REVIEW Section 102 (c) of the Illegal Immigration and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1103 Note) is amended to read as follows: (c) Waiver. – (1) In General. – Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall have the authority to waive all legal requirements such Secretary, in such Secretary's sole discretion, determines necessary to ensure expeditious construction of the barriers and roads under this section... (2) Federal Court Review. – (A.) In General. – The district courts of the United States shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear all causes or claims arising from any action undertaken, or any decision made, b the Secretary of Homeland Security pursuant to paragraph (1). A cause of action or claim may only be brought alleging a violation of the Constitution of the United States. The court shall not have jurisdiction to hear any claim not specified in this subparagraph.

Federal Inter-Agency Cooperation Against the War on Terror

Given the fact that I interviewed federal agents from the U.S. Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, this short section delves into the history, proposed relationships, and core mission of these State entities. The majority of federal law enforcement agencies are clear about the importance of partnering with other agencies at the federal, state, and local levels in order to investigate, detain, and arrest. These agencies walk a fine line in carrying out their responsibilities while trying not to trample on each other's toes. In other words, the ability for different agencies to work together entails respecting one another's "turf" or investigative terrain. The following sub-sections entail a glimpse into two agencies – U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement – under the direction of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Meanwhile, the second sub-section offers a look at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The purpose of these sections is to delineate the tasks and duties of three agencies that seek to protect the American homeland from terrorist threats.

Department of Homeland Security

As mentioned previously, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created in 2002 with the intention of protecting the "American homeland" from terrorism (see Appendix E). This section will provide a discussion of the organizational structure of DHS and briefly note how it partners with other entities such as the Department of Defense (DOD) in order to make visible the logistics of federal law enforcement agencies of the State as it extends its tentacles into the local level in Cameron County and the

surrounding areas. As a law enforcement strong-arm of the federal government, the DHS government website provides a detailed statement articulating how the department is linked with other federal governing agencies and/or local governments such as in Cameron County and other locales,

Homeland Security leverages resources within federal, state, and local governments, coordinating the transition of multiple agencies and programs into a single, integrated agency focused on protecting the American people and their homeland. More than 87,000 different governmental jurisdictions at the federal, state, and local level have homeland security responsibilities. The comprehensive national strategy seeks to develop a complementary system connecting all levels of government without duplicating effort. Homeland Security is truly a 'national mission' (U.S. Department of Homeland Security "Department Subcomponents and Agencies" May 2011)

As I noted earlier, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is also known as the U.S. Border Patrol. The U.S. Border Patrol has twenty field offices across the country providing assistance to America's ports of entry. With regard to the Secure Fence Act of 2006, areas whereby this "tactical infrastructure" has been built are delineated by Border Patrol sectors. In this case, the Rio Grande Valley sector is part of the tactical infrastructure plan whereby the border "fence" as well as technological devices has been used to deter and detect undocumented border crossers.

In the Rio Grande Valley sector, as the U.S. Border Patrol began overseeing the building of the border barrier, former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff also enlisted the aid of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACE). The Army Corp of Engineers has been in existence since the time George Washington employed the first engineer officers of the Army during the American Revolution. It persisted through the Cold War, the Iraq invasion, and currently operates as part of the War on Terrorism (U.S. Army Corp of Engineers "A Brief History" November 2007). The Army Corp of Engineers has assisted

the Department of Homeland Security by facilitating the construction of the border barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, “When the Cold War ended, the Corps was poised to support the Army and the Nation in the new era. Army engineers supported 9/11 recovery efforts and currently play an important international role in the rapidly evolving Global War on Terrorism” (U.S. Army Corp of Engineers “A Brief History” November 2007). Both the U.S. Border Patrol and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers are quasi-military-civil service entities. In fact, the entire Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also functions as both a civil service and military organization serving the needs of the public during a natural disaster, yet deploying military soldiers in a border region when described as “out of control.”

Another important agency under the umbrella of DHS is the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, which is responsible for

Homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration. The agency has an annual budget of more than \$5.7 billion dollars, primarily devoted to its two principal operating components - Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Overview Mission Statement 2011).

It becomes clear in reading the mission statements of both the U.S. Border Patrol and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that protecting America’s borders is of central concern and focus. However, not all of the agencies under the purview of DHS strictly enforce border control and protection, for example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is concerned with providing assistance to Americans during a natural disaster or catastrophe.

More importantly, a primary focus for DHS is the commitment to working with agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. For instance, DHS may work closely with the Department of Justice in creating an immigrant detention facility or it may seek to work with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in order to track down suspected terrorists. The bureaucratic nature of the federal government delineates specific tasks and duties for each organization within it. In the next section, I briefly discuss the Department of Justice (DOJ) specifically the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and its connection with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Department of Justice: The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

As an agency within the Department of Justice (see Appendix F), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) emerged on July 26, 1908 under the direction of former Attorney General Charles Bonaparte during the Presidential Administration of Theodore Roosevelt (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation A Brief History “Origins” 2011). Initially, the FBI focused its efforts on interstate commerce, national banking, espionage, anti-trust, and naturalization issues, and later broadened their investigative scope. For example, as it broadened its efforts, the FBI stated that it had field offices in major cities, but also “Several were located near the Mexican border where they concentrated on smuggling, neutrality violations, and intelligence collection, often in connection with the Mexican revolution” (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation A Brief History “Early Days” 2011).

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the FBI was granted more powers to ensure the capture of suspected terrorists and the prevention of a future 9/11. Current FBI

Director Robert S. Mueller was sworn in days before 9/11 and had to lead a massive investigative front in the aftermath of the event. The attacks led to significant changes within the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies as they all were instructed to cooperate with one another as well as state and local agencies nationwide to ensure protection of the homeland as described the bureau,

Director Mueller led...investigative efforts in partnership with all U.S. law enforcement, the federal government, and our allies overseas. The investigation of the attacks was the largest in FBI history. On October 26, 2001, the president signed into law the USA PATRIOT Act...and Director Mueller accordingly accepted on behalf of the Bureau responsibility for protecting the American people against future terrorist attacks...Director Mueller called for a reengineering of FBI structure and operations that would closely focus the Bureau on prevention of terrorist attacks...In December 2004, Director Mueller expanded the Office of Intelligence to form the Directorate of Intelligence (DI). The DI manages all FBI intelligence activities—from collection to dissemination—to ensure that they are integrated with investigative operations (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation “Facts and Figures: A Short History of the FBI” 2011).

The above statement indicates that the FBI had to restructure its intelligence gathering techniques and start sharing information with other agencies to combat terrorism because it had not previously done so. After 9/11, the public and the government heavily criticized the communication and sharing dilemma between the two federal agencies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were highly scrutinized for their intelligence and communication “lapses,” which many in the White House felt might have prevented the 9/11 attack (Johnston 2003).

Thereafter, it became institutional policy among federal law enforcement agencies to share information from the start of intelligence collection and to communicate their findings with all levels of law enforcement, if necessary, to ensure homeland defense.

Over time, this “collection to dissemination” process has evolved into further strategies and partnerships with state and local agencies especially along the U.S.-Mexico border in order to stifle potential terrorist activities.

The State and the Complexities of Securing the Texas-Mexico Border

Former President George W. Bush signed into law the Real ID Act in 2005 as part of the initiative to gain control of the southwest border region. The final yet crucial law set in place after the U.S. Patriot Act and the Real ID Act was the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The SFA was coupled by the popular (yet most contentious notion used by the State) call for “Securing Our Borders” from the Department of Homeland Security’s Secure Our Borders Initiative (SBI). This SBI is “a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America’s borders and reduce illegal migration” stipulating the addition of more border law enforcement officials, upgrading of technology, and “increased investment in infrastructure improvements at the border” (Department of Homeland Security, “Secure Border Initiative”). The Secure Fence Act of 2006 mandates the following:

Sec. 2. ACHIEVING OPERATIONAL CONTROL ON THE BORDER (a) In General. – Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall take all actions of the Secretary determines necessary and appropriate to achieve and maintain operational control over the entire international land and maritime border of the United States, to include the following – (1) Systematic Surveillance of the international land and maritime borders of the United States through more effective use of personnel and technology, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, ground based sensors, satellite, radar coverage, and cameras; and (2) Physical Infrastructure enhancements to prevent unlawful entry by aliens into the United States and facilitate access to the international land and maritime borders b United States Customs and Border Protection, such as additional checkpoints, all weather access roads, and vehicle barriers. (b) Operational Control Defined. – In this section, the term ‘Operational Control’ means the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States, including terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband.

The SFA of 2006 goes on to discuss the construction of fencing and further security in the southwest border region from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Following the detailed plans to build a two-layered fencing system, cameras, lights and sensors, DHS briefly mentions that it will partake in a study to examine the United States' "Northern Border" – U.S. and Canadian border and whether or not fencing will also be need to built in order to protect Americans from terrorists and other "aliens" (Secure Fence Act of 2006, Section 104, Northern Border Study). First, DHS would establish whether or not it was "feasible" and what the "economic impact" would be in constructing the two-layered reinforced fencing (Secure Fence Act of 2006, Section 104, Northern Border Study). To date, the DHS has never stated publicly that it would begin construction of a barrier between Canada and the United States.

After the SFA of 2006 was passed, President George W. Bush on October 26, 2006 stated to the American public, "This bill will help protect the American people. This bill will make our borders more secure. It is an important step toward immigration reform" (Office of the Press Secretary, Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006, October 26, 2006). Since the President took office (for his second term in 2004) immigration reform concentrated primarily on the southern border had been a focus for him. George W. Bush's administration noted, "Comprehensive immigration reform begins with Securing the Border" (Office of the Press Secretary, Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006, October 26, 2006). The President had ensured that the Border Patrol funding increased from \$4.6 billion in 2001 to \$10.4 billion in 2006, Border Patrol agents jumped from 9,000 to more than 12,000, the National Guard was deployed, technological advances used along the border, fencing, and the creation of more detention facilities

along the U.S.-Mexico border region (Office of the Press Secretary, Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006, October 26, 2006). The State has even acknowledged that through comprehensive immigration reform both assimilation and the idea of America's "melting pot" can be achieved if immigrants could only learn English,

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Requires That We Honor The Great American Tradition of the Melting Pot. Americans are bound together by our shared ideals, an appreciation of our history, respect for the flag we fly, and an ability to speak and write the English. When immigrants assimilate and advance in our society, they realize their dreams, renew our spirit, and add to the unity of America (Office of the Press Secretary, Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006, October 26, 2006).

Former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff was given full reign over the Secure Fence Act, sending letters and waivers to residents along the southwest border region of the State's concrete plan to build the barrier. Cameron County was one of the areas designated by DHS as a project site. Kiewit Construction Company headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska was hired by the Army Corp of Engineers to build the steel barrier in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. The Kiewit Construction Company has a long history with the State and has been contracted out by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers since 1931 (Williamson 2009: 2) shortly after the U.S. Great Depression engaging in "war-related work" such as cantonment, barracks, street and utilities.

In time, many of the landowners would see the Kiewit men and women dressed in yellow reflector tops and utility trucks building the wall that would partition their properties, push them to uproot, or leave them on the south side of the barrier. Kiewit would build the barrier in a non-continuous fashion on the northern end of the levee system created under the purview of the International Boundary and Water Commission, which traces its roots to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and established the

remaking of America. The barrier would be approximately 18 ft high and would be built within 100 ft. North of the levee with major gaps throughout. These gaps would prove to be menacing for the landowners in two important ways: One, some landowners feared that these gaps would funnel in unauthorized immigrants searching for an outlet into the United States and; Two, the proposed gaps caused an uproar from landowners who questioned (and in some cases protested) DHS's decision to have the gaps in wealthier locales (see Miller 2010).

Meanwhile, many residents in the county did not fully contend with the possibility of this new forming reality and how it would prove to be an intrusion in their lives. On December 7, 2007 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff discussed the realities of the barrier in a statement to the press, "The American public has been loud and clear in their call for secure borders," said Homeland Security Michael Chertoff. "We will continue to use every tool, resource and authority we have to answer that call. Without the participation of border residents and the technology to span remote areas, we place an unfair burden on our frontline personnel and will have difficulty meeting the expectations of the American public" (Office of the Press Secretary, "DHS Moves Forward On Border Fencing and Technology Improvements," December 7, 2007). This statement from former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff was quite sweeping given the number of Texas landowners who did not support the barrier.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) admitted to sending letters, waivers, and U.S. Border Patrol Agents and/or U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)

to the homes of border residents living near the Rio Grande to notify them that their properties were going to be surveyed for potential use in the barrier project. Many of the Cameron County landowners allowed them to conduct the land surveys while others refused outright. Thereafter, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff explained that if these landowners did not provide the State with access into their properties to survey the land there would be legal ramifications. DHS Secretary Chertoff declared in his press release that they had contacted over six hundred landowners. There were a number of Texas landowners that allowed access into their properties while others did not. The refusal to let DHS into the properties to survey would enable the State to sue the landowners for the right to gain entry,

Today, CPB will mail letters to those landowners notifying them that an action will be brought in federal court for a temporary right of entry to conduct tests and surveys. If CBP and USACE determine that they land is suitable for fence-building, they will negotiate with the landowner on a purchase price. If these negotiations are unsuccessful, the government will return to court to seek title and possession and the court will determine the appropriate price. (Office of the Press Secretary, “DHS Moves Forward On Border Fencing and Technology Improvements,” December 7, 2007).

The landowners who refused to let the State enter their properties were met with a steadfast opponent on a mission to build the wall. The State conceptualized “securing the border” as more important than the concerns of Texas landowners and residents. The Department of Homeland Security admitted that the south Texas border region, proved to have the most vocal landowners, who refused to give up their lands to the State. The local Brownsville Herald exclaimed, “The Department of Homeland Security has run into numerous legal obstacles in its attempt to construct the barrier in the Rio Grande Valley, making it one of the few places along the border where fencing plans remain incomplete” (Sieff 2009).

Conclusion

Historically, people of Mexican-origin in the United States have experienced violence, war, and land appropriation at the hands of Anglo Americans colonizers. In time, as the U.S. federal government began to emerge as a centralized entity, these strategies and tactics became cemented in policies toward Mexicans and other racialized minorities (i.e. Native Americans and Africans). In addition, the U.S. State's deployments of political tactics have changed depending on the political climate and the social construction of people of Mexican American ancestry. Most recently, change occurred following 9/11, when the national political discourse on terrorism began to incorporate Latinos and the U.S.-Mexico border region. The Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA) was implemented by the federal State to "secure America's border" from terrorism and immigration. These concerns have created tensions and concerns among border communities with regard to their identity, land, and beliefs about their southern neighbor – Mexico.

The U.S. national discourse regarding terrorism, immigration, and the border barrier have appropriated the lived experiences and meanings border residents have created about the barrier. Ultimately, these State discourses force the realities and understandings of border residents into a static relationship rather than one that is dynamic and in constant transformation depending on *who* and *how* a person experiences the material reality. *Why* and *how* DHS decided to build a barrier between the United States and Mexico after the events of September 11, 2001 are main focal points for addressing the local impacts of Texas landowners and border residents. Was there was a

real threat of terrorism from south of the border? I argue that the State conflated terrorism concerns with the already heightened hysteria regarding (unauthorized) Latin American immigration – specifically Mexican undocumented immigration.

The Secure Fence Act, in many ways, set the spotlight on the U.S.-Mexico border. As illustrated throughout history, the federal State has had a schizophrenic relationship with Mexican (undocumented) immigration – employing restrictionist immigration policies, nativist sentiments and violence (see Chacón and Davis 2006; Doty 2009), while at other moments implementing policies that welcome Mexican labor (i.e. Bracero Program). Once the spotlight was set on Latin America specifically Mexican immigrants, State political forces (with the assistance of anti-immigrant groups) ensured that the SFA would be brought to fruition (see Doty 2009). Overall, this discursive framing denies the complexity that all people in the community face in dealing with this material reality. The literature review will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section delves into the existing literature on Latinas/os of Mexican-origin, while specifically focusing on the social construction of Latinas/os and the implications of a State-waged “War on Terror.” The literature review spans various disciplines including sociology, law, political science, history, cultural anthropology, Chicano studies, and Latina/o studies. In conclusion, the literature tends to focus on the impacts of State laws and enforcement, yet does not yield enough findings about how it impacts the lived realities of the people on the ground. Power relations between the State and the public need to be closely examined in order to shed light on how power relations between the macro and the micro are dynamic and intertwined.

Social Construction of Latinas/os: Anti-Mexican Hysteria

Anti-Mexican/immigrant groups, restrictionist immigrant laws, the media, and the State have represented the Latina/o community in a vitriolic fashion. Anthropologist Leo Chavez (2008) has investigated the discourses of Latinas/os specifically women of Mexican origin and how they are represented by the media, academic elites, and the State. The overall representation of Latinas has combined fears of race, immigration, and fertility as a “fearsome trinity for much of U.S. history” (Chavez 2008: 71). Latina reproduction especially from women of Mexican descent has been deemed an alarming threat by the media and represented as, “dangerous, pathological, abnormal, and even a

threat to national security” (Chavez 2008: 72). These gendered and racist representations of Mexican women speak to the fears of the Reconquista invasion whereby the United States will be re-conquered by Mexicans.

Embedded in these alarmist tones are emotions that are centered on anger, frustration, and fear. These feelings are not far removed from violence and in many cases it is the final response. For example, U.S. politician and conservative analyst Patrick J. Buchanan in his book *The Death of the West* made it clear that America’s population was changing and for the worst as he cited Israel Zangwill’s play *The Melting Pot*,

‘America is God’s crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming’ wrote Israel Zangwill, the Russian-Jewish playwright, in his famous 1908 play *The Melting Pot*. But, the immigration tsunami rolling over America is not coming from ‘all the races of Europe.’ The largest population transfer in history is coming from all the races of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and they are not ‘melting and reforming’ (Buchanan 2002: 3).

However, research on immigration/border politics and its linkages to the current “War on Terror” continues to be underdeveloped with regard to its impact on the Latina/o population specifically in the southwest. The racialization of Mexicans fueled the discourses of Latinas/os as a threat to American society. There has been a “Latina/o threat narrative” taking place in the United States, historically as well as presently (Chavez 2008: 3). This Latino threat narrative sets the stage for inclusion and exclusion for immigrants from Latin America claiming that immigrants,

Do not learn English, and they seal themselves off from the larger society, reproducing cultural beliefs and behaviors antithetical to a modern life such as pathologically high fertility levels that reduce the demographic presence of white Americans. Latinos are represented as an unchanging people, standing outside the currents of history, merely waiting for the opportunity to revolt and to reconquer land that was once theirs. They live to destroy social institutions such as medical care and education. They dilute the privileges and rights of citizenship for legitimate members of society (Chavez 2008: 177).

This antagonistic narrative by political elites and anti-immigrant groups revitalizes and spreads the “Reconquering of Aztlán” or “Reconquista” myths surmising that Latinas/os are coming by the hordes back to the Southwest to re-claim their conquered lands (Navarro 2005). This has been a common myth that has been dispersed by media conglomerates such as CNN. Former CNN Anchor Lou Dobbs was a well known participant in perpetuating these myths and stirring up fears and hatred among The Right and anti-immigrant groups (CNN 2006: “Special Issue: Presidential Immigration Summit” Transcript). As an exemplar of this threat narrative CNN Anchor Lou Dobbs stated the following,

Some Mexican citizens and some Mexican- Americans have formed a group to see states like New Mexico and California be turned over to Mexico. It's the reconquista movement. We'll be telling you about that in our special report tonight. And did President Bush make any progress today to help secure our broken borders?... There are some Mexican citizens and some Mexican- Americans who want to see California, New Mexico and other parts of the Southwestern United States given over to Mexico. These groups call it the reconquista, Spanish for reconquest. And they view the millions of Mexican illegal aliens in particular entering the United States as potentially an army of invaders to achieve that takeover .(CNN 2006: “Special Issue: Presidential Immigration Summit” Transcript)

Lou Dobb’s message has reached the television sets of millions of Americans and has entrenched itself in the mental schemas Americans use to talk about Mexicans. The message of Dobbs and others like him transmit the following vitriolic ideas about people of Mexican-origin: (1) People of Mexican descent are a problem for the United States; (2) They are involved in a surreptitious movement to re-claim the American Southwest; (3) They pose a threat to American National Security by coming through our borders illegally. Furthermore, this message resonates with many anti-immigrant, nativists, and political elites who have argued that Mexican immigrants are a drain to social services such as health care and education (Mehan 1997; Lipmann 2006; Doty 2009). In

actuality, many undocumented and authorized immigrants partake in their local economies by purchasing products and most importantly contribute billions into social security through falsification of documents with the idea that perhaps it will pave a path for citizenship (Bosworth 2005; Lipmann 2006). The reality is that the idea of paving the way for citizenship in many cases proves to be a false illusion. Nonetheless, the Latino/o threat narrative is very much alive in American discourses of Mexico, Mexican immigrants, and Mexican Americans. Since the 1990s, the rise of the term “illegal” Mexicans has given way to a new racialized and gendered understanding of Mexicans. Nevins (2002) in his study concerning Operation Gatekeeper, a State plan to build a steel barrier between San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico, set the stage for the building of walls along the southwestern United States. Operation Gatekeeper concretized the U.S. national sentiments regarding “illegal” immigration and a border “out of control.” The State played a primary role in “constructing social [cultural and legal] boundaries between those who belonged and those who did not” (Nevins 2002: 53). Through this creation of the “illegal,” the State was able to create a “crisis” and continue to maintain a border between “alien” and “citizen,” “American” and “foreigner.”

Implications of a State-Waged War Against Immigrants

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the State targeted Arab Americans, Arabs, and Muslims and labeled them a threat to national security. Jamal and Naber (2008) argued that Arab Americans/Muslims have experienced intense scrutiny and racial profiling since 9/11 and declared that wider spectrums of racial groups have fallen subject to these terrorism policies including Latina/os (Jamal and Naber 2008: 277).

Tumlin (2004) also discussed how 9/11 terrorism policies have influenced immigration laws and their effects on Arabs/Muslims, but did not thoroughly discuss how this would impact other racialized groups such as Latinas/os. Later, scholars began to assess the “collateral damage” this would have on Latinas/os (Johnson 2003: 850) Bender (2002) provided a sobering analysis on the exacerbated construction of Latinas/os shortly after the tragedy. Chacón and Davis (2006) as well as Massey (2009) have all discussed the concerns within the Latino/a community, as they argued that the 9/11 events would have serious implications for the community with a heavy emphasis on (undocumented) immigrants.

Implications or “collateral damages” has been the major funding of border enforcement after 9/11. For example, border policing tactics of the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) department (Border Patrol) has been explored by Inda (2006: 117) who uses the term prophylactic technology to describe the – “assemblages of practical knowledge, architectural arrangements, mechanical devices, types of authorities...oriented toward the calculated transformation of human conduct so as to bring about particular outcomes. Put otherwise, it refers to any practical mechanisms that deal with possible social risk and danger through preemptive means.” Various militaristic mechanisms such as the use of helicopters, night-vision, fencing, personnel and high-tech surveillance systems and identification systems such as ICAD, ENFORCE, and IDENT – have been used along the U.S.-Mexico border to stifle the flow of undocumented immigration. This is a clear contrast to activities at the Canadian border.

The government has increased the monetary budget of the CBP – Border Patrol from millions to billions in order to secure the U.S-Mexican border (Inda 2006).

However, even though Border Patrol officials have alleviated some problems in hot spots such as San Diego and El Paso, the government has only displaced the routes for the immigrants. Now, immigrants must travel over treacherous terrain and deserts struggling to survive in intense heat and cold. Over the years, there has been a major increase in the number of immigrant deaths along the southwestern border from less than 100 in a year to over 500 in a year since the new “prevention through deterrence” program was established (Inda 2006: 118). In addition, Coleman (2007) has noted that the enforcement strategies of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are no longer centrally focused on the southwestern border but have extended their tactics into the Midwestern and Northeastern regions following migrant trails across the United States.

Bound up in immigration and border enforcement has been the strategy of racial profiling that is a part of the everyday lives of many Latinas/os living along the southwest and other states where there is an increasing number of immigrants (Bender 2002; Coleman 2007; Romero 2001, 2006, 2008; Goldsmith, Romero, Rubio-Goldsmith, Escobedo, and Khoury 2009). This has taken place among all levels of law enforcement (local, state, federal). For example, within the past few years, we have seen Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conduct raids in regions such as Midwest – Postville, Iowa – where approximately three-hundred immigrants were hauled in by ICE (Duara, Petroski and Schulte 2008). Romero (2008) has described this type of profiling as being perpetrated against individuals who display features of “Mexicanness” – such as dark skin color and Spanish-speaking abilities. These are signifiers that evoke enough

probable cause to conduct an investigatory stop based on suspicions that such persons are “illegal aliens.”

Bender (2002: 1154) reminds us that Latinas/os are not safe, “because undocumented immigrants are now seen as a national security threat, as would-be terrorists, the longstanding association of Latinas/os with ‘illegal aliens’ may cause Americans to view Latinas/os with suspicion.” A year later, Johnson (2003: 852) talked about the “collateral damage” that would ensue after the 9/11 tragedy toward Mexican undocumented immigrants and Mexican Americans alike – “Ultimately, persons of Mexican ancestry – citizens and noncitizens – will be disparately affected by the legal changes triggered by September 11.” The “War on Terror” has antecedents such as the “War on Communism” and the “War on Drugs” as we now have shifted the political discourse to an all-out “War on Mexicans.” In this post-9/11 era, “undocumented immigrants, the largest group of undocumented immigrants, the largest group of undocumented immigrants in the United States, will not have the opportunity to legalize and enjoy some modicum of security in their daily lives. They [will] live in the periphery of U.S. social life...” (Johnson 2003: 867). Johnson (2003: 849) declared that in the “name of fighting terrorism,” attacks on the civil rights and liberties of *all* Latinas/os would be impacted regardless of citizenship, as they are all typically lumped together based on their phenotypical [“Mexican”] features.

A most recent attack has been through the implementation of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. Miller (2010) in assessing the consequences of the Secure Fence Act found that Texas landowners suffered greatly from the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) taking of private land rights. The State, Miller (2010) argued, has had a set formal

policy for how to intervene with Native American tribal lands; however, the State via the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not have a formal process for condemning the land of U.S. citizen property owners. Given the rationalized and bureaucratic nature of the State and its ancillary branch – the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), led to “inefficient Due Process for property owners at the Texas-Mexico border” (Miller 2010: 632). The State’s “colossal centralization” of DHS by shifting twenty-two agencies under its purview turned the agency into a “national security, military, and civilian” hybrid organization (Miller 2010: 636). This type of rationalized bureaucratic organization ensured that “the wealthy and the well-connected have fared better in the DHS’s [Department of Homeland Security’s] taking” (Miller 2010: 644). In the end, Texas landowners were left displaced, landless, and at the mercy of the State.

Chapter Summary

The literature on Latinas/os tends to focus predominantly on Mexican (undocumented) immigrants and/or State laws and enforcement that oppress/target this particular group. Yet, there is still a lack of research conducted on the how the modalities of State power penetrate people’s everyday lived realities. There is a weakness in the re-centering of people’s voices and lived experiences along with a dialectical take on its their relationship the State. My study will use these works as a spring board to fill in the gaps in the literature in two ways: First, by demonstrating how State terrorism policy/enforcement strategies impact American citizens living along the U.S-Mexico border. Second, to provide a window into Texas border residents’ experiences in confronting the State and its Secure Fence Act mandate. A study of this scope provides a

sociological entry into the contentious and complicated terrain of power relations between the State and the populace.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The theoretical frameworks that inform this project are located in the following perspectives: State and nation theories, critical race, Latina/o critical, and feminist theories, cognitive sociology, social constructionism, and borderland studies. These theoretical frameworks are used to gain a better understanding of the webs of domination involving the State, citizens, borders, nation and sovereignty. In utilizing all these perspectives, I am able to delve into the intricacies of how the aforementioned phenomena operate together and begin to map the relations of how power operates between the State and the Texas border residents, many of who are of Mexican-origin, facing the reality of the State mandated Secure Fence Act. In the next three subsections, I offer theoretical lenses that guide the conceptual and analytic tools for this study.

State, Nation, and Power Theories

Defining “the State” is complicated as Mitchell (1999: 76) pointed out, it is “an object of analysis that appears to exist simultaneously as material force and as an ideological construct. It seems both real and illusory.” The reality is that citizens and non-citizens are bounded by laws – what many feminists have called the “personal is political.” We are all politicized beings governed by State laws and policies. If we do not adhere to the laws of a nation, there are implications, consequences, and punishments. There has been much debate about the State in the social science literature, for example,

in the 1950s and 1960s scholars argued that we should “abandon ‘the state’ as a term [that was] too ideological and narrow” and in the late 1970s scholars sought to “bring the state back in” (Mitchell 1999: 77). Scholars such as Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985) argue that the State plays an important part in society. There have been debates surrounding the State’s role as an autonomous entity, a tool of political elites and other powerful social groups, or dominated at times by civil society (see Quadagno 1984; Skocpol 1985; Domhoff 1990). Historically speaking, it appears that the State has operated in ways that support some elements of autonomy while also being used as a tool for corporate/political elite agendas.

Social scientists such as Domhoff (1990) and Doty (2009) have demonstrated in their research that there is the potential for corporate elites and civil society to have a part in crafting State laws. I agree with both scholars that these possibilities exist for other non-State actors to play a part in the crafting of State laws – what Doty (2009: 15) calls “Statecraft from below.” This concept does not suggest that civil society or what Doty (2009: 15) calls “popular sovereignty” acts in the process alone; rather, both State sovereignty and popular (populace) sovereignty engage in the process together – “this concept suggests that we may need to rethink dominant understandings of how sovereign authority and power work, and where or in whom they are located. It forces us to consider that not only is the ‘the State’ not a unitary, rational, and cohesive entity, but it also may not have a monopoly on practices that construct the friend-enemy distinction and exceptions.” I acknowledge that the theorizing of the State has varying institutional forms, political approaches, and can even manifest itself within the (disciplining of the) individual (Foucault 1977).

State theories are also intertwined with notions and operations of power. French social theorist Michel Foucault (1994: 340) stated that power “exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action...Power is not a matter of consent.” In these terms, Foucault (1994) acknowledges that power is not (always) a centrally located phenomenon, but one that resides in interactions between people. With a concern over operations of the State, Foucault (1994: 202) was interested in the “governmentality” or the art of governing populations. Similar to feminist studies of the State, Foucault (1994: 207) mentions that the “correct way of managing individuals, goods, and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in a relation to his wife, children, and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper – how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father toward his family into the management of the state.”

The development of an economy of governing based on controlling populations of people through “surveillance and control” is similar to the relationship that a male head of a household controlling his family (Foucault 1994: 207). Through laws and policies the State can establish surveillance and control that discipline the body or discipline a population ensuring the “management of populations” (Foucault 1994: 219). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977: 136) noted that “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.” The body is subjugated by those who wish and have the authority to do so. This “policy of coercions” is a process whereby,

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A ‘political anatomy,’ which was also a ‘mechanics of power,’ was being born; it defined how one may have hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies (Foucault 1977: 138).

But forms of discipline are only part of the story. Lukes (1974) has suggested, however, that *A* can get *B* to do something by making it appear as though it is in *B*'s interest to do so. In this study, I to argue that in addition to its laws and policies, the State has also constructed a discourse – the terrorism discourse as a strategy (see Althusser 1971; Foucault 1972; Hall 1996) to get Texas landowners to relinquish their properties for the greater good and safety of the United States and its citizens (Meserve 2008). Discourses as defined by Foucault (1972: 49) are not merely “groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.” Thus, discourses are a language imbued with particular representations and meanings that can shape the subjectivities of people. Following suit, Stuart Hall (1996: 201) defined discourse as,

A group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic... One important point about this notion of discourse is that it is not based on the conventional distinction between thought and action, language and practice. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: ‘discursive practice’ – the practice of producing meaning.

The exchange of discourses takes place in a discursive power-field where political elites compete for the ability to inscribe a meaning about a particular group typically a less powerful (minority) group. Within the discursive power-field, there are meta-discourses that can be discounted by particular counter-discourses.

The State and nation are mutually constructing systems of discourses, knowledges, and power. It was Benedict Anderson (2006: 3) who declared that nationalism and “nation-ness” was a fundamental or “legitimate value in the potential life of our time.” Anderson (2006: 5-6) proposed the following definition of a nation, “It is

an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign...It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Socially aware of inequality and exploitative systems, Anderson (2006: 7) adds, “The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing die for such limited imaginings.”

Two key terms that Anderson (2006) uses to describe the inhabitants of the nation are “horizontal comradeship” and “fraternity.” These are important given that the United State’s history of race, gender, and class relations have been tumultuous from the start and equality at any level has been difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, unity remains a fundamental goal. Second, his use of the word “fraternity” is relatively accurate as the political, economic, and legal emergence of the early U.S. republic was tailored by men for men – specifically White upper-class men – as they were able to vote, own property, and establish wealth on the backs of African slaves (Roediger 2008). Thus, the original imagined community of Whites set the tone for the historical reality of other racial groups.

While nation(s) are imagined communities, Hogan (2009: 1) argued that “in this communal imaginary the nation is almost inevitably gendered and racialized. That is, the icons, experiences, traits, and contexts central to nations come to be symbolically linked to individuals and groups with distinct gender and ethnoracial identities. The imagined

community is, in other words, a nation of flesh and blood.” In this national image, the imaginary is a reflection of and informed by society at large. In the case of America, the nation was imagined as White. This had implications not only for those already living within the territory, but also for those wishing to enter. How we imagine our nation to be has material and psychological effects on those we judge to be different or outside of the constituted ideal. In other words, our ideas of nation continue to sustain social inequalities in our society. Since nations are “discursively constructed” (Hogan 2009: 4) they are not static, but constantly changing depending on the socio-historical-political moment. In a similar vein, Hall (1992: 293) had pointed out that discourses of the nation(s) are maintained and reproduced through, “stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which...give meaning to the nation.”

Foucault’s (1994) ideas about power are that it is not centralized but is dispersed in interactions. In other words, every person has the ability enact power over someone. This is where my conceptualization of power diverges with Foucault. Theoretically, one can say that everybody has power. Indeed, we all have some kind of power that we can enact in our lives. Pragmatically, the reality is that power is expressed in various forms depending on the localized context. For example, slavery and racism in the South compared to the Southwest was expressed differently different by Whites, Blacks, and Mexican-Americans (Foley 1997). In the Deep South, the economic engine of King Cotton (slavery) and the racialized domain of plantations were forms of power over Black bodies. This was significantly different than the racialization and oppression of Mexicans by Whites in the southwest. In the southwest, there were Mexican landed elites that were subjected to regimes of power whereby their properties were appropriated via

deception, murder, and manipulation. In certain cases, these Spanish/Mexican landed elite established *haciendas* (estate) similar to southern plantations where they had working-class Mexicans “work” the land for them and raise cattle.

In time, as this system began to fade and White southerners emerged in parts of the Southwest such as Texas these *haciendas* or estates were predominantly owned by Whites. Many working-class Mexicans were part of this new feudal-system but only as farmhands, ranchers, *vaqueros* (cowboys) for these newly transplanted White southerners. Many of these *vaqueros* lived on these ranches along with their families earning less than a living wage (Alonzo 1998). Most importantly, race, racism, and colorism produced a deeply disturbing system in the Southwest as Mexicans complicated their racial schema and impacted race relations between these two groups for generations to come.

In this study, I draw attention to the power relations between the State and the border residents in the Southwest. I investigate how State power operates, through whom it operates, and via the strategies that are utilized in the process. In addition, I delve into the possibility of resistance of the marginalized. One form of resistance of interest to me is the resistance to meta-discourses. Foucault (2003) pays close attention to this by noting that it is possible to unearth subjugated knowledges. His use of genealogy entails the excavation of subjugated knowledges to counter the meta-discourses and provide a voice for the marginalized. It is a “sort of attempt to desubjugate historical knowledges, to set them free, or in other words to enable them to oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal...discourse” (Foucault 2003: 10). Through a study of

discourses and actions, I attempt to understand the operation of power and a genealogy of experiential knowledges of border residents.

Feminist Theories

Feminists have interrogated the predominantly male-centered/Marxist theoretical discussions of the State emphasizing that gender relations are external and internal to the State (Pateman 1988; MacKinnon 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). Pateman (1988) and MacKinnon (1989) investigated the role of the State/gender relations and acknowledged that social institutions were embedded in patriarchy, as males were not only expected to be heads of households, but also heads of State. This was important for feminist theories (and praxis) as women's experiences and voices were theorized in terms of their dialectical (or dialogical, see Collins 2000: 30) relationship to social structures/institutions.

Connell's (1990: 509) review of feminist literature on the State claims that the State should be theorized in terms of discourses and procedural strategies. Connell (1990) admits "The state is empirically as well as theoretically complex...the problem is compounded by the fact that the realm of the state as well as the form of the state changes historically." Connell (1990) takes a Foucauldian approach to the discussion of gender relations and State dynamics and emphasizes that we should theorize, "the state as process rather than the state as thing." The feminist adage of the "personal is political" clearly indicates that the State should be theorized, "As an institution [that] is part of a wider social structure of gender relations."

Scholars such as Catherine MacKinnon who have proclaimed the “state is male” have in many ways essentialized the State as a gendered thing. It should be surmised that patriarchy is embedded in the State’s deployment of procedures (Connell 1990). Most importantly, the State is the “main organizer of the power relations of gender” (Connell 1990: 520) via laws, regulations, policies and security/control. Not only is the State a primary organizer for gender relations, but also of racialized relations in society. Our examination of the State should focus on *how* the State functions? *What* types of legal/social deployments (strategies and tactics) does the State partake in? *Who* are these strategies and tactics are impacting? The idea of “the State” is quite cumbersome for many. However, the reality is that there is a central institution such as a State that is made up of political actors that regulate our lives (bodies) and property through the constituting of laws and policies.

The State also crafts and legitimates mandates such as immigration laws that ultimately define the demographic make-up of our nation (Ngai 2004). Indeed, immigration laws can be changed, but to what extent? In who’s interest? In addition, gender has played a crucial role within the state’s procedures, for example, during increased times of Asian immigration in the U.S. During this time frame, Asian immigrants were not allowed to bring their wives or female partners (Peffer 1999). Yet, it was also not racially appropriate that these Asian men could intermingle with White American women and social policing ensured that this would not happen. Therefore, the State ensures that the demographics of the nation “looks” a particular way – primarily White.

Within the realm of the State emerges a discussion of territoriality and our ideas about nationhood. Important to this is gender, and as Davis (1997: 1) pointed out “constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood.’” Thus, Davis (1997) analyzes the ways in which “discourses on gender and that on the nation tend to intersect and to be constructed by each other.” Just as the shape and form of the State changes historically so do the discourses on gender and nation. Despite “State” and “nation(hood)” being social constructs, they are very real in their consequences. In the United States as well as other countries, how we imagine “our nation” to be is at the heart how women and men come together as collectivities and families. Davis (1997: 45) goes on to say,

A figure of a woman, often a mother, symbolizes in many cultures the spirit of the collectivity, whether it is Mother Russia, Mother Ireland, or Mother India. In the French Revolution its symbol was ‘La Patrie,’ a figure of a woman giving birth to a baby; and in Cyprus, a crying woman refugee on roadside posters was the embodiment of the pain and anger of the Greek Cypriot collectivity after the Turkish invasion. In peasant countries, the dependence of the people on the fertility of ‘Mother Earth’ has no doubt contributed to this class association between collectivity territory, collective identity and womanhood...The ‘burden of representation’ on women of the collectivity’s identity and future destiny has also brought about the construction of women as the bearers of the collectivity’s honour.

Living in a post 9/11 era, Davis’s (1997) concept of the, “burden of representation” is necessary as the United State engages in discourses about war, terrorism, nation, security and sovereignty in a post 9/11 context. This implies that America needs to be protected. America needing protection is gendered-talk about the nation. Women are the ones generally seen as in need of protection because they are constructed as weak.

As Hogan (2009: 7) eloquently noted, “In other words, men *create* the nation, while women simply *symbolize* the nation.” In discourses regarding the nation, gendered

imagery is not always couched solely in masculine-centered talk. Rather a masculine and feminine discourse often takes place simultaneously as the U.S. engages in wars, but also tell the American public that the nation needs to be protected from terrorism. Defending the nation was and is seen the bravery associated with White men, while the idea of being a coward or “cowardice” was attributed to “the feminine and with people of colour” (Blom 2000: 15). The idea of the military and military practice in defending the nation has a masculine connotation – undoubtedly, defending the nation is understood as defending (white) women. Overall, the idea of defending the homeland from terrorists suggested that the masculine State must protect the vulnerable nation. What might this mean to men and women within America? Perhaps this stirs up the wish to help protect the homeland in men and the wish to be protected in women. But what does it mean for the men and women at the border, particularly those individuals who do not approximate the racial ideals as noted earlier. I propose that the barrier being built along the southwest border region is not indicative of keeping those residents safe, but primarily to keep the general White American population safe from the “hordes” of brown bodies that they believe are crossing the border on a daily basis.

Today the State refers to America as “the homeland.” This has implications for the perceptions of the border, immigration, and National Security. Wendy Webster (1998) in her book *Imagining Home* examines the concept of “home” in Britain from 1945-1964. She makes the connection between “home” as a metaphor for “nation.” Following the theoretical thought of feminist literature and Black feminists, Webster (1998: ix) focuses on “home” as being concerned with “notions of location and dislocation, belonging and displacement, migration and exile...associations of home with

origins, identity, attachment and settlement, and with its common use as a metaphor for nation.” Feminist scholars have also studied the binary of the public/private spheres contending that the public is generally seen as the site where men take on roles outside of the home or what is considered “domestic” life. Meanwhile, women, due to their subordinate status in society, are situated in the private – what is considered the home. These conceptions of “home,” “public/private,” “protection,” draw attention to the way the southern border of the U.S. is being presented to the “majority.”

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory also provides a lens for investigating interactions and social structures present at the Texas-Mexico border. In general, demarcated regions have a hybridity of elements taking place between politics, economies and inhabitants. These are places where – the local meets the transnational, cultures collide and inculcate, and how economies are interdependent. Critical race theorists have also demonstrated how the State apparatus expresses power over such regions through its use of State sanctioned racism (James 1996; Romero 2001; Feagin 2006; Correa 2011). Racism and how it operates via social structures and in interactions is something that is ignored by those who argue that we now live in a post-racial society. Racism can limit a person or group’s life chances and plays a major part in structuring our everyday lives. Second, living in a racialized society affords privileges to those that are considered “White” and disadvantages and loss of privileges to those that are considered non-White. Finally, racial categories are products of social relations/interactions that we invent and

manipulate when it fits our interests (Delgado and Stefancic 2001: 7). Bonilla -Silva (1999: 899) discusses the concept of race in detail,

Like a growing number of social scientists, I contend that although race is not an essential category (no *social* category is essential) and in fact is highly malleable and historically bounded (as *all* social categories are), it is nonetheless a central principle of social organization...I argue that race is a ‘social fact’ similar to class and gender...race is a *real* and *central* social vessel of group affiliation and life in the modern world.

Further, Bonilla Silva (1999:901) explained that races are not “things” but *socially racialized relations*, “Viewed in this light, ‘races are the effect of racial practices of opposition at the economic, political, social and ideological levels.’” Critical race theorists are aware that these constructs are a human product, but because they are embedded in social relations, they become institutionalized and *real* hierarchies emerge. Bonilla Silva (1999) quoted Hanchard (1994:4) who explained that, “Race operates as a shuttle between socially constructed meanings and practices, between subjective and lived, material reality.”

Race and the body, in particular, the Latino/a body has been critically examined by Romero (2008: 28) who argues that people of Mexican descent embody a “bodily figurative border” making it easier for law enforcement officials to racially profile them. This perceived “Mexicanness” pinpoints traits such as brown/dark skin and hair, language, and working-class/poor attire. These characteristics prove to be social signifiers as law enforcement uses them as racial profiling tools assisting in the capture, arrest, and detainment of immigrants. Ultimately, all Latinas/os regardless of citizenship status become absorbed into these racialized schemas and profiling tools and the consequence has proven to be violent.

These racialized schemas and profiling tools are discussed by Feagin (2010: 13) as White racial frames used as a “comprehensive orienting structure, a ‘tool kit’ Whites and others have long used to understand, interpret and act in social settings...From the beginning of this country, this white frame has been deeply held and strongly resistant to displacement, and it includes many important ‘bits’ – that is, frame elements such as the stereotyped racial knowledge, racial images and emotions, and racial interpretations...”

Along the same vein, critical Black feminist scholars also engage in these theoretical discussions and introduced to the academic platform the concepts of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1991) and the *matrix of domination* (Collins 2000), in order to view a person’s identity and/or social location (i.e. race, class, gender, citizenship) holistically and how it is organized by social structures. Crenshaw (1991) coined the term *intersectionality* to examine the “mutually constructing systems” (Collins 1998: 116) of race, class, and gender. Collins (2000: 18) demonstrates how both concepts are interdependent, but also comments on their distinctive character,

Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice. In contrast, the matrix of domination refers to how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized. Regardless of particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression

Collins (2000) clearly points to the fact that membership in various categories shape a person’s life chances and hinders opportunities via institutional discrimination. These theoretical frameworks are not focused social psychological explanations of social life, but examine how social structures operate in people’s everyday lives. It becomes clear in examining the Secure Fence Act of 2006, that race and racism are not the *only* factors

that have played a role in fostering support for the building of the border wall.

Nonetheless, the issue of race is one of the strings in the web of domination present between people and the social structures they are embedded in.

For instance, Nativist elements have always been embedded in America's history (see Higham 1988) toward those they considered "strangers." Thus, there is a link between American culture and State activity, as our laws reflect our nation's values (see Hays 2004). Our nation's values and beliefs are what make up our American culture. As individuals we are (re)producers of these culture(s). As cultural agents and producers, it is inevitable that these Nativist values and beliefs will be embedded in our National Security and immigration laws.

Johnson (2004) in *The Huddled Mass Myth* reflects on these American values, "The dominant society's treatment of noncitizens gives us a view of its potential treatment of U.S. citizens who share similar characteristics if all legal constraints were lifted." In other words, how dominant groups in the United States treat non-citizen minorities are at times a reflection of how U.S. citizens minorities are treated. For example, since the War on Terror began shortly after September 11, 2001, there has been an uproar from the Arab/Muslim/Middle Eastern communities about racial profiling and unjust arrests from the state and its ancillary the Department of Homeland Security based on suspicions of terrorist activities (Bakalian and Bozorgmeher 2009).

On the treatment of minorities, the sociology of race and cognitive sociological theories have been merged in order explain how our social environments affect how we remember our past and present. For example, cognitive sociologist Zerubavel (1992: 22)

noted, “The politics of the past is [are] inevitably affected by the politics of the present, and groups always have a vested interest in promoting or destroying certain images of their past.” This can be seen in the United States in the way that history is taught to young children. In most cases, women and racial minority groups only get a brief mention and are usually discussed in a negative fashion. For instance, Native Americans were labeled as “savages,” “barbaric,” and “inferior” (Tebbel and Jennison 2003) by the early colonizers as they settled in the Americas. Most of the United States history as it is taught in many schools revolves around the collective narrative that the early “settlers” came to the Americas because they were escaping religious persecution and desired political freedom from England. As they arrived in the Americas they were confronted by “savages” and in the end it was their right (granted from God) to rid the land of these savages and proclaim the land as their own. These are the histories and knowledges taught in schools.

The hidden history was that before the colonizers set foot on the Americas, it was inhabited by an abundance of Native American tribes, as Tebbel and Jennison (2003:1) poignantly stated,

Before the white man came, the vast, magnificent, and comparatively empty region that is now the United States was inhabited by one million Indians, organized into six hundred distinct societies and scattered from the desolate ice wastes of the Far North to the hot swamps of the South; from the great forests of the East to the plains, deserts, and mountains of the West.

The collective narrative became embedded in its collective memory. As we are taught in U.S. primary education, the “birth” of America was in 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed on its shores. The reality is that Christopher Columbus had docked near the Bahamas, approximately three hundred miles off the coast of what is now the state of

Florida. What is considered pre-Columbian American history is important in the collective narrative and memory of the United States.

In opposition to Anderson's (1991) understanding of the "imagined community" as homogenous, the reality in America is that it is not just anyone that is a bona fide part of this community when issues like patriotism, citizenship, and American identity are evoked. Our U.S. imagined American community has been very clear in its description via its immigration laws for who is part of this "American family" (Lopez 2006). The American family rhetoric relies on discourses of blood ties and place of birth (i.e. space and territory).

Mexican Americans, who are born in the United States and have "dark" phenotypical features and/or do not "look" White, are casted as not part of the American (White) family (Collins 2001). Place of birth in a particular geographical space/territory can also be perceived as not part of the American "family homeland." As Mexican Americans are implicated as "intruders" or "foreigners" in the Southwestern part of United States, it is considered a "darkened" presence in America. A type of hierarchical family arrangement is constructed whereby White families are at the top and non-white families fall to the bottom experiencing discrimination, inferior treatment, & considered second-class citizens, if citizens at all. Other examples of these racialized White notions or frames of the American family are expressed by Ivy League scholars, political pundits, Media Anchors, and other political stakeholders such as Samuel Huntington, Pat Buchanan, Lou Dobbs, and Jim Gilchrist (Chavez 2008). The academy and mainstream media have given much spotlight and voice to this racialized frame of thought about the

Other. The concept of a White racialized frame has been used to make sense of everyday interactions and relations since the colonial era (Feagin 2010).

As social scientists, we are fully aware that race is a social construct, but it has real material and psychological advantages and disadvantages depending on where one is positioned in the racial hierarchy. Race is always in a state of constant change transforming to fit the political mold of the moment. Collins (2004) has argued that there is always a “past-in-present” feel to this contemporary and new racism. It operates in a subtle, covert, and institutionalized form compared to the overt racism of the colonial and Jim Crow eras (Collins 2004: 55).

Borderland Studies

There have been a myriad of scholars who have studied borders/boundaries and its inhabitants such as the U.S.-Mexico border and abroad (Borneman 1992, 1998; Vila 2000, 2003, 2005; Martinez 1994; Dunn 1996; Coleman 2007). There are commonalities and differences when comparing border regions as can be seen, for example, between the U.S. surveillance of the southern border (Mexico) in comparison to its northern neighbor (Canada). The major stark, visible difference has been the militarization of the border dividing the United States and Mexico. Thus, the theorization of borders is central to the present study.

The border barrier or “border wall” as many locals described it, could have many negative implications for Mexicans on both sides of the border, such as a negation of their Mexican roots. It is probable that Mexican Americans, their children, and most importantly their culture, will consider Mexicans as distinctly foreign despite their proximity. Historian Mario T. Garcia in his piece entitled “La Frontera in Mexican-American Thought,” (1996: 113) examined *La Frontera* (the border) and Mexican Americans (or *Mexicanos/as*) and concluded that there are three different states of consciousness for the diverse group of Mexican Americans in the southwest which are: “An immigrant consciousness steeped in *Mexico* ethnic and cultural nationalism plus an abiding attachment to Mexico; a Mexican-American consciousness centered on integration and acculturation; and a Chicano consciousness stressing ethnic revival with elements of Marxism.”

Living and conducting fieldwork in the Texas border region, I can attest to these varying forms of consciousness – they do exist, but not amongst *all* Mexican Americans. There have been studies indicating that Mexican Americans especially those with lighter skin tones and higher socioeconomic statuses have assimilated and accommodated mainstream American values (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Hunter 2005). Prior to the late 1960s, Mexican Americans living in the southwest were “acculturated” to the (white) dominant culture of the time. The children of these Mexican Americans, who would later come to age in the 1960s, known as *Chicanos/as*, rebelled against this mode of thinking and challenged their parent’s accommodationist ideologies. The term *Chicano/a* characterized a separate Mexican nationalist race. The term Chicano stands for, “both Hispanic and Indian” (Burciaga: 49). According to Burciaga (1993: 49),

Chicano is more than just a political label for it has a link to our indigenous past. Its etymology dates to the conquest of the Valle de Mexico. Mexica was pronounced ‘Meshica.’ The Spaniards had not a letter for the ‘sh’ or ‘j’ so they put an ‘x’ in its place. Meshico became Mexico... The first Mestizos were born of Spanish soldiers and indigenous maidens. This scorned underclass of ‘half-breeds’ were called meshicanos, which evolved to schicanos Chicanos is nothing more than an abbreviated form for Mexicanos.

During the emergence of the Chicano Movement, the term *Chicano* engendered a politicized meaning in which the individual was aware of the injustices of the Mexican people and fought for self-determination. Self-determination for Chicanos meant that they wanted the right to make their own decisions and to participate in the decisions that would affect their daily lives. This Chicano consciousness was a powerful identity that enabled these young adults to fight for equality in their local neighborhoods and the United States. Further research needs to be done to ascertain whether the Chicana/o consciousness is pervasive amongst people of Mexican descent. However, racial and

ethnic tensions between Mexican Americans have persisted as young generations become aware of the stereotypes associated with Mexican ancestry. Mexican immigration and familial ties provide younger generations with contact, context, history, and culture.

These analyses are useful in this project in order to conceptualize dynamics, interactions, and relations among Texas border residents. Border scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) poignantly described the Texas-Mexico border as *una herida abierta* (an open wound),

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead. In short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal.'

Borders can be conceptualized as dividing lines, but all borders have some semblance of being porous in certain instances whereby people still cross them. In a metaphorical sense, borders/boundaries also symbolize manifestations of people's cultures, and identities. Borders also delineate a State's ability to establish and maintain sovereignty, which is an indicator to other nations that its territories are well guarded and that it has a functioning and/or powerful government. Most importantly, policing boundaries play an integral part in maintaining sovereignty. McC. Heyman (1999) declared that the State's practices towards the increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border was analogous to the United States invasion of Viet Nam in the late 1960s.

Benjamin Saenz (1997) problematized Anzaldúa's romanticized notions of border life among Mexican Americans and Mexicans and/or *Mexicanas/os*. For Saenz (1997) the relationship was much more complex and mired in nuances and contradictions, such

that Chicanas/os experienced a fragmented sense of self and connection with their Mexican counterparts. Similarly, Vila's (2000) study of Mexican Americans living along the border found that they had resisted solidarity with their Mexican counterparts or recent Mexican immigrants. Moreover, when McC. Heyman (2002) conducted fieldwork and interviewed Mexican American U.S. Border Patrol agents in El Paso, Texas, he found that many of their narratives demonstrated multiple and contradictory stances toward Mexicans such as loathing and a sense of pride. The racialized history of Mexican Americans in Texas and their systemic oppression by Texas Anglos have caused many Texas Mexicans to both despise and espouse social and legal privileges associated with Whiteness as many tried to claim a "White" identity (Martinez 1997). The dominant historical story narrated by Texas Anglos about Mexicans was that they were a "biologically separate group but also anticitizens, people with a distinct propensity for short-term labor and then a return to a 'natural' homeland in Mexico" (McC. Heyman 2002: 482). Racial/ethnic identity among people of Mexican descent, McC. Heyman (2002: 479) noted, was "fluid and situational." For the most part, McC. Heyman (2002) described relations among Mexican Americans as promoting some kind of solidarity with their Mexican counterparts and/or assimilation into the dominant White culture. This highlights the complexity of the situation. For example, in an interview with a male Border Patrol agent the complex nuances of the Mexican American agent become visible. In the following excerpt the agent discusses his views about Mexicans, job obligations and family values,

My family was kind of proud of me getting a job like this. My friends at the police department, their opinion was, 'Why chase our own people?' But, it's our own people who are committing all those burglaries, so I didn't care what they thought...Sometimes, for example, when I have a prosecution case going, you see

these people. Personally, I feel very sorry for them, but I remind myself of a job I have to do. I cannot close my eyes to the job I have to do. I don't want to lose my job; my family comes first before these people. I feel sorry (quoted in McC. Heyman 2002: 489).

The agent's response provides profound insight into the mainstream American discourses about Mexicans as criminals. In this sense, the agent is not far removed from these discursive platforms. Meanwhile, when discussing his job further the agent admitted that most of Border Patrol officers stopped "Latino-appearing people," yet "personally" he did not want to be seen as "a discriminating officer" (McC. Heyman 2002: 489). These types of racialized situations cannot be judged *prima facie* as a person being racist or not; Individuals can have multiple meanings, ideas, beliefs, and values about another race/ethnic group and particular situations/contexts compel them to act in specific ways.

Moving from the U.S.-Mexico border to an international framework, Borneman (1998) in his work on the barrier between the East German State (German Democratic Republic) and West Germany, (Federal Republic of Germany) discussed the confrontations, conflicts, and moral and economic divides between Germans. East Germans erected a wall known as the Berlin Wall to keep workers from fleeing to West Germany. The East German State announced the wall was a form of protection for East Germans from the negative impacts of the capitalistic market in the West. The metamorphosis of the Berlin Wall from a material object to a representation of the fight between the "East" and "West" and "Communism" and "Capitalism" "Good" and "Evil" was also taken on by its citizens on both sides of the barrier. Therefore, it is clear that a State and its citizens engage in a dynamic meaning-making process of "walls."

Borneman (1998: 168) also discussed the East German's idea of "containment" as one that is both a concept and practice (or strategy). The containment practice included particular ideas and actions revolving around gender, class, sexuality, and nationalism. As an example, women in West Germany were considered quite liberated compared to Eastern German women, people in the West were perceived (whether real or not) as having greater access to jobs and better wages, and finally the idea of alternative sexualities was viewed as a way of life for many in the West German state, while in the East the only idea of sexuality was a heteronormative one devoted to love of your husband and the East German state as a male/masculine institution. This unconditional love and respect for the state was linked to notions of nationalism and patriotism in that primarily women and to some extent men were bound by the (male) state government, husband, and love of the nation-state (Borneman 1992).

Material walls can also morph into "mental walls" whereby individuals who are the ones being contained such as the East Germans developed ideas about those who fled to West Germany as "monsters, heroes, traitors" and overall feelings of "yearnings, love and hate" toward the West German state (Borneman 1998: 179). Furthermore, "borders, even an over determined one like the Berlin Wall, are the products of ambivalent and multiple inputs; they are fortuitously constructed and dismantled because of contradictory processes that usually simultaneously support and undermine their continued existence" (Borneman 1998: 189).

When States' craft and construct physical barriers, there are also other social facts at work here, such as the border representing a sign or symbol. It could be

conceptualized as a “border-as-metaphor” signifying other references and meanings about the nation-State, its citizens, and territory. In discussing how people construct meaning and identities via material objects, Holstein and Gubrium (2000: 190) noted,

Material objects can be brought to bear on self construction in extraordinary ways. The self is not just sensitive to the interactions in which it unfolds, but it also is mediated by the settings in which it finds itself. The lesson, of course, is that who we are is more bound to the scenic presence of our everyday lives than we might otherwise imagine.

Citizenship and national identity play a part in a person’s or group’s identity, but context (physical, geographical, cultural) and a material object such as the physical barrier can also shape personal/group identity. An example of the implications of the Secure Fence Act on Texas border resident’s citizenship has been the state’s problem with midwifery. Texas border residents are having their citizenship questioned by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) despite the fact of being born in the United States and having American born parents. For instance, Texas Rio Grande Valley resident Mireya Salgado recounted her experiences in a local newspaper regarding this harsh reality,

Mireya Salgado is one of those Americans feeling the frustrations of the new regulations. A small notation on her birth certificate reads, ‘Attendant at birth: Midwife.’ It is the same document she used to successfully apply for a voter’s registration card, a driver’s license and a Social Security number (Brownsville Herald Newspaper, July 19, 2008: 4).

The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) intense scrutiny of births by midwives has led to many Rio Grande Valley residents having to prove their citizenship through a series of state-bureaucratic agencies requiring immense documentation that they were born in the United States. The Texas Midwifery Board (TMB) reported that in 1925 more than fifty-percent of babies born in Texas through the use of a midwife. However, by 2004 that number of babies had dropped to less than seven percent (Brownsville Herald Newspaper, July 19, 2008: 4). The border-as-metaphor in this scenario indicates

that being born on American soil or having citizenship status (or the lack thereof) remains meaningless if Texas border residents systematically encounter obstacles in proving their citizenship status of their Mexican traits. As the physical wall is erected, it becomes increasingly difficult for border residents to prove their American citizenship status and “American-ness.”

The border-as-metaphor may also speak to the internal struggles experienced by Mexican Americans living along the border similar to W.E.B Du Bois’s (1922) concept of double-consciousness. This double-consciousness entails experiencing your life as a Mexican American in a social world and culture that is predominantly White. A times, as people of color confront a reality and world that is not of their own making, it poses problems for their own identity. This reinforces Fanon’s (1967) critical question, “Who am I really?” Not only is reality a human product as argued by social constructionists, but not all people are the actual producers, their realities may have already of been created for them by others. Texas border residents who have been impacted by the border wall, did not construct that reality, it was created for them, now they have to deal with the ending result. However, the metaphorical extension of the border as discussed by borderland theorists (see Anzaldúa 1987; Rosaldo 1993) may limit our ability to understand and see how these metaphorical borders actually operate in people’s daily lives as both a material entity (or object) and a symbolic force simultaneously. This study will demonstrate the importance of both as social facts organizing the daily lives of border residents.

Chapter Summary

The theoretical lenses mentioned above provide analytic concepts such as the State, race, gender, border, and citizenship, which are all useful in studying the U.S.-Mexico border. However, my conception of “the State” merges these discussions into a two-pronged working definition whereby the State is both a material entity and a symbolic force. This definition differs slightly from Mitchell’s (1999: 76) discussion of the State as a “material force” and an “ideological construct” in that my definition allows for a broader understanding of the representations, manifestations, and context where it emerges. I will begin by discussing how the State is a material entity and why it is useful to define it this way. In addition, I will go on to explain how the State can also be described as a symbolic force that articulates itself in particular ways in people’s imaginations and is manifested in particular ways depending on the (social, political, geographic) context.

First, it is useful to define the State in this study as a material entity since the Secure Fence Act of 2006 was a law crafted at the federal level of government. The federal government as a political entity is composed of a centralized government and its political actors, which make up a system of governing, via the crafting and enacting of federal laws. The State as a material entity can be described as having generally three levels – federal, state, local (County/City). In this study, the focal points of the findings are primarily concerned with the Department of Homeland Security (federal), which I consider to be a policing apparatus of the federal State. My decision to approach the construction of the State as a material object enables the researcher to focus on the visible

strategies and tactics (discourses, laws, enforcement practices) used to control a population or region.

Meanwhile, the State, constituted by a system of governing not only manifests itself in law enforcement agencies, but also within local or micro governing bodies such as Cameron County and the City of Brownsville. The citizens of their respective jurisdictions elect these officials into these particular positions. Theoretically, the State – as a system of governing via crafting and enacting of laws – permeates all levels of law enforcement and local governing bodies with regard to implementation strategies, practices, laws, enforcement techniques, and community relations. Cameron County and the City of Brownsville are local governing bodies made up of a commission, which also has to be knowledgeable of Texas state and federal laws. Yet, implementation, practices, legal procedures and laws, and officials-community member relationships differ between levels of government, as I will demonstrate in the findings section of this study. In this project, I argue that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is an apparatus of the federal State that has imposed itself in the lives of Texas border residents in a material and symbolic fashion via the presence of federal law enforcement officers and the physical border barrier in their locales. As publicly shown by DHS, the organizational structure of this agency is a colossal amalgam of over twenty-three departments such as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Secret Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency and others (see Appendix C for DHS Organizational Chart). The federal government’s passage of the Secure Fence Act has created a precarious situation for many border residents as the physical barrier becomes a material

presence of “the State” – part of its system of governing that controls and manages populations.

Second, when the State is conceptualized as a symbolic and/or imagined force, it can enable us to “see” how the State penetrates people’s lives and how it impacts their subjectivities via their experiential narratives. Listening to the people’s narratives is one way of understanding this impact. Initially, as a material reality, the federal State crafts and enacts laws that are expected to elicit a change in the public (or civil society). For example, when the State crafted and passed the Secure Fence Act of 2006, it created a 670-mile barrier that represented or symbolized the presence of the federal government in the region. Most importantly, in this moment, the federal government and the barrier become much more than a material objects. They symbolized an entity that is powerful, pervasive, and insidious, therefore becoming “the State” – both a material entity and a symbolic force that impacts the lives of landowners and community members. The border barrier as a material reality becomes a symbolic representation of “the State” and takes on a particular meaning in people’s lives.

In other words, *how* the State is constructed and/or imagined by Texas residents as a result of the border barrier is contingent upon *what* the barrier means to an individual or group. This meaning-making process and meaning-system is dependent on the social location of the individual and/or group. Moreover, the State also becomes *mobile* – moving in and out of people’s lives and taking a particular form depending on what the barrier represents to the residents of Cameron County. Ultimately, the State is a social fact that is *centralized* in its ability to govern and craft federal laws from a specific site

(White House) that impacts every American and it also mobile in how it permeates and manifests itself in people's lives via symbolic representations.

French sociologist Emile Durkheim's definition of a *social fact* is useful here as social facts are external to, and potentially coercive of, the individual (Durkheim [1895] 1982). In other words, the State as a social fact becomes something external to the individual having the potential to constrain and/or enable the individual's everyday life. The constraining and/or enabling of agency can be considered a social fact as it emerges from the experiential narratives of the respondents. In utilizing the concept of the State as both a material reality and a symbolic or imagined force, this project seeks to explore the following questions: One, how has the federal State constructed people of Mexican descent living along the border? Two, what does the federal State sanctioned border wall represent to Texas landowners living along its path? Three, what meaning(s) does the barrier have for the border residents and how will it shape their lived experiences? Finally, how do they negotiate their every-day lives - as mediated through a material object? The federal State has used different borders (social, political, economic, and cognitive) to control a population of people historically viewed as a foreign Other. In order to answer these crucial research questions, the aforementioned theoretical perspectives have helped me shape my own working definition of the State, and it will inform my research questions and methodology. This framework will shed light on the interconnecting dominations and multiplicities of social phenomena in this study. The following chapter focuses on the methodology and methods used in the project.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

Situating the Research/Researcher

Before I embark on the actual discussion of the methods of the project, I would like to address the methodological inquiries and/or concerns regarding my social location in this research. My embodied-persona is comprised of: Mexican American, woman, educated, light-skinned, and having a different dialect than the TX Rio Grande Valley residents. English is a “master” language and I am a part of a state university institution – these are all assets to assimilation – which can be seen as hostile or even threatening to potential participants. From another perspective, I am a working-class Mexican American woman from a small rural Texas town near the border. In many respects, I am both an outsider-insider in the communities I studied.

When questioning the concept of the “detached researcher” Crang and Cook (2007: 9) state, “In reality, research is an embodied activity that draws in our whole physical person, along with all its inescapable identities. What we bring to the research affects what we get...Ethnographies involve relationships developed between of similar and/or different cultures, classes, genders, sexualities, (dis)abilities, generations, nationalities, skin colours, faiths and/or other identities. What’s important about this is that the ways in which these relationships (can) develop have highly significant effects on the understandings which emerge from them.”

The intention of the project is not to determine absolute truths but partial, subjective truths. Critical methodological scholars such as Collins (1986), Haraway

(1988), Holstein and Gubrium (1995), Sprague (2005), Crang and Cook (2007), Denzin and Lincoln (2008) have all acknowledged that there is no such thing as “objectivity” in research or “value-free” researcher. We are products of our history, political, social and economic contexts and we come to the research process with these contexts and experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008: 7) capture the value in qualitative research that is considered mixed- method,

Qualitative research is inherently multimethod in focus. However, the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methodological practice, empirical materials, perspectives...in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.

In this case, qualitative research consisting of ethnographic work has been used by social scientists in the Western world (e.g. anthropologists) for more than one hundred years to study distant cultures whereby it built up its reputation as a colonial method (Gobo 2008). However, as scholars, we have the ability to de-colonize the process by being self-reflexive and mindful of our respondents (Gobo 2008; Sprague 2005). Ethnographies are comprised of various methods such as interviewing, participant observation, non-participant observation, analyzing documentary materials (e.g. letters, diaries), textual materials such as archival documents, newspapers, and legal documents/transcripts, informal conversations, focus groups, and visual sociology (photographic work) (Gobo 2008; Crang and Cook 2007).

As mentioned before, my personal biography situates me in a particular position in the research as well as the field in that I am both insider and outsider simultaneously. The theories, methodologies, ontologies, and epistemologies are all shaped and informed through my situatedness in the research and in the field site. This is why, “There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed. Subjects, or individuals are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they have done and why” (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Scholars such as Fontana and Frey (2008: 115) argue that the interview itself is “historically, politically and contextually bound” encapsulating the interviewer and participant in a socially constructed mutual dance using language, emotions, and signs to describe their accounts. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) have called this process the “active interview.”

Haraway (1988: 581) problematized objectivity as part of the “god trick” of absolute objectivity and truth being false notions in the sciences. Haraway (1988: 581-582) argued for a feminist objectivity comprising of “situated knowledges” providing partial objectivity/truth based on a particular subject location and embodiment. This specific location and embodiment offers a “new lens” or *way of seeing and experiencing* the social world, as Haraway (1988: 589) pointed out,

I’m arguing for a politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.

However, knowledge from a particular subject location can be privileged over another and can fall prey to epistemic oppression. These subjugated knowledge(s) and

standpoint(s) are to be brought to bear by scholars who hold a social justice approach in their research. “Subjugated standpoints...seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world” (Haraway 1988: 584). As a researcher who also holds, subjugated positions, one must be careful not to “speak” for the subjugated and not to romanticize their predicament. Rather, one should “speak” with the subjugated and share their knowledge and experiences.

Collins (1986) also advocates for privileging the standpoints of the subjugated in research (and academia), while integrating the personal and cultural biography of the researcher into the study. This approach is, “in contrast to approaches that require submerging these dimensions of self in the process of becoming an allegedly unbiased, objective social scientist, outsiders within bring these ways of knowing back into the research process” (Collins 1986: S29). The outsider within concept for Collins (1986) speaks to the outsider and marginal position that women of color are relegated to in Academia by having their knowledge, experience, and research deemed as illegitimate.

Methods

This study employs a hybrid methodology encompassing elements from ethnography, descriptive analysis, and grounded theory (Wolcott 1994, 1999; Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul 1997; Charmaz and Mitchell 2001; Crang and Cook 2007; Corbin and Strauss 2008) to provide a thick, rich, and descriptive detail of the *what, how, where,* and the *why* of the relationship between the State and its citizens after the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. What unfolds is a complicated and multifaceted relationship between the State and its citizenry.

Before embarking on my research, I received the permission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct my study in 2008. This study was conducted over a two-year period (2008-2010). First, I visited Cameron County Texas in the summer of 2008 to test the feasibility of my research and to begin to get a feel for what was occurring “on the ground” with residents and their properties. In addition, I also visited with city and county officials, activists, and residents who were not directly impacted by the barrier to get a sense of what people’s perspectives were on the Secure Fence Act. I spoke informally with dozens of residents in Brownsville and the surrounding areas and personally visited landowners in their homes. Landowners led me around their properties and actually showed me where the fence was going to be erected. Yet, at that time, the fence had not yet been erected in many of the areas where I had visited. In the summer of 2009, I visited Cameron County once more to obtain formal interviews with residents I had met the previous summer. By this time, the fence had been erected and landowners especially had undergone tremendous turmoil regarding the activities of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). A year later in 2010, I interviewed federal officials in the community about their experiences working and living along the border. I conducted a total of 26 formal interviews (16 men and 10 women) with Cameron County Texas residents consisting of – landowners, community members, university officials, city/county officials, and border enforcement officers. The duration of the formal interviews ranged between 1-3 hours.

Second, I engaged in participant observations on three fronts: First, was the barrier sites in Cameron County and the surrounding communities; Second, I attended the only two major city council meetings where landowners and residents expressed their

concerns. Third, protests against the barrier whereby elected officials, landowners, and community members, and activist organizations were all participants. This protest was on one of the largest surrounding the barrier on July 12, 2008 in Edinburg, TX located in Hidalgo County, a neighboring county to Cameron County. There were four hundred to five hundred people in attendance that day. During the protest, I was able to connect first-hand with landowners and activists, political officials, and residents from other counties and towns about their concerns regarding the wall and the impact on their communities and livelihoods. At the two crucial city council meetings regarding the barrier, Cameron County residents took to the podium and expressed their discontent with the State and local government for the lack of attention to landowners and residents regarding their overall opposition to the barrier. Ethnographic studies involve participation observations and the writing of field notes. These inscribed representations provide field researchers with a primal *corpus* of what has been seen, heard, and experienced (Geertz 1973). This experience is not limited to persons observed, but also the experience of the researcher (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2007). Given the study and the social location of the field researcher there are representations (e.g. event(s), place(s), person(s), or social discourse(s)) that are missed creating only a partial picture of an inscribed description (Atkinson 1992). Thus, my use of field notes is to provide an inscription of my experiences and thoughts while simultaneously describing what I have seen and heard. My thoughts on field note writing are in accordance with Richardson (1994: 525) who suggests that writing field notes are “an opportunity to expand...habits of thought, and attentiveness to your senses.”

Third, I supplement the formal interviews and participant observations with online newspapers. I used descriptive analysis (Geertz 1973; Wolcott 1994) to describe, interpret, and analyze discursive practices and formations used by political elites and community stakeholders regarding the Secure Fence Act of 2006, immigration, and border residents. The newspapers range from the local to the national – Brownsville Herald, The Monitor, San Antonio Express News, Austin Statesman, Texas Observer, Associated Press, Arizona Central, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, New York Times - in from 2006-2010. In addition, I examined State legal policies (USA Patriot Act of 2001, Homeland Security Act of 2002, Real ID Act of 2005 and Secure Fence Act of 2006); Department of Homeland Security public (online) documents: eminent domain waivers, and border security policies located in the U.S. Customs and Border Protection online website. Stuart Hall (1996: 201) reminds us that “discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” and discursive practices are what people utilize to produce meanings of the subjects they wish to target. Thus, I suggest that what the polity has deemed a “War on Terror” is a discursive strategy deployed to create a particular meaning and image of a subject(s).

Furthermore, for coding and categorizing the (descriptive) data, I used parts of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001; Corbin and Strauss 2008) to assist with analyzing the mass amount of text. I specifically used the preliminary stages of grounded theory such as what Corbin and Strauss (2008: 58) call *open coding* or “microanalysis” which takes place at the beginning of a project “when the analyst is trying to break into the data, to make some sense out of the materials...it is like using a high-powered microscope to examine each piece of data up close.” As I used the

microanalysis tool to sift through the texts, concepts or themes began to emerge from the data. Concepts “represent an analyst’s impressionistic understandings of what is being described in the experiences, spoken words, actions, interactions, problems, and issues expressed by participants. The use of concepts provides a way of grouping/organizing the data that a researcher is working with (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 51).

Instead of using line-by-line coding as suggested by earlier grounded theory approaches (Charmaz 1983, 1995; Glaser 1978), I used *selective coding* as described by Charmaz and Mitchell (2001: 167) which “provides a more abstract and comprehensive conceptual handle on the data” than the line-by-line approach. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001: 167) go on to note, “These focused codes not only serve to synthesize large amounts of data, but also to organize earlier codes into a coherent framework...Selective coding prompts the researcher to make comparisons between emerging categories.” Memo-making was utilized as a mechanism to make sense of the data, which is similar to Charmaz (1995) and Becker’s (1986) concepts of free-writing or pre-writing. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) advise that the,

Memos may stand as private conversations with self in which researchers record ideas and information and state confirmed facts and conjectures. Memo-writing elaborates material subsumed by a code...A grounded theory emphasis on keeping codes active and specific from the start accrues advantages. Ethnographers see and connect actions and contexts early in their research. In later memos, active codes enable ethnographers to show how categories are connected in a larger, overall process.

As the researcher, I began to organize my data, however, maintaining the basic foundation of grounded theory, which is “developing the codes directly from [the] data through an emergent process” (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001: 165)

Corbin and Strauss's (2008: 54-55) notion of "conceptual ordering" was used to organize the data into "discrete categories, according to their properties and dimensions, then, the utilization of description to elucidate those categories." As researchers we all use some measure of conceptual ordering as we think and talk about the data. Three categories that were elucidated were: State (federal government and local government), and Citizens (Texas landowners/resident activists). Linked with conceptual ordering is a method I used called theoretical sampling, which Crang and Cook (2007: 14) described as,

This refers to the means by which a researcher decides who should be approached to take part in her/his work. In place of the random sampling of statistical research, this approach involves gaining selective access to appropriate groups of people who may be concerned with, and/or involved in living through, the research problem and encouraging them to teach the researcher about it from their various perspectives. Therefore, it is not the sheer number, 'typicality' or 'representativeness' of people approached which matters, but the quality and positionality of the information that they can offer.

In conducting the interviews, I began to notice that the participant's accounts/stories began to have the "same ring to them" and I ultimately reached theoretical saturation – a "point in the research process where the range of arguments which can be made concerning a particular matter has been made" (Crang and Cook 2007: 15). Furthermore, the accounts are represented in a "layered stories" fashion, which highlights the "emergent, relative, and changing perspectives...containing fragments of information, splintered remembrances of many people, and ruptures of logic as various explanations are juxtaposed to suggest why the tragedy [event] occurred" (Ely et. al. 1997: 78-79; also see MacLean 1992). It is a narrative technique to provide a "way of looking and inquiring and finally knowing the story" of an event (Ely et. al. 1997: 79).

In the findings section, I discuss how these categories are interrelated, most importantly, demonstrating the constant interaction/dynamic between all three segments. In using these specific methodologies (critical race/feminist) I am able to depict the complicated and multifaceted contours of the State while presenting the complex lived experiences of Texas border residents surrounding the barrier. This multimethod approach allows me to demonstrate what Crang and Cook (2007: 14) call the “real world messiness.” By using a descriptive analysis and grounded theory approach for the formal interviews, participant observations, and the newspaper accounts, I illuminate the State and its defense apparatus the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interventions in the lives of Cameron County residents and its overall representation of the these residents and the border region.

Brief Description of the Setting

The history of South Texas in general and of Cameron County in particular has been discussed by various historians or native residents of the area (Hill 1926; Wooldridge and Vezzetti 1982). I seek to provide a brief historical mention of how Brownsville, TX emerged in history and where it is today in order to provide a socio-historical, cultural, political, and economic context for the reader. My intention is to provide a visual in the mind of the reader thereby illustrating the “lay of the land” or ethnographic site.

The beginning of Brownsville, TX and most of southern Texas begins with the Spanish colonizer José de Escandón in the mid 1740s as he was given orders from the royalty in Spain to colonize the northern part of Mexico. The area was initially called

Seno Mexicano and later known as Nuevo Santander (Hill 1926: 6). Nuevo Santander is now the current Mexican state of Tamaulipas and most of South Texas (Wooldridge and Vezzetti 1982). Hill (1926: 6) sheds light on how the area was explored and ultimately colonized,

Some time in 1747, practically every portion of Seno Mexicano, by this time also called Nuevo Santander, was made known to the Spaniards and sites were selected for fourteen settlements. The locations of the sites were made with the view of dominating the Gulf coast and the tribes of the interior. The two years following the preliminary inspection were spent in making arrangements for planting the settlements...The Selection of the colonists' revealed substantial forethoughts on the part of Escandón. As the tasks to be met would require a hardy, self-reliant people, the settlers were chosen from the [Mexican] frontier communities. Among those selected were represented by the Spanish, the mestizo, and the mulatto stocks.

From the 1740's until 1836, Mexico had ownership of what today is known as Texas.

The Texas Revolution encompassing the Battle of the Alamo in 1836 (The Republic of Texas from 1836-1845) and then the Mexican-American war from 1846-1848 played crucial roles in the geographical design and demographic make-up of Texas (Navarro 2005). Now, Texas shares more than a two thousand mile boundary with Mexico.

In a pictorial history of Brownsville, TX, Wooldridge and Vezzetti (1982:10)

describe the town as,

The City of Brownsville, located in the southernmost part of the continental United States (lying adjacent to its sister of Matamoros, Mexico), has played an important and interesting part in European, Mexican, and United States history. Situated on the northern bank of the winding Rio Grande, in a flat river delta some two-two miles from the point where the river flows into the Gulf of Mexico, Brownsville began as a wilderness, became a military outpost, then a merchandising center; it bloomed into an agricultural community and now has the promise of becoming an industrial city.

Brownsville received its name from Major Jacob Brown a soldier of General Zachary

Taylor. General Taylor was sent by former President James Polk in 1845 to head south

to Corpus Christi, TX and then further south near Point Isabel. While leaving soldiers to

guard the fort as he headed to Point Isabel, his remaining men were attacked and Major Jacob Brown was killed, leading them to name it Fort Brown (Wooldridge and Vezzetti (1982: 18). In 1848, Fort Brown was transformed into a town called Brownsville by the Northeastern entrepreneur and businessman Charles Stillman (Sibley 1973).

Most recently, in 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau described Brownsville, TX as having 172,437 residents. In the year 2000, the population was reported to be 139,722 (U.S. Census Bureau Brownsville Quick Facts Online). In the same year, there were 81.6% Whites, 0.4% Blacks, 0.4% American Indian, 0.5% Asian, and 91.3% Hispanic/Latino living in Brownsville (U.S. Census Bureau Brownsville Quick Facts Online). In terms of socioeconomic status, the Median household income reported for Brownsville in 1999 was \$24,468 and those living below the poverty level averaged at 36.0% (U.S. Census Bureau Brownsville Quick Facts Online). Brownsville, TX holds the County Seat for Cameron County in the state of Texas (The County of Cameron Online). Cameron County is comprised of several cities and towns including Brownsville, San Benito, Harlingen, La Feria, Port Isabel, and South Padre Island (The Texas State Historical Society Online, Cameron County). Cameron County has had a long history of racial segregation and people living in poverty as demonstrated by the Texas State Historical Association (Cameron County, Texas State Handbook),

Cameron County ranks high among United States counties in the size of its Hispanic population. The civil rights movement of the 1960s helped to desegregate most of the county, and a growing number of Mexican Americans subsequently attained positions of power. The last vestiges of segregation were removed with the closing of separate schools for migrant farmworkers' children in the 1970s. Many poor Hispanics, particularly new arrivals from Mexico and Central America, live in the county's numerous colonias, or shantytowns, a sizable number of them without electricity or running water.

The U.S. Census Bureau in 2009 estimated that a total of 396,371 people live in Cameron County. The demographics of the area for 2009 consists of 96.8% White, 1.3% Black, 0.7% American Indian, 0.6% Asian, 86.6% Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Census Bureau Cameron County Quick Facts). It is clear from the demographic information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau that the two largest racial/ethnic groups in the Brownsville/Cameron County area are Whites and Hispanics/Latinos. The socio-cultural-historical aspects of the Texas-Mexico border region has changed, yet stayed the same in many respects.

By interviewing a wide array of individuals, I seek to provide a well-rounded picture of the lived realities of Texas border residents. Texas border residents are not monolithic, but heterogeneous. This adds to the complexity of examining their lived realities. In fact, scholar Renato Rosaldo (1999: 257) has dubbed the borderlands a “border theater” whereby social/ physical violence takes place daily,

Actual violence has become inseparable from symbolic ritual on the border – crossings, invasions, lines of defense, high-tech surveillance, and more. Social scientists often think of public rituals as events that resemble formal rituals separated from daily life in time and space and marked by repeated formal structures. In contrast the violence and high tech weaponry of border theater is at once, symbolic and material. Social analysts need to recognize the centrality of actual violence and the symbols that shape that violence

The border wall is a material object, yet a symbol of terror and violence bestowed upon those who dare to cross it, namely undocumented immigrants from Latin America.

Although, it is also a symbol and reminder to Latinas/os in the United States that they should not take their position, subjectivity, identity, and citizenship for granted as their social/legal status can change depending on the political climate of the moment.

Research Limitations

The initial research agenda began with a vision of spending a year at the Texas-Mexico border interviewing fifty participants and studying every facet of the resident's lives on both sides of the borderline. However, due to a lack of resources, monies/grants, and time, I was not able to conduct further interviews or garner interviews on the Mexican side of the border. Despite not gaining more U.S. participants, I strongly feel that I reached theoretical saturation with the interviewee's responses.

Nonetheless, by not be able to access Mexican nationals along the border, I am only able to speculate about their experiences and lived realities. I surmise that many of the Mexican nationals along the border felt in many ways like their American counterparts about the U.S. State mandated Secure Fence Act. Moreover, it would have been beneficial to obtain interviews with political officials on the Mexican side to determine what their views were about the Act. My hopes for the future are to supplement the narratives of U.S. citizens with the political discourses embedded in Mexican newspapers surrounding the barrier, as well as, potentially gain access to interviewing Mexican political elites about the mandate. Nonetheless, this study provides a much needed examination and discussion of U.S. State policies against a marginalized border region, race/ethnic group, and class status group.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

I will use the terms Texas landowners and community members when discussing the relationship between the State and its citizenry. As mentioned previously, I interviewed a total of twenty-six people who lived in Cameron County and the

surrounding areas. In addition, these individuals made up six different categories: (1) Landowners; (2) Community Members; (3) Border Enforcement Officials; (4) City Commission officials; (5) County Commission officials; and (6) University officials. In this research, there is an analytic distinction between landowners and community members. These two groups are different for two reasons: First, landowners were targeted by the State via Declarations of Taking/Condemnation Land Suits (i.e. Eminent Domain). Second, others in the community did live in Cameron County and the surrounding areas, but did not live on sites near the Rio Grande Valley levee system designated as “paths” for the barrier. Therefore these community members did not have their land condemned by the State.

I interviewed a total of four male border law enforcement officers that averaged approximately two hours each. Due to time restraints, the remaining female border enforcement officer had only twenty minutes to spare to discuss her experiences of working and living along the border. Many of the male officers worked longer in their respective departments, which enabled them to have more personal discretion about their time. The female officer was at an entry-level position and was not afforded these privileges. The day of our interview, the female agent displayed feelings of reservation and fear in discussing the barrier. Before our interview ended, the female agent indicated that the Department of Homeland Security had “public information offices,” that handled any questions the public might have regarding immigration and terrorism laws. There were a total of six landowners whom I interviewed and only three individuals out of the group were active in protests, town hall meetings, and writing their federal and state representatives in opposition to the barrier.

Community members comprised seven of the respondents in the research and none of these residents were directly impacted by the State condemnation suits, but deeply cared about the fate of their communities. These community members were made up of concerned citizens involved in community service organizations, environmental advocates who participated in the local chapter of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, groups affiliated with the local Catholic Church, and the local chapter of the Republican Conservative Party. All of the community members, with the exception of one, expressed opposition to the barrier. The one in favor was a Mexican American male respondent who was a part of the Republican Conservative Party and later became a Tea Party member.

As extensions of the State, almost all the local Border Enforcement officers described their approval of the Secure Fence Act (border barrier) and its need in the region. Only one border agent conveyed that the situation was over-exaggerated at the societal/public level, which in turn caused the State to react in a panic mode. Lower tier State officials at the City and County levels did not experience land condemnations, but the majority of them advocated strong opposition toward the State on behalf of landowners.

The individual I interviewed from the local university in Cameron County battled the State to protect the University from becoming another target site for the barrier. After a long legal battle that last longer than a year this official managed to strike a deal with DHS to have specific fencing around the campus similar to fencing that one would find around a home. There are stark differences between the fence at the University campus and the border barrier in the rest of the Texas Rio Grande Valley. The justification for

the deal that the University was able to obtain with DHS is founded on the fact that the former has some political clout and the monetary resources to take on such an opponent.

Unfortunately, many of the landowners and community members who opposed the Department of Homeland Security did not have access to these two fundamental assets. Those who were activists (Table 1) were in opposition to the barrier, except for one community member who was in favor of it. Table 1 delineates whose property was condemned by the State and who were active in protesting. All the participants under the “Activists” column were in opposition to the barrier except for one community member who was in favor of the Secure Fence Act of 2006.

Profile	Property Condemned	Activists	Total Group n
Landowners	Yes (n = 6)	Yes (n = 4)	6
Community Members	No (n = 0)	Yes (n = 7)	7
Border Enforcement	No (n = 0)	No (n = 0)	5
City Commission	No (n = 0)	Yes (n = 4)	5
County Commission	No (n = 0)	Yes (n = 1)	2
University Officials	No (n = 0)	No (n = 0)	1
			Total N = 26

Table 1. Participant Profiles Regarding Condemnation and Activism

The gender profiles of the research participants are displayed in Table 2 below. As demonstrated in the Table 2, women made up all the landowners in this study. Many of the landowners were widows and/or whose husbands were not available for an interview due to a chronic/debilitating illness. Given the historical patriarchal nature of the State and the ancillary branches of the Department of Homeland Security, the majority of the border officers are male. There was only one female officer. At the time of the interviews, men primarily headed the City and County Commissioner seats in Cameron County and the surrounding areas with no women serving as City members and only one female at the County level. Unfortunately, I was not able to meet with this female

member due to her reservations about participating in any discussion regarding the barrier.

Gender Profile	Female	Male	Total Group n
Landowners	6	0	6
Community Members	3	4	7
Border Enforcement	1	4	5
City Commission	0	5	5
County Commission	0	2	2
University Officials	0	1	1
	n = 10	n = 16	Total N = 26

Table 2. Gender Profiles of Participants

Table 3 below highlights the race/ethnicity backgrounds of the twenty-six respondents are presented. In every interview session, I asked the respondents to self-identify and describe their race/ethnic backgrounds. For some of the Mexican American respondents, this was a rather frustrating process as these individuals attested to not knowing how they should identify or disliked the process of telling another person their status. For example, the one female border officer acknowledged, “Well, I would not call myself a Mexican American. I was not born in Mexico so I cannot call myself Mexican American...I’m an American because I was born here in the United States, right?” At this point, she looks to me to find reassurance for her answer and I tell her “Well, it’s whatever makes you feel comfortable.” The majority of the Mexican American participants in the study expressed confusion, confusion, and contradictory explanations when responding to this specific question.

Race/Ethnicity Profile	White	Mexican	Native American
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Landowners	3	2	*1
Community Members	3	4	0
Border Enforcement	1	4	0
City Commission	2	3	0
County Commission	**1	1	0
University Officials	1	0	0
	n = 11	n = 14	n = 1
	*Biracial Mex/Native		
	**Biracial White/Mex		Total N = 26

Table 3. Race/Ethnicity Profiles of Respondents.

The educational backgrounds of the participants ranged from less than high school education to earning a college degree. Table 4 indicates the educational profiles of all the groups. The majority of the respondents had a high school diploma or college degree. In addition, although this is not noted in Table 4, some of the respondents, for instance, one of the landowners, two of the community members, and two of the border enforcement officers also had military service backgrounds.

Education Profile	< H.S. Ed.	H.S. Diploma	College Degree	Total Group n
Landowners	1	3	2	6
Community Members	0	0	5	7
Border Enforcement	0	2	3	5
City Commission	0	4	1	5
County Commission	0	0	2	2
University Officials	0	0	1	1
				Total N = 26

Table 4. Educational Background Profiles of Respondents.

The border enforcement officers who did not obtain a college degree used their time in the military to serve as experience for the attainment of a federal job. The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense share overlapping methods of training and recruiting their cadets, which makes for a smooth transition into either branch.

In the following table (Table 5), I have divided participants into six different age categories. As shown in the aforementioned table, most of the respondents were between

the ages of 60 – 80 years old, especially the landowner group. Meanwhile, the majority of the border enforcement officers were between 20 – 40 years of age. The County and City Commission members were primarily between the ages of 40 – 60 yrs old (the remaining University official turned 61 years old a few weeks before I met with him). The community members were from varying age backgrounds – younger to older.

Age	20 - 40	40 - 60	60 - 80	Total Group n
Landowners	1	1	4	6
Community Members	3	2	2	7
Border Enforcement	5	0	0	5
City Commission	1	3	1	5
County Commission	0	1	1	2
University Officials	0	0	1	1
				Total N = 26

Table 5. Age Range of Respondents.

In other words, the Secure Fence Act did not only bring to the fore older citizens in the community, but also the younger generation. All the younger community members I interviewed expressed concern about the future of their communities as well as the livelihoods of the landowners.

At this point, I would like to be clear about the descriptors used to describe the border barrier. The terms “barrier” “border wall,” and “border fence” will be used interchangeably in the findings. However, I would like to point out that interview respondents who were being directly impacted by the wall or were in opposition to the wall tended to use the term “border wall,” while State officials almost always used the “border fence” to describe the project. During the interviews, I used the more general term “barrier” to discuss the demarcated boundary since I did not want to influence the way respondents viewed the wall. In addition, I wanted to ensure that I gained a sense of

how each respondent understood the barrier and if it differed depending on their social location and his/her stake in the community. Moreover, I utilize the descriptor for the barrier that the respondents used during our interviews together. In addition, these State discourses surrounding the barrier have both homogenized (“America Wants Secure Borders”) and dichotomized (American/Foreigner; Patriot/Terrorists; Friend/Enemy) the U.S.-Mexico border region and its residents. By using a grounded theory approach, I was able to mine the data, what grounded theorists call open coding, while closely analyzing the respondent’s narrative about living and working along the border region (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Strauss 2008). Furthermore, I would like to point out that pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study. The findings for the research are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

Protecting the Homeland: Fragmentation of State Agents

You joke about it Sam, but we are in a state of crisis. The lines of demarcation are gettin' fuzzy. To run a successful civilization you have got to have your lines of demarcation between right and wrong, between this 'n and that 'n... and your daddy understood that...he was a, uh, what do you call it? A referee in this damn menudo we got down here! He understood how most folks don't want their salt and sugar in the same jar. Bartender – 1996 “Lone Star” film

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. Former President George W. Bush

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents who work and live along the Texas-Mexico border. Their narratives bring to bear the State as a material entity, while also depicting how the State is “imagined” and how it permeates their personal lives. In addition, their accounts unveil the fragmentation of their beliefs, values, perceptions, and the meaning-systems they have created concerning the State, race/ethnicity, immigration, and citizenship in the United States. Meanwhile, this chapter also delves into the intricacies of how DHS as a State apparatus and its agents constitute and articulate themselves on the ground level as illustrated by their experiential narratives. While conducting my fieldwork, I spent many hours talking to border law enforcement officials about their day-to-day experiences living and working on the border. It was extremely difficult to set-up interviews with the agents due to their insider-outsider law enforcement code-of-ethic. I was a civilian and a

female making some of the agents hesitant to speak with me. Fortunately, some agents expressed interest given the nature of the dissertation topic, my educational background in Criminal Justice, and my familial links to local law enforcement in the area. Without these advantages, it would have been nearly impossible to gain a deeper understanding of how their work and personal lives shape one another.

I formally met with four male agents and briefly with a female border patrol agent from various branches of the Department of Homeland Security – U.S. Border Patrol (2), Drug Enforcement Agency (1) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (1). The remaining border law enforcement official was a Narcotics Agent from the Texas Department of Public Safety (1). In this group, four out of the five participants were male and were between the ages of 30 to 45. The remaining female Border Patrol agent was 29 years of age at the time of the interview. Four out of the five agents were of Mexican American ancestry, while the remaining agent was Caucasian/White of German and Irish descent. In analyzing the border enforcement transcripts it is evident that these agents considered themselves American patriots who shared a responsibility in protecting America.

However, their personal narratives also painted a picture of contention, accommodation, and struggle. Within these complicated narratives their understandings about the barrier revolved around three emerging themes – (1) Beneficial deterrent from the Other; (2) Procurement of American Economy and; (3) Social paranoia and State action. These themes were present in all five border official narratives. However, I will utilize narratives involving a Drug Enforcement Agent (DEA), U.S. Border Patrol, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent to demonstrate the aforementioned themes.

Beneficial Deterrent from the Other

Before meeting with any of the enforcement officers, I was nervous about asking visibly non-White officers to talk to me about their race/ethnic background given the racialized socio-historical-political trajectory of people of color, in particular, Mexican Americans in Texas. Eduardo Ramirez, 36, a U.S. Border Patrolman, has spent nearly two decades working for the State. Initially, he served four years in the Army and then transferred over to U.S. Border Patrol in the late 1990s. As a U.S. Border Patrol agent, Eduardo took his mission of serving and protecting America very seriously. Most importantly, he strongly believed in the Department of Homeland Security's mission of erecting a barrier in the southern border to protect America from terrorism. In fact, this core belief and mission often caused tension in his family. Eduardo's parents were both born in Mexico and came to the United States as young adults and raised their children in the United States. When asked about his racial/ethnic identification, in a serious tone, Eduardo responded, "I'm Mexican American but mostly American. My parents were born in Mexico, but I am American born" (Ramirez 2010). Agent Ramirez made sure to stress that he was "mostly American" while simultaneously de-emphasizing his Mexican ancestry, and highlighting rather quickly that unlike his parents he was "American born."

In our discussion of the barrier, Eduardo shared a personal story about a recent visit with two sisters in Chicago. When meeting with his sisters, they had an argument about the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, commonly known as Arizona's SB 1070 immigration law as Agent Ramirez goes on to say,

I told them 'I think it would be helpful'. It's just that the public hears only the bad views about it. We always get into arguments because they think it targets only

Mexicans. You know, we have huge problems...It seems like this law focuses on *Mexicans*, but it doesn't...it focuses on *illegals*. Actually, I believe it is beneficial in case we catch a terrorist and then we can prevent *him* from killing or something (Ramirez 2010).

The two sisters firmly thought Arizona's SB 1070 law was a racial project between the United States and Mexico that would also lead to the profiling of Mexican Americans. In addition, the sisters felt strongly that the law targeted a border area that does not have "terrorists" coming across. Arizona's SB 1070 law requires local law enforcement officials to stop, arrest, and detain people they suspect of being the United States illegally (Archibold 2010). The sisters were upset that federal powers had made their way into local state politics. In the case of Arizona, these tactics are typically reserved for State federal law enforcement agents who are under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). However, with recent programs in the U.S. such as 287 (g), local enforcement departments in various states are being given the task of inquiring, stopping, arresting, and detaining people they suspect are in the country illegally. The 287 (g) program is under the direction of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, which has sixty-nine active agreements with twenty-four partnering states. Moreover, ICE has trained over a thousand agents to be able to "arrest and detain criminal aliens" (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fact Sheet 2011). In fact, the 287 (g) program has gained much traction since its creation in 2006 beginning with a budget of five million and ending with sixty eight million for 2010 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fact Sheet 2011).

The partial decentralization of the federal State via programs such as 287 (g) instilled fear in Eduardo's sisters as they argued that these types of policies have taken on a new legal scheme. This argument harks back to the age-old debate of state rights

versus federal laws. Nevertheless, the fact that Agent Ramirez had such an intense argument with his sisters suggests that his federal State job has caused tension and conflict within his family life. In this example, the State becomes mobile and manifests itself in Agent Ramirez's family life and one can see it in his body language and hear it in his emotional tones in his account.

When speaking of terrorism, Eduardo had a male-gendered image of a terrorist illegally crossing the southern border into the United States to engage in violence against Americans. Eduardo also supported the Secure Fence Act of 2006 because he valued the project as a method of deterring both *terrorists* and *illegals*,

It has reduced the number of apprehensions in the problem areas and it has reduced the number of crimes in the border cities. There have been many minors that have crossed the border and committed crimes on the U.S. side then they go back to Mexico. Although the border fence is not popular among these border people... They don't want to admit that it works. It is very beneficial to Border Patrol and the public at large (Ramirez 2010).

Then, I asked Eduardo about his response to his sisters' statement that "terrorists" did not cross the southern border illegally and that they were more likely to come in legally through Canada. In response, Eduardo said that the southern border is of "grave concern" to him and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),

The Border Patrol has changed a lot because before if you caught ten illegals nine of them were hard working and one of them was a criminal. Now, it's the opposite. This has changed our view of the undocumented. We have caught people from Yemen, Iraq and other places from the Middle East... Besides the terrorists did come in from a border! How many that we know about have come through our borders and can then come into our planes? *I see it as it is...as it should be seen!* (Ramirez 2010).

This statement undermines the argument that his sisters and other Americans have posed regarding terrorism and people from the "Middle East." The concept of terrorism has been racially defined as a male who is non-White or who is brown-bodied. The

explanation of “terrorists” coming through “our border” is vague since he does not specifically indicate which border. But it becomes clear when a majority of the “boots on the ground” are primarily focused on the U.S.-Mexico border,

You know, a border town is a different world than the rest of the United States...it’s all about drugs, sex, and money and the Customs and Border Protection must be trustworthy and not engage in betrayal of country and government. ...Since 9/11 happened the Border Patrol has gone from fifteen thousand agents to like sixty thousand on the border (Ramirez 2010).

When Eduardo speaks of a “border” in the physical sense he is referring to the U.S.-Mexico border. Any other “border” (e.g. U.S.-Canadian border) is not part of his discussion (or imagination) of terrorism, illegal immigration, and drug trafficking (i.e. illegality). This was a common framework for all the border law enforcement agents (including many of the landowners and a few community members I spoke with). Border Patrol agents such as Mr. Eduardo Ramirez hold positive and amicable perceptions regarding the State and its mission. However, there are DHS agents who adhere to the State’s mission of protecting the homeland, but may not agree wholeheartedly with the objectives of a federal mandate such as the Secure Fence Act. Yet, they realize that these objectives serve a larger purpose, one that may not necessarily bode well with the general American public. In the next section, I will illustrate this particular thematic, displaying the complexity of State agents as they articulate their work and personal lives on the border.

Procurement of American Economy

As I sat down with Carlos Robles, 38, a DEA agent, I asked him to describe his race/ethnic background and identification,

You know, I *don't* like it when I am asked these types of questions. The way I see it is that we are *all* Americans, right? It shouldn't matter. But, since you are asking, I would have to say that I am of Mexican descent, but I was born in the United States...*I'm an American! My kids are American!* (Robles 2010).

Later in our interview, Carlos talked about working along the Texas border and mentioned that his friends had predicted that his perspective would change after moving to the south Texas border region. As I probed further, Carlos revealed a racialized angst toward people of Mexican ancestry,

That's why I call myself an *American*...When I was little I used to fight with the White kids and say, 'Hey, I'm *Mexican American!*' you know, and my friends told me, 'Hey, when you move over here you are going to change your perspective' and I did. I used to say stuff like, 'Yeah, y que mi raza! (Yeah, my people and my race) [puts his fist in the air]. Now, forget it! I've raised my kids like this too...to say *'I'm an American! I'm not Mexican American!'* Because that's not who we are. I'm embarrassed to call myself a Mexican American...No, I'm an American! If the U.S. and Mexico went to war I wouldn't fight on the Mexican side, I'd fight on the American side! The mentality here is different from even like fifty miles North of here...If you go to a McDonalds here the workers will say, 'Listos para ordenar' (Ready to order!) or 'En que les puedo ayudar?' (How may I help you?) and I am thinking, 'Hey man, you are in America...*speak English!*' (Robles 2010).

Conflicts over citizenship, language, and work are central to Carlos's ambivalences towards Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans who have not assimilated. Many people of Mexican descent who live along the Texas borderland speak Spanish and for many it is their primary language. Low-wage workers speaking Spanish at a popular American hot spot like McDonalds was similar to profanity spoken in a Church setting for the agent. Carlos's work entails investigating people associated with the Mexican drug cartels and their networks on the U.S. side and he spoke about how "Living on the border is scarier because they can snatch your family at any moment. That is why I am protective of my children and I always pack a gun" (Robles 2010).

I asked Carlos why he feared living in the county when he had previously mentioned it had a low crime rate? He responded that it is, “The *potentiality* of a crime makes the border region scary...Abductions, kidnappings, and quick violence make it scary.” Again, I ask, “Does that stuff take place a lot here on the U.S. side?” Carlos answered that, “It happens a lot on the Mexican side, but all they have to do is snatch you and take you over to Mexico and then these guys can do whatever they want to you because you are on their turf now.” This “potential” threat again has a male-gendered image associated with it since Mexican men are linked with criminality and violence (see Romero 2001).

As Carlos continues his story, about these potentially dangerous scenarios, he begins searching for something on the computer. Finally, he alerts me to go and check out his computer screen. I look over Carlos’s shoulder toward the computer screen and I see a beautiful young woman dressed in a black top, sitting with a friend, and she appeared to be having a drink at a bar. Carlos goes on to say, “Okay, this girl was a lawyer in Mexico and she was handling a case against the cartels.” The agent proceeds to click on another photo and I am horrified at the contents of the picture. It is the same woman from the first picture but now her body had been severely mutilated and she was decapitated. At that moment, I felt my stomach turning and my knees wobbling from fright. I was petrified for a moment and could not murmur a word. He continues to click on other photos of the woman’s body shown in pieces, “This is what happens when people get in the way of the cartels and these are the people I am trying to protect us from...and this is why I am embarrassed to call myself ‘Mexican.’”

This was an illuminating moment in regards to the agent's ideas about race/ethnicity, Mexican nationals, and crime. The idea that America is also ridden with crime was not the issue. For Carlos, the type of crime that occurs in Mexico is much "worse." "Mexicans" capable of committing horrendous murders like the one shown in the pictures was not something he wanted to be associated with. For the agent, the crimes became racialized – being "Mexican" was equivalent to being a "criminal" and on the other side of the boundary line "Americans" are "law-abiding." There is a strong detachment and distinction that Carlos tries to make between "America/Americans" (civilized) and "Mexico/Mexicans" (uncivilized). The agent's work and life experiences constitute an identity that is anti-Mexican and hyper-patriotic American.

Meanwhile, as we begin to talk about Carlos's work in relation to the barrier, he admits to some of the pitfalls of a "wall,"

I don't think it will work to stop the crossings unless you put a non-stop wall from Texas to California then maybe it will work like the Berlin Wall or the Wall of China. But, this wall is not going to work since it has gaps. We still need to be mindful of the tunnels that can be built and the fact that people can come across through air (Robles 2010).

However, Carlos adds that the "wall" was advantageous for the State, America, and border enforcement officials because it provided overall job security,

It has made some people rich. It was a job for people...an economic and a political job. People did it because they needed the money and politicians did it to keep their jobs. That's how it works in my opinion. It secures jobs for the people...both political and economic and it ensures that people like me continue to have a job (Robles 2010).

Carlos did not agree that the State sanctioned barrier would work, but did believe that it procured economic and job security gains. This response illustrates how there are State agents that believe the barrier is ineffective at deterring "illegals" and drugs; yet, successful in sustaining a workforce and creating a new enterprise of maintaining

American security. As a single father caring for five children, he is not willing to advise the Department of Homeland Security that the State's wall is ineffective. As long as it provides his family with economic stability, Mr. Carlos Robles will continue to do his job. This theme provides a glimpse into the life of State agents who may adhere to the mission of protecting the American homeland, but do not believe that a given strategy (i.e. border wall) will solve the "immigration problem". This belief amongst State agents such as Mr. Robles remains in the background as they realize that in order to maintain job security they must remain loyal and be beholden to their employer.

Social Paranoia and State Action

Michael Bergmann, 35, a self-identified "White" Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officer noted that his father was a "full-blooded German and his mother was part Irish and Scottish" (Bergmann 2010) and that ended his discussion on his racial/ethnic background as compared to his frustrated Mexican American counterparts who had provided longer explanations. Shortly thereafter, Michael informed me that he was married to a "Latina" and had directly experienced the way race and racism operate in the community,

My wife is a Federal Prosecutor and she can tell you that Mexican Americans hate Mexicans from the other side. Many of them don't teach Spanish to their kids. They berate Mexican immigrants. I'll give you an example, my first child was born with blond hair and green eyes and my wife's family was super happy. Our second child was born with dark hair and brown eyes and the family was...[paused]...we could tell...definitely disappointed. I firmly believe that this is very prevalent along the border. They [Mexican Americans] want to separate themselves from Mexicans from the other side...you know, to say that 'We are different than you are!' I feel that it is very pronounced around here (Bergmann 2010).

Michael's account provides a window into the ways Whiteness and Mexicanness operate along the border region. He does not overtly critique Whiteness, but does note that his "White" looking daughter gained positive attention from his in-laws while his second daughter who appeared "Mexican" was generally frowned upon. Michael does not provide a precise answer (i.e. Whiteness) to explain Mexican Americans hating Mexican immigrants and detesting the use of the Spanish language. Later in our talk, he strongly encourages me to see the 1996 film *Lone Star* to truly "understand life along the south Texas border" (Bergmann 2010). The film follows the lives of two lovers – Rio County Sheriff Sam Deeds and Rio County history schoolteacher Pilar Cruz. The mysterious story begins by the discovery of bones by military officials out in the south Texas border desert stirring up emotions and memories about old lovers, Texas history, borderlines, murder, and hidden familial secrets.

Sheriff Deeds is called out to the site where the bones were found and therein an investigation begins on the murder of Charlie Wade. Later, it is revealed that the bones were indeed those of former corrupt Rio County Sheriff Charlie Wade. Sheriff Sam Deeds believes it was his father, former Sheriff Buddy Deeds who was responsible for the killing. The film concludes with the fact that former Rio County Sheriff Buddy Deeds did not kill Sheriff Charlie Wade. Most importantly, Sheriff Sam Deeds begins looking through his father's personal items and finds out Buddy had an affair with Mercedes Cruz (mother of Pilar Cruz), making Sam and Pilar half brother and sister. As Sam meets with Pilar to advise her of the tragic news, Pilar lets him know that she does not care about the unfortunate historical trajectories of both their life stories. Rather, Pilar tells Sam, "All that other stuff, you know, all that history – the hell with it, right?"

Forget about the Alamo!” as the movie comes to a final end (Lone Star 1996). I outlined the narrative of the film because it exemplifies how the enactment of strict borders (racial, sexual, and physical) serves to undermine the messiness of people’s lives and the fluidity of neighboring nations such as the U.S. and Mexico.

Michael’s recommendation to watch this specific film led me to believe that he realized to some extent that “borders” (i.e. racial, gendered, sexual, national) are fluid rather than closed and nonporous. In other words, it is not just “Mexicans” who cross “borders,” but all people cross borders (e.g. border lines, racial, cognitive, sexual, and cultural). Linking Michael’s personal life – married to a Mexican American, the toll that Whiteness can take on a biracial family, and the particulars of the film illuminate how he has crossed racialized borders. This particular “crossing” has heightened his own awareness of Whiteness, race, and racism.

Michael defined the barrier as a form of public social paranoia that has been exaggerated and exacerbated by entities such as Right Wing radio talk show hosts,

In my opinion, this is not the agency’s opinion, it is because of these Right Wing talk show hosts like Bill O’Reilly, Beck, Lou Dobbs...the one who used to be on CNN...and the public believes this kind of stuff! That guy [referring to Lou Dobbs] hates Hispanics! (Bergmann 2010).

Conservative television and radio talk show hosts such as the ones mentioned here have been criticized for fueling anger and encouraging violence among the American public. In fact, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported a sharp rise in Anti-Hispanic/Latino violent crimes beginning in 2003 at 43% and steadily increasing to 63% in 2006 (FBI 2003; FBI 2006).

Michael admits that there are undocumented immigrants who cross the border into the United States, but conceptualizes it differently from Carlos and Eduardo by emphasizing economic desperation and public panic,

Immigration violations are the biggest here. Not to mention my wife is a lawyer and she deals with these realities too. You know, but people's perception of illegal human trafficking is that they are raping and pillaging or stealing babies...this is all nonsense! Most people come here to work and seek out a better life for themselves and their families. Yes, there are criminal elements, but the good ones far outnumber the bad ones. You know, I don't even lock my door at home. I feel safe on this side, but not necessarily on the Mexican side. But, I do feel safer here in this border town than I did when I lived in Houston (Bergmann 2010).

The social paranoia or moral panic that focuses on Mexican immigrants "raping and pillaging or stealing babies" has been a constant discursive tool used by the State and nativist elements to incite anger amongst the public toward immigrants. Some agents, including Michael are aware that this discursive strategy has been successful and has led to nonsensical solutions. At the time of the interview, the term "spillover violence" had gained prominence in the mainstream media and I asked Michael to what extent the U.S.-Mexico border was experiencing this violence,

There is some, but again the spill over is targeted against drug trafficking business and the cartels. If you are in the drug business then you will be targeted. No innocent people are being killed, kidnapped, etc. But, that is the perception we are given from the media (Bergmann 2010).

The above comment differs from the other two respondents discussed here in that the violence and crime that takes place on the U.S.-Mexico border is seen as linked to those involved with particular networks of crimes such as narcotics smuggling and battling over drug turf. Nonetheless, Michael neglects to discuss how the State and the public have a dynamic relationship whereby social paranoia is created by both the State and the public. Yet, to some extent, the American public expects the State to handle it. Of

course, there are times when the public feels that the State has not done enough and then may take matters into their own hands (i.e. anti-immigrant vigilante groups). The State's message about the "border fence" has been that it would stem the flow of immigrants and keep Americans safe from would-be terrorists. However, when asked if the barrier would help alleviate any of the State's concerns over undocumented immigration or terrorism Michael responded with the following,

There are no pros to the fence at all! People are going to go over, under, or around it. It is costing billions of dollars and the fence is cutting off good American real estate. My overall sentiment is that the fence is a waste of taxpayer money. You know, there are hardliners that believe that there should be mines on the other side. But, I haven't seen too many around here that agree with the fence. I know that the high traffic areas have it, but what it does is creates high traffic areas somewhere else (Bergmann 2010).

The "fence" was considered a "waste of taxpayer money" by Michael rather than viewed as a beneficial deterrent like his other DHS colleagues Carlos and Eduardo. Both Carlos and Eduardo demonstrated what McC. Heyman (2002: 490) called "immigration-restrictionist" views. McC. Heyman (2002: 492) in his study of Mexican American Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officers found that this particular group had complex and contradictory beliefs about Mexican immigrants (regardless of citizenship status) and others who are considered "Hispanic cultured-people." I am not suggesting that the agents of Mexican ancestry are not socially aware of Whiteness and how it operates on the border. Even in McC. Heyman's (2002) study, some Mexican American immigration-restrictionists were aware of how race/ethnicity functions along the border as they tried to rationalize their job as not discriminatory toward people who "look" Mexican. I suspect that it is difficult for agents of color to talk about Whiteness, race, and racism given the violent, discriminatory, and contentious historical trajectory of

Anglos and Mexicans in the U.S. southwest and specifically the state of Texas (see Montejano 1987). However, their relationship to whiteness is multifaceted exemplifying accommodation, contention, and negotiation.

McC. Heyman (2002) also mentioned that the agents in his study glorified their jobs as a means of achieving the American dream. Yet, the question still remains – why would Mexican Americans want to become DHS officers? The concept of internalized racism does not fully capture the phenomenon that is taking place at the along the U.S.-Mexico border. All of my respondents came from working or lower middle class socioeconomic backgrounds and from the south Texas region. Mexican Americans in south Texas and especially in the Rio Grande Valley have are not equipped with the best schools and if they are able to enter college their career choice options are limited. Many of the local community colleges and universities in the South Texas/Rio Grande valley area offer vocational programs and/or programs in Criminal Justice/ Criminology to fulfill a need for jobs in the local prisons/immigrant detention centers. These types of jobs are gloried and deemed as a way out of the working-class/low-income neighborhoods (see McC. Heyman 2002).

Similarly, McC. Heyman (2002) found that many of his Mexican American INS respondents revered federal jobs such as U.S. Border Patrol. In the Southwest, many Mexican Americans can achieve a middle-class economic standing and feel they can be treated as first-class citizens by landing these types of jobs. All the agents I spoke with considered their job positions as a means for economic stability and a way of improving the lives of their families. Michael's case was also revealing in that he was explaining the operations of race and racism along the border from his life experiences. The issue of

whiteness was also a matter of contention for Michael especially with regard to his two daughters with the varying skin tones. He did not contend directly with his own whiteness and the privileges that he is afforded because of them, but he was apt to how whiteness would shape the life trajectories of his daughters. As mentioned before, the concepts of race and racism are difficult for the agent's to grapple with in their personal and working lives.

FBI Agent Michael Bergmann presents a radical perspective compared to his fellow DHS counterparts when he suggests that the social paranoia concerning undocumented immigration is created within the public. However, Agent Bergmann does not focus on how the State uses powerful discourses that create "social paranoia" within the general public or perhaps how the two (State and public) are involved in a mutual interplay. In this narrative, the relationship between the State and the public is expressed as working from the bottom toward the top rather than one that is mired in a constant dialectical relationship. Nonetheless, within the interplay there are moments when one entity has complete power to create the discourse (or the paranoia) as well as maintain and (re)produce it as necessary to complete an objective(s). Agent Bergmann imagines the State and its relationship with the public as one whereby the power to construct works from the bottom-up. From this perspective, the public or those who have social and perhaps political clout such as vigilante/nativist groups, right-wing radio talk show hosts, and elements of the public create the discourse of the "illegal criminal alien."

Furthermore, Agent Bergmann tends to de-emphasizes the power of the State to construct physical borders (i.e. U.S.-Mexico border) and cognitive barriers (i.e. racialized notions about people of Mexican descent) as indicated in the story of his daughter's

“Mexican” skin tone and phenotypical features as well as in his personal observations of racism between Mexican Americans and Mexicans from *el otro lado* (the other side). The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was enacted through federal State intervention as it acted upon a “conquered” Mexico. One outcome of this action was the creation of a national boundary. This boundary has affected everyday interactions along the U.S.-Mexico border region. To a degree, his neglect of the State’s role in constructing physical as well as symbolic barriers, allows him to present the State in a redemptive fashion as the administer of justice and equality. In actuality, the State has historically held a facilitative role in the creation of violence against those that it has Othered (see James 1996).

Summary

The aforementioned agents are the direct law enforcement strong-arm of the State. The State is not only their employer, but also an entity that commands respect and loyalty. Despite the fragmentation of perspectives and experiences, beneath the surface, the agents demonstrated an overall loyalty to the core mission of protecting the American homeland from terroristic threats. The agents considered themselves American patriots and believed in their mission of protecting America from outside threats (illegal immigration, terrorism, and narcotrafficking). The stories highlight the complexities of the State’s mission and the politics at the ground level as they carry out this objective. The experiential knowledge illuminated in their personal and work narratives reveals the intersections of race, class, gender, and citizenship concerns surrounding the barrier. As mentioned previously, the aforementioned themes – beneficial deterrent from the Other,

procurement of American jobs, and social paranoia and State action – reveal the fragmentation between the agents and acknowledges that they support the DHS core mission, but for different reasons. These variations are based on their social locations and experiences of living and working along the border. Furthermore, the ability of the State to permeate their personal lives is of great significance. Focusing on these narratives, one may argue that many agents are unable to fully “see” and acknowledge how the State manifests itself in personal relationships and social worlds given their level of embeddedness. How they construct and/or imagine the State is also contingent upon their location in the matrix of domination.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS

Local Government Officials Contending with Federal State Actions

Introduction

Under the purview of the federal State are county/city governments, which also play a part in controlling populations and municipal infrastructures. For example, the Cameron County Commission is made up of five members with the County Judge as the highest-ranking official and other members are comprised of County Commission serving-members. These four County Commissioners are each in charge of managing a respective precinct – totaling four precincts in Cameron County. The County Judge handles both criminal and civil matters while County Commissioners are in charge of County projects concerning drainage and park/road improvement. The City of Brownsville is comprised of seven members with the City Mayor holding the highest rank assisted by a chamber of six City Commissioners. The City Commission also has similar agenda items as the County – managing the city’s economic and physical infrastructure. There are minimal differences in the daily operations of counties/cities along the Rio Grande Valley. The Secure Fence Act was one major reality that many of the elected county/city officials in the Rio Grande Valley experienced.

I interviewed a total of six county/city officials in Cameron County and the surrounding areas concerning the Secure Fence Act of 2006. In this section, I will focus on two predominant themes that appeared in all six interviews: 1.) State Imposition and Dismissal of Local Knowledge; and 2.) Acquiescing to the State. These two constructs

below capture the experiences of county/city officials who confronted the realities of the barrier bypassing their communities.

State Imposition and Dismissal of Local Knowledge

At the City government level, Roberto Cruz, 57, a leading city official was concerned with the federal State's imposition in the community and the blatant dismissal of the economic, political, and cultural damage that the "wall" would have on the City of Brownsville. First, Roberto noted some of the cultural damages the barrier would have on the Rio Grande Valley region since it was a unique area with vibrant cultures, languages, foods, and music,

It's very hard for those who do not live along the southwest border or region, which is very unique, to comprehend our way of life, our culture, our heritage, our traditions. It is very difficult for somebody that has never been exposed or knows very little about the southwest border region to understand this (Cruz 2009).

Specifically, Roberto argued that most people "up North" in America did not understand the distinct qualities of the border region. He believed that people in the "interior" of America could not comprehend the everyday lives of Texas borderlanders and their cultural, economical, and political connection with Mexico,

What makes it very unique is that we are *bi-cultural* here and we have a heritage that is *connected* and *bounded* together. When you ask somebody from the United States - Are you a patriot? They will respond 'yes.' They will defend the United States to the death. Then you ask somebody down here - 'Are you a patriot?' Yes. Will you defend the United States to the death? Yes we will. But at the same time don't ask us as if we were going through a divorce proceeding. Uh, who do you love best - your mother or father? There is no answer to that...uh, we are at peace with Mexico. They are our neighbors and they are our brothers and sisters...I have brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts that live in Mexico so it is my family. So if you ask me - 'Who do I love best?' I love both the United States and Mexico. They *both* run in my blood. People do not understand this in the *interior* of the United States. It makes no sense to me of the things that are decided by people that are focused on a national solution that's not applicable to the southwest border region (Cruz 2009).

In the above statement, “interior” meant people living in Middle America along with politicians in Washington, D.C. Since these individuals do not live in the region, it is believed they do not have the knowledge and cultural understandings of how the border area is “bi-cultural,” politically, and economically connected. Moreover, this concept was used throughout the respondent’s narrative. Other areas of the U.S. were not perceived as the “interior” or “Middle America.” I speculate that perhaps this concept was used by Mr. Cruz to indicate that these are areas with only a small percentage of Latinas/os, which would lead to Eurocentric ideas about the border region and Mexicans. Meanwhile, despite Roberto’s criticisms of Middle America, he does consider himself to be an American “patriot.” However, he cautions that this does not mean that he does not like Mexico. Many people in the south Texas region, like Mr. Cruz, have feelings of endearment and sense of pride toward Mexico, since residents have familial ties just across the border. Many residents do not have an either/or dichotomous perspective on the issue. However, popular themes in the media continue to create discourses that the “border is out of control” or is in a state of “lawlessness” creates major concern for people like Roberto, who feel that these images give the region a reputation of being violent. Roberto discussed how the “crisis of immigration” was exaggerated by political elites,

Let’s talk about the ‘*crisis*’ of immigration...or about the terrorism with 9/11...or the ‘*crisis*’ with drug trafficking...In Washington, they look at the problem of immigration and say ‘We have a crisis with immigration, people are coming through a porous border,’ which is the southwest border region. So they decide ‘we are going to build a fence’ to address this national crisis of immigration...for somebody in the *interior* that doesn’t understand...that’s beyond stupidity. We recognize the problem, but our approach is different. The national proposal to build the fence is not going to work and the national proposal to add more border patrol agents is not going to work. This is a *national* problem, ok, but the *solutions* are regional. You need to come to the table with local leaders around

the southwest border to solve the national problem and you have ignored us. You are ramrodding something we have to live with to appease the *interior* of America! Why? Because we are ‘*communities of lawlessness.*’ We are not! Brownsville has had three murders per year for the last ten years (Cruz 2009).

For border leaders like Mr. Roberto Cruz, the south Texas border region has been constructed by Washington politicians and the “interior of America” as “communities of lawlessness,” unfairly scrutinized for being “out of control.” In fact, for this reason Mr. Roberto Cruz joined the Texas Border Coalition (TBC), an organization made up of local south Texas border officials such as Mayors, Sheriffs, Judges, and City Council members that were strongly opposed to the Secure Fence Act and a militarization of the border. The organization’s framework insisted that the State was forcing upon the state of Texas national solutions for local issues (Texas Border Coalition). Former Texas Border Coalition’s Chairman Mr. Carl Fraser (TBC) criticized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff ability to waive thirty-six federal laws, bisecting landowner’s properties in order to build the barrier. Texas Border Coalition members Mr. Cruz and Mr. Fraser publicly vocalized that the bureaucratic nature of DHS neglected to think about the social, cultural, economic, and political consequences of such actions.

The DHS Secretary, Michael Chertoff, waived thirty-six federal laws that included: The National Environmental Policy Act, The Endangered Species Act, The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (commonly referred to as the Clean Water Act), The National Historic Preservation Act, The Clean Air Act, and The Safe Drinking Water Act (Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club 2008). In a public critique, Mr. Fraser declared, “I hope the [United States] justices will seize this opportunity to restore the balance of

sovereignty among federal, state and local governments that our nation's founders guaranteed to the people and eloquently expressed in the Constitution and in the writings of James Madison...Should the Supreme Court allow these waivers to stand without so much as an argument in defense of liberty, the justices will effectively confer upon an unelected agency chief limitless and unbridled power never dreamed possible by the authors of the Constitution" (No Border Wall 2009).

The idea that the DHS Secretary could make a decision that would significantly impact an entire region including the state of Texas was the type of "ramrodding" Mr. Roberto Cruz and others in the Texas Border Coalition could not bear. Mr. Cruz felt that the DHS should have been attentive to the local knowledge of border officials and landowners before going forward with the mandate. He described how tugging at people's emotions and creating fear and moral panic in Middle America fueled the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006,

This proposal [Secure Fence Act] has been *hijacked* out of *fear* by those who want to protect our homeland from *terrorists*...the government...people in the government. Representative Duncan Hunter proposed this wall to begin with, then was helped by Dan Flynn...they *hijacked* this agenda out of *fear* and some of it is driven by *racism*. Racism, because if I am talking to you with reason and I tell them, 'Look, Brownsville has only had three murders per year - How is a wall going to protect us from that?' It's not...going back to the immigration debate – how is the wall going to keep immigrants out if *we are creating a market that we need people at the meat packing plants, at the hotels, restaurants, service oriented jobs, the fields, and agricultural industry* (Cruz 2009).

Political "hijacking" through the use of fear in order to get legislation passed was a common thread in many of the border officials (and landowners) I spoke with. This tactic bears similarity with Klein's (2007) analysis that the State and corporations economically and politically thrive on foreign policies such as the Iraq War via entities like Halliburton. Through the use of political machinations or what I call political

maneuverings, political elites use fear, the threat of violence, and disaster, to achieve economic and political opportunities (Klein 2007). These kinds of political incentives do not necessarily have to take place through foreign policy, but domestic policy as well. For example, politicians such as Republican Texas Representative Dan Flynn, a leading proponent of the Texas barrier, announced on March 17, 2006,

The U.S. Supreme Court overruled two hundred years of constitutionally based decisions about property rights. Under this expanded version of eminent domain, governmental entities can take property from one person and give it to another just because the government thinks the new owner will generate more tax revenue. This is wrong and un-American...last summer we passed legislation that would make it harder for that to happen in Texas. This Legislation tightened restrictions on the government land grabbers, but we must do more...I will work towards passage of a state constitutional amendment to protect our homes and businesses. We must have the protection of a constitutional amendment that clearly defines the situations in which our state, county and local governments can and cannot take our land...Any government land grab must be stopped and I intend to support a constitutional amendment to protect our private property rights (Dan Flynn, The Flynn Report, March 17, 2006).

As mentioned before, the Secure Fence Act of 2006 was first introduced on September 13, 2006 and later became law on January 3. Flynn's announcement was given in the midst of a monumental legislation that would significantly alter the geographical landscape and people's lives in the Texas border region. Mr. Roberto Cruz had previously noted that Representative Flynn was in full support of the barrier. Thus, Flynn ultimately supported a policy that he had initially called "un-American" and a "government land grab." After backing the Secure Fence Act, Representative Flynn began making public statements to alert Texans about the Conservative agenda in the legislature and his commitment to protecting citizens from "terrorism...and other homeland security threats" (Flynn 2007).

Mr. Roberto Cruz consistently argued that the State had ignored the knowledge of local border government officials and landowners. Given the historical, cultural, and

economic interdependent relationship that the Rio Grande Valley has had with Mexico, Roberto provides some ideas on how to alleviate America's immigration concerns – local solutions for national problems by,

Working with the region. A region that recognizes that this border is unique...it's not like California or Arizona. We have a river, so, a wall may work in California or Arizona, but not necessarily in Texas because we have a natural barrier. You can put some boots on the ground and create a virtual fence around the river with good technology. That is our solution regionally. If we do that and in part we have already been doing it...the apprehensions have dropped drastically. The wall, the *national solution*, is not going to work (Cruz 2009).

The number of undocumented immigrants, as noted by Roberto, has been dropping significantly. The Pew Hispanic Center in their study suggested that this drop in immigration was primarily due to the economic recession and increased border enforcement, as reported by the Washington Post,

A deep recession and tougher border enforcement have led to a sharp decline in the number of immigrants entering the United States illegally in the past five years...The number of illegal immigrants entering the United States plunged by almost two-thirds between 2005 and 2009, a dramatic shift after years of growth in the population...In the first half of the decade, an average of 850,000 people a year entered the United States without authorization...As the economy plunged into recession between 2007 and 2009, that number fell to 300,000 (Bahrampour 2010).

The tremendous drop in the number of unauthorized entrants should also be indicative of the modern global market and how powerful countries like the United States are interconnected with less powerful countries such as Mexico (see Wallerstein 2004).

However, the study reported by the Washington Post neglects other important factors that have had implications for Mexico and the United, such as the Northern Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). U.S. agribusinesses have had a major impact in Mexico, fueling displacement and high unemployment among farmers and the working-class, people who were already living on the margins. Immigration scholars have concluded that neoliberal

immigration policies such as NAFTA caused tremendous immigration from Mexico into the United States in search of better economic conditions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Navarro 2005; Chacón and Davis 2006). Media outlets tend to put immigration into the U.S. at the center of its analysis. However, the media (and the State) ignore the push/pull factors that cause people to leave immigrate in the first place.

Border officials I spoke with including Robert mentioned the flagrant disregard by DHS toward any of their local proposals. These border officials felt that they had viable plans for alleviating undocumented immigration as well as alternatives to the border barrier. While border officials like Roberto considered undocumented immigration and drug trafficking to be actual problems along the border region, terrorism was believed to be a political tool used by the federal State to instill fear in all Americans.

On the other hand, there were border officials that acquiesced to the State's beliefs and demands. This was not necessarily due to fear, but primarily out of respect for American (federal) laws, and the obligation as citizens to accept the State's goals of protecting Americans from terrorism, illegal immigration, and narco-trafficking. This approach also expected the landowners to uphold the State's "Declarations of Taking" or eminent domain powers. In other words, landowners as American citizens should accept the condemnation suits and comply with the State's policies. This response will be discussed in the following section.

Acquiescing to the Federal State

At the County level, Mr. Manuel Vargas, 57, was head of the Cameron County commission and offered another perspective about the State's construction of the barrier.

Manuel was born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas Mexico and shortly thereafter his family moved to Texas. I asked Manuel if the borderlands/border region held any significance for him, to which he replied, “It means...other than the area I grew up in...I was born and raised on the southern border and that’s about it!” (Vargas 2009). Manuel referred to the barrier as merely a “fence” as he adamantly explained, “*A fence is a fence!* So, I think, uh, in some areas it has been referred to as a *border wall*...here, we referred to it as a border wall for a long, a long time until we started to see the construction of it and then it *looks like a fence.*” Many of the other border officials (and landowners) noted that the barrier would damage the “uniqueness” of the region and “bicultural” essence of the community. Yet, other officials like Manuel Vargas viewed these attributes as secondary and/or inconsequential to the overall deference to State federal laws,

There is a perception that it will. I think there are people that think it does... I think it’s more of an *emotional* and *psychological* rather than a *real* issue...Really, if you look at it *objectively*, it shouldn’t change *any* culture. Uh, is it going to affect people’s feeling about, you know...if and when they finish building it...it’s not going to change *my* feelings towards the people living in Mexico, the people living there, or their family members. I don’t think it’s going to affect people living in Mexico...They may have some significant feelings about the American government as a whole for doing it. But, I don’t think they personally hold animosity towards their neighbors that live across the border [referring to their U.S. counterparts] (Vargas 2009).

Mr. Vargas’s feelings about landowners (and Mexico) were that they were acting in an emotionally and psychologically irrational manner and they were not looking at the situation “objectively.” Personally, Manuel did not believe the barrier would contribute to any cultural and emotional changes. In actuality, there were an outstanding number of Rio Grande Valley landowners who took an oppositional stance toward the barrier including the many heads of state in Mexico (The Bernard and Audre Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice). In this case, the concept of objectivity denies the

experiences of landowners, overlooks their criticism, and renders them irrational actors for expressing feelings of anger and frustration toward the State.

Manuel also felt that the barrier would not have a negative impact on the local culture, landowners, or the American culture in general. In our discussion of American culture and views of the barrier, Manuel stated the following,

You know, no it's not going to change anything. I think that people who had those types of feelings had them long before the border fence was even a player. Uh, I think you are *naturally* going to have people that are somewhat of, uh, uh, have some racism, but that had nothing to do with the wall. I think, uh, people that had those thoughts probably were helped along by the wall...But, uh, I think you have to look at it in...I look at it in a different way. People that live along the border, uh, predominantly are against a border fence slash wall. Once you get outside of that area and you go in a hundred miles [going north from Cameron County] as an example or fifty miles...the further inland you go the less opposition there is to the wall, ok (Vargas 2009).

Based on the above statements, it appears that for Manuel, racism was not a determining factor in the erection of the wall. Rather, the wall was built for objective reasons: to target terrorism, illegal immigration, and drug smuggling. In addition, he makes us aware that Americans who live away from the border region do not hold negative views about the barrier. However, how does Manuel's statement explain or justify how the Secure Fence Act garnered support? The above statement does not offer an answer to this type of question. Furthermore, the landowners who were protesting against the barrier were participating in these engagements because the law directly impacted their homesteads and properties. The mere fact that the landowners reacted with anger poses a problem for political elites like Manuel. Meanwhile, "rational" landowners are expected to feel apathetic and/or supportive about the State mandate. Emotional expression in this context is a twofold issue: to be a rational landowner, the person should demonstrate emotion by

becoming apathetic/supportive; In turn, an irrational emotion landowner is one who displays anger, frustration, and resistance toward State policy.

The federal State as a bureaucratic structure adheres to rational objectives via laws and regulations, which can be seen in local level governments, as these officials are also required to maintain a rigid rational and objective approach. These bureaucratic and rational positions are also expected of landowners and community members in their experiences with “objective” laws. Landowners and residents who voice their grievances and concerns are met with a rigid State pragmatist disposition that insists on silence, docility, and acquiescence to federal laws. Manuel provides a window into these expectations,

It’s an emotional issue and people need to get away from it and look at it logistically and realistically... Then, you got the people who jump on the bandwagon. It gives them a cause... it takes them back to the 1960s or whatever. When people talk about that it’s going to affect *economic* development, it’s going to hurt our businesses... I’m an opponent of the wall but at the same time *one has to be realistic*... Tell me how is it going to hurt retail sales? People that are coming across illegally are not going to stop at the malls. They are not going to stop at HEB or Academy. The ones that come over illegally use the border as a *halfway house* before they find a way to move up. So, when they say its affecting economic development and what message are we sending to Mexico and blah, blah, blah. I say, ‘Why don’t you look at it in a different way? Like what kind of message is Mexico sending to *us*?’ By not controlling their Northern border! (Vargas 2009).

This local government message treats “emotional” landowners and residents as outside agitators looking to derail a federal State mission. In addition, this type of discourse portrays landowners and residents as unruly fussy children who are not following their parent’s orders. Furthermore, Mr. Vargas’s critique of the 1960s Chicano Movement expresses once again that these are primarily Mexican Americans who have delved into a romanticized notion of protesting against the federal government. Manuel also argued

that landowners and community residents should not be concerned with their properties as much as they should be worried about the “message” that Mexico is sending to the United States. He strongly felt that the message Mexico is sending to the United States is that it does not care for the welfare of its people and has left the U.S. to control its northern border.

The issue of eminent domain was discussed by Manuel as a way for the State to utilize property for a justifiable reason. In this case, concerns of terrorism, illegal immigration, and drug trafficking are defensible reasons for a legal declaration of taking. I asked Manuel if he could elaborate on the State’s ability to gain control of one’s property (i.e. land and/or house) via eminent domain/declaration of taking and his response was,

If government says, ‘I want that chair! I need it to complete this set,’ it becomes a public use. Congress decided it was a public use for the good of the public. Now you say ‘No, that’s my chair, it’s been in my family for one thousand years!’ Okay, ‘But it’s only worth *at best* \$125 dollars.’ Now, you want to talk me to court. But, all we are going to do is fight over the price. You say it’s worth a million dollars because you have *emotional attachment* to it. I’m sorry, but you can’t put a dollar figure on emotional attachment. That is what has happened with the land along the river, ‘Oh, this land has been in my family since the Spaniards.’ Hey, it’s still just *dirt*. *It is still just land*. The government, nor us, nor anybody can pay you your *emotional value*...we *can’t pay you for that*...we have to pay you for what you paid for it and *that’s it, ok*. That is what the federal government did. That’s what they are doing now (Vargas 2009).

As long as the State can justify that the property/land will be for the public good then it is able to “declare a taking.” Even if the private landowner does not agree with this assessment, the State can proceed without wavering, battling the landowner in judicial court. Mr. Vargas’s account of the landowner’s price for the land is interesting given that all the landowners I interviewed did not attach a price to their property because they simply did not want to give it up for any price. The landowners were questioning the

legal grounds used to “declare a taking” of their property. In the aforementioned response, Manuel Vargas does not question the State’s procedure, while only critiquing the landowners for not complying with State’s orders. The landowner’s wish to comply with the State is hindered by their “emotional attachment” to their land, which the State perceives to be irrational.

Mr. Manuel Vargas condemns the use of landowner’s emotions as simply a strategy to gain sympathy for their cause. They are able to pit their loss against Congress’ claims about the “public good.” Political elites like Manuel claim that activist landowners use irrational emotional claims as a method to derail the “public good” objective by declaring that the State is engaging in racist land-grabbing strategies,

I think people try to *spin* it that way because they want to make it a *racial issue*. I’ve heard the argument many times, ‘How come there is nothing on the northern border?’ and ‘How come they are not treating Canada like that?’ Well, again, let’s look at it realistically, ok. First of all, you don’t have a whole lot of people from Canada *illegally* coming into the country by the hundreds of thousands per year. You don’t have Canadians rushing to the U.S. for employment. If you have a hundred thousand illegals coming from the Mexican border you might have five hundred from the Canadian border. Uh, they didn’t build it to stop terrorism, you know, it’s *not* going to stop anything. If a *terrorist* wants to get to here, *he’s* going to get here. They did it mainly to give Border Patrol more time to apprehend...(Vargas 2009).

The issue of “race” is perceived by Mr. Vargas as a way to draw attention away from the real and pressing issue of illegal immigration. In an added twist, Mr. Vargas felt that the barrier was not truly built to curtail terrorism, but only to buy time for federal State agents (i.e. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to apprehend unauthorized immigrants. Most importantly, Mr. Vargas, like his federal State counterparts, envisioned terrorists as always male: “If a *terrorist* wants to get here, *he’s* going to get here” (Vargas 2009). In Mr. Vargas’s explanation, a terrorist could

potentially come from either the northern or the southern border, but the State spotlight has been focused on the southern border as more “illegals” come through that region. A glaring omission in Mr. Vargas’s statement is the fact that all the 9/11 hijackers came in to the United States through a legal port of entry and many were found to have U.S. passports (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States). More importantly, neither the Canadian nor the Mexican borders are used as terrorist channels; yet, much of the national discourse surrounding terrorism in America focuses on the southern border, as the presence of militarization and surveillance increases.

Summary

Local governments are designed to manage political, legal, and economic infrastructures in locales throughout the United States. These local governments are extensions of the federal State in three important ways: 1). Local governments receive federal monies for a myriad of community projects; 2.) They must be attuned to federal laws and policies; 3). Local government entities are also bureaucratic structures that function in similar ways as the federal State via their governing systems and practices. However, as demonstrated by the previous narratives – the federal State has the capacity to impose itself in a region despite local government disapproval. At times, local government disapproval can complicate a federal State’s mission. However, in this case, the federal State was able to meet its objective of building the barrier. As demonstrated in the local government official’s narratives, there is not complete agreement with one another nor with exactly how to proceed with the federal mandate. A geographical, political, cultural, economic issue can necessitate particular action from County/City

officials as well as residents that may undermine a State mission. In this case, the federal State mandated the Secure Fence Act and planned to erect a 670-mile barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border. Local official narratives presented a view whereby the federal government crafted a mandate without a full grasp of how it would impact border communities and property owners. Local government official narratives such as those of Roberto Cruz (“State Interference and Dismissal of Local Knowledge” and Manuel Vargas (Acquiescing to the State) illustrate the varying perspectives on the ground toward the federal State’s mandate. Although, all the border officials I interviewed stated they did not personally support the Secure Fence Act, they all had two primary ways of confronting the reality of the barrier in their communities – 1). Critiquing and resisting the federal State’s interference in the region and; 2.) Complying with federal laws despite their personal disposition and awareness of the public’s opposition. The next two sections focus on the narratives and actions of Texas landowners followed by community members.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS

Landowners Respond to Federal State

Introduction

While conducting my fieldwork in Cameron County and the surrounding communities, I noticed a momentum building amongst the landowners toward the federal mandate. The majority of landowners found themselves legally battling the federal State for their livelihoods. For some Texas landowners, though, it was a chance to demonstrate their opposition to the barrier. Initially, the division of opposition and support amongst the local community was unclear. As I continued to speak with landowners an interesting pattern emerged in which this (false) dichotomy of support/opposition was troubled. As previously noted in the border official narratives, the primary response from landowners toward the Act was opposition; however, below the surface, I uncovered that indeed there was a public *collective opposition*, but not a *unified opposition*. In other words, some landowners only expressed opposition because they realized how it was going to impact their lives, homestead, and property. On the other hand, others believed it to be a form of racialized discrimination and an erosion of U.S. democracy. Based on the interviews, two themes surfaced among the landowners that convey the reality behind the (false) dichotomization: 1.) The law as an erosion of democracy via cultural and racial discrimination; and 2.) The law as jeopardizing citizen's safety. The following subsection provides the aforementioned landowner perspectives.

The Secure Fence Act As An Erosion of Democracy via Cultural and Racial Discrimination

News outlets such as CNN covered the border fence construction and called it a “Texas Showdown” between DHS and Texas landowners,

This week, the Justice Department began legal action against landowners and municipalities who have refused to give government surveyors access to their land. Tamez expects she will be sued sometime soon, but she is not intimidated. Asked how long she will fight, she said, "As long as I have to." Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of Homeland Security, said the fence will not be stopped by opponents like Tamez. "Can we simply abandon an enterprise because it is a problem for a particular individual?" Chertoff told CNN. "I don't think I can accept that" (Meserve 2008).

One such showdown involved Texas landowner and University of Texas – Brownsville Dr. Loisa Torres, 74, who was born in El Calaboz (a *rancho* or ranch 20 mi. west of Brownsville, TX), and was one of the State’s staunchest opponents fighting to save her property from the impact of the barrier. Dr. Torres was adamant about the fact that her family had owned the land for generations. In 1784, the King of Spain granted the San Pedro de Carricitos Land Grant to then Spanish Viceroy Pedro Villarreal, which consisted of 12,730.59 acres (Lipan Apache Communities of the Lower Rio Grande Resolution). Even with the activities of three governments – Spain, Mexico, and the United States of America – Dr. Loisa Torres, a descendent of the original Spanish grantee, holds on tenaciously to the small plot of land she inherited (approximately 3 acres). In November of 2007, agents from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement knocked on Dr. Torres’s office door at the University of Texas –Brownsville asking for consent (via a signature) to survey the land (Sieff 2007).

At the federal level, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff gave south Texas landowners thirty days to reach an agreement and sign the waivers. Those who did not

comply would be brought to court to establish the State's right of entry onto their properties. Dr. Loisa Torres ultimately refused to sign the consent form knowing that there would be legal consequences for her actions. The idea of a border "wall" being built through her property was unimaginable to her. Dr. Loisa Torres also indicated it was an identity assault because her genealogy and ethnic lineage (Lipan Apache tribe) that dates back to pre-European colonization. This American Indian-Spanish-Mexican interracial history shapes and informs her subjectivity and lived experience (Ellis and Flaherty 1992). While talking with Loisa, I became aware of the attachments and affection she possessed toward her property. When I asked Ms. Loisa Torres how she felt about her land she responded with,

The memories keep coming back...I realize what it is about *this* land that I'm so attached to...it is because I recalled how *hard* my father and grandfather worked to plant the crops, get them irrigated, harvested, and get them free of insects...it was *very* hard work! I remember they didn't have tools that most people would have...All they had was a plow and a horse...they worked hard to carve a life out for us and that makes me *more* attached to *this* land...The way my parents farmed and how hard it was for them as well as my grandparents...those things I believe are *very* special to me. I'm pleased that I'm able to remember...to have those memories. Having those memories now makes me even more diligent in the way I research the rationale for *why* I need to hold on to this land as we go into court. I have to *depend* on those thoughts because these are not things that are written down, it's just memories, stories, and oral histories that are passed on down. It makes it very special and gives it meaning as to 'what *is* this?' (Torres 2009).

The hard work that was done by Loisa Torres's family on the land is very significant for her. There is also a spiritual component as Ms. Torres is a descendent of one of the original Texas American Indian tribes – Lipan Apache. The spiritual rituals and indigenous ways of conceptualizing land and people are far different from the ideas of those who colonized the land and saw it largely in terms of economic profit. There were indigenous tribes that tended to the land, protected it, and were its stewards because they knew that in doing so the land would provide them with sustenance. Ms. Louisa Torres

reminisced about the genuine caring of a their property due to all the hard labor involved. In addition, she attributed to the land a profound spirit based on their indigenous beliefs. Dr. Loisa Torres conveyed some of the familial spiritual rituals during moments in her childhood while living on the property,

I also remember that as a child...and this probably goes with the rituals related to the indigenous ways and beliefs...I remember that since I was the oldest child if there was any, um...say we had a *tempestad* [Spanish for bad weather consisting of heavy rain, hail], a bad weather coming, as you know, they happen here frequently...My grandmother would seek me out. Supposedly the oldest one...and then she would hold me...and hold a knife in my hand. She would say some prayers and use my hand and guide my hand as I made a cross towards the bad clouds [moves her hands in a cross symbol]...for the bad weather that was coming...to kind of cut and split it and make it go away. I suppose that's why she did it. I remember that vividly because she would seek me out immediately. Supposedly that was the connection with being the oldest grandchild. So, they would get me to do this ritual. So that's one of the rituals I remember (Torres 2009).

Spiritual and cultural rituals were a common practice for Loisa as she was growing up. However, these fond memories were no match for an unwavering State bent on completing a project that would ultimately sever her connection to the land. When she refused to sign the documents, the agents asked her "Have you heard of eminent domain" (Sieff 2007). Loisa knew that DHS would soon get their way and enter into the property, but for her it was a matter of principle, making it clear to the State from the start that she would not tolerate it, "It means we're not going to allow this from the very beginning" (Sieff 2007).

Dr. Torres's situation is not a unique experience. There have been many scenarios whereby Spanish-Mexican land grantees were dispossessed of their lands especially if they had property on the North side of the Rio Grande after the 1846-1848 U.S.-Mexican War and the passage of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (see Alonzo 1998). These

experiences were always plagued with uncertainty, as grantees were never sure if the new occupying government – United States – would legally acknowledge and validate the land grants especially after two previous government transitions. In 1852, four years after the U.S.-Mexico War, the United States legally recognized the San Pedro de Carricitos Land Grant via the Bourland and Miller Commission (Sieff 2007). Not all landowners were that fortunate, for some federal State intervention on their private properties was a re-enactment of previous histories of Mexican American land dispossession and they were not going to give up without a fight. As Loisa Torres noted ““I feel like I live in an occupied zone now” (Del Bosque 2010). This statement offers a window into the lived realities of many border residents as militarization tactics have increased along the border. The use of the term “occupied” initiates feelings among residents of heightened surveillance, border agents, and military personnel within communities. Unfortunately, in order to mount a fight against the State, Loisa Torres had to have access to a lawyer *pro bono*. Mr. Peter Schey, a lawyer, affiliated with the Center for Human rights and Constitutional Law headquartered in Los Angeles, California decided to help landowners like Ms. Torres resist State imposition. Resistance is crucial for Loisa Torres as she intends to give the parcel of land to her grandchildren stating, “I will not give up my land” (Del Bosque 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the wall has been constructed differently by different categories of people. For instance, federal bureaucrats insisted it was only a “border fence,” (Hylton 2009), while many residents and landowners called it a wall – reminiscent of the Berlin Wall. Another example, south of the Rio Grande, Governor Humberto Moreira of the Mexican state of Coahuila has dubbed it a “wall of hate”

(Hylton 2009). Therefore, I wanted to find out how the landowners described the barrier. While Loisa and I were discussing how the State and landowners described the barrier – “wall” or “fence” – Dr. Torres noted that she and many of the landowners referred to the barrier as a border wall. They strongly believed that the State maintained it was a “fence” in order to downplay the significance, trauma, and impact on the residents as mentioned by Loisa,

To me, it's a *border wall!* I don't care that it has those *rejitas* [slits]...It's a *barrier* between cultures and founded on the denial of the human rights of the people. It has too much negativism attached to it because of *how* the Act was implemented...It was done in a way that brought up about a lot of *hurt* to innocent people. Even worse is when we found out that the high income Anglo Americans who own property in the path of the wall were not subjected to this pain and suffering...Just the low income Mexican American communities are impacted by the wall. It is symbolic of the *erosion of our democracy*...it carries a recognition that the constitution was violated in order to move this forward. These are ancient ways of implementation...and *why here?* If America *is* unsafe and a wall must be built around it, *why is it that the people in the South are the dangerous people that are going to harm America?* There is *no* wall by the resort, Hunt Enterprises sits, or the Moody Enterprises...yet they were in the path of the proposed wall. The barrier was built deliberately to *harm!* We were singled out as the people to harm...*We are helpless here!*

Loisa is referring to various themes, histories, and symbols in this statement. First, she feels that the barrier is a wall despite having small three-inch gaps in-between the steel pylon bars. Second, for her it represents a discriminatory racist act and the material wall itself is the consequence of State racism. Third, it is hurtful, harmful, and disparaging toward Mexican Americans and Latin America in general. Ms. Loisa Torres makes it clear that the trajectory or “racial project” (Omi and Winant 1994) against Mexican Americans has been a longstanding one culminating in the “wall” to keep cultures separate, and by implication, the White culture superior. The barrier was erected by the time I visited Ms. Loisa Torres in the summer of 2009. For many it is a solid barrier between Americans and Mexicans, Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os, and citizen and non-

citizen. Ms. Torres contends it is an erosion of democracy in America, and she is fully aware that these are “ancient ways,” an ongoing colonial project by the State.

Nonetheless, the particular *harm* imposed by the State on Mexican American landowners has its own historical trajectory imbued with colonialism, racism, illegal land acquisition, war, conflict, and powerlessness as Loisa angrily declared at the end of the statement that they were helpless. In addition, these *harms* have presently manifested themselves in the vulnerability of the landowners who were not able to access legal aid, did not speak English proficiently, elderly landowners, and those that did not vocalize their discontent because they feared the government’s reprisals – these were all major concerns for Loisa Torres.

The sense that Mexican Americans and their Mexican counterparts were being targeted by this legislation permeates Loisa’s narrative. The concept of human rights was also a prominent theme throughout her account. In this case, human rights for Loisa meant the ability for people to have self-determination, full protection from malevolent government intrusion, full landowning rights, religious/spiritual rights, and indigenous rights. Other landowners express the same type of concerns; however, the use of human rights in Loisa’s story is indicative of her post-secondary education. Most importantly, human rights for Loisa are defined by the notion freedom or in her case the lack thereof, “You know, my freedom has been taken away from me...I am in the United States...this is where we *know freedom*...this is *why* people come to America...*to be free!* Yet, we here in south Texas cannot enjoy that freedom anymore” (Interview with Author 2009). The notion of freedom here is the ability for Loisa to roam freely within her three acres of land without State interference. If their freedom is taken away these landowners will

have to use a gap/gate entrance to gain access to any property that lies behind the barrier. Gaining access on the south side of the barrier will entail driving one to three miles east or west along the Rio Grande. This will prove to be a big burden for those farmers that live along the Rio Grande and need to have quick and direct access to their crops and farm animals. For these farmers, it is not just the political and psychological distress of having their property partitioned, but the economic ramifications this will have on their livelihoods. Furthermore, the above statement also contradicts previous statements about being fully aware of the historical plight of Mexican Americans and indigenous peoples in the southwest; yet, having an idealistic tone that runs at times strongly through her narrative about her belief in America's form of democracy, freedom, and independence. The notion that Loisa Torres' freedom has been taken from her also surfaces when she describes the possibility of having a checkpoint guard/escort at the gate entrance in order to access her property behind the barrier,

Remember, I won't be able to do this by myself. I will have escorts, as it will soon be gates. It's going to be a *checkpoint*...I am going to have to show my identification when I go in and when I come out. So, does that sound like the United States? The freedom I have enjoyed for seventy-four years by being *an American*...that doesn't sound like it to me...*I shouldn't have to have an escort! What DHS has done is that they have made the Border Patrol take a different kind of approach to guarding and doing the surveillance here by the riverfront. They now see us as the enemy...we are the enemy to them...and we are accosted every time we try to go up there...we are accosted!* When I have been on the levee they come from either side and they want to know what I am doing there. So, that is *not* freedom! My freedom has been *robbed* from me (Torres 2009).

If these gaps turn into gates whereby Border Patrol will have armed men and women guarding the entrance, it will drastically change the lives of residents living along the banks of the Rio Grande. Not only do some of the landowners feel they are being targeted, but they believe this surveillance renders each an *enemy* of the State. Border Patrol will have the right to question these landowners for trying to access their own

property.

Loisa Torres, like other landowners, mentioned that she had never experienced any problems with “illegal” aliens, drug trafficking, or terrorists crossing through her property. In a Chicago Tribune article, she pointed out “I do respect the fact that our government wants to keep our country safe from terrorists, but there have been no terrorists wading across the Rio Grande. The 9/11 terrorists came in legally, through the front door” (Witt 2008). Loisa also informed me that she still was not sure why the barrier was being built, and when concerned landowners attended a town hall meeting to ask the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), they were disregarded,

They had a *so-called* town hall meeting, on December 12, 2007 in Brownsville, TX. A town hall meeting, as I understand it, is where you go and you have an interaction. You exchange dialogue, right? I mean that’s the kind of town hall meeting I’m used to. Well, we went there...first of all we couldn’t go into the hall until the exact time. All around the doors were *armed guards* not allowing just *anybody* in....No one from DHS was talking...the people that were giving the presentation were *contractors*. If you had any questions or if you had any concerns...you didn’t ask them. You were herded into a room and in this room you could dictate your questions, you could type them into the computer yourself, or you could just be recorded...whatever it was you wanted to record. Now, whatever happened to all those statements? A lot of people went in there...*they didn’t do anything with it!* So, that’s how they got the input from the people. But, if you heard DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff talk about it he kept saying over and over again that they had had numerous town hall meetings...numerous! They only had *one* in Brownsville, TX (Torres 2009).

Since DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff maintained that town hall meetings were being held with border landowners and residents about the barrier, here is a clear case of two very different statements on what transpired. The people were not able to speak with DHS officials, but only had access to Kiewit contractors. These contractors were not equipped to answer all the concerns/grievances of the landowners. The main priority of a contractor is to get a specified job done. There was no dialogue at this town hall meeting.

People who had concerns/grievances were taken to another room where they could write a statement to DHS.

Similar concerns were echoed at a United States Subcommittee Hearing on the border wall at the University of Texas – Brownsville/ Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) campus located in central Brownsville on April 28, 2008. The national debate on the border wall was held at an actual field site where the proposed barrier would be erected. Politicians who were present at the hearing were Democrat U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva from Arizona and Representative Solomon Ortiz of Texas, Republican U.S. Representative Tom Tancredo of Colorado and Representative Duncan Hunter of California (“UTB/TSC Hosts Border Wall Subcommittee Hearings” 2008). Republican Representatives Tancredo and Hunter have run for office on anti-immigration platforms. Hunter sponsored legislation in 1994 to build a steel barrier between Tijuana and San Diego known as Operation Gatekeeper (Nevins 2002) and co-sponsored the Secure Fence Act of 2006 along with Republican U.S. Representative Peter King of New York who is currently serving as a ranking member (former Chairman from 2005-2007) of the Committee on Homeland Security (Malkin 2007; Committee on Homeland Security Republicans 2010).

During the Subcommittee Hearing at the University of Texas – Brownsville, Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo was informed by members of the community about their disapproval, concerns, and issues regarding the border wall. He became frustrated with the opposition to the barrier as detailed by a local Texas newspaper,

BROWNSVILLE, Texas – One of Congress' strongest border fence proponents received a hostile reception Monday in the city that has become the epicenter of

fence opposition. Boos and hisses emanated from the audience for a congressional field hearing when Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo of Colorado dismissed residents' concerns that the effort to build 670 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border by year's end would damage the environment and destroy a centuries-old bond between residents on both sides of the Rio Grande. Late in the five-hour hearing, Tancredo returned to a comment made earlier by panelist Betty Perez, a rancher and local activist. Perez said, "It really isn't a border to most of us who live down here." Tancredo dismissed Perez's remarks as a "multiculturalist attitude toward borders." As jeers rose, Tancredo added, '*I suggest that you build this fence around the northern part of your city*' [emphasis added] (Denton Record-Chronicle 2008).

The last sentence in Tancredo's comment was considered anathema to the members in the audience regardless of whether or not they support the idea of a barrier, since all of Brownsville would be behind the barrier. More importantly, in making such a comment, Tancredo calls into question the status of Brownsville's citizens by insisting that the entire city should be behind the barrier. A statement such as this one implies that people living in Brownsville are (undocumented) immigrants and/or Brownsville should be considered an extension of Mexico. The barrier demarcates a new boundary (aside from the Rio Grande River which is considered a natural boundary dictated by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo).

Dr. Loisa Torres was furious with all the media and polity talk that suggested Texas landowners were un-American/non-patriotic or were siding with Mexico and undocumented immigrants because many of them did not support it. In the following statement, Loisa provides a comprehensive account of how many people of Mexican and Indigenous descent came to be in south Texas,

I think that the most significant thing about the Texas-Mexico border is its *history*...I just love the history that it carries. I love the fact that I can say *we are indigenous to this land!* We have been here for generations. I'm the thirteenth generation. I am one of those that you don't know of that you tried to *exclude* because for the most part I think the rest of America wants to say that anybody who is Mexican American is an *illegal immigrant* at one time and I can say that...In fact, we were on this land before it became Texas...our ancestors were

here whether it was Lipan Apache or whether it was the Spanish...we were in *this territory* before *this country*...this part of the United States became Texas and then Texas became part of the United States...*We were here!* We are the dividends that came with the land that was taken!

In this statement, history and citizenship are complicated by the very nature of American colonialism (expansion and land acquisition – “Manifest Destiny” (Gomez 2007). From this perspective, both history and the idea of citizenship are socially constructed phenomena often invented to oppress and/or marginalize groups deemed as racially inferior (Ngai 2004). Scholars have argued that histories and policies written about Mexican Americans and for the border region have continued to instill fear, doubt, suspicion, while simultaneously creating a docile population through the laws created to control (Foucault 1977; Dunn 1996; Navarro 2005; Gomez 2007). When talking about Mexican Americans living in the border region with careful attention to working-class Mexican Americans living in the *colonias* [colonies] Ms. Loisa Torres was adamant about this type of control, “That’s why it’s easy for the government to want to come in and build a wall and tear us down, but the government doesn’t *understand the kind of people that we are...they don’t understand it*. I think we are also *vulnerable* because of the way we are, you know, the *respect* we have for government and all. We are vulnerable” (Torres 2009). Many of the people who are directly impacted by the barrier are of working class Mexican American background (see Wilson et. al. 2008). In addition, the vulnerabilities Loisa is referring to continue to impact many of the landowners – poverty, fear and respect of the government. Furthermore, she points to the State’s unwillingness and/or incapacity to understand the plight of Mexican Americans living in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. These factors make this group of citizens a *vulnerable* population.

The Secure Fence Act As Jeopardizing Citizen's Safety

While most of those impacted were working-class Hispanic and/or Mexican Americans, there were some Anglo Americans that were also fighting the federal State to keep their property such as the Langley Family. More importantly, not all Texas landowners who found themselves in the path of the barrier felt the same as Dr. Loisa Torres. There were some who strongly felt that America needed to “Secure its Borders,” while firmly believing that immigration should be a National Security concern. For example, Louis, 72 and his wife Debra Langley, 68, lived on a farm in Brownsville, TX near the Rio Grande River. They made a living by producing and selling fruits such as naval oranges and grapefruits. The concern for securing the border was a constant theme throughout my interview with Mrs. Debra Langley. Nonetheless, she still felt that the federal State should have looked for alternatives to the “fence” as she described her situation with the barrier,

I think there *were* alternatives. We have lived on the border for a long time and so *we* know how there is a lot of stuff going on. It's always been like that...there has always been people crossing and there has always been drug smuggling. It's just been that way and we are aware of that...*I'm for securing the border as an American citizen...*I believe in that, but I don't think this is the way to go. But, that's *my* opinion only. My idea is to put a tower like at the airport...towers where they watch the planes come in...I would suggest that they put towers every mile or quarter of a mile or half a mile with all the technology that is available, that they have personnel always watching twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days out of the year. Just everyday...that they have an individual that does nothing but visually watch the border (Langley 2009).

Mrs. Langley declares that she is an American citizen who is in agreement with the federal State's right to secure the border. The problem for Mrs. Debra Langley was the specific solution to the problem – the erection of 670 miles of a steel barrier. Mrs. Langley's concerns about safety and the fears of terrorist immigrants coming across the

border were concrete enough and felt the need to have twenty-four hour surveillance along the border region. Many of the landowners I spoke with did not report having a problem with unauthorized immigrants crossing the border into their properties, but Mrs. Langley did acknowledge that this was a problem on her property,

We have seen *hundreds of people crossing*. You know, I mean, uh, usually it can vary from six to fifteen people at a time...It's not just Mexico...we are talking about *all* countries – Pakistan, uh, China, Guatemala, El Salvador. So, you know, if people think it's *only* from Mexico...no that's not true! They have the OTM's... OTM is Other Than Mexico. So, my son has actually had people from China...Oh, there are people from all over the world coming in here. But, the thing you need to understand is that it is a big business. There could be ten or twenty thousand dollars made off of someone from certain countries like Pakistan. These people are making money off of people and it is a very crude business (Langley 2009).

On August 15, 2008, in an interview with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) reporter Maria Hinojosa, Mrs. Langley stated, “Initially I thought that maybe a fence was a good idea, and the more I've learned the more I realize what a mistake it is to put this fence up.” She was under the impression that the government owned the levee system and figured it would be a good idea if the State decided to build the barrier on the levee. Initially, Mrs. Langley did not realize that the government intended to build the wall approximately one hundred feet north of the levee, thus encompassing part of the Langley family farmland,

Yes and actually in one of those meetings...um, you know, I even thought putting up a fence...because I at the time thought that the government owned the levee. You see, the IBWC, which is the International Boundary and Water Commission, built the levee. I was thinking that the *government* owned that levee but I was mistaken. Well, and I had thought well since they *already* owned the levee maybe putting a fence on the levee would be a good idea. But, I didn't realize at the moment that that was *not* a good idea because they were going to condemn the land and then we would lose the *control* of entering *our* private property (Langley 2009).

Debra Langley and her immediate family own approximately eight hundred acres of

farmland, which includes a section of her son's property, and all this land will soon be walled off. Debra's son Fred Langley and his family will be on the south side of the wall and cut off from his parent's house and the City of Brownsville. His mother was distraught and very concerned about the fate of her son and his family once the barrier was erected,

This is the United States of America and this is wonderful beautiful productive farmland, which raises grain, corn, sunflowers, soybeans...we are stewards of the land. Our sons...our sons farm this land. That's our concern...nobody came down here when all this stuff was happening...no one came to look at this...and all of this is going to be inside [meaning the south side of the fence] and it won't be safe for my family to live in here with the fence and the gate and having Mexico *right* there [points in the direction of Mexico to the south] (Langley 2009).

The concept of safety was at the heart of Mrs. Langley's response. The idea of having her son and his family on the south side of the barrier was frightening. There are several layers of concern here. One, the State, along with the news media, has manufactured the idea that there was a huge problem with "border violence" and/or "spillover violence" taking place on a daily basis along the U.S.-Mexico. By the second week of 2009, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff's last remaining days in office alarmed the public again with the possibility of a border "surge," of violence from Mexico resulting in the need for U.S. military troops along the border, "We completed a contingency plan for border violence, so if we did get a significant spillover, we have a surge - if I may use that word - capability to bring in not only our own assets but even to work with the Defense Department" (Archibold 2009).

Since the militarization of the border beginning in the 1970s the term border "surge" was frequently used to denote paramilitary activities (see Dunn 1996). But, it also conjures up feelings of everyday people (or in military terms – civilians)

participating in this war as well. For example, ideas of an out of control border tend to blur the narrative of danger when talking about communities along the border. For example, political elites will publicly announce that the “border is out of control” by mentioning how places like Ciudad Juarez are extremely dangerous; Yet, its northern neighbor – El Paso, TX was labeled as the second safest city in the country in 2009 (Borunda 2009). Every community and its inhabitants along the border become “dangerous” and “out of control” as these images and discourses are conflated. Moreover, what is neglected in the public discourse is that documented spillover violence on U.S. soil stemming from drug cartels has been sparse.

Most recently, the cases of Krentz and Hartley have created a media frenzy about “border violence” spinning out of control. On March 27, 2010 an Arizona rancher named Robert Krentz, 58, was shot to death on his property. Authorities suspected a Mexican drug smuggler shot Krentz that day (Archibold 2010). A second incident occurred six months later on September 30, 2010 on the Mexican side of Falcon Lake, a bi-national lake shared by Texas and Mexico, where 30 year-old David Michael Hartley was allegedly killed by Mexican pirates. David and Tiffany Hartley were jet skiing on the Mexican side of Falcon Lake doing some sightseeing when they were “ambushed” by Mexican pirates and Tiffany stated that her husband David had been shot in the back of the head (Weber 2010). Tiffany managed to escape and called authorities for help (Brezosky 2010).

In May, a few months prior to the incident, local authorities had warned tourists and locals not to venture into the Mexican side of the lake since there had been reports of boat robberies. The San Antonio Express News reported Cindy Young’s (the mother of

Tiffany Hartley) fear of border violence that would soon escalate and spread across the United States of America,

The family's campaign to make David's death "something bigger than David" - a wake-up call about the Mexican border drug war - can continue in Colorado, Young said. "We're not done yet," she said. "We want everybody to call their congressmen and talk about this issue. Because it's not just the border town, it's nationwide. Even us in Colorado need to pay attention to this." (San Antonio Express News 2010).

Authorities on both sides of the border have yet to find David Hartley's body and some politicians and law enforcement officials remain skeptical toward Tiffany Hartley's story.

This discourse on "spillover violence" has fueled panic throughout the nation and political stakeholders are pushing for more border security. The concept of "spillover violence" can have multiple meanings and it is never quite clear what politicians, anti-immigration groups, and the media specifically mean when they use the term. Texas Governor Rick Perry publicly stated, "It's really become substantially worse in the last 18 months with the drug cartels having almost free rein... This is about our citizens, on both sides of the borders, safety" (Fox News 2010). All in all, should these stories constitute "spillover violence"? When is it considered "isolated cases" and/or "spillover violence?"

To date, the Hartley case has been the only incident that has occurred near the Texas shoreline. Meanwhile, State officials along with the assistance of the media have blurred the lines between drug cartel violence on Mexican soil and violence inside the United States. Blurring the lines of violence has been an effective method for State political elites in contributing to an anti-Mexican hysteria and a restrictionist border security attitude. Texas governor, Mr. Rick Perry, has played a crucial role in the hype surrounding the potential for terrorist aliens coming across the border and recently asked the Department of Homeland Security for unmanned aerial aircraft for surveillance

purposes (Eaton 2010). The Department of Homeland Secretary Janet Napolitano did not immediately agree to Texas Governor Rick Perry's request because there was no "spillover violence" in Texas. Texas Republican Senator John Cornyn critiqued current DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano for not providing Mr. Perry with the resources necessary to provide border security. In Senator Cornyn's interview with the American-Statesman on March 17, 2010, he admitted there had been no spillover violence in Texas, "As far as the Texas border is concerned, to my knowledge, we have not had spillover violence, per se," Cornyn said on the conference call. 'It's more like the threat of spillover violence' (Eaton 2010).

The political concept of "spillover violence" needs to be analyzed critically – its use and meaning require close scrutiny. For many political stakeholders and Americans, "spillover violence" is a concept that is both real and illusory since there has been no actual violence on Texas soil. What becomes a concern is the *threat* of spillover violence. Other concerns that come to the surface are: what constitutes spillover violence and is that violence unidirectional? In other words, is the violence only traveling from the South (Mexico/Latin America) to the North (United States)? What is clear about the entire concept of "spillover violence" is that powerful individuals and organizations continue to use it, and it has a deleterious effect on the lives of many border residents. On March 17, 2010, Senator Cornyn posted a news release illustrating a short news article written with his colleague Senator Kay B. Hutchison on the issue of spillover violence. The news release stated,

WASHINGTON—In response to the brazen murders of two U.S. citizens affiliated with the American consulate in Ciudad Juarez, U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn today urged President Barack Obama again to take

action on the escalating violence along our southern border. ‘The spillover violence in Texas is real and it is escalating. Our border patrol agents and local law enforcement are more regularly engaged with gunmen associated with drug cartels, but our resources and personnel are limited... We urge you to deliver a concrete plan to address the increasing violence across the border, and share it with Congress,’ wrote Sens. Hutchison and Cornyn. ‘A credible plan must include immediate measures, including the temporary deployment of additional resources to help local officials better protect their citizens and communities as well as minimize disruptions to travel and trade.’ (Cornyn 2010).

In his interview with the American-Statesman, Senator Cornyn indicated there had actually never been any spillover violence and that his main concern was the *potential* for spillover violence. Nonetheless, in another article, Cornyn states that the spillover violence in Texas is “real” and it is “escalating.” Meanwhile, you have two competing discourses – potential for violence and real escalating violence. Current DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano publicly stated that there was no need for Texas to receive extra resources to combat violence along the border (see Eaton 2010). On the other hand, two prominent conservative Texas Senators have continued to declare the opposite. This creates confusion and heightened fear among the public given that terrorist discourses continue to escalate with regard to violence along the border. These discourses created primarily by the State have an impact on local communities along the border as residents become saturated with terrifying ideas about terrorists and “illegal” immigrants.

While at the Langley farm, Debra and I jumped in her Chevy pick-up truck and she drove me through various parts of their property, including her son Fred’s land. She decided to take me to a pavilion area where the entire family normally participated in birthdays, Mother’s day, Father’s Day and play games like volleyball and other outdoor games. The Rio Grande was approximately 10 ft from their small family pavilion, but would soon be on the south side of the barrier. It is clear that this land has a special

significance for the family as noted below,

*Our whole lives have been changed... We have our Fourth of July picnics, Mother's Day picnics, and Father's day picnics, and birthday celebrations over here. I'll just show you and you will understand... we are just saddened at what's happening because it will make things totally different. This is going to be like a no man's land. The land, when the fence goes up, will be just ruined! What we've had will never be the same again because now we have the freedom to come and go. The *government* will basically *own* the *entry* all the way down the property to get in here. They haven't told us what kind of access we are going to have, you know, we *just* don't know. Also, our sons' farming sometimes is not very good and so they do hunting leases... I want you to look right here. Right there we have a volleyball net and they play games... we have eleven grandchildren. This is the Rio Grande river and this is a beautiful scene of the river, isn't it? We can sit here and just see the beauty of what *we* have here (Langley 2009).*

The freedom to use their land as they had in the past will dramatically change within a few months as the barrier is erected. Knowing it will become a no-man's land is disheartening for Debra, as they had spent years celebrating family events there. The barrier will disrupt their familial gatherings and their cohesiveness as a family unit. In addition, the problems of information sharing and access to information for the Langley's proved to be a daunting mission. Economic tensions were also present in her account as the family made a living as farmers. The Rio Grande River now represented something beautiful (beautiful land and plentiful vegetation) and something negative (having their land partitioned and turned into a "no man's land). Fears about overall security from the Mexican drug cartels and diseased bodies were also present in Debra's story of living along the Texas-Mexico border,

*I think it may get worse with the drug cartels in Mexico... things may get really bad on the border. That's why I think you should have twenty-four hour surveillance... visual people and boots on the ground, horse patrol, the use of dogs for dope... They did tell my son and his wife that *if* there is an Orange Alert that he and his family will have to pack up their belongings and move into town until the alert is over. It's to try to control immigration and drug smuggling and *it is a problem*. My concern about the illegal smuggling is the *health issue* because *we got all of our diseases under control in this country* and when these people come in, we just have no clue. It's not just Mexico (Langley 2009).*

Security and safety for Debra Langley also meant that the federal State must keep diseases and/or diseased bodies out of the United States. This fear of diseases was concretized by the political and media discourses regarding the H1N1 influenza (commonly known as the swine flu) that emerged full force three months before my trip to Cameron County. Many people around the nation were wearing facemasks and using germ-fighting sanitizers trying to protect themselves from the “deadly” disease. An Associated Press article in May of 2009, reported “Mexico chartered a plane on Monday to China to bring home 70 of its citizens who were seized at the airport and quarantined, declaring that the swine flu epidemic was no reason for "repressive and discriminatory measures" (Koop 2009). People from Mexico were seen as disease carrying bodies spreading the “swine flu” disease to other parts of the country and world.

In south Texas, Judy Dominguez Trunnell, a young pregnant mother, died in May 2009 from both health complications and the H1N1 flu. Initially, when Trunnell went to get treatment for her flu symptoms, doctors did not know what type of flu she had. Later, officials announced that the combination of both an underlying chronic health condition and the H1N1 flu both caused Mrs. Trunnell’s unfortunate death. Nonetheless, most media outlets continued to discuss her death as only related to the “swine flu.” Trunnell was said to be the first victim of the H1N1 in the United States (Martinez 2009). The local Brownsville Herald ran a story of Trunnell putting the matter in full perspective in an interview with Dr. Joseph McCormick, regional dean at the University of Texas School of Public Health in Brownsville,

‘I certainly think the two together are kind of a double dose of underlying conditions,’ McCormick said. ‘We know that pregnancy itself, especially in a third trimester, is a risk. If you add a respiratory condition to that, if that is what she had, that just raises the risk even higher.’ Trunnell was in the third trimester

of her pregnancy. McCormick said associated risks motivate health officials to encourage pregnant women to get the influenza vaccine during the regular flu season. Although McCormick defined the H1N1 flu virus as a mild disease, he added there are individuals out there who are vulnerable if they have other medical conditions (Martinez 2009).

While others mentioned other anxieties, Mrs. Langley was the only landowner who expressed a concern about a spread of diseases by Mexican immigrants. Security along the border for Mrs. Langley meant protection from terrorists, diseased immigrant bodies, and narco-trafficking Mexicans. However, security for her represented a double-edged sword. While the family demonstrated strong conservative feelings about securing the borders from “illegal” immigrants, they did not believe the barrier was the solution. Mrs. Debra Langley in particular expressed strong emotions about the border and how the fence would impact their lives. Debra felt that the barrier was simply “de-facing” America,

We like it here...I mean my husband was born and raised here...this is his home. Um, there were six children in his family. He and his brother both live here...one of his brothers lives across the road from us. So, um, we are not anti-securing the border! That needs to be really clear...We are not that way! Because we live here...securing the border is an important issue. It's how we secure the border and now in essence we are de-facing the United States of America, Cameron County, Brownsville, the border...we are de-facing our own country! You know what? There is not any amount of money that I can put on my family that is going to be fenced inside the fence with Mexico to their East (Langley 2009).

In the final analysis, this was the problem: Debra wanted a secure border, but neither she nor her family liked the government's solution. As a grandmother, Debra felt a sense of vulnerability for her granddaughters who would be subjected to living behind the border fence and possibly being confronted with violence. No matter how much money the State would offer for the property, Debra disagreed with her husband on the negotiation plan and felt compelled to protect her family's safety over the State's plan,

It's just a safety concern...my granddaughters are seventeen years old and under – seventeen, fourteen, and ten years old. I said, 'You know what? I *can't do that!* I *can't sign* their papers! They can't do that!' The family will be *unsafe!* My grandchildren *all* ride horses. They *all* ride horses back here and they were just doing that a couple of days ago. So, we, you know, we don't *have* any problems as it is, but when the fence goes up it's going to change. Last fall, I was over here picking tomatoes by myself on this farm with the river right there...but I would *never* do that again once the fence goes up. I would be worried. I would be afraid (Langley 2009).

Both Mr. and Mrs. Langley debated the advantages and disadvantages of the border barrier. The government would offer the Langley's over twenty-four thousand dollars for the partitioned piece of land. Mr. Langley thought the compensation was reasonable, yet for Mrs. Langley no amount of money could persuade her to put her family in danger. In the end, the family did not agree with the State and would eventually be sued by the government. Furthermore, the issues of capital and safety were part of the family's debate. But, for Mrs. Langley, the fear of potential criminal activity as a consequence of the wall justified her rationale for disagreeing with the State and her husband. The idea of being walled off on the "Mexican side" was a terrifying picture for the entire Langley family. Undoubtedly, it is not *the* Mexican side, legally speaking; however, in the minds of many landowners these were two common narratives that emerged – First, that the United States was giving this U.S. soil to Mexico by re-making a natural boundary with a new (metal) one (Associated Press 2008). Second, there was also frustration that resonated through newspaper coverage and landowners alike about the creation of a "no man's land" between the United States and Mexico (Associated Press 2007; Schwartz 2010). The overall sentiment was that the State was negatively impacting landowner rights and citizen protection against harm.

The Langley family was aware of the concept of eminent domain and felt that Americans in general and they in particular were upset about “illegal” immigration. Debra admitted that there was “pressure” on the government to build the barrier, but she still felt that she was in a quagmire for three reasons: One, she was concerned about immigration; Two, she felt compelled to protect her family; Three, she did not want the federal State to build the barrier through the family land. The Langley family met with local level DHS officials and voiced their concerns to the local government, but these efforts proved futile as the Bush Administration planned to stay its course on building the barrier,

Well, we have had numerous meetings...now I’m going to estimate...for a year and a half where Border Patrol would come and sit down and chitchat and chitchat about nothing in particular. But, then we had *more* meetings with *more people*. We had one meeting with the Border Patrol and the Army Corp of Engineers and they talked to us. I never actually wanted a fence to begin with, but I do understand that people in America are upset about the illegal immigration. I think the pressure was on for the leadership to do something about the immigration problem. I *think* it *may* get worse because I think with the drug cartels in Mexico...I think things may get *really* bad on the border [emphasis added] (Langley 2009).

Federal State officials heard what Texas landowners were saying, but they were not attentively listening to what was being said. Debra and I talked about America’s values and beliefs – democracy, independence, and individual rights – as we drove through her property. As an American citizen, she felt that there was no one in Washington or locally who was advocating on behalf of the landowners. Federal government control of their property evoked intense emotions from landowners such as the Langley family. Since the Langley family did not sign the waiver to let DHS on their property, they were sued by the State for failing to comply with the “friendly condemnation” procedures. Even though Mr. Langley’s health problems meant that he should to avoid stressful situations,

dealing with the State about these issues made that impossible. The physical, psychological and material effects caused by the Secure Fence Act and negotiating with the State drove many landowners into a dark hole of despair. As Mr. Langley's illness intensified, Debra had to take over operations of the farm, ensuring production while simultaneously dealing with the government. In retrospect, she detailed her initial thoughts about the barrier and then explains the family's experiences,

They are trying to *secure* the United States of America but each area should be *examined carefully* and studied and not just say, 'We are going to throw a fence up here and disregard the people who live around and behind it. When you do it California and Arizona there is nothing there but desert...that's just land against land. This is beautiful country! We are in a *legal battle* right now because we are trying to get the government to address this land. *What will happen to the land that we own?* My husband and I own a small amount but our sons are buying seven hundred acres, which was long before the fence was ever proposed...*when the fence goes up what is that going to do to the value of the property?* I will be honest with you, the government offered us twenty-four thousand seven hundred dollars for the 60 ft strip at the base of the levee where our property is and then they ignored the orchard on the other side of the levee...*But, what about our entry to our property?* [Emphasis added] (Langley 2009).

Debra felt that building a steel barrier in other states such as California and Arizona was a reasonable alternative since they do not have a natural boundary like the Rio Grande River in south Texas. Texas has "beautiful" land to offer its people. Debra questions the principles of lawmakers by exposing how they were not careful, considerate, smart, compassionate, or understanding in their approach to seizing hundreds of acres of land. Debra told me, from the start of the government proceedings, she felt wary of the officials and the "friendly condemnation" waivers. She made it clear to her husband that there would be no signing of any government papers. In the following statement, Debra proclaims that her intuition regarding the State's waiver caused her not to sign on the dotted line,

That's when I told my husband, 'Something doesn't sound right!' Something just didn't seem right and *maybe* women just have these *feelings* that other people just don't comprehend, but it was *very real*. They did offer my sons money, and I actually don't remember how much it was, that they offered them...like I told you there is a thing called a 'friendly condemnation' and lots of people *took it*, you understand? They offered them a sum of money if they would sign the papers and then, you know, that would be it. Well, *we didn't sign the papers* so now we are in a legal battle with the government trying to get them to tell us *how* we are going to get in and out? What *kind* of control we are going to have to get into our property? (Langley 2009).

As I spent time in the locality, I found out from landowners and resident activists that the language in the waivers and letters from the federal State caused much confusion and panic. Many landowners did not fully understand the legal language and had no prior experience with State notions of eminent domain, "friendly condemnation," or what it meant for DHS to "survey" their land. Debra described her suspicion about the waivers as something quite natural for a woman to have these "very real feelings." A person's gut feeling about a situation can stem from previous experiences that provide a mental schema and assist a person in judging a matter they are currently experiencing. DHS officials did not provide the full details of what "surveying" land entailed or what the legal ramifications would be if landowners did not sign. When the Langleys' did not sign the waiver, they were perceived as enemies by the federal State because of their resistance, facing a lawsuit that would last more than a year. DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff discussed landowner's "unruliness" to participate by stating, "What we're not going to do is say that everyone gets to decide whether they're going to participate in the process and if they don't want to, then the greater good be damned" (Witt 2008). The "greater good" is defined as being patriotic, and thus signing allowing the federal State to survey the land for barrier construction. Not allowing was equated with being un-

American, un-patriotic, and by default not invested in the protecting Americans from terrorism, “illegal” immigration, and drug trafficking.

Summary

The themes of erosion of democracy and the jeopardizing of citizen safety were predominant in all my landowner accounts regardless of their personal views on the barrier. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the relationship between the federal State and Texas landowners (residents whose properties were in the direct path of the border barrier). All the landowners I interviewed resisted the Secure Fence Act, however, their justifications behind their resistance did not emerge out of the same concerns. Meanwhile, the DHS publicly denounced the resistance as if it were a *united collective*, when in fact it was a *fragmented* one. Chapter nine delves into the community member group, whose activism at the ground level took on different forms depending on their stake in the local community. Since community members did not have to contend directly with the fact of a barrier going through their land, their responses and experiences differed from Texas landowners who were directly impacted by the federal State mandate. Nonetheless, their reactions, like the landowners, shed light on the different concerns weighed in by community members.

CHAPTER 9: FINDINGS

Community Members Take to the Streets

Introduction

Texas landowners were not the only people taking the federal State to task on property rights. Most of the community members in the county and the surrounding areas took to the streets to either support or oppose the State's lawsuits and barrier construction. Some of these residents considered themselves ordinary working Americans until the barrier began impacting neighbors and friends in their community. On the other hand, there were residents who had always been involved in overall social welfare activism and local political change.

My interviews with indicated that the national discourses on the "War on Terror" and "illegal Immigration" shaped and informed the daily lives of border residents in Brownsville and the surrounding communities. Community members indicated varying concerns, experiences, and sentiments toward the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA). There were three dominant themes that emerged from the community member's interviews: (1) American Patriots Support the State; (2) Barriers as Permeable and Unifying and; (3) Us (Southern border) v. Them (Northerners): Politicians Whipping Up Fear. The sections below capture each theme in detail.

American “Patriots” Support the Federal State

As previously mentioned, Texas proved to be the toughest state that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) battled. I searched long and hard to find local activists who were in favor of the barrier and everyone I spoke with could only point to one individual who publicly advocated for the wall on the streets and at City Council meetings. I attended two city council meetings in Brownsville that were held specifically for discussing the barrier in order to meet different individuals/groups who were in favor or in opposition to the Secure Fence Act. I finally met the one person others mentioned in their interviews who favored the building of the barrier. This is not to suggest that there were no other individuals who favored the wall, but Mr. Humberto Barreles was the only one who publicly advocated on behalf of the barrier. Mr. Humberto Barreles, 77, a native of Brownsville agreed wholeheartedly with the SFA law and felt it was necessary for the community and the nation as a whole. When I asked him about his activism he expressed frustration that he was the only person, who publicly advocated for the wall,

H: Most of the people are against the border wall...and there I am standing in the corner and so forth and people do not have the traits I have to be supporting this agenda.

R: Would you say there has been much organizing and protesting in resistance to the wall?

H: Yes, mainly in opposition to the wall. But, the majority, the *silent majority* is in favor of the wall.

R: You feel that there is a silent majority?

H: Yes, I do. These people are keeping quite. They call me afterwards and say, “Keep it up, keep it up!” And I am like, “Hey, but why don’t you help me?” They are afraid.

When I asked Mr. Barreles if he could put me in contact with these individuals who were a part of the “silent majority” he stated that they would not talk to me. The group of

people who made up the silent majority may have had to keep quiet in that particular locale, but in other locales, they were the “vocal majority” as many of these individuals were involved in groups like anti-immigrant vigilante organizations (i.e. Minutemen) and politicians in places like Arizona, California and Colorado for example were publicly vocal about in support of the barrier (see Doty 2009).

Mr. Barreles had served in the military and had spent the greater part of his life working in the educational system as a counselor. Discussions about the U.S. and Mexico, Americans and Mexicans, and the label Mexican American were hot button issues for the retired military veteran. When I asked him to describe his ethnic background he responded with the following,

[Angrily] *I'm an American!* I'm an American citizen, I don't want to...I am not a hyphenated American...I'm an American citizen! I was born here. I served my country. I got my education here. My parents are from here. So, I am really an American...I don't want...I don't like this hyphenated Americans. That you are one or the other, you are an American...You have an allegiance to this nation. You believe in the principles of this nation. So, you are an American citizen. You don't have to bring into it what nationality you are from...its immaterial, you know. We are all imports from other countries, but when we become an America citizen, you are an American citizen (Barreles 2009).

Mr. Barreles's property was not encroached upon by the State. However, for him the barrier was a necessity in the “War on Terror,” and the protection of America, and its citizens. He believed that his fellow landowners should relinquish their land rights for the “greater good” of the nation. The topic of immigration was also central to Humberto's favorable stance toward the barrier. Thoughts of “illegals” conjured up feelings of fear, anger, and resentment in Mr. Barreles as he spoke to me. He made it clear that America should seal its southern border in order to protect Americans from diseases, an overabundance of “illegal” immigrants, drugs, and terrorists.

Mr. Barreles, echoing similar concerns as landowner Mrs. Debra Langley, believed the term “illegal immigrant,” especially those from Latin America, signified foreign, alien, enemy, diseased bodies, terrorist, welfare abusers, and uncontrolled fertility, all in one. In addition, many of these categories were also blurred with regard to citizenship status once the topic was about people of Mexican descent. In other words, Mr. Barreles tended to conflate Mexican Americans (those born in the United States) with Mexicans who were undocumented or naturalized. In the end, the concept of citizenship dissolved when Mr. Barreles (as well as other participants) discussed heated issues such as immigration, real or perceived State welfare program abuses, or national security concerns. For example, he conveyed that he was frustrated and angered by “Hispanics” in this country because of their perceived social welfare abuses. In the response, he blurred the lines between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans (or “Hispanics”),

Hay Diosito (Oh God)! If we let things just stay they way they were then there would not be any Anglos...because the Anglos are not having kids. But, the Hispanics, “Hey! Mas werkos (more kids)!” More welfare! They have kids all over the place without thinking como los voy a mantener (how am I going to support them)? Honey, put a diaphragm on! They don’t give a shit! They just want to have sex with out any regard to what could happen afterwards. Viene el viejo borracho (a drunk man comes), they have sex, and they don’t care what happens. They cross the bridge, me dicen los (I am told by) by agents [DHS agents]...when there is not a line, I talk to the agents to get information. They come with loose blouses, well, because they are pregnant like six or seven months and they want to have their babies over here. They stay with somebody over here. When they have an emergency, the ambulance comes and los llevan al hospital (they take them to the hospital). They want to have their babies here porque aqui les dan todo (because here they are given everything) (Barreles 2009).

Labels and categories pose problems as people (including scholars) talk about Latinas/os, “Hispanics”, Chicanas/os, and Mexicanas/os, as a monolithic or homogenous group. In fact, there are recognized distinctions *between* and *within* these categories. Living on the

border for many Mexican Americans does not necessarily imply an automatic sense of social solidarity, sisterhood/brotherhood, shared struggle, and racial/ethnic solidarity between themselves or their Mexican counterparts. Scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) have talked about border life in quite a romanticized fashion leading readers to believe that all is well between Mexican Americans and their Mexican counterparts. Meanwhile, scholars such as Benjamin Saenz (1997), Pablo Vila (2000), and Josiah McC. Heyman (2002) have examined how there is much social/political distinction or “us vs. them” perspectives between these two groups in the southwest. Mr. Barreles’s personal sentiments about Mexican Americans/”Hispanics” and Mexican nationals have shaped his perceptions of the State, the barrier, and the border region.

Mr. Barreles also demonstrated a fear of “illegals” who could potentially be terrorists coming in through Mexico and harming American citizens. To this date, I have not found or been told about a case, event, or incident whereby DHS officials at U.S. ports of entry in the southwest or specifically in Texas have apprehended a suspected or known “terrorist” crossing the southern border into the United States. Yet, Mr. Barreles indicated that this had already occurred at one of the U.S.-Mexico ports of entry checkpoint,

Si (Yes). One or two of those terrorists can come from Iraq through Mexico. They have come through Mexico too and they were caught at the bridge. They still had on their Arab attire. That’s how they spotted those guys... Well, I don’t know, but if you turn all these people at Guantanamo Bay lose, they will infiltrate back into their old systems of destruction for America, you understand. We won’t know what the hell to do (Barreles 2009).

In this response, it is not clear whether or not an actual incident such as this one occurred, but what is transparent is how terrorism is linked with Mexico and the image of a terrorist

is male-gendered. As with many national discourses about terrorism/terrorists, many of my respondents conceived of terrorists as male. Further, I am not denying that people from many parts of the world cross the U.S.-Mexico border region without documentation, however, I have not found a single case where they have caught a known or suspected terrorist(s) crossing a port of entry checkpoint or in an unauthorized fashion in the Southwest region in general and Texas in particular.

A “law and order” nation was important to Humberto who believed that as American citizens we should support the government despite protests against the Secure Fence Act. He believed that those who did not support the State and its Act were un-American and un-patriotic. Mr. Barreles was scared of the idea of “open borders” and the potential flood of “illegals” into the United States. He followed strict dichotomous views regarding immigrants and the nation: lawful/criminal, legal/illegal, order/chaos, rendering any nuance problematic. When discussing views on legal immigrants, he tends to conflate naturalized citizens and undocumented immigrants and expects all “foreigners” to assimilate,

In fact, they *should* because they live over here and they got all kinds of rights and so forth. Yet, they don’t even pledge an allegiance to the flag and that kind of stuff. They don’t like the necessary obligations that an American citizen has. They [all American citizens] have a lot of obligations to *support* this nation. Right or wrong, it’s *our* nation and you got to protect it especially right now when we have *open* borders and there are a lot of people who want to come in and violate *our* laws. *They are criminals! Muchos dicen, ‘No, no mas que cruzaron el Puente!’* [Many people say, ‘Well, they should just cross through a port of entry!'] They *knowingly* do this because they *know* there is a law against coming across without documentation. It’s just like when I go to Mexico, I have to get a passport! You know! Why should *anybody* not do that? Once they start breaking laws, we don’t have a nation of laws! *We will have chaos!! We are a nation of laws!* [Emphasis added] (Barreles 2010).

It becomes clear that Mr. Barreles's "imagined community" leaves no room for the messiness of people's lives. The fact that he believed that the United States is a "law and order" nation suited his position on the border fence and the land condemnation suits. Since the landowners were allegedly compensated a market value price for their properties, Mr. Barreles believed it was a good thing, although he acknowledged this might not be a "cure all" measure,

But, they are being compensated. They are not going to give you whatever you want. I know about condemnation proceedings. They are going to give you what the appraiser tells you its worth. Not what you think it is worth. It might be worth more to you. As an appraiser, they are only going to give you a certain amount. The government is not going to take something away from you that is not worth what it's worth. Besides it is just a temporary type of thing, it is not a cure all measure, it may work or it may not work. They have to try different things (Barreles 2009).

In fact there were many residents, landowners, city/county officials and border enforcement officials who believed that the wall was not a "cure all" policy. DHS Secretary Chertoff also publicly admitted the following about the fence,

"I don't believe the fence is a cure-all," Mr. Chertoff said. "Nor do I believe it is a waste. Yes, you can get over it; yes, you can get under it. But it is a useful tool that makes it more difficult for people to cross. It is one of a number of tools we have, and you've got to use all of the tools (Archibold and Preston 2008).

Although Mr. Barreles may appear as the "Lone Ranger" in not having much local community support for the barrier, he had intense support at the state and national levels, as most Americans agreed with the government. Although statistics in opinion polls can be controversial, one opinion poll conducted by the Rasmussen Report in March 18, 2010 reported that fifty-nine percent of Americans supported the construction of the barrier. Interestingly, at the time, President Obama withdrew funding for the barrier due to lack of funds (Rasmussen Opinion Poll 2010a).

Three months later on June 24, 2010, the Rasmussen Report stated that sixty-nine percent of Texans supported sending U.S. troops to the border region to stop illegal immigration (Rasmussen Opinion Poll 2010b). The frames that Mr. Barreles evokes in his fear and dislike of “Mexicans” are clearly informed by ongoing national discourses and narratives of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. Toward the end of the interview, Mr. Barreles admits to watching conservative talk show and talk radio hosts such as Bill O’Reilly, Glenn Beck, and Lou Dobbs (Barreles 2010). In many ways, Mr. Barreles had become a vessel whereby these national discourses are channeled into local communities.

Barrier as Permeable and Unifying

Notwithstanding the above, a large social movement opposing the Secure Fence Act (SFA) surfaced in the South Texas Rio Grande Valley. The Coalition of Amigos in Solidarity and Action (CASA), a social movement organization in Cameron County, pulled together residents and landowners against the State. Many members of the group had a good portion of their lives working with the disadvantaged in the community and abroad. For example, as Elida Garza, 44, head organizer for CASA explained, “the involvement in community projects has been very important personally to me... You know, for me it is not a job... It is a way of living... That’s who I am... it is something that has to be done.” The emotional affect conveyed by Ms. Garza’s tone captures her core beliefs about being a community member and an activist. Ms. Garza’s attributes her strong feelings to the fact that she was born in Matamoros, Mexico and still has a strong connection with her family in Mexico. I do not wish to presume that all naturalized

citizens of the U.S. from Mexico have these feelings toward Mexico or their Mexican relatives, but familial connections in Mexico do shape attitudes, beliefs, and values of people living in the Rio Grande Valley (see Richardson 1999; Vila 2000).

In addition, communal relations and a shared struggle among community members influence how residents view each other and those on the Mexican side. For example, Elida passionately talked about the borderlands and believed the region was unique and a central part of her life and identity. Her response is different from that of Ms. Loisa Torres or Mr. Humberto Barreles who have other particular histories and experiences living in the community. One major difference between Ms. Garza and the other respondents is that she was born in Mexico and still has family living there, which influences how she conceptualizes the border

I think it's that *family connection*. Those that live on *this* side of the river *still* have a lot of ties on the *other* side of the river. In Canada, you don't really see that too much. People in Canada are from Canada and people from the United States are from the U.S. So, therefore, it has not created that, um, new culture that is caught *in-between*...The *Frontera* is different than the rest of the country...This is *very* hard to *explain* unless *you live here*...it is something that you have to *experience* and it *is* different. It's the *way* we support each other and not just as family members, but as communities...from one community to another. *It's a struggle* that has brought *us* together in many ways...According to other people the border is a division...For me, personally, it's a *connection*. Maybe that is the uniqueness of living in the *Frontera* because if you are living in the *Frontera* you are going to see that it has a *connection* when the rest of the country sees it as a *separation* (Garza 2009).

At the beginning of Elida's comments she explains how the southern border is different from the Canadian border because as Canadians immigrate to the U.S., they are "allowed" to assimilate. As Canadians shed their previous identity, they have an opportunity take on take on an American identity. This is why there is no "in-between" culture for Canadians, as Elida reminds us. On the southern border, Mexicans who migrate to the United States are constantly reminded of their Mexican identity and

culture, which makes this a hybrid space where White, Mexican, and Indian intersect. In order to understand life on the border and the borderlands, Elida instructs that one must “experience” it. Outsiders must be able to experience living on the border – eating the food, listening to the music, interacting with other ethnicities, working in the communities, and sharing things with your neighbors. As a result, one is able to gain a sense of solidarity and awareness of the other person’s stake in the community. Unfortunately, the Rio Grande Valley is one of the poorest regions in the country and economic conflicts are commonplace (see Richardson and Resendiz 2006). Nonetheless, the communal ideal of helping your neighbor is fundamental for survival.

Barriers and/or dividing borderlines may be a hardened division or demarcation for many Americans, but for community members like Elida, these barriers are quite permeable and have the potential for unifying people living on both sides of the demarcated boundary. Accepting borders and/or barriers as both permeable and unifying is similar to Du Bois’s construction of the *veil* (Du Bois 1922). The barrier becomes both a material object and a social construct that shapes people’s identity and can transform social structures such as the State (Winant 2004). Further, it transforms geographic regions and their landscapes as well as nations. Winant (2004: 25) discussed the “dialectics of the veil” and how it “embodies antagonism and interdependence.” The narrative of Mr. Humberto Barreles typifies the antagonism and Elida Garza evokes the interdependence, permeability, and unifying forces at play. The State imposed barrier suggests a system of meaning-making processes that vary based on the social location of the individual. The unity that the barrier creates is also based upon emotions and feelings - anger, grief, shared sense of struggle, empowerment, familial connection, and solidarity.

For instance, the Coalition of Amigos in Solidarity and Action (CASA) joined with the No Border Wall Coalition and staged a protest in Edinburg, TX where approximately five hundred people marched in opposition to the barrier. The event convened at the University of Texas Pan American and had speakers from across the region and country talk about the negative outcomes (cultural, political, environmental, and economic) of the Secure Fence Act and potential alternatives.

The protestors claimed that the State was targeting its southern border, border residents, and Mexican immigrants by using “terrorist propaganda” in order to further militarize the area. Elida spoke to many of the concerns of the demonstrators and border residents,

It’s nothing more than a *racist* barrier! I’m sure you have heard from people that it’s not going to work. There has been lots of propaganda from the government saying we need the wall because of security reasons...Again, like I said, it’s been propaganda. You know, when they talk about security it’s all about 9/11. After 9/11 everything changed and so they want to blame *us* for what happened on 9/11, which everybody knows is *not* true....they want to create something to protect the country from terrorists.... Since 9/11 like I said everything changed to the point that even undocumented immigrants moving to *el Norte* became criminalized in the U.S. If they become *criminalized*, that means they are *dangerous*, and if they are dangerous, we need to put up *something* to stop them from coming to this country (Garza 2009).

The racialized constructions of people of Mexican descent, primarily Mexican immigrants, has led to increased criminalization and racial profiling of undocumented immigrants (Dunn 1996; Nevins 2002; Fernandes 2007; Goldsmith et. al. 2009). The 9/11 tragedy only intensified these activities leading law enforcement to question people’s citizenship status based on their “Mexican” appearance (Bender 2002; Romero 2008).

Despite discussing the barrier as a source of racial/ethnic and familial connection with their Mexican counterparts, Elida was also aware of its antagonisms, as dividing lines can stifle solidarity between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. Surprisingly, Elida did not agree with the pan-ethnic term of Latino or Latina and felt that it further fragmented people of Mexican descent; Du Bois's theorizing of "double-consciousness" and the veil are useful in analyzing Elida's narrative because it also represents moments where a person's identity becomes "sundered and fused" (Winant 2004: 28) as noted below,

We don't think or act the same...because we have been through the *assimilation process*...we have become *Americanized*...I mean, the Border Patrol Agents are a perfect example...most Border Patrol on the southern border are of Mexican descent and those *are* the *worst* agents! They are the ones that treat the illegals the worst! Why? Because they have become *Americanized* and they have to *prove* that, 'I'm an American!' Despite having Mexican heritage...I am an American citizen and was born here and now I am better than you are!' That is one of the problems we have had in *our* culture because *Latinos* is such a broad concept...I *hate* that term, Latino! We are so *different*...yet we are still Latino? But, because we *are* different we are always fighting amongst ourselves. There is that lack of *unity* among ourselves...I don't know who invented that term 'Latino.' I am *Mexican*! I, myself, find it difficult... There are times I don't like to be called 'Mexican.' I'm from *la Frontera*... I, I, [pauses]...You know, if I...If I had to describe myself I would say I am a 'Mexican.' You know, that's what I am even though the border town Matamoros is different from the rest of the country...it's still part of Mexico and that's what I am...I'm a Mexican. But, because I live on the *Frontera* and I would rather consider myself as *Chicana*! (Garza 2009).

These "sundered and fused" (Winant 2004: 28) moments illuminate the ways in which identities are shaped by social structures such as the State that invent and disperse political discourses about racial/ethnic identity and citizenship. The U.S. Census Bureau, an entity that is also in charge of "racial(ized) management," (Roediger 2008) constructs racialized descriptors/categories: White, Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Some Other

Race. In addition, there are two minimum categories for ethnicity – Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau “Racial and Ethnic Classifications Used in Census 2000 and Beyond”). This presents a quagmire for Mexican Americans who may not identify as “racially” White, but rather simply as Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicana/o. The nuances of a Mexican American, Mexican, or Chicana/o identity are rendered invisible in instances where these individuals have to fill-in the circle next to “White” and “Hispanic or Latino.” Theoretically, a person has the ability to write-in his/her self-identification as “Some Other Race,” but such instances could further muddle the identity politics of an individual/group. Elida’s denigration of the terms “Latino” or “Hispanic” is no surprise given the racialized historical trajectory of people of Mexican descent in the Texas-Mexico border. This identity politics is explained by Lopez ([1994] 2011: 13) as he states that racial self-identification has a contextual component,

Context is the social setting in which races are recognized, constructed, and contested; it is the ‘circumstances directly encountered, give and transmitted from the past.’ At the meta level, context includes both ideological and material components, such as entrenched cultural and customary prejudices, and also maldistributed resources, marketplace inequalities, and everything from individual actors and community movements to broad-based changes in the economic, demographic, and political landscape...context also refers to highly localized settings. The systems of meaning regarding morphology and ancestry are inconstant and unstable. These systems shift in time and space, and even across class and educational levels, in ways that give to any individual different racial identities depending upon her shifting location.

Unlike other Mexican Americans I interviewed, Elida justified her self-identity based on the localized setting – the Rio Grande Valley – to formalize a “Mexican” or “Chicana” identity. Elida has lived in other parts of the Southwest such as Arizona and has visited Israel and Palestine where there are stark racial and religious differences and tensions. Lopez ([1994] 2011) mentions that class and education can make a difference in how a person racially/ethnically identifies. At this moment, there are three components that

emerge here: One, external constructions of a group; Two, internal group constructions; and; Three, self-identification of any one individual (i.e. Elida Garza). Future investigation along the border would be able to ascertain how the border barrier over the course of a long period will impact the identities of Mexican Americans. As Lopez ([1994] 2011) reminds us, social and geographic contexts play a crucial role in identity formation. I speculate that the border barrier will primarily have a negative effect on the political and cultural identities of Latinas/os, in this case Mexican Americans, living in the Texas border region.

More specifically, the awareness of subjugated knowledges/experiences pertaining to the historically violent, contentious, and accommodationist relationship between Anglos, Mexicans, and indigenous peoples in Texas history can also shape a person's identity (see Spivak 1988; Foucault 2003). In this case, the historical trajectory or contextual histories of these three groups in the Southwest provide the groundwork for a local setting/context. The meta-historical-narrative in the Southwest, particularly in the schools, has been that Anglos are superior and Mexicans are inferior, and findings ways to resist this past remains a difficult venture for many Mexican Americans living in Texas (Montejano 1987). In fact, as Shorris ([1992] 2011: 6) pointed out, "Latino history has become a confused and painful algebra of race, culture, and conquest; it has less to do with evidence than with politics, for whoever owns the beginning has dignity, whoever owns the beginning owns the world." This awareness and resistance to the meta-historical-narrative in Texas by Elida and others promote the possibility for symbolic and material borders/barriers to be penetrated while simultaneously binding.

“Us” (Southern border) v. “Them” (North): Politicians Whipping Up Fear

Wayne Collier, 39, is a well-known social justice/environmental activist in Cameron County and the surrounding areas. While juggling home-life with his wife and young daughter and working as a Community College instructor, Wayne found time to protest against the State’s border wall. The borderlands conjured up a feeling that was “always present” for him (Collier 2009) by the very fact that he like other border residents *know* there is a borderline. But, for many border residents who live in the area, it is as if it is *not* there. In many ways, the borderline carries a different perception from the barrier, one that is more symbolic, yet visible and invisible as Wayne put it,

I think mentally for the rest of the country it’s sort of as though there already *is* a wall that demarcates the border. But, down here it’s not that big of a deal. You are conscious of the fact that there is a border. You are conscious of the fact that if you want to walk across you gotta have documentation to get back in and you are probably going to wait in line for a while...I think for a lot of people who have family ties and have lived here all their lives...like for a lot of my student since I teach at STCC...they go *back* and *forth* on the border *all* the time. They have friends and family on *both* sides. I think that’s part of the reason people see the border wall as being so ludicrous because it doesn’t make sense with the way *people actually live down here*... So, *where* is the *fear*? What’s the need for building something like this *thing*? (Collier 2009).

Many Texas-Mexico border residents realize that the borderline becomes *real* when they have to provide the legal documents necessary to cross this imaginary, yet legal line.

Wayne declared that what seems *foreign* for many residents was traveling “up North” to different parts of Texas such as San Antonio, Austin, Dallas or Houston. Both Wayne and his students felt more *comfortable* crossing next door into the Mexican border communities. Mexican border communities near Cameron County such as Matamoros and Reynosa are not consistently shown in the media as “violently out of control” in comparison to its kin Ciudad Juarez, which makes crossing the border much more

accessible for residents in the area. This is why Wayne asks: “Where is the fear?” What’s the need for building something like this *thing*?” The answer to this question is complicated as “violence” on the “Mexican side” is sensationalized and extended to include the entire Southwest border region. This is how political elites are able to control and manipulate how Mexico, drug cartels, U.S. and border residents on both sides of the border are defined. Whether perceived or real, politicians and the American public alike, have played a role in creating a fear of the “Mexican Other.” Most of the border residents I spoke with did acknowledge the presence of drug cartel violence, but overall they all felt that their Mexican neighbors as a whole did not pose a threat to American National Security.

Many community member activists have pointed out the stark differences in how the State manages and militarizes the southern border compared to the northern Canadian border. Wayne and others have articulated specific reasons *why* the State has operated in this manner,

We see it as being *racist!* It’s not just something that is put up out of fear. It’s a cynical attempt on the parts of many *politicians* to tap into *fear* and to *whip up fear*. It’s a *politically generated imaginary crisis*. It’s politicians trying to say, ‘*We* the dominant Conservatives haven’t been screwing up the country... We shouldn’t be facing anger from the electorate... All of the nation’s problems stem from *those* people down there! You know, the fact that unemployment is creeping up and the economy is shaky. The fact that schools don’t have enough funding or that health care is in crisis... those are not *our* problems! Congress didn’t screw things up! It’s all those immigrants coming across! They are the ones that are to blame! So, let’s put up a wall and keep them out! We, Congress, will save you from that and in two weeks you can re-elect us!’ *I think that was really the thinking behind it*. I find it offensive that people can buy into that garbage. I also find it offensive that *we* down here would be *sacrificed* so that people who will never *see* the border can whip up xenophobia just to get themselves re-elected (Collier 2009).

Conjuring up fear becomes a tool at the disposal of politicians as a method of getting re-elected into office. In Wayne’s view, rather than “Conservative” politicians having a civil

and honest dialogue with the public about the realities of – de-funding social and educational programs, schools, and accessibility to health insurance – politicians deflect responsibility and attention from themselves and onto immigrants. The Secure Fence Act was crafted by and predominantly sponsored by Republicans. However, during their run in the presidential primaries, Barack Obama, John McCain, and Hilary Clinton all voted for the Act. As late as 2009, President Barack Obama publicly announced that increasing patrol and using the latest surveillance technology “would be a better approach” than a “fence,” while continuing to ignore a detailed discussion about the impacts of the barrier on residents (Reese 2009). As politicians continue to dodge important issues regarding the barrier, it has only served to reduce trust amongst their constituents.

As the public begins to lose trust and confidence in their elected officials they are able to view situations in a different light. For example, many of the border residents I interviewed talked about political officials and Americans “up North” as descriptors for people who have no idea what the border region looks like and how residents in the area actually go about their daily lives. Wayne uncovers the belief of the “Us v. Them” of many border residents in this excerpt,

Basically, people *down* here see this as being promoted by people *up North*. So, whereas people farther North see it as an Us v. Them issue as ‘Us’ being the United States versus ‘Them’ as Mexico. People along the border on the U.S. side see it as ‘Us’ on the southern border but still U.S. citizens versus ‘Them’ being other parts of America who somehow think that this area is a war zone or a danger zone that needs to be walled off. You constantly hear us saying, ‘They are ramming this down our throats!’ The ‘They’ being the rest of the United States. There is not a feeling of the rest of the country caring about people who live on the border or being in it together with people down on the border (Collier 2009).

This comment points to the concept of citizenship and the rights associated with it.

Ideally, those who are considered citizens are granted a voice in the civil sphere along

with protections against second-class citizenship (Blau and Moncada 2006). Feminists and border studies scholars have pointed out that citizenship is never an either/or proposition, but comprised of various levels (Mouffe 1995; Rosaldo 1999; Ong 1999; Mohanty 2003;)

Given the racialized and poverty-stricken history of the Texas-Mexico border, it is no surprise that many residents have begun to view their interactions with the State as an “Us v. Them” relationship. This dynamic creates conflict between citizens as they continue to create boundaries around the concept of citizenship – who is a citizen? Wayne speaks to this tension coming from those politicians “up North” constructing an entire region as non-citizen and a threat to National Security leading people to “resentment” amongst the public toward communities up North and the State (Collier 2009). Furthermore, there are critical issues that arise within the Mexican communities on both sides of the border as one views the other with suspicion and angst as Wayne explained, “I think it is also going to cause the same resentments between people on *this side* of the river [U.S./Rio Grande Valley] and the *other side* of the river [Mexico]. The City of McAllen for a while was going into Monterrey and putting up billboards saying, ‘We still Want You to Come Visit!’ Basically, they were trying to counter the message of the wall that says, ‘*Keep Out! We don’t Want You Here!*’” (Collier 2009). These messages encourage the dismantling of solidarities between people of Mexican descent on both sides of the borderline. Mexican Americans perceive themselves as different from their Mexican counterparts, leading to discriminatory practices and negative racialized notions.

Wayne and other respondents stated that they had shared their grievances with elected officials, such as Representatives and Senators at the federal and state levels, but to no avail. The experiences were described as meaningless and unproductive,

Local politicians down here see the feds as too big to fight. They don't want to pick a fight they are going to lose. They figure that they will have to count on the federal government for various other funding so they make public statements, but don't do a heck of a lot! It showed in the run-up to the last election, Senator Cornyn in 2007 sponsored legislation that would have provided three billion dollars to build the border wall. Local politicians say, 'Senator Cornyn is in Congress and we need to be able to work with him so we can get federal funds for various projects.' They feel they are going to lose because it is a politically weak area. The reason it is weak is because politicians don't fight! They don't stand up! But, their thinking is, 'We don't have a lot of clout! So, we will grovel and see what we can get' (Collier 2009).

An important theme that emerged in Collier's interview (as well as others) was the belief that the Texas Rio Grande Valley is a politically weak region. People here believe that actions are largely based on political agendas and favors. Many residents felt that the conventional idea of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" ruled local politics. Mr. Collier's interview suggests that the state/federal representatives in the border region were predominantly against the Secure Fence Act, but realized that their concerted efforts would not make much of an impact, and could stifle funding support for other personal initiatives.

As the U.S.-Mexico border region continues to be constructed by the State, anti-immigrant groups, and conservative media outlets as "out of control" and in a state of "lawlessness," there will be continued growth in the privatization of immigrant detention centers. For example, Texas has the largest number of immigration detention centers than any other state in the nation (Arizona has 4 and California has 6 immigration detention centers) (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2010). In many ways,

the situation becomes a win-win for both the polity and private detention-facility contractors (i.e. Wackenhut, Corrections Corporation of America) as one group looks like they are tough on crime and the other gets compensated for providing the facilities (see Fernandes 2007). Ultimately, for Wayne and other community members, the political method to promote fear and Othering has worked well for politicians seeking to bolster their reputations, stakes, and re-election. Many community residents felt that the exaggeration and exacerbation of violence on the U.S.-Mexico border created a perfect opportunity for political elites to conjure up fear in the American public and capitalizing on the fear of the brown-bodied Other. Meanwhile, Texas border residents continue to deal with the consequences of these political maneuverings as their voices and lived experiences are stifled, silenced, and neglected.

Summary

The three community member narratives provide a window into the varying forms of activism centered on the Secure Fence Act. The themes mentioned in the chapter indicate that there is not a clear-cut or dichotomous position that community members have taken on the border barrier. For some, the barrier is porous and has the ability to unify people on both sides of the borderline, while for another it is a necessary concrete dividing line. In other cases, the wall represents a political agenda that politicians seek to benefit from. Nonetheless, the representation of the wall as a federal State structure and the meanings that residents attribute to this material object vary depending on their biographical particulars and past experiences with government structures. Furthermore, despite their position on the border barrier, these community members were socially

aware that the barrier was primarily a representation of the federal State forcing itself upon the region.

Conclusion of Chapter Findings

The findings section demonstrates the meaning-making systems that have emerged among federal border law enforcement officers, local government officials, landowners, and community members surrounding the federal State's mandate of the border barrier. For example, each group the border "wall" or "fence" serves as a metaphor to signify: American patriotism, racial discrimination, jeopardizing national security, permeability and unification, finally and as a tool for politicians to create fear among the public. However, it is evident that the meanings and experiences of the residents go beyond having a specific stake in the community or only shaped by a person's occupation. In digging deeper, the respondent's narratives indicate that their stake in the community as a landowner or border enforcement agent is also troubled and compounded by their race/ethnic location. The theoretical construct of the border barrier as a material/symbolic divider and unifier is useful here as it has implications for four groups living along the Texas-Mexico border: (1) Euro-Americans (Whites); (2) U.S. born Chicanas/os and/or Mexican Americans; (3) Mexican immigrants and; (4) Mexicans in Mexico. For instance, the State's Eurocentric-White ideal of being a "real American citizen" forms an inclusive, yet exclusive boundary around what it means to be a member of this larger community.

By default in the United States, the socially acceptable definition of an American is someone who is considered (visibly) White, speaks English, has a middle-to-upper

class socioeconomic background, owns property and most importantly was born on U.S. soil. The barrier lends credence to this social definition of an “American.” This Eurocentric idea of being an American citizen wreaks havoc on communities of color, in this case, people of Mexican-origin in the United States by causing an identity crises and/or psychological toll. People of Mexican-origin find themselves conflicted about *who* they are and ultimately seeks community acceptance.

For U.S. born Chicanas/os and/or Mexican Americans, the idea of what it means to be American is tricky and complicated because it is not only a binary experience for the entire group: holding mainstream American values and beliefs or feeling a sense of shared solidarity with their Mexican ancestry and neighbors. U.S. born Chicanas/os and Mexican Americans find themselves caught in the “in-between” space of a racial/ethnic identity. In addition, they find themselves in a space (southwester border region) where they are highly scrutinized for not being “American” or “Patriot” by Whites and people in their own group. This phenomenon was made salient in some of the narratives of the border law enforcement officials and local government leaders of Mexican ancestry. These respondents expressed an acceptance of the Eurocentric ideals of American citizenship. In their narratives, they distanced themselves from what they perceived was “Mexican” by downplaying their race/ethnic backgrounds and familial histories.

The ability to connect with Mexican immigrants (regardless of citizenship status) and their counterparts in Mexico was weakened due in part by the State and the dominant American values and ideals about nation-state and citizenship. In some respects, the border barrier further antagonizes this relationship between Chicanas/os and their Mexican counterparts. On the other hand, this idea is complicated by the presence of

Chicanas/os who view the barrier as a unifier – a material reality that has the capacity to bring together different groups of people. Respondents such as Elida Garza and other community members I interviewed viewed the barrier as a way to bring people from the community together against a “symbol of hate” (Garza 2009). These individuals embraced and felt a sense of solidarity with Mexicans *en el otro lado* (on the other side). This chapter demonstrates that not only their stake in the community and professions impact their views about the barrier, but it is also highly dependent upon their racial/ethnic location. Furthermore, as the State imposes itself in the lives of these border residents, it forces many of them to take a side (i.e. American or Mexican) and in the process puts Chicanas/os in a difficult position. In conclusion, the presence of the barrier as a reality and metaphor for people’s experiences emphasizes the need to closely examine the construct of *State imposition* in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this final chapter, I intend to draw together some important threads that run through my findings and then provide a conclusion. The threads will be organized around the major themes found in the participant's interviews: federal border enforcement officials, local government leaders, landowners, and community members. I demonstrate how a person's social location, biographical particulars, and lived experiences impact how he/she imagines or constructs the federal State and its activities. Furthermore, I provide a detailed discussion of each group while taking a closer look at how my concept of *State imposition* affects their subjectivities and lived experiences. In the findings section, I introduced a theoretical construct *State imposition and dismissal of local knowledge*. The first half of this theme *State imposition* takes on paramount importance in the narratives of all the respondents. In some capacity or another this construct surfaced in all of my interviews with border law enforcement officers, County/City officials, landowners, and community members. More importantly, depending on the social location and lived experiences of the participants, it yielded a particular understanding and meaning about the federal State and the barrier. The *imposition and dismissal of local knowledge* were two strategies the State used to ignore the concerns of local residents, while also penetrating their lives. Most importantly, where there is *State imposition* we find *public resistance*, and many of the participants used resistance to curtail, limit, or partially break free from the stronghold of the State.

The facilitative *tools* the State used were the *discursive frames* deployed at the national level – “War on Terror,” “Terrorists are coming into America’s border,” “A lawless, violent, and out of control U.S.-Mexico border,” and the blurring of the lines between immigrant and terrorists. These discursive tools also were able to garner national public support for the Secure Fence Act of 2006 as Americans believed that those who did not agree with the State’s mission were un-patriotic and un-American. It is no surprise that former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff declared the Texas Rio Grande Valley was a hindrance to the completion of the Act referring to the fact that a sizeable number of Texas Rio Grande Valley residents did not agree with the implementation plan. In the following sub-sections, I demonstrate how the State used one method of imposition in infiltrating people’s lives.

Federal State Border Law Enforcement Officers

The vision of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is explicit. Its core mission is to keep the “homeland” safe from outside threats. However, in interviewing federal State law enforcement officers on the ground, it becomes clear that this vision is problematic for those who have to interpret and negotiate the mission of the State on a daily basis. In these cases, the idea of *State imposition* rises to the surface in the personal narratives of these agents. For example, Mr. Ramirez can be viewed as the quintessential Border Patrol, who offers a glimpse into the life of a Mexican American agent who does not question the State. Rather, he tries to enforce the wishes of DHS while simultaneously encountering problems in his family life, as members confront him about specific State actions. The story about his siblings’ opposition points to the fact that no

person lives in isolation. Individuals are often confronted with the views of close family members. Mr. Ramirez's work life spills into his family life, leading these two social worlds to collide when a sensitive work-related topic is breached, resulting in conflict.

These scenarios cause what I call *rupturing moments* in an individual's personal life and the sense of self when their "family-self" and "institutional-self" come into direct conflict (see Gubrium and Holstein 2001). The State expects agents to have "separate selves" keeping their "family-self" out of the institution; meanwhile, the agents should also try to keep the "institutional self" out of their family life. Perhaps there are people who can keep their work and family lives separate, but the idea that this can be achieved all the time can be potentially damaging to a person. Furthermore, the State's ability to impose itself in the personal lives of agents is significantly exposed in their racial self-identification. All the agents I interviewed of Mexican-origin had immense trouble and expressed great frustration in describing their racial/ethnic background. I am not suggesting that these individuals did not already harbor these kinds of feelings before they became agents, but based on their work-histories they have spent much time in the "care" of the State (i.e. previous military service and/or local law enforcement experience). State ancillaries like the military have a history of degradation processes that strip an individual's sense of self. This process makes the social environment conducive for the State to fashion an individual (or group) in its own reflection.

State imposition was manifested in other ways as in the narrative of the DEA agent, Mr. Carlos Robles who explained that the Secure Fence Act of 2006 was primarily a means of (re)producing and maintaining jobs for State political elites, federal agents, and the private sector. Mr. Robles, a person of Mexican-origin, held personal beliefs

about Mexicans as criminals and aliens. For instance, when Mr. Robles talked about the drug cartel members his voice and tone became angry. Evidence of anger, hate, and disgust for “those people” may have been created by a rigid mental/social binary framework: legality and illegality, Mexican and American, citizen and illegal alien, criminal and non-criminal – leaving no room for gray areas. A “Mexican” was something “alien” to Mr. Robles in his narratives. The language, behaviors, motives, lifestyles, and overall existence of “Mexicans” on U.S. soil was questioned and scrutinized by the agent.

Discussing the agent’s racial/ethnic background stirred up emotions that were linked to a personal battle of having a connection with a subject he abhorred. Mr. Robles admitted to having a Chicano political consciousness (i.e. *La Raza*) when he was young, but was warned by his fellow federal law enforcement agents that his attitude would change once he got the job and moved to the Texas border. His racial pride and consciousness turned into loathing and hatred as the idea of being “Mexican” was equated with being a “criminal.” As Agent Robles admits in his narrative, these racialized schemes were fostered primarily by his job as a State agent. There are formal and informal belief-systems that work behind-the-scenes in the State and Mr. Robles provided a glimpse into that institutional world.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent Mr. Michael Bergmann had never directly experienced racism until he married his Mexican American wife and had two biracial daughters. His in-laws resented the second daughter who was born with indigenous features. Michael was outspoken and visibly upset as he went on to say that

living in the border region he witnessed daily racist and discriminatory practices between Mexican Americans and Mexicans. He found it difficult to understand why being of Mexican descent was such a huge deal for border residents (it seems as if Michael, like Pilar in Lone Star, forgot what took place over the Alamo). He went on to blame the conservative media outlets that constantly rave about how Mexicans are horrible and perverse. This social paranoia, as Michael described it, was the root cause of State legislation such as the Secure Fence Act. Admittedly, Michael was one of the most critical State agents I interviewed. However, he was not aware of the fact that the State and the public work, at times, in tandem to create the social paranoia via anti-immigrant, anti-terrorist, and border security discourses. In some ways, Mr. Bergmann had crossed institutional, cultural, and racial boundaries in his personal life and this demonstrated a partial breakaway from the State's racialized customs and practices. Nonetheless, he felt the tensions in his personal life.

Local Government

At the local government level, there are two opposing sides, demonstrating conflict about the position of the federal State. The phenomena of *State imposition and dismissal of local knowledge* caused difficulties for local City/County officials. Mr. Roberto Cruz's interview reveals the kinds of problems that arise when local governments do not necessarily share the federal State's vision and agenda.

On the other hand, *State imposition and dismissal of local knowledge* was upheld by Mr. Manuel Vargas's account as he urges that citizens of the United States are to adhere to the laws of the federal State (despite legitimate community objections).

Sociologist Max Weber called this framework a legal-rational approach where citizens/individuals comply with the legal rules that are created by the State (Roth and Wittich 1978). The ability to question, resist, or even protest these legal matters could bring severe sanctions from the State. Although it was not always clear what Mr. Vargas' personal views were, he insisted that all landowners/residents needed to comport themselves in a rational manner and be void of emotion. I would argue that these ideas are a Euro-centric male gendered approach to personal crises. With this lens, landowners who react with emotions of anger, frustration, and resistance are viewed as uncooperative, un-patriotic, and ultimately un-American. The "rational", "impersonal," "emotionally neutral" State labels these landowners as agitators against State sovereignty and National Security, and Mr. Vargas goes along with this as well.

As a unit of the State the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a sub-bureaucracy that legally controls and manages both citizens and noncitizens. Weber warned that as these machineries become increasingly rationalized, individuals working within the system would become impersonal and non-emotive (Gerth and Mills 1946). The bureaucrats working within the administrative machine (the State) become the experts. This poses a problem when State experts dismiss and impose their knowledge on a region that has historically experienced violence and conflict at the hands of such structures (i.e. Texas Rangers and Anglo militias). For example, many of the families living along the path of the barrier have been there for generations. These residents are familiar and knowledgeable about the border communities they inhabit. However, the State bypassed their concerns, grievances, and experiential knowledge in order to achieve a political goal – building a 670-mile barrier between the U.S. and Mexico.

Texas landowners

On the surface, all the landowner narratives in my study demonstrate a *collective opposition*. This position bodes well with the State's interpretation of the border region's reaction to the Secure Fence Act. However, beneath this State construction of a collective opposition was a *fragmented collective* of landowners. Indeed, many of the landowners did not agree with the State's solution to build a barrier through their properties, but had different reasons. Their narratives shed light on the State's processual maneuvers and inner-workings as battles erupted between the two. The State penetrated their lives in different ways, leaving landowners to confront the new material reality (barrier) in two specific ways: (1) As an erosion of democracy and; (2) As a means for jeopardizing the national security of the American people.

Ms. Loisa Torres's compelling narrative indicates that she believes there has been an erosion of democracy through the silencing of voices and discriminatory actions against an already vulnerable group – Mexican Americans. The State engaged in an intricate cultural and psychological violence against Dr. Loisa Torres's subjectivity and lived reality by stripping her land, attacking her familial history, and assailing her childhood memories. Her ancestral heritage and racial/ethnic identity informed her beliefs, values, and the meaning(s) she attributed to her land. Furthermore, being aware of the socio-cultural-historical histories of the property was also very significant for Ms. Loisa Torres.

On the other hand, Debra Langley's account reveals a *patriotic obligation* to the State, yet a divergence when the family perceives the State's solutions as unacceptable. The concept of safety was paramount for Debra as she thought of her granddaughters

living on the other side of the barrier (the “Mexican” side) and the possibility of becoming victims to the “ongoing border violence” (Langley 2009). With the erection of the barrier, the Langley family feared that it would unleash a horde “illegal” immigrants, Mexican drug cartels and the possibility of being exposed to diseases “coming from the other [Mexican] side” (Langley 2009). In Debra’s case, the State imposed a form of social and psychological violence upon the Langley family. The fear and anxiety about the well being of the family and the farm also wreaked havoc on the physical health of Mr. Louis Langley. During my interview with Debra Langley she pointed out that her husband’s health problems (heart disease, high blood pressure, and high anxiety) were exacerbated by the confrontations they were having with the State over the fate of their property. Many of the landowners I interviewed were elderly and fighting with the State would certainly have made things worse. Despite the origins of the family’s illnesses, it is important to keep in mind that these participants strongly believed that there was a connection between the State and their overall wellbeing.

Another fundamental issue that runs through the fabric of landowner narratives are concerns over *landownership* and *citizenship rights*. Both of these concepts speak to the issue of citizenship rights for nonwhites (and in some cases White Americans such as the Langley family) in America. Historically in the United States, citizenship and landownership were two important privileges of White males. Nonwhites have had to fight to acquire these privileges (Blau and Moncada 2006). The federal State engages in a “Declaration of Taking” via eminent domain, it strips landowners of their livelihoods, economic security, citizenship rights, and dredges up memories of the history of insecurities regarding citizenship and land.

Wilson et. al. (2008: 8) in their preliminary findings using U.S. Census Bureau demographic information and GIS technology found that the “construction of the border barrier and the necessary taking of property associated with it would have substantial disproportional impacts on certain groups based on ethnicity, income, and citizenship status in Cameron County, Texas” whereby those most affected would be low-income, U.S. citizens of Hispanic origin. These findings (surprisingly) corroborate with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s November 2007 Environmental Impact Statement’s initial conclusions that demographic characteristics of “the population closest to the census tract...closest to the project area would seem to be lower in income than the population in the same census tract farther away from the river” (DHS 2007: 3-66). The Texas Rio Grande Valley’s large population of Mexican-origin and working-poor residents makes them extremely vulnerable to the State. In this case, the landowners did not have political and economical clout, elite status, and lacked the educational resources necessary to understand the State’s legal documents, leaving many of them at a disadvantage as they all ultimately lost their battles in court.

Community Members

The community members exhibited an interesting array of narratives surrounding the State and the border barrier. The issue of federal *State imposition* also weaves itself throughout their experiences. For instance, local supporter of the border barrier, Mr. Barreles, expressed similar concerns as DEA agent Mr. Carlos Robles regarding the barrier, immigration, and Mexican Americans. Mr. Barreles was a military veteran and this also impacted his patriotic views. The rigid binary logic used by Mr. Barreles helped

him navigate his everyday interactions and conceptualizations of “Anglos” and “Mexicans,” citizenship and patriotism. Mr. Barreles strongly believed that in order to be a “true patriot” American citizens must support the State sanctioned barrier.

Moreover, Ms. Elida Garza, a member of the Coalition of Amigos in Solidarity and Action (CASA), was intensely bothered by the mere idea of a border wall and its potential consequences. She had also been the victim of excessive interrogation by local U.S. Border Patrol agents in the community. Elida Garza spoke to me about how these interactions with Border Patrol had become a normalized routine despite the fact that she knew it was a violation of her citizenship rights. Yet, there was nothing she could do about it – whom would she seek out for help?

Ms. Garza informed me that these were common occurrences in the community because Border Patrol has a mental scheme of what an “illegal Mexican looks like” (Garza 2009). In these cases, the State uses the power of harassment to control the lives of community members (Foucault 1994). This type of State surveillance and control in the Rio Grande Valley region shows up in begins Elida’s narrative about the impact of race/ethnicity – there are times she “hates” to be called “Mexican” and at other times she is “proud” of it (Garza 2009). Despite experiencing State surveillance, harassment, and racial profiling, Ms. Elida Garza surprisingly continues to hold the belief that the barrier can be a unifying material object. Her ideas stem from the belief that through struggle, people on both sides of the dividing barrier can come together. In this sense, the barrier also becomes permeable when people build solidarity and social cohesiveness against the wall. The overall opposition to the wall by border residents throughout the Texas southwest indicated to Ms. Garza that the barrier had the ability to unify.

In Wayne Collier's account, he mentions that as border residents they are always aware of the demarcated-border – the need for a passport, immigration checkpoints, and having the U.S. Border Patrol as a common fixture in the region. This is one way the State imposes itself upon the region. These are daily reminders that you live in a “militarized border” (Collier 2009). Wayne's perspective allows for a discussion about political elites, personal agendas, and capitalistic gains. *State imposition* also operates through capitalistic arrangements. The State hired contractors such as Kiewit to build the barrier and these entities made high profits at the end of the day. Furthermore, as strict immigration and terrorism laws are crafted, people who straddle social borders – racial, citizenship, and religious – could potentially be detained at immigration checkpoints and thrown into detention centers. These detention centers are also predominantly contracted out by the State. These corporate contractors (i.e. GEO and Wackenhut) are financially capitalizing on what I call the *business of illegality*. In other words, as the State constructs undocumented immigrants as criminals, illegal, and potential terrorists, there are private corporations that are able to make a profit out of the illegality of this group. Furthermore, corporate lobbyists can make it financially expedient for political elites to push for policy agendas that entail the building of new immigrant detention facilities.

The Power of the State to Construct the Other

The study points to the fact that the federal State through its laws, policies, and officials has been able to construct Mexicans as the Other. Present constructions are only the latest in a long history of such constructions. The historical relationship between the Texas and Mexico (and the U.S. and Mexico in general) has been one mired in violence,

conflict, contention, and accommodation. Since the colonization of Tejas by southern Whites, the Texas-Mexico War, Battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto, and the final war between the U.S. and Mexico and beyond, the status and identity of Mexican peoples has been subjected to constant attack (Paredes 1958; Montejano 1987; Anzaldúa 1987; Dunn 1996; Padilla 2001; Romero 2001; Johnson 2005; Navarro 2005; Gomez 2007).

The “War on Terror” has worked as a guise for the federal State to continue this racialized project. Yet, the contours of this project are not only fastened with racial bolts, but with capitalistic ones as well. Historian David Roediger (2008) provides a compelling analysis of White supremacy in America and how it has survived since the first colonies as White elites tried to crush attempts at solidarity between the African slaves and the lower-class White indentured servants. Whether the goal was land appropriation (“Manifest Destiny”) or capital profit (King Cotton), White supremacy managed to subordinate those it constructed as the Other – Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian Americans. These marginalized groups were perceived as a hindrance and/or used as a “means to an end.”

The terror discourse in the United States against (un)documented Latino/a immigrants has inflicted racism and discrimination upon the community in very “gender-specific” ways (Collins 2005: 5). The discussions surrounding terror(ism) particularly by political elites, the media, and anti-immigrant groups have predominantly masculine-gendered tones. In other words, brown-bodied men cause fear in the American public as they can potentially inflict physical harm onto Americans. The shape and tone of terror that is mediated by political elites and others at the national level produces fear, which

makes the creation of restrictive immigration laws, geographical boundaries, physical barriers and as Massey (2009: 12) would argue “cognitive boundaries” effortless.

Conclusion

The Texas-Mexico border does not intrinsically hold definitions of constant “crisis,” “chaos,” and “lawlessness.” It has been defined this way primarily by the U.S. State, which has had a contentious relationship with Mexico (and Latin American in general) for centuries (Montejano 1987; Rodriguez 1997; Gomez 2007). The social construction of people of Mexican-origin and the U.S.-Mexico border region as dangerous by the federal State serves two fundamental purposes: (1) To control and manage of targeted population and; (2) To spread fear among the general population in order to control the population at large while simultaneously fashioning itself as the knowledgeable expert.

Scholar Saskia Sassen (2008) asserts that the growing global/transnational financial markets, ideas of the nation-state, and citizenship will become reordered, taking on new meanings in a global community. In addition, Sassen (2008) argues that the ever-growing debordering processes of markets and capital have troubled the concept of sovereignty. This may only hold true for particular countries/regions as the United States continues to show its Nativistic face by building a physical barrier to keep unwanted populations out. It becomes clear that when examining globalization, capital is free to move swiftly through countries and regions, while labor is restricted by State political elites when they feel it becomes a threat. In the United States we have seen a resurgence of racialized nativism (see Galindo and Vigil 2006) whereby cultural markers such as the

Spanish language (as well as other “foreign” languages) are verbally attacked overtly/covertly by the State and the media. The consequences of these verbal attacks have manifested themselves in an increase in the physical assaults of Latinos in the United States (Mock 2007). At various times in our U.S. history, acts of racism have used patriotism and nationalism as guises to keep those we consider foreigners, aliens, and criminals barred from entry.

The findings indicate that the Secure Fence Act of 2006 aligns itself closely with the historical oppressive, colonial treatment of Mexican origin people by the State. Since the creation of the Texas Rangers on the border in the 1860s to the modern invention of the U.S. Border Patrol, border residents have experienced increased surveillance, management, and militarization. Thus, the State has had a long track record of targeting Mexican Americans and Mexicans for their land, resources, and labor. This track record provides further impetus for continued State targeting of Mexican Americans and increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border as renewed fears of “illegal aliens” have morphed into public outcries of terrorists from south of the border. These discursive frames and practices have been followed by legal mandates that seek the safety of the United States through enhancing National Security technologies (i.e. Patriot Act, Homeland Security Act, and Real ID Act).

Given the long and unsettling relationship that has existed between the United States and Mexico, the barrier will only serve to further intensify problems between the two countries. In its relationship with Mexico, the U.S. needs to turn Mexico into an ally both in terms of political and economic interests. International politics scholar Charles Kupchan (2010) in *How Enemies Become Friends* provides a potential path for countries

that are enemies to come to terms as “friendly” allies. Kupchan (2010: 12) previously examined the historical geopolitical rivalry between the United States and Great Britain and their diplomatic rapprochement (1895-1906). Other supporting cases Kupchan (2010: 12) discussed were “friendly alliances” between Norway – Sweden (1905-1935) and Brazil – Argentina (1979-1998). These “successes” can be used as a template for building alliances with countries that the United States deems as a geopolitical rivalry or economic competitor. Kupchan (2010: 3) argues that “deft diplomacy” and not economic competition will cultivate an alliance between two enemies and/or rivalries. There are four phases that Kupchan (2010: 6) argues can lead a nation to stable peace:

- (1) *unilateral accommodation*: a state confronted with multiple threats seeks to remove one of the sources of its insecurity by exercising strategic restraint and making concessions to an adversary. Such concessions constitute a peace offering, an opening gambit intended to signal benign as opposed to hostile intent;
- (2) *Reciprocal restraint*: The states in question trade concessions each cautiously stepping away from rivalry as it entertains the prospect that geopolitical competition may give way to programmatic cooperation;
- (3) *Societal integration*: Transaction between the parties increase in frequency and intensity, resulting in more extensive contacts among governing officials, private-sector elites, and ordinary citizens. Interest groups that benefit from closer relations begin to invest in and lobby for the further reduction of economic and political barriers, adding momentum to the process of reconciliation;
- (4) *generation of new narratives and identities*: Through elite statements, popular culture (media, literature, theater) and items laden with political symbolism as charters, flags, and anthems that states in question embrace a new domestic discourse that alters the identity they possess of the other. The distinctions between self and other erode, giving way to communal identities and a shared sense of solidarity, completing the onset of stable peace.

These four phases were put into practice and/or emerged in relations with the aforementioned countries primarily the United States and Great Britain. The phases provide a humanistic and ideal vision for global alliance. Nonetheless, these four phases depend on the distinct historical relationship, interaction, and economic interdependence of the countries in question. In order to build the type of alliances Kupchan (2010) envisions, these countries would have to change their economic structures (i.e. capitalistic

motivations), which would be extremely difficult given the history of many of these colonial nations. In the case of the United States and Mexico, some of these concessions do not fit well with their relationship. For example, a *unilateral accommodation* between the two nations implies that the two countries are at war or that there is a “threat” of an impending war. In the foreign policy sense, the United States and Mexico are not at war; however, the discursive frames that the United States utilizes to refer to Mexican immigrants emphasizes a stage of conflict and in some cases an impending war. The concept of *reciprocal restraint* has not been achieved and within the past thirty years has worsened (i.e. Operation Gatekeeper, National Guard on the U.S.-Mexico border, and enhancement of border technology). *Societal integration* of Mexican-origin people has been an unresolved issue in the United States since the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. *New narratives and identities* have appeared as old ones that are repackaged or as Omi and Winant (1994) have described it, “rearticulated” over time. In today’s rearticulation, people of Mexican-origin, and Latinas/os in general, have been subjected to a new interpretation that is expressed through U.S. National Security concerns – “War on Terror.” It would therefore seem, that the long strained relationship between the two nations has wedged them a part, weakening the possibility of becoming “friendly” allies.

Legal race scholar Kevin Johnson (2007) provides another vantage point in *Opening the Flood Gates*. He advances a position of open borders similar to the modern European system – European Union. Rather than have the State focus on whether or not people have citizenship status, Johnson (2007: 9) suggests that the focal point should be residency status. With the changing dynamics of globalization, the United States has been propelled into economic competition with other rising countries, “ the issue is not

whether we can close our borders but how we might best manage the flow of migrants into the country and integrate those who live here. We, as a nation, must ensure that our immigration laws comport with modern political, economic, and social reality. If not, they will prove to be untenable, just as they are today” (Johnson 2007: 26). Johnson (2007: 32) does not imply that the United States should not have any border control; rather his proposal suggests it should have,

Minimal controls that would be much more focused and narrow in scope than those found in the current U.S. immigration laws. Efforts would be made to bar hardened criminals and those reasonably suspected of terrorist activities from entering the United States. Persons who pose true threats to national security and public safety could be denied entry into the country. Unlike the current law, the run-of-the-mill dreamer searching for economic opportunity would be embraced, not spurned.

It is understandable that a country is concerned with terrorist activities and migrants who have a record and are strongly suspected of associating with terrorist cells. What is problematic, Johnson declares, is when entire groups of people (i.e. Arab/Muslims and Latinos) are targeted, profiled, and constructed as potential terrorists.

I would like to suggest here that the wall is like the veil that Du Bois constructs in *Souls of Black Folk*. People on the ground project onto this steel veil a myriad of attitudes, beliefs, values, and meanings. As I have noted throughout this study, these meanings emanate from the social location of residents and in turn affect their behavior. Winant (2004) argues that the veil serves two ends - to protect and exclude. In this case, one can argue that the border barrier was initially proposed to protect American citizens from immigrants and/or terrorists.

A fundamental finding in this study has been the cognitive impact on those living along the demarcated border barrier, which has been demonstrated in three forms: 1). The

perception of themselves as less than full citizens; 2.) The growing sentiment of powerlessness and; 3). The view of the State as imposing both psychologically and physically. Thus, while attempting to solve one problem, the federal State has created new problems between itself and its citizens as well as among its citizens. Winant (2004: 29) believes that in these “unstable and contradictory” moments,

The weight of racial oppression is bound up with the implacable will to resist...more rare perhaps but still crucially important, the sheer weight of the veil – qua social structure – becomes insupportable. The built-up rage and inequity, the irrationality and inutility, and the explosive force of dreams denied have sometimes been mobilized politically in ways that can only be termed quasi-revolutionary.

These ruptures or “breaks” in the system occur during crises and do have the potential for positive social transformation via social movement uprising such as with the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s (Winant 2004: 29-30). In these moments, local residents have the potential of coming together to confront the State. A sizeable majority of the residents in the south Texas Rio Grande Valley did come together to resist the State’s imposition; however, their efforts were subjected to intense legal battles leaving many of them powerless. Nonetheless, the resistance by residents against the State proved to be a wake-up call that they were not going to go down without a fight. These minor breaks in the system have the potential to culminate into major breaks when other crises arise.

A second major impact has been with regard to citizenship rights in the U.S. The history of rights in the United States were embedded in property and political rights primarily for White male slave owners. The ideas of civil and social rights were notions that came later. However, notions of civil and social rights have been slowly weakening in the U.S. as economic and political rights have taken center stage. Neoliberal economic

policies have been at the root of decreasing social and civil rights in industrialized nations like the U.S. (Esping-Andersen 1990; Mishra 1999). Landownership in America is highly valued and connected to citizenship. As U.S. citizens, all of the landowner participants, regardless of their position toward the State, were astounded that their land could be stripped away at a moment's notice. Many of the landowners questioned the State's ability to engage in a Declaration of Taking via eminent domain. More importantly, most of the landowners I interviewed were not familiar with the concept of eminent domain until they had DHS agents come to their homes to advise them of it.

As we turn to the problem of State power and imposition, the work of Michel Foucault become immensely useful. More than thirty years ago, social theorist Michel Foucault (1982: 778) noted that he did not study the phenomena of power, per se; rather, he was concerned with the historical modes/conditions of the "objectivizing" process whereby people are made into subjects (or make themselves into subjects). Foucault (1982: 788) asked that as social scientists we should push beyond the legal and institutional dimensions of power (i.e. "What legitimates power?" and "What is the State?") to focus closely on the objectivizing of the subject and the forms of resistance used by the subject, in order to shed light on power relations. Foucault (1982: 779-780) declared that we needed a "new economy of power relations" that demonstrates these dynamics,

I would like to suggest another way to go toward a new economy of power relations, a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing

power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.

Foucault does not suggest that we should abandon examining the State and its laws (see Foucault 2003), but seeks to focus on the interplay of how these modalities of power affect people's lives and in turn how people resist these forces. His work has investigated how this has materialized through various historical moments and modalities (science, clinics, and so on). Bound up in the objectivizing, subjugation, and struggle is Foucault's question: "Who are we?" (Foucault 1982: 781). This is one of the fundamental questions that the United States and other empire building nations have spent their entire colonial histories trying to answer (via ideologies, discourses, narratives, subjugation). At this critical juncture in U.S. history as economies are failing, subjugated peoples are revolting, and desperation is ever-increasing, it is imperative we ask ourselves one crucial question – *Who are the "We"?*

In this study, I partially utilize a Foucauldian framework to achieve a "new economy of power relations" by focusing on the social construction of race, context, class, citizenship status, and the federal State and how these structures organize the lives Latinas/os. Yet, in turn, how Latinas/os resist this web of domination. At the national level, the federal State has crafted discourses about the U.S.-Mexico border and its inhabitants that are couched in the language of "terror" and national security. My study "on the ground" with federal State officials, local government officials, and local border residents was to highlight the multiple ways in which they struggled with particular State actions. The intersectionality of a resident's social location shaped how they perceived the State and its barrier policy. In this study, landowners and a majority of community

members demonstrated resistance toward the federal State; yet, ultimately faced what they perceived were tremendous losses (dignity, rights, land, and homestead).

Michel Foucault may have urged social scientists to move beyond the question of “What is the State?” to examine how power emerges through interaction. However, I strongly feel that as social scientists we must not neglect this fundamental question of “What is the State?” I disagree with Foucault’s admonition and remind social scientists that we must define what it is, where it emerges, how it operates, and how it permeates and manifests itself in people’s lives. My conception and understanding of *State imposition* helps us get a step closer to answering, “What is the State?” The State, as it emerged in my study, is both a material entity and a symbolic force in people’s daily lives. Each narrative account in this study expresses how the federal government and the border wall become something more than just material entities for the respondents. They also manifest themselves in people’s lives in a myriad of ways. In this instance, the material is also symbolic, transforming itself into forces that also structure the personal lives of borderlanders. My future work will continue to utilize the macro-micro dialectical lens to delve deeper into concerns of the State and its relationship with its citizens, in particular the civil, political, economic, and social rights of Latinas/os in the United States. I seek to explore the ways in which “rights” are conceptualized by Latinas/os with regard to their (non) citizenship status, racial/ethnic identity, gender, and socioeconomic background.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Acceptance Form

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled Social Construction of Mexican Americans: Secure Fence Act of 2006 and the U.S. War on Terror meets the criteria for EXEMPT APPROVAL and will expire on January 14, 2011. Your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. The Campus IRB is required to maintain a record of all human subject research activities conducted under its jurisdiction, and this includes exempt research.

You must submit the Annual Exempt Research Certification form before **November 30, 2010**. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval.

If you wish to revise your exempt activities, you must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You may do this by email. You will be expected to provide a description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants. The Campus IRB will provide a written determination of the level of review required for the proposed revisions.

If the activities no longer qualify for exemption, an Expedited or Full Board IRB application must be submitted to the Campus IRB. The investigator may not proceed with the proposed revisions until IRB approval is granted.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

Research Verbal Consent Form

You have been asked to participate in a research study by Jennifer G. Correa, a graduate student from the University of Missouri - Columbia. The purpose of this study is to explore the impacts of the Secure Fence Act of 2006 on the Texas Rio Grande Valley specifically in Cameron and Hidalgo counties. As a participant in this research project, you will be asked a number of questions regarding your experiences with the Secure Fence Act of 2006 and its impacts. The interview will last between 1-2 hours.

You might possibly encounter feelings of distress, such as emotional upset when asked a particular question(s). If you feel uneasy about a question(s), you can request not to answer that particular question(s). Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time. If you decide not to participate throughout the interview, the tape will not be used in the study and will be destroyed in order to protect your rights and privacy.

The interview will be audio taped and I will take written notes on your responses in case of audiotape failure. The interview tapes will be kept confidential. I will have the tapes and written notes in my possession, and I will keep them in a locked file cabinet. The tapes will be destroyed once the transcriptions are complete. I am the only person who will have access to the audiotapes and written notes. Your name will not be connected to any of the information you provide during the interview. I will use a false name in the study when referring to specific comments made by you in the interview in order to protect your confidentiality rights. The benefits of the research include public and global understandings with regard to polices/laws that implement physical barriers, what landowners, organizations, specific groups deal with when trying to change social policies. In addition, it is an opportunity to bring to bear the voices of the people who are being directly impacted by the initiative.

In addition, it is an opportunity to discuss human rights and civil rights issues within the public and academia, which can provide further knowledge and awareness on these matters. Finally, it may bring about a sense of personal satisfaction on your part when discussing these issues.

Do you have any questions about the researcher or the research being conducted? Do you consent to participate in this research project? If you have questions pertaining to this research, please feel free to contact me:

Principal Investigator: Jennifer G. Correa
Doctoral Student
Department of Sociology
312 Middlebush Hall
University of Missouri - Columbia
Columbia, MO 65211
Department Phone: (573) 882-8331
Cell: 405-762-0407

APPENDIX C

Landowners/Residents Interview Schedule

Background Questions:

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. What is your place of birth?
3. What year were you born?
4. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
5. What is your marital status?
6. What is your occupation? If retired, etc., discuss the type of job you had?
7. How many years have you been living in Cameron County/Hidalgo County? If a long time, what has tied you to this area or community?
8. Do you have any ancestral history on the property you are living on? How about ancestral history of living in the borderlands?
9. Are you a member of an indigenous Native American tribe? If so, what tribe? Can you give a history of the tribal origins?
10. Do you have family/extended families that live in Mexico? If so, how often do you visit them? How often do they visit you?

Meaning(s)/Representation(s) of Borderlands and the Border Wall:

11. Does living in the TX borderlands (Frontera) hold any significance for you?
12. What does the word “borderlands” or “Frontera” mean to you?
13. What does the border wall signify/symbolize for you?
14. Have you heard of or seen the border wall?

15. Will the border wall have an impact on your day to day life? (i.e. visiting family; going to the doctor; or shopping, etc.).
16. Do you consider the physical barrier to be a fence or a wall?
17. Do you feel that the border wall will impact the national culture in the United States? How about the local culture in Cameron County/Brownsville?
18. Just as a hypothetical example – Ten, twenty or thirty years from now, what do you think will be said about the border wall/fence? How will it be remembered?

Criminalization of Community/Immigrants:

19. Do you think that the Latino community here in Cameron/Hidalgo county will (or is) somehow being impacted (socially, politically, economically) by the SFA (border wall)? If so, how? If you don't think so, why?
20. Can you discuss how this might impact the Latino Community around the nation? For example, there have been increasing immigration raids by ICE across the nation.

Construction of Immigrants/Latinos/Mexicanos:

21. Do you feel that immigration from Latin America particularly from Mexico has been a growing concern for the United States?
22. Do you think the U.S. is in dire need of immigration reform? Explain why or why not?
23. How do you feel about the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States?
24. Do you feel that immigrants pose a risk or potential harm toward the United States?
25. In your opinion, did the U.S. government make the appropriate decision by crafting and passing the Secure Fence Act of 2006 – building a border wall between the United States and Mexico?
26. Do you feel this federal mandate (SFA 2006) will resolve or ameliorate the alleged issues of immigration? Terrorism?
27. Are your values and beliefs represented by your local government on the issues of immigration? If yes, how so? If no, whose values do you feel are being represented?

How Community Views Officials (city, state, federal levels):

28. When did you first find out about the Secure Fence Act of 2006?

29. When did you first find out that this federal mandate would actually be built in your community/property?
30. Were you ever contacted by any official (i.e. via phone, letter, or in person) about the proposed border wall initiative? If so, can you describe that experience? If not, can you describe that experience?
31. Do you feel that your local government has been responsive to the local concerns of the people living in your community? Why or why not?
32. Do you feel that your federal government has been responsive to the local concerns of the people in your community? Why or why not?
33. Can you describe how you view local officials (city/state) are conducting matters along the U.S.-Mexico border? If an impacted landowner – conducting matters in your property?
34. To your knowledge, has there been any grassroots organizing in support of or in opposition to the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (border wall)?
35. Have you engaged in any type of grassroots organizing either in support or opposition to the border wall? Can you discuss the level of your participation?
36. Do you feel that you are able to speak with city/state official about any concerns and/or questions you might have regarding the SFA (border wall)?
37. Do you feel that city/state officials are accessible and willing to discuss these matters with you upon your (or the community's) request?
38. Have you tried to access within the federal government about any concerns and/or questions you (or the community) might have about the border wall? Have you been successful or unsuccessful? Describe your experience?
39. Have you ever felt that it is difficult to get your voice heard about any concerns and/or questions you might have regarding the SFA (border wall)? If so, what have you done to make your voice heard?
40. Do you feel that this mandate is in your best interests?
41. Do you feel that this mandate is in the best interests of the nation as a whole?

APPENDIX D

Officials Interview Schedule

Background Questions:

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. What is your place of birth?
3. What year were you born?
4. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
5. What is your marital status?
6. What is your occupation? If retired, etc., discuss the type of job you had?
7. How many years have you been living in Cameron County/Hidalgo County? If a long time, what has tied you to this area or community?
8. Do you have any ancestral history on the property you are living on? How about ancestral history of living in the borderlands?
9. Are you a member of an indigenous Native American tribe? If so, what tribe? Can you give a history of the tribal origins?
10. Do you have family/extended families that live in Mexico? If so, how often do you visit them? How often do they visit you?

Meaning(s)/Representation(s) of Borderlands and the Border Wall:

11. Does living in the TX borderlands (Frontera) hold any significance for you?
12. What does the word “borderlands” or “Frontera” mean to you?
13. What does the border wall signify/symbolize for you?
14. Have you heard of or seen the border wall?
15. Will the border wall have an impact on your day to day life? (i.e. visiting family; going to the doctor; or shopping, etc.).

16. Do you consider the physical barrier to be a fence or a wall?
17. Do you feel that the border wall will impact the national culture in the United States? How about the local culture in Cameron County/Brownsville?
18. Just as a hypothetical example – Ten, twenty or thirty years from now, what do you think will be said about the border wall/fence? How will it be remembered?

Criminalization of Community/Immigrants:

19. Do you think that the Latino community here in Cameron/Hidalgo county will (or is) somehow being impacted (socially, politically, economically) by the SFA (border wall)? If so, how? If you don't think so, why?
20. Can you discuss how this might impact the Latino Community around the nation? For example, there have been increasing immigration raids by ICE across the nation.

Construction of Immigrants/Latinos/Mexicanos:

21. Do you feel that immigration from Latin America particularly from Mexico has been a growing concern for the United States?
22. Do you think the U.S. is in dire need of immigration reform? Explain why or why not?
23. How do you feel about the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States?
24. Do you feel that immigrants pose a risk or potential harm toward the United States?
25. In your opinion, did the U.S. government make the appropriate decision by crafting and passing the Secure Fence Act of 2006 – building a border wall between the United States and Mexico?
26. Do you feel this federal mandate (SFA 2006) will resolve or ameliorate the alleged issues of immigration? Terrorism?
27. Are your values and beliefs represented by your federal government on the issues of immigration (and terrorism)? If yes, how so? If no, whose values do you feel are being represented?

How Officials View the Community/Border Wall:

28. When did you first find out about the Secure Fence Act of 2006?
29. When did you first find out that the Secure Fence Act of 2006 would actually be built in the community you represent?

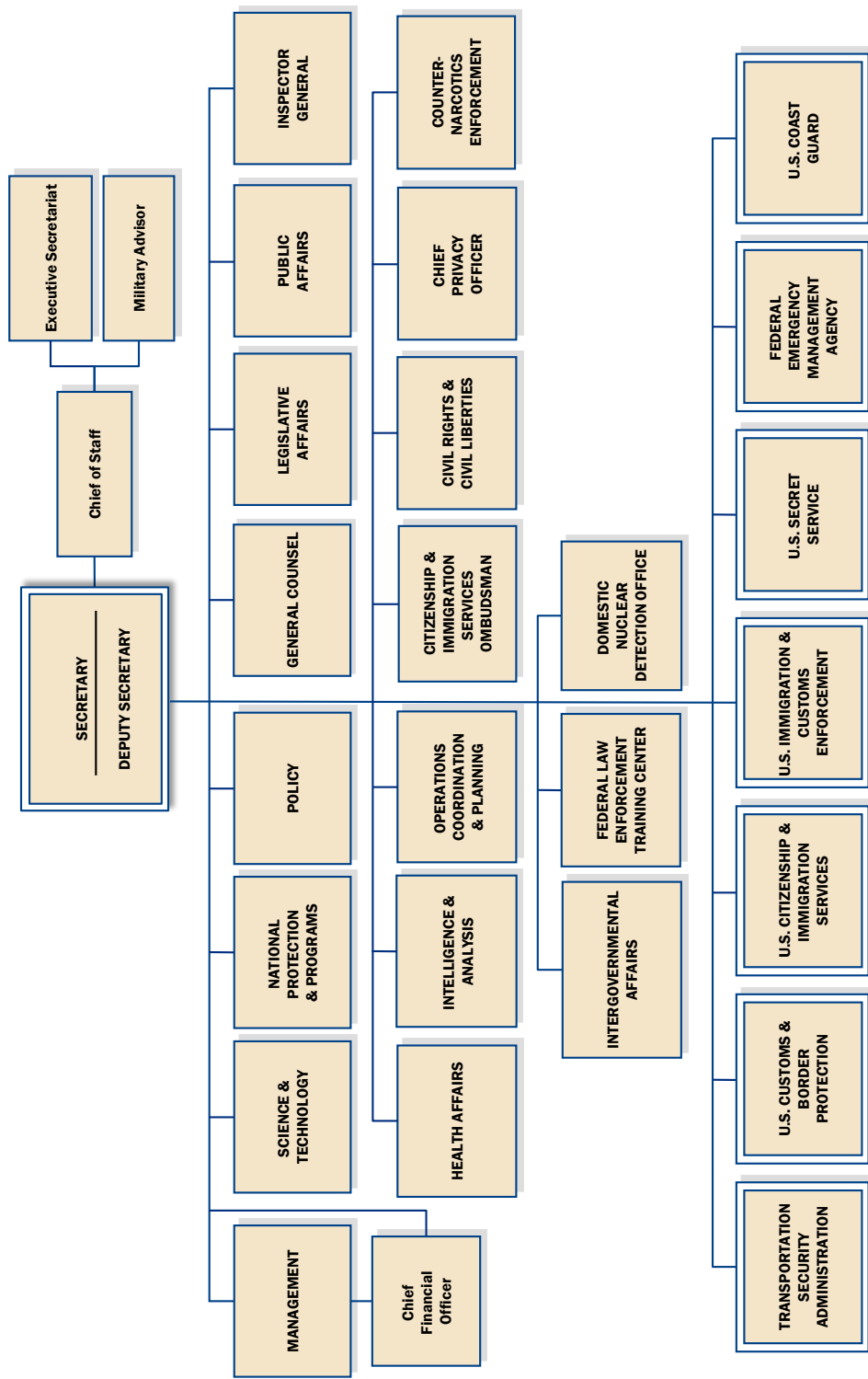
30. What reasons were you given by U.S. government officials/DHS officials for the building of the border wall?
31. Were you ever contacted by any official (i.e. via phone, letter, or in person) about the proposed border fence initiative? If so, can you describe that experience? If not, can you describe that experience?
32. What role has the City/County played in this matter?
33. What role did you have as a public official in this matter?
34. Do you feel that local government has been responsive to the local concerns of the people living in your community? If so, can you explain? If not, can you explain?
35. Do you feel that the federal government has been responsive to the local concerns of the people in your community? If so, can you explain? If not, can you explain?
36. Have you tried to access officials within the federal government about any concerns and/or questions you (or the community) might have about the border wall? Have you been successful or unsuccessful?
37. Have you ever felt that it is difficult to get your voice heard about any concerns and/or questions you might have regarding the Secure Fence Act of 2006? If so, what have you done to make your voice heard?
38. In your view, how have the local community and/or the people you represent responded to the initiative?
39. Do you feel that there has been procedural transparency at the local level of government toward the community?
40. Do you feel that there has been procedural transparency at the federal level of government toward the local community?

41. Do you believe that the local community has had fair and easy access to local officials if they have any concerns/questions regarding the SFA initiative/border wall? If yes, how so? If no, can you provide an example?

42. Is this mandate in the best interest of the local community?

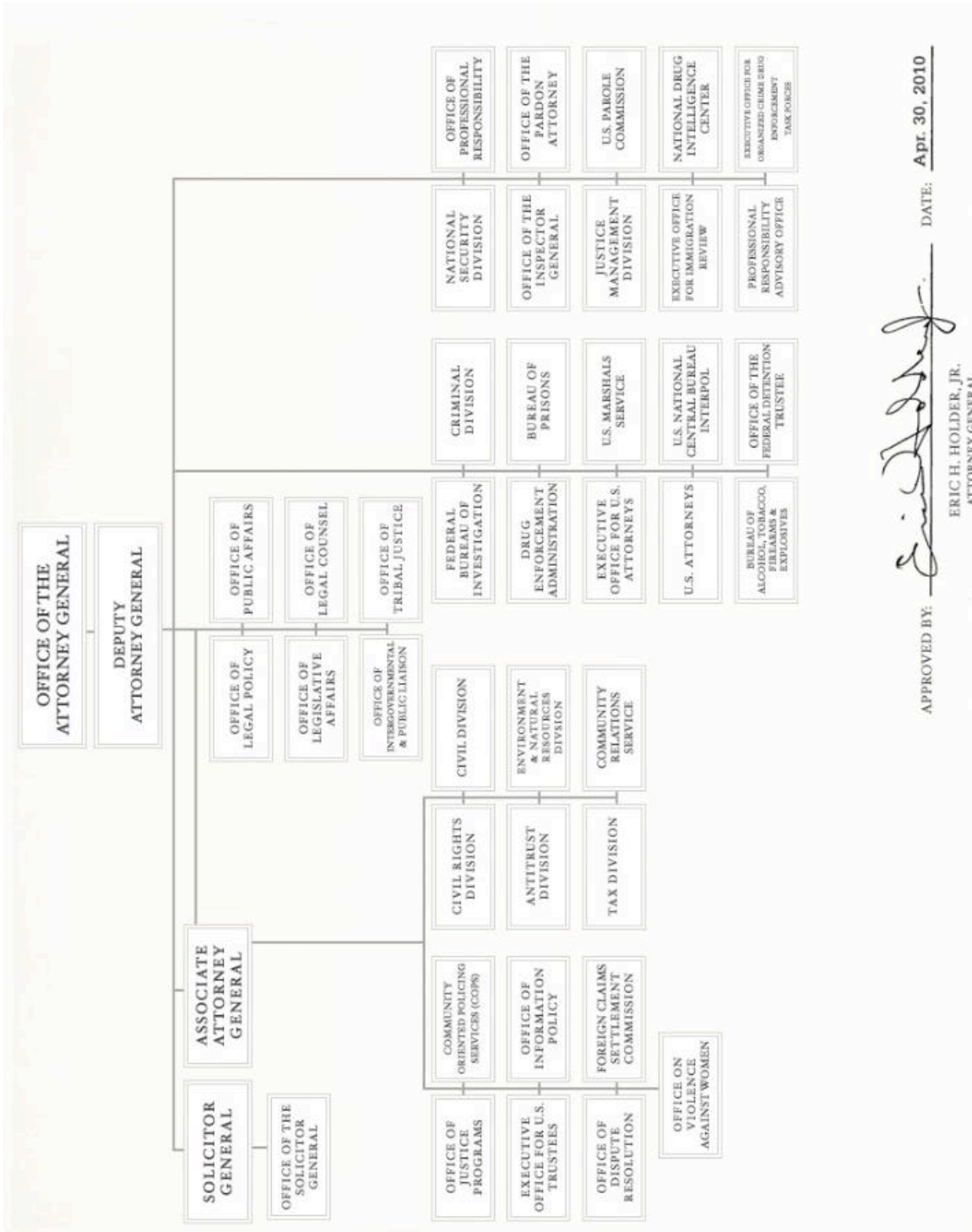
43. Is this mandate in the best interest of the nation as a whole?


APPENDIX E



11/05/2010

APPENDIX F



APPROVED BY:  DATE: Apr. 30, 2010

ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL

VITA

I, Jennifer Gonzalez Correa, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George and Irma Correa, was born in the small town of Dilley, Texas on July 3, 1981. I am the daughter of a Mexican immigrant and a fourth generation Mexican American Texan. As a product of a working-class family and a strong work ethic, I knew the value of hard work. My family experienced personal hardships and economic struggles that shaped my ideas about life and the importance of education. My parents ignited a flame in me that inspired me to obtain a PhD in sociology. With love and gratitude, this degree is dedicated to them for without their loving support this would not have been possible. I continue to live my life by four central principles my parents have instilled in me since I was a child: 1.) Work hard; 2). Never take anyone or anything for granted; 3.) Take care of those who take care of you; and 4.) Live to learn.