“They’ve got power up the waz”:
Border Enforcement as Collective Trauma Among Retirees in Southern Arizona

Olivia Falchi Simpson

An honors thesis submitted to the faculty of the Department of Sociology at Duke University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with a Bachelor of Arts with
Distinction in Sociology

Duke University
Durham, North Carolina
2020
Abstract

Over 3,200 migrants have died in the borderlands of southern Arizona as a result of the last three decades of United Stated border enforcement policy. This project evaluates the impact of violent border enforcement activities, especially these fatal outcomes, on retirees living in the borderlands. Arizona is the second most popular place to move to for retirement, and many of these retirees, seeking low costs of living and quiet communities, end up settling in the borderlands. Unlike migrants themselves, retired residents are predominantly white United States citizens with little prior knowledge or exposure to border enforcement. An analysis of 15 in-depth interviews with retirees living in Arizona revealed that, although these residents are relatively privileged, they are still affected by the violence of border enforcement in their communities. For many of these retirees, the unavoidable and continuous exposure to enforcement activities is even traumatic, affecting their social relationships and in some cases drawing them into humanitarian volunteer work. Retirees that moved to Arizona more recently, in the midst of the escalating border enforcement of the last decade, are more likely to report such experiences.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... 3

Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 4

- Border enforcement since 1990 .................................................................................................. 5
- Changes in migration patterns since 1990 .................................................................................. 9
- Project rationale ........................................................................................................................ 11
- Theoretical foundation .............................................................................................................. 12
- Project summary ....................................................................................................................... 13

Literature Review .......................................................................................................................... 15

- Theoretical perspectives ............................................................................................................ 16
- Empirical perspectives .............................................................................................................. 21
- Discussion and relevance .......................................................................................................... 28

Data and Methods ......................................................................................................................... 31

- Data ........................................................................................................................................ 31
- Analytical method ..................................................................................................................... 37

Results ........................................................................................................................................... 40

- Encounters with enforcement ................................................................................................... 40
- Perceptions of violence ............................................................................................................. 48
- Social relationships ................................................................................................................... 55
- Changes over time ...................................................................................................................... 60

Discussion and Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 62

Appendices.................................................................................................................................... 67

References ..................................................................................................................................... 79
Acknowledgements

I owe a vast debt to the scholars, activists, and community members that have dedicated their lives to documenting the lethal violence of the borderlands.

Lynn Smith Lovin and Charlie Thompson were generous with their time early on as this project initially took shape. I am grateful to both of them for working across multiple timezones and even through quarantine.

Eduardo Bonilla Silva has taught me more that I can express—a bit about art and much about theory.

The fieldwork that this project rests on would have been impossible without support from the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Undergraduate Research Support Office, and the Duke Endowment. Ken Maffit at CLACS was also an invaluable sounding board each time I revisited and revised my research question.

I am also grateful for the encouragement from everyone in the Honors Thesis Seminar over this past year and so proud of the work you all have done.

Lastly, to Jo for her friendship and desert wisdom. *Los mapaches ven con sus manos.* Someday let’s meet up in Abilene.
Introduction

“You know, I think they have consciously funneled the migrants to this most dangerous section of the desert to try to come through” -- Jennifer

Since the 1990s, the explicit goal of the United States’ border enforcement strategy has been one of ‘prevention through deterrence.’ Rather than deterring large scale migration across the southern border, though, the strategy has instead resulted in the deaths of thousands of migrants primarily in the desert of southern Arizona (Humane Borders). In a well-known example, Urrea (2004) dramatizes these very real consequences for popular audiences in his novel *The Devil’s Highway*, named for a well-traveled route through the Arizona desert. This lethality was predicted by the architects of the strategy who assumed that the increased risk of injury would be, in and of itself, a deterrent (De Leon 2015; U.S. Border Patrol 1994). In the midst of this escalating violence, Arizona continues to be a popular recreational and retirement destination, especially in the sparsely populated borderlands adjacent to Organ Pipe National Monument and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. According to 2017 census data, Arizona is the second most popular state amongst retirees after Florida (Silva 2019). My investigation is centered in this tension between these retirees with little presumed interest in border issues and the increasingly traumatic results of border enforcement.

- How do these relatively recent arrivals experience border enforcement strategies?
- To what extent are they impacted by the lethal consequences of enforcement?

These questions are at the heart of this project and have driven my fieldwork since I began background research in 2018.

---

1I use ‘migrant’ to refer to those traveling across the United States-Mexico border without attempting to assess the legality or necessity of their movement. See Nail (2015) and Nevins (2010) for more robust discussions of semantics within migration and border studies.
Border enforcement since 1990

The 1990s marked an important shift in immigration policy. Rather than concentrating on the interior of the United States, policymakers turned their attention outward to the southern border (Nevins 2010; Rosenblum 2012; Martínez 2008:107). In 1994, the Border Patrol adopted the “Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond” which outlines the first record of a series of measures known collectively as ‘prevention through deterrence.’ The ostensible goal of the plan was to divert migrants away from ports of entry by increasing enforcement in those areas (U.S. Border Patrol 1994). The Border Patrol assumed that, faced with the choice between a fortified and patrolled point of entry and the relatively open yet deadly Sonoran desert, migrants would cease unauthorized attempts to cross into the United States (Rosenblum 2012). The Border Patrol was explicit that this strategy would result in higher levels of injury and death for migrants, but they argued that prospective migrants would be further deterred by news of the increased risks (De Leon 2015; Strategic Plan 1994). From the very beginning, however, there was no concrete evidence\(^2\) of any overall deterrent effect (Rosenblum 2012), a fact which remains even as the Border Patrol has doubled down on deterrence as an enforcement strategy in the years since (Martínez 2008; Nevins 2010).

The implementation of prevention through deterrence began unofficially in El Paso in when the Border Patrol command for the sector developed Operation Hold the Line in 1993 (Nevins 2010; Rosenblum 2012). Without approval from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, more than 400 additional agents were deployed to patrol the area directly adjacent to the point of entry (Nevins 2010:111). The Border Patrol officials in El Paso also increased inspections and installed floodlights and extra fencing (Nevins 2010; Rosenblum 2012).

\(^2\)See Rosenblum (2012) and Singer (2019) for further discussions of the methodological challenges with measuring the impact of enforcement strategies on migration flows.
Border Patrol replicated this same strategy in San Diego in 1994 under the name Operation Gatekeeper and in the Arizona sector of the border the same year under the name Operation Safeguard (Nevins 2010; Rosenblum 2012). The concentration of enforcement activities at ports of entry represented a novel focus on the physical border where previously the focus had been primarily on tracking down migrants already inside the country. Nevins (2010) describes this as a “a shift from the divide being a border, or a zone of transition within which the peoples and places have much in common, to a boundary that represents a stark, linear demarcation between a strongly differentiated “us” and “them”—both territorially and socially” (115). This emphasis on demarcating the United States with an enforced boundary-line has persisted and intensified since the 1990s.

As a strategy, prevention through deterrence was initially considered a success (Rosenblum 2012). The San Diego and El Paso sectors saw border crossings decrease within a few years (Cornelius 2001; Nevins 2010); however, the myopia of the strategy was revealed just as quickly as migrants adjusted their routes to travel through Arizona instead. In 1998, the Border Patrol created the Border Safety Initiative fearing backlash over the already increasing numbers of injuries and deaths in the Arizona desert (Vandervoet 2008:67). As part of the initiative, rescue beacons that injured migrants could use to signal for assistance were installed throughout the borderlands and the Border Patrol deployed a Special Tactical and Rescue Unit (BORSTAR) to carry out search and rescue operations (Doty 2011; Vandervoet 2008:67). By 1999, border crossings in the Arizona sector had increased dramatically, necessitating still more agents and infrastructure to continue the pretense of ‘deterrence’ (Cornelius 2001; Rosenblum 2012). By 2001, empirical studies confirmed the previously predicted rise in injury and death (Cornelius 2001). By then, the spatial distribution of those deaths had also changed dramatically.
Previously the majority of migrant fatalities were located somewhat close to ports of entry in California and Texas, but by the beginning of the 2000s, deceased migrants were almost exclusively found in the borderlands of Arizona (Cornelius 2001). Further, cause of death statistics show an increase in fatalities resulting from exposure and dehydration, suggesting that migrants are choosing the dangerous path through the Sonoran Desert and dying as a result of the extreme heat, extended journey, and rough terrain (Boyce, Chambers, and Launius 2019; Cornelius 2001).

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, border security was placed under the purview of the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS), creating an enduring connection between anti-terrorism efforts and border enforcement. In the years that followed, the Bush Administration used this connection to establish immigration checkpoints still in operation along all major roads within 100 miles of the US-Mexico border (Nevins 2010). More fencing and surveillance technology along with a tenfold increase in enforcement personnel in were authorized in 2005 by DHS the under the Secure Border Initiative (Ackleson 2003; Rosenblum 2012). At the same time, in Arizona specifically, the murder of Park Ranger Kris Eggle in 2002 by suspected cartel members catalyzed the involvement of Organ Pipe National Monument and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in enforcement strategies (U.S. House of Representatives 2003). Portions of both parks were closed to tourists and the Federal government directed Rangers to act in tandem with Border Patrol as immigration enforcement agents, a power which they still hold (Devereaux 2019). President Bush was also responsible for deploying the National Guard to the border from 2006 to 2008, doubling down on a strategy of militarization that has persisted in the years since (National Guard).

The change in presidential administrations in 2008 did not fundamentally alter the
trajectory of US border enforcement strategy. The Obama Administration authorized further increases in the hiring of Border Patrol agents and funded the construction of hundreds more miles of fencing and vehicle barricades along the southern border (Rosenblum 2012). President Obama was also responsible for a dramatic increase in the number of deportations and removals particularly through the expansion of criminal immigration courts in Arizona under Operational Streamline (Burridge 2009). By 2012, thousands of migrant fatalities had been recorded in Arizona alone (Humane Borders), and surveys with those waiting in Mexico to cross the border showed that many migrants were deportees attempting to return to their previous lives in the United States (De Leon 2015; Slack, Martínez, Lee, and Whiteford 2016).

Though debates over immigration and border enforcement policy characterized the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election, the next significant change came in 2017 under an Executive Order by President Trump (Singer 2019). The order lays out the Administration’s priorities for increased enforcement including the promised border wall, additional surveillance technology, and the hiring of 5000 more Border Patrol agents (Singer 2019; Trump 2017). Under the Trump Administration the militarization of the wilderness areas continued with the targeted arrests of humanitarian volunteers by Park Rangers and Border Patrol in a 2018 joint operation (Devereaux 2019). Though in the most high-profile trial, volunteer Dr. Scott Warren was acquitted of all charges, federal prosecutors have vowed to continue to press charges against humanitarian volunteers who they see as aiding and abetting illegal entry (Devereaux 2019). Later in 2018, after President Trump declared a state of emergency, he deployed the National Guard and active duty soldiers to the border (O’Toole 2020). Thousands of troops were ultimately sent to Texas, Arizona, and California to patrol the border and put up additional fencing (O’Toole 2020). Most recently, construction began on the Arizona section of the border wall, a 30-foot-tall metal fence
Changes in migration patterns since 1990

Parallel to the evolution in enforcement strategies since the 1990s has been a series of changes in migration patterns across the US-Mexico border. Some of these changes are the result of the policy shifts I have described, some directly influenced policy decisions, and some are unrelated to either. The most critical change occurred in the 1990s soon after the adoption of prevention through deterrence. Though increased enforcement at ports of entry did not have a clear deterrent effect on overall migration totals, migrants were increasingly less likely to attempt crossings near major population centers (Cornelius 2001). Instead, Border Patrol apprehension data suggest migrants began to cross more frequently in the remote parts of the borderlands especially the Sonoran Desert region of Arizona (Cornelius 2001; Boyce et al. 2019; Rosenblum 2012). As a result, smuggling costs for migrants have greatly increased over the last 20 years leading to a rise in the power and influence of criminal organizations such as cartels (Rosenblum 2012). Still, the most immediate and enduring consequence of the increasing difficulty of border crossing, has been a parallel increase in migrant fatalities.

Data from the Arizona OpenGIS Initiative for Deceased Migrants, a collaboration between the non-profit Humane Borders and the Pima County Medical Examiner’s Office, shows the number of reported fatalities\(^3\) in Arizona increasing more than 100 times over between the launch of Operation Safeguard in 1994 and 2019. Table 1 outlines the average recorded fatalities by year which rose from less than 10 in the 1990s to more than 100 in the

\(^{3}\text{Measures of migrant fatalities are necessarily imprecise owing to issues of jurisdiction and given the reality that many bodies will likely never be discovered. I use the Humane Borders dataset because it is specific to Arizona and because it has been used in educational campaigns in the Arizona borderlands, so it is familiar to many residents there. See Rosenblum (2012) and Androff and Tavassoli (2012) for datasets from other sources.} \)
2010s. Figures 1-4 map fatalities by decade, orienting the data spatially within Arizona. Each map highlights the proximity of the recorded deaths to relevant landmarks in the borderlands including recreational areas, metropolitan centers including ports of entry, and tribal lands. Figure 1 displays fatality data from the 1980s when Humane Borders first began the Arizona OpenGIS through 1994, the launch of Operation Safeguard and codification of prevention through deterrence. Figure 2 represents fatalities reported from 1995 until 2001 whereas Figure 3 captures migrant fatalities during the period of increased border enforcement in the wake of 9/11. Finally, Figure 4 highlights data from 2011 through 2019, the year that I ended my fieldwork. Although these maps clearly illustrate a massive increase in migrant fatalities since the implementation of prevention through deterrence, it is also important to consider that the Humane Borders data represents only the deceased migrants that are discovered and reported to the authorities. As De Leon (2015) discusses, fast decomposition times and rugged landscapes mean many migrants die without ever being noticed.

Less directly related to enforcement policy have been noticeable changes in the demographics of migrants crossing the US-Mexico border. In the 1990s, migrants were almost exclusively younger male individuals (Rosenblum 2012). By the mid-2000s, more women and families were noted among those crossing (Rosenblum 2012; Vandervoet 2008:56). This change is the result, in large part, of decades of United States immigration policy that encouraged the male migration for short-term labor and left their families behind (Nevins 2010). As border security tightened into the 2000s and the penalties for illegal entry increased, greater numbers of deportees attempting to return permanently to the United States were also among those migrating as opposed to those seeking temporary work (De Leon 2015).

By 2011, increasing political instability in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador fueled
by the deportation of gang members back to these countries by the United States (Cruz 2013) was pushing a large number of migrants toward the United States in hopes of asylum (Abbot 2020). These asylum seekers included strikingly high numbers of unaccompanied minors (U.S. Customs and Border Protection). Arizona and El Paso, Texas were the sections of the border with the largest increases in minor children by 2016 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection). Starting in 2018, asylum seekers began to gather together in so-called ‘migrant caravans’ where hundreds or even thousands of migrants travelled in groups across Central American and Mexico en route to the United States (Abbot 2020). It has continued to be somewhat routine for large groups to cross the border especially in Arizona and wait to be apprehended as the Trump Administration has put in place more restrictions on asylum claims (Abbot 2020). For a timeline of major changes in the Arizona borderlands specifically including changes in the United States’ border enforcement strategy as well as changes in migration patterns, see Table 2.

Project rationale

Although there has been a substantial amount of research in the last decade on the impact of border enforcement and immigration policy more generally on migrant communities, little scholarship has focused explicitly on residents of the borderlands. Many of these residents, particularly retirees, are white and United States citizens and therefore not targeted by enforcement strategies explicitly, but they live very literally with the consequences of those strategies, nonetheless. Understanding the impact of lethal, state-sanctioned violence on those adjacent to it is critical to understanding the full impact of such policies.

There is also a temporal urgency to this project. In making border enforcement a central issue of his 2016 campaign, President Donald Trump shined a light on a segment of executive authority that has for the most part gone unnoticed and unchallenged since prevention through
deterrence was codified in 1994: immigration and border policy. In the years since President Trump was elected, media outlets, often at the insistence of community members, have made a unique effort to illuminate the complexity of the borderlands, but, as mentioned, empirical research on these communities remains nascent. This is especially true of research that focuses on resident’s lives writ large rather than trying to understand the particularities of those who have ‘taken sides,’ either pro or anti-migration. As the United States prepares for another presidential election, border issues are again prominent, but regardless of the next President’s politics, the consequences of the past three decades of enforcement activity will endure. Addressing the systemic violence of the southern border will be a long and difficult process that first requires a thorough understanding of the problem’s scope. The questions posed by this project about the impact of enforcement strategies on borderland residents is a step towards that. More studies are needed to fully outline the consequences of the last 30 years of policy, but this investigation into the experiences of retirees is an important piece.

Theoretical foundation

In this project, my central question is how retirees in the Arizona borderlands experience and adapt to their new environment. Within this question, I am specifically asking how and to what extent these residents are impacted by border enforcement activities and their lethal consequences. Implicit in these questions is a structural perspective of violence (Nevins 2010:181). In line with Foucault (2003) and the more recent work of Mbembe (2019) and other theorists, I argue that the border enforcement strategies adopted by the United States over the past three decades represent a violent expression of state power that is both explicit and implicit, overt and covert. This is not a unique perspective. Many other empirical works have applied theories of structural violence to border research. Still, while white retirees may sometimes be
subject to state violence in the borderlands, they will likely be witnesses more often. In this way, my project is also asking about the reach of state violence and how it might be felt tangentially by those not explicitly targeted.

In psychology, the term ‘vicarious trauma’ is used to describe exactly the idea that violence can impact those who do not directly experience it (McCann and Pearlman 1990). Given this parallel, I rely heavily on sociological theories of to ground my analysis and shape the study design. Alexander (2004), Erikson (1991), and Eyerman (2019) specifically propose theories of trauma that are communal rather than about individual pathology, though their work has almost exclusively been applied to discrete events such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. In asking how retirees are impacted by enforcement strategies, I am implicitly questioning whether proximity to the border constitutes a trauma in the way that Alexander (2004), Erikson (1991), and Eyerman (2019) describe and whether their conceptions are applicable in the context of the borderlands.

Although this is an empirical study and not a theoretical paper, my research questions draw a clear connection between theories of state violence and sociological understandings of trauma that has not previously been explored in-depth. As a result, I include discussion on the potential and limitations of Alexander (2004), Erikson (1991), and Eyerman (2019) in relation to the borderlands and propose areas for further inquiry within sociological trauma studies.

Project summary

In the following sections I first expand more on the branches of sociological and philosophical theory that address structural violence and socio-cultural trauma in a literature review. Within the literature review I also explore existing empirical work on manifestations of violence in the borderlands, traumatic outcomes of this violence, and types of resident exposure
to enforcement activity. In the next section, I clearly present the qualitative interview data I have collected in Arizona over the past year and a half as well as my methods for data collection and analysis. Then, I discuss the results of that analysis wherein I find residents’ experiences can be categorized by three major themes, all of which vary depending on when the retirees arrived in the borderlands: (1) exposure to enforcement, (2) perception of violence, and (3) social relationships. Finally, I address the sampling limitations of my project as well as the challenges posed by my own social identities and suggest areas for further research.
**Literature Review**

Border studies is, in many ways, a uniquely interdisciplinary area of research with a variety of perspectives on what a border is and how it functions. Similarly, though I am approaching this project as a sociologist interested in the experiences of people and communities, I am drawing not only on sources of sociological theory and inquiry but also philosophical, anthropological, and psychological sources. The dialogue between these different theorists and disciplines is the foundation on which this project rests.

In the first section of this literature review, I discuss theoretical perspectives on structural violence and trauma respectively. The question of how borderland residents are impacted by enforcement strategies necessitates an understanding of both of these topics. When I ask about the impact of border enforcement, I am really asking about citizens’ experiences of state power, especially violent power. Meanwhile, theories of trauma offer possible mechanisms to explain how residents are specifically impacted by their experiences with that violence.

Building on these perspectives, in the second section, I review the relevant empirical work on structural violence, on trauma, and on border communities. In terms of literature on structural violence, I focus specifically on studies that apply theories of state power to the borderlands of Arizona to show the feasibility of this project. The trauma literature that I include features applications of trauma theory or emotional sociology to border studies for the same reason as well as to inform my data analysis. Finally, I intend the literature on border communities to showcase the impacts of enforcement activities that have been previously identified to provide a point of comparison for this project.
Theoretical perspectives

Structural violence

Mbembe (2019) provides the most useful conception of state power in the context of border enforcement. His theory of necropolitics proposes that “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (2019:66). This idea is heavily rooted in the early work by Foucault (2003) on biopower. In his Lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault (2003) explains biopower as sovereign control over citizens’ lives, focusing particularly on the role that technology like surveillance cameras plays in facilitating that control. Foucault (2003) also draws a connection between racial ideologies and the rationales for the use of lethal force by governments. This connection emerges clearly in the discourse around border security and immigration enforcement through the centuries especially in the last two decades as United States policies and practices have sought to criminalize and otherize migrants to an even greater degree.

It is this reference to lethal force that Mbembe (2019) is most interested in. Following Foucault (2003), Mbembe assumes the supremacy of state control, but where Foucault (2003) focuses more often on the control of living subjects, Mbembe (2019) narrows in on the state’s power to kill. He is particularly interested in what the selective use of lethal power says about the way certain people are perceived by the state, arguing that this discretion betrays an explicitly racialized logic where certain lives are validated and others exterminated. Mbembe (2019) calls this process of valuation necropolitics.

Necropolitics rests not only on Foucault (2003) but also on Agamben’s (1998, 2005) related theories of state power. Agamben (2005) proposes that governments are able to create ‘states of exception’ wherein there is no accountability practically speaking and the state has
absolute authority. He primarily cites Nazi Germany, but Mbembe (2019) argues that states of exception are constantly being created by state powers to justify death and go often unacknowledged. Of particular use to this project, he specifically cites border regions especially ports of entry and detention facilities as examples of spaces where the state is uniquely sanctioned to wield lethal force without question. Modern border regimes are also, Mbembe (2019) argues, manifestations of Agamben’s (1998) theory of “bare life,” or the way that the state intentionally strips certain people of their humanity. Necropolitics, then according to Mbembe (2019) is really about the state’s use of lethal force to render specific populations vulnerable and disposable. This is visible in Arizona within the Sonoran Desert where hundreds of migrants continue to die unnoticed each year as the result of decisions made by the state.

In this exact vein, Doty (2011) applies both Foucault’s (2003) and Agamben’s (1998, 2005) theories to border enforcement in Arizona specifically. Though she does not engage with necropolitics, she focuses on the potential for resistance and reclaimed agency for migrants subject to the biopolitics of the borderlands. Because many migrants are able to make it across the border and through the desert safely, some with the aid of food and water from humanitarian volunteers, Doty (2011) argues that the state is never completely successful in its attempt at reducing populations to bare life even within a state of exception. This, she concludes, is evidence that Agamben and Foucault are too rigid in their theorizing. Instead, Doty (2011) suggests that future work should consider the potential for survival and escape when applying theories of state power to real-world scenarios. Drawing on Foucault (2003) and Agamben (1998, 2005), both Doty (2011) and Mbembe (2019) explicitly connect their theories of state power and violence to border enforcement. This established connection suggests that it is reasonable to consider enforcement activities a manifestation of state power and thus a form of
structural violence.

Socio-cultural trauma

Meštrović (1985) is one of the first theorists to explicitly call for a sociological exploration of trauma. He reviews the work of founding sociological theorists and ultimately concludes that trauma should not be thought of as a single event but rather the interpretation and understanding of events within a collective. Meštrović (1985) argues persuasively that expanding the definition of trauma beyond individual pathology opens the door for sociologists to make meaningful contributions to trauma studies. He is particularly concerned with the mechanism by which events become traumatic because, as he notes, this is not the case for every tragedy or crisis. He also points out that social relationships, often considered to be buffers against stress and trauma, can also be sources of the same. Ultimately, he does not answer many of his own questions and instead calls on others to use them as prompts for further inquiry.

Rather than beginning with theory as Meštrović (1985) does, Erikson (1976) is interested in the experiences of communities grappling with environmental disasters. His landmark work on the flooding of Buffalo Creek, West Virginia paved the way for his later more theoretical ideas about community-level manifestations of trauma (Erikson 1991). In his interviews with residents of Buffalo Creek, Erikson (1976) noticed that many people without firsthand experiences of the flood still experienced poor social outcomes that were directly attributable to the disaster. It is here that he first formulates a sociological understanding of trauma by distinguishing between an individual and collective definition.

To Erikson (1976, 1991), individual trauma refers to a person’s damaged psyche whereas collective trauma describes a “damaged social organism” (1991:460) where the normal relationships and organization that characterize a community have been fundamentally altered. In
the Buffalo Creek, for example, the displacement caused by the flood changed social life so dramatically that even subsequent generations with no individual trauma related to the flood felt the collective effects. In a nod to Meštrović’s (1985) question about the impact of social relationships, Erikson (1991) also suggests that collective trauma may be a binding agent that brings similarly traumatized people together. Different from Buffalo Creek and other established communities, he argues that “otherwise unconnected individuals who share a traumatic experience can seek one another out and develop a form of community on that basis” (1991:461). It is easy to see the possibility for both manifestations of trauma in the borderlands. On the one hand, enforcement activities may sow fear and suspicion, preventing the traditional flow of social life. On the other, the residents’ shared experiences may bring them together and strengthen existing social bonds.

Alexander (2004) builds on Erkison’s (1976, 1991) idea of collective trauma and is the first to comprehensively articulate trauma in terms of social theory. Alexander follows Meštrović’s (1985) assertion that a trauma is not just an event but a larger process of “socially mediated attribution” (Alexander 2004:8) where social groups come to a collective understanding about the way they have been impacted and to what extent. The result of this mediation, according to Alexander (2004), is a new or altered identity for the affected group. He terms this outcome ‘cultural trauma,’ giving an indication of the phenomenon’s magnitude. These traumas are not to be taken lightly if by definition they result in an entirely new culture.

Alexander (2004) argues that there are four components to such a trauma: the type of traumatizing event or idea, the specific victim(s), the position of the victim(s) within the larger group, and finally the determination of blame (13). Because, to Anderson (2004), traumatizing events are only those that cause a shift in culture, he focuses narrowly on mass atrocities such as
war and genocide. Erikson (1991), in contrast, emphasises smaller more regional traumas such as the Buffalo Creek flood. This difference is perhaps the clearest way to distinguish between a trauma that is collective and one that is cultural, although neither author directly references the other. Even his updated edition, Alexander (2012) continues his emphasis on large-scale tragedy including the Holocaust and 9/11. Eyerman (2019), however, places Alexander (2004) and Erikson (1991) on just such a continuum arguing that a collective trauma can be a precursor to a cultural one, but only in the instance that the affected group emerges with an identity directly linked to the trauma. Eyerman (2019) is not specific about the types of events that are more conducive to this outcome, but like Anderson (2004) he cites examples with far reaching rather than localized impacts such as the African slave trade.

Given Eyerman (2019), viewing border enforcement as a source of cultural trauma for residents of the Arizona borderlands would require first identifying an overarching identity shared among them as a result of their experiences with enforcement. Collective trauma could be identified much more simply by noting whether social relationships are altered—either broken or strengthened—as the result of enforcement-related experiences. Alexander (2004) does acknowledge that cultural traumas may manifest in different ways depending on the social institutions involved (15). Traumatic events related to religious institutions for example may unfold in distinct ways from those that involve political institutions. In this way, it is also true that just because the theorists have not explicitly explored the ways their ideas might apply to the particulars of state violence in the borderlands does not mean that they are not applicable.

Lastly, Demertzis (2009) also suggests that there is a socio-cultural dimension to trauma that is more than just an individual’s experience. Like Alexander (2004), he also focuses heavily on the politics of the modern era, especially national politics, to provide examples of collective
trauma. Demertzis emphasizes the “discourse of crises and fear” (2009:154) that he argues is omnipresent in many national societies, and he agrees with Alexander (2004) that media is an important mechanism through which collective traumas are acknowledged and negotiated (Demertzis 2009:155-6). Demertzis (2009) does make a critical departure from Alexander (2004) in that he argues for more inclusion of the Freudian, psychoanalytic theory that Alexander (2004) explicitly tells trauma theorists to move away from. More than Alexander (2004), Smelser (2004) makes a persuasive case for a clear boundary between psychological and cultural trauma. The psychological model, he argues, is a useful metaphor for socio-cultural trauma, but it does not accurately capture the full complexity of the social world. Certainly, the usefulness and limitations of such a metaphor are apparent in the context of the borderlands where white retirees, the focus of this project, are adjacent to violence and trauma daily. This is akin to the psychological concept of vicarious trauma where hearing about their clients’ trauma is traumatizing in and of itself to clinicians (McCann and Pearlman 1990), but it is unclear how this process would translate to a possible collective trauma like the violence of the borderlands.

Empirical perspectives

Structural violence in the borderlands

Since Foucault (2003), Mbembe (2019), and Agamben (1998, 2005) articulated their theories of lethal state power, many empirical studies on the Arizona borderlands have been grounded in their ideas. The majority of these studies focus on prevention through deterrence as an example of structural violence. De Leon (2015) provides one of the most comprehensive studies drawing on interviews with migrants, archaeological fieldwork, and historical data. He argues that prevention through deterrence has weaponized the Sonoran Desert and turned it into an extension of the state. He also proposes that the violence perpetrated against migrants via the
landscape is rendered invisible both because of the speed at which bodies decompose in the desert and because the majority of deceased migrants whose bodies are discovered died of natural causes like dehydration.

Boyce, Chambers, and Launius (2019) make a similar argument using a GIS model of migrant routes through Arizona over time. They conclude, using the same language of ‘weaponization,’ that migrants are traveling through more rugged terrain at greater risk to their lives. Their models draw a direct connection between state action under prevention through deterrence and the increased danger to migrants, suggesting like Mbembe (2019) that enforcement activity renders migrants disposable by leaving them to the mercy of the landscape.

Finally, Slack, Martínez, Lee, and Whiteford (2016) focus on migrants’ actual experience of violence. The authors analyze responses from the Migrant Border Crossing Study, a survey of a random sample of migrants deported to Nogales, Mexico after attempting to cross the border between 2007 and 2009. Slack et al. (2016) find a distinction between the officially sanctioned violence of policies like prevention through deterrence and the tacitly endorsed, though unsanctioned, violence of individual Border Patrol agents in their interactions with migrants. To the migrants victimized, both types of violence, the authors argue, represent state action.

Together, these empirical works make a strong case that the Arizona borderlands are the site of the type of lethal state violence suggested by both Doty (2011) and Mbembe (2019). Still, none of them deal explicitly with residents’ experiences writ large. Rather, they focus instead on migrants, the explicit targets of violence. In addition to empirical work on prevention through deterrence, several studies do expand their focus beyond migrants. Burridge (2009) uses the expansion of Operation Streamline as a case-study to explore the dimensions of state violence. He draws on observations from the Federal courthouse in Tucson, Arizona as well as
fieldwork with the humanitarian organization No More Deaths. Although migrants bear the brunt of state power during their Operation Streamline trials, Burridge (2009) finds that the criminalization of migration also impacts volunteers with organizations like No More Deaths whose work puts them at odds with the criminal-justice system.

Williams (2015) is also interested in humanitarian aid groups. She presents a historical analysis of the changing politics of migrant aid in the borderlands beginning with the first humanitarian organizations in the early 2000s. She argues that, following Agamben (1998) and Foucault (2003), the increasing criminalization of migrant aid, including by hospitals and other previously sanctioned providers, is a manifestation of the state’s control over life and death. Similar to Doty (2011), Williams (2015) concludes that there is still room for resistance and that the power of the state is not absolute. Although many of the volunteers that Burridge (2009) and Williams (2015) encounter are Arizona residents, they are unique in that they are choosing to expose themselves to violence through their volunteer work. These studies capture a dimension of the resident experience, but they do not answer the question of how those operating closer to the role of a bystander are affected by the violence they witness.

*Trauma in the borderlands*

As Alexander (2004) and Smelser (2004) note, much of the empirical work on trauma even within sociology follows the clinical psychological model based on individual experiences. In terms of empirical work on trauma in the US/Mexico borderlands, Fortuna, Porche, and Alegria (2008) use the National Latino and Asian American Study to analyze mental health risk factors for Latinos in the United States. They find a strong correlation between previous experiences of political violence and the use of mental health services. Estrada (2009) applies historical trauma theory to the Mexican population in the United States to illustrate the
cumulative, intergenerational nature of stress in those communities. Fernández, Ríos, James, Martinez, and Bravo (2012) conduct an evaluation of the Cruzando Fronteras project, a program designed to address trauma in Mexican elementary-school children attending school in the US borderlands. They find border-related violence has had a considerable impact on the children including interrupting school performance and leading to behavioral concerns. Relatedly, Hess (2012) evaluates the efficacy of the Capacitar Body-Mind-Spirit Practices Training on facilitating healing from trauma in a transnational group of women from El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. In preparation for the training, Hess (2012) conducts background interviews with each of the women and finds a significant history of traumatic experiences, both for those living in El Paso as well as those in Ciudad Juárez.

These empirical studies suggest strongly that there is a correlation between exposure to the violence of the borderlands and poor mental health outcomes, if not trauma explicitly. Still, what about those proximate to the violence of the borderlands that do not experience it directly? In their study of therapists working with traumatized clients, McCann and Pearlman (1990) propose the term ‘vicarious trauma’ to describe way exposure to others’ trauma can in and of itself be traumatizing. Since McCann and Pearlman (1990), the topic has continued to be well-studied within clinical psychology and social work (Cohen and Collens 2013; Newell and MacNeil 2010; and Schauben and Frazier 1995).

More relevant to this project, Zhang (2010) draws the idea of vicarious trauma in her cultural anthropology thesis analyzing the trauma responses of humanitarian volunteers in the Arizona borderlands. Based on her personal experience as a volunteer with No More Deaths and a series of interviews she conducted with other volunteers, Zhang (2010) suggests that the volunteer experience is a cycle of privilege, violence, and trauma. She argues that the privilege to
choose to engage with the borderlands necessitates exposure to violence which traumatizes the volunteers. The volunteers then return to a place of privilege either by choosing to leave the borderlands or to continue volunteering (2010:51). She considers the trauma experienced by these volunteers to be a type of vicarious trauma because they themselves do not experience violence directly but rather are exposed to it via their volunteering. Critically, Zhang (2010) identifies the ease with which the cyclical transition from trauma back to privilege can obscure the true impact of the volunteer’s experiences. Many, she argues, do not recognize themselves as traumatized without a great deal of reflection. Unlike herself, many of the volunteers Zhang (2010) engages with are residents of the Arizona borderlands, so her work is instructive in considering how trauma might be at play even for those that choose not to volunteer.

*Resident exposure to border enforcement*

The empirical literature on residents of the Arizona borderlands centers primarily on humanitarian volunteers. Although larger organizations like No More Deaths draw short-term volunteers from out of state (Zhang 2010), the majority of humanitarian work in southern Arizona is done by relatively small groups of local volunteers. Squire (2014) examines the interaction between humanitarian volunteers and the objects left behind by migrants crossing through the desert. She argues that collecting discarded backpacks, water bottles, and other objects represents an acknowledgement of the humanity of both the volunteer and the migrant. By choosing to focus on encounters not with migrants but with the objects they leave behind, Squire (2014) highlights a common, yet somewhat overlooked, reality of life in southern Arizona.

Gomez, Newell, and Vannini (2020) interview volunteers from four of these organizations including No More Deaths in an attempt to understand their motivations. The
authors identify four distinct volunteer typologies: missionary, good samaritan, do gooder, and activist (2020:9). The volunteers that Gomez et al. (2020) identify as missionaries or good samaritans are motivated by their religious faith whereas the do gooders and activists choose to become involved for secular reasons. Ultimately, while the authors argue their typologies are useful, they acknowledge the motivations of most individuals will likely fit in several categories at once and are likely to change over time. The heterogeneity of volunteer motivations likely applies also to the experiences of the volunteers given that their differing reasons for participating may lead them into different types of activities, but Gomez et al. (2020) do not discuss the experiences of volunteers in the field.

Goodman (2009), on the other hand, provides one perspective on how experiences might affect volunteers and activists. Similar to Squire’s (2014) focus on interactions between volunteers and the belongings of migrants, Goodman (2009) analyzes the encounters of detained asylees by migration activists in Australia. Though these activists are not living as proximate to state violence as are Arizona residents confronting the objects left behind by migrants, Goodman (2009) finds that even fleeting encounters with asylees had an overwhelming emotional impact on the activists. If Gomez et al. (2020) had probed their subjects about their experiences with migrants, whether in the desert or during a court proceeding like Operation Streamline, they might have expressed similarly intense emotional reactions.

Aside from humanitarian organizations and discarded objects, anti-immigration militias are another reality of life in the borderlands. Shapira (2013) presents an ethnographic study of the Minutemen, one of several militia organizations active in the borderlands. Media coverage of the Minutemen based on the politics and public persona of the group’s founder describes the members as having radically xenophobic views and violent tendencies. Shapira (2013) argues,
though, that the Minutemen are better understood as alienated veterans searching for community and purpose. Their military-style patrols of the border and anti-immigrant rhetoric are avenues for social bonding, he concludes, rather than an expression of long-held political convictions.

Shapira (2013) suggests that, if shown a more productive opportunity to create community, these veterans would never have joined the Minutemen. Although militia organizations generally draw volunteers from outside Arizona, similar to Gomez et al. (2020), Shapira (2013) finds that members’ motivations for engaging with border enforcement are general and not tied explicitly to border issues.

The few studies of borderland residents that do not focus entirely on volunteers, find that they are impacted by their surroundings, especially enforcement activities. In his analysis of the history of United States border enforcement, Nevins (2010) indicates, based on his fieldwork, that residents of Arizona border communities have been perceptibly affected by increased enforcement over time (156-7). He explicitly mentions Border Patrol immigration checkpoints on roads within 100 miles of the border as instances where citizen residents feel the privileges of their citizenship somewhat diminished (2010:185). De La Ossa and Miller (2019) conduct a series of interviews with residents in Nogales, Arizona, a port of entry in the southeastern part of the state, to explore further the impact of “the everyday militarized landscape” (140). Their sample is predominantly long-term Latino residents who De La Ossa and Miller (2019) find are very aware of the presence of enforcement activities from surveillance equipment to the ‘boots on the ground.’ The authors argue this awareness often leads to fear and feelings of reduced liberty for residents. Williams and Boyce (2013), meanwhile, focus specifically on ranchers in southern Arizona and find that they too experience fear as a result of encounters with border enforcement. For the ranchers, though, their fear is directed primarily at migrants. The ranchers’
repeated interactions with enforcement activities and even migrants themselves, Williams and Boyce (2013) argue, fuel their support for anti-immigration policies.

**Discussion and relevance**

In their theoretical work, Doty (2011) and Mbembe (2019) both suggest that national borders are characterized by violent expressions of state power. Empirical studies of the US borderlands reveal that border enforcement since the implementation of prevention through deterrence represents just such a form of structural, state sponsored violence where migrants are rendered inhuman and disposable through the weaponization of the landscape (Boyce et al. 2019; De Leon 2015; Slack et al. 2016). This is especially relevant in southern Arizona where the majority of migrant deaths and injury have occurred to date (Humane Borders). Relatedly, there is well documented empirical evidence that the intense concentration of violence and death in the region has significant mental health consequences on vulnerable groups including migrants themselves (Fernández 2012; Fortuna 2008) and humanitarian volunteers (Burridge 2009; Williams 2015; Zhang 2010). Further, although they do not speak directly to the traumatic implications, De La Ossa and Miller (2019), Squire (2009), and Williams and Boyce (2013) document the myriad ways that residents of the Arizona borderlands encounter enforcement activities in their everyday lives.

Altogether the literature suggests that even residents not explicitly targeted by border enforcement still encounter it frequently and that the violence of the borderlands can result in a type of vicarious trauma for those who witness it (Hess 2013; Zhang 2010). Yet, relatively few studies have attempted to draw a connection between these facts. If the borderlands of southern Arizona are characterized by particularly overt expressions of state violence, is the result a collective or even cultural trauma as articulated by Erikson (1991), Eyerman (2019), and
Alexander (2004)? Lomnitz (2008) asserts that “local residents have become mourners of people who die and whom they do not know...the humanitarian crisis on the US side of the border pertains not only to the plight of the immigrants but is also manifested in the lives of...residents who become aids to the immigrants” (26). Is there a unified understanding of the borderlands as being in crisis as he suggests? Or in the same way that Gomez et al. (2020) show diversity in the reasons why residents choose to volunteer, is it the case that there is diversity in residents’ perceptions of violence in the borderlands?

Of the recent empirical work, De La Ossa and Miller (2019) come the closest to answering this question; however, their sample is drawn from Nogales, a town that is over 90% Latino. Given the racialized nature of state power in the borderlands (De Leon 2015; Mbembe 2019; Nevins 2010), it would be irresponsible to consider the experiences of Latino residents as ‘adjacent’ to violence. Instead, for the purposes of this project, I have chosen to focus on white retirees some of whom, as Gomez et al. (2020) mention, engage in humanitarian aid work, but most of whom simply moved to Arizona to spend their golden years recreating in a quiet, affordable community (Silva 2019) and have stuck to that plan. In light of the patterns previously identified in the literature, the central question of this study—how are borderland residents impacted by enforcement strategies?—can be disaggregated into three specific sub-questions that address the particular realities for white retired citizens in southern Arizona:

- How do retirees in the borderlands encounter enforcement activities? How do these types of encounters impact them?
- Through these encounters, how do retirees perceive state violence if at all?
- How do these encounters with and perceptions of violence impact social relationships? Is the impact collective or primarily individual?

These questions are critical to exposing the full effects of enforcement strategies in Arizona and complicating assumptions about border communities. Understanding the extent of
the impact of these strategies could lend further urgency to calls for the cessation of violent enforcement actions and inform the public discourse around border enforcement. This study also represents an opportunity to critically analyze the usefulness of a sociological conception of trauma outside of massive, national shocks. Can cultural traumas manifest in small communities adjacent to, but not the targets of, violence? How would this challenge previous understandings of what violence is and how it is experienced? Though ‘vicarious trauma’ is an accepted phenomenon in clinical psychology and social work (Newell and MacNeil 2010), not since Erikson (1991), has an analogous concept been included in sociological trauma theories. Thus, this project should be considered an initial inquiry with room for further research in the future.
Data and Methods

Data

*Background data collection*

I have used an emergent study design (Creswell and Creswell 2018), modifying the structure of my project as I gathered data and reviewed literature. Although I traveled to my fieldsite in Arizona four times over the course of collecting data for this project, the first two trips I took to the borderlands were the most important in forming my research question and outlining the final study structure. I first arrived in southern Arizona in March of 2018 intending to spend a week volunteering with a local humanitarian aid organization. I was introduced to the different types of aid activities including leaving water and first aid supplies along migrant trails in the desert, providing medical care to injured migrants, and educating community members about migration. In addition to time in the desert, I observed a community forum and a presentation by an immigration court observer. During the week, I began a journal where I recorded observations at the end of each day. This journal became my research notebook where I have kept detailed notes from the field as well as on each part of my data analysis. It was also during this week that, while with a group of volunteers in Organ Pipe National Monument, I encountered a young man and his three-year-old daughter waiting by the side of the road to be apprehended by Border Patrol. My experiences as a volunteer, this interaction in particular, are what led me to consider further study on border enforcement.

The second time I visited Arizona, I spent almost four weeks during December of 2018 and January of 2019 continuing to conduct background research under an IRB approved protocol. Most of my research was observational, following Kawulich’s (2005) recommendation that researchers spend time observing the social context of any setting they wish to study further. Woods (2019) suggests this is particularly critical for empirical work on trauma which should
“incorporate as many relevant perspectives into analysis as possible” (199).

During this time, I volunteered with a different humanitarian organization, observed Operation Streamline proceedings in the Federal courthouse in Tucson, attended more community meetings, and spoke informally with different community members. As before, I continued to record field notes including summaries of my observations from the day’s events. The day before flying back to North Carolina, a group of residents invited me on an exploratory hike in the Sonoran Desert. After a few hours of walking, we discovered a human skeleton scattered across the path. If my encounter with the migrant family prior to their apprehension by Border Patrol was what led me to consider studying border enforcement, the discovery of human remains during a recreational hike led me to focus on the violent impacts of enforcement.

Reflexivity/Position of the researcher

Following Alcoff’s (1991:12) call that researchers abandon passive voice in favor of taking first-person responsibility for their choices, my goal is to be transparent about the perspective from which I approach this research and the decisions that I have made along the way. Though this is an empirical study based on qualitative data I collected from my research site in Arizona and not an autoethnography or otherwise a study of my experience, I acknowledge the impact of my personal identities on each stage of the research process (Creswell and Creswell 2018). As a young, white, female-presenting college student and a citizen of the United States, I share some key characteristics with the Arizona residents that I sought to interview. Berger (2015) suggests that these similarities, most especially my race and citizenship status, may have been helpful in building rapport with the white, citizen community.

As with my use of the word “migrant,” I am choosing to use “remains” intentionally. One of the women that I interviewed expressed a specific discomfort around the phrase, saying that she thought it obscured the humanity of the deceased, but as De Leon (2015) points out, dehumanization is exactly what is happening in the borderlands.
members I interviewed.

Although Berger (2015) does not discuss age, I feel that my relative youth was a very significant factor in all of my interactions. Given the significant retiree population in southern Arizona, I was immediately conspicuous as an outsider most anywhere I went. The only exception to this was during community events when I was often assumed to be a part of an out-of-town volunteer group passing through the area. This dynamic manifested during my interviews as well. Many of the residents that I spoke with expressed their desire for more young people to move to the area and would ask me if I had plans to settle permanently in Arizona. Their answers to my questions would often veer from talking about their experiences to publicizing the region, the amenities, and the atmosphere as though they might be able to entice me to stay. I will discuss the potential impact of this dynamic on my results later, but it is clear that my identities did have an effect on my interactions with residents.

Berger (2015) also posits that research may be affected not only by identities shared by the researcher and their subjects but also by events experienced in common. Researchers with experiences like those that they set out to study may find that their personal experience invariably shapes their research questions, study design, and analytical process. Undoubtedly, the time I have spent in the Arizona borderlands, especially my encounters with migrants, Border Patrol, and human remains, influenced the structure of my project. Discovering the skeleton of a deceased migrant pushed me to center the violent realities of border enforcement more explicitly. More mundanely, having to stop at immigration checkpoints each time I visited my research site led me to consider the ways that even citizens are directly impacted by state power in the region. During my interviews with residents, I found that these experiences prepared me well to probe some of their more contradictory answers about life in the borderlands, but as Berger (2015)
cautions, this also led me to be more drawn into the interviews than I might have been otherwise. More than once, after talking about their own interactions with migrants, interviewees would ask me whether I had ever met a migrant or seen human remains. As with the impact of my age on the residents’ responses, I will discuss the implications of these moments further in my analysis of limitations.

Interview data collection

Based on the connections I made during my first two trips to Arizona, in the spring of 2019, I began preparing to return for a longer period of time to conduct a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with community members. At this time, though I had met residents that were not humanitarian volunteers, I was only in direct contact with active participants in aid work. I reached out to several of these volunteers to schedule a few initial interviews. I also reached out to members of law enforcement and other prominent community figures whose contact information was publicly available. Though none agreed to let me record our conversations, I was able to use notes from our conversations to shape my interview guide.

In July of 2019, I drove to Arizona from North Carolina and stayed there for a total of four weeks. I continued to do participant-observation work as a volunteer with humanitarian aid organizations, to attend community events, and to talk informally with residents. In my notes I focused on manifestations of border-enforcement and on social dynamics within the town that I noticed. I also joined a search and rescue group for a weekend to observe that work and learn more about the interaction between law enforcement and volunteer organizations in the area. During this four week period, I conducted seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with community members I had made prior contact with. These residents are all involved with one or both of the humanitarian organizations that I had previously volunteered with which was how I
was able to get in touch with them.

Based on these initial seven recruits, I used a snowball sampling technique to recruit other participants. At the end of each interview, I asked the participant to put me in touch with other residents that they thought would be willing to speak with me. I explicitly asked that they refer me to community members that had moved to Arizona within the last 20 years and that were not actively involved in humanitarian volunteer work in order to intentionally diversify my sample. I also explicitly screened participants based on race and citizenship status. This strategy was intentional in order to capture the experiences of those least likely to be considered targets of border enforcement—white retirees with little, if any, prior connection or exposure to the borderlands.

In the end, I recruited a total of 15 participants, seven of which I interviewed over the summer and eight of which I interviewed in December of 2019 when I returned to my research site for the fourth and final time. Participants’ names were changed to maintain anonymity, but I have included information on each person’s type of residence and the time period in which they arrived in the region. A full list of participants can be found in Table 3. The type of residence refers to whether they reside in Arizona full-time (year-round) or whether they only live there for a part of the year (seasonal). Arrival context refers to the three major phases of enforcement strategy change outlined in Table 2. I assigned a time period to each of the participants according to the year they arrived in Arizona. For example, the arrival context for a participant who moved in 1998 would be “pre-9/11” whereas someone that arrived in 2015 would be “2011-2019.” The reason for including each participant’s type of residence is to be transparent about the diversity of my sample and to identify any variations that might exist between the experiences of year-round and seasonal residents. I highlight the arrival context of each participant also to show the
sample’s diversity and to investigate any correlations between changes in enforcement strategy and impacts on residents.

Of the 15 retired residents that I interviewed, the majority (60%) are female. Most of the interviewees are also seasonal (67%) as opposed to year-round (33%) residents, reflecting retirees’ aversion to southern Arizona summers. Although this information is not included in Table 3 for privacy reasons, the majority of the retirees reported participating in humanitarian work on at least one occasion (73%), although fewer (53%) consider themselves active volunteers. Humanitarian work in this context is defined as attending the meeting of a humanitarian organization, participating in search and rescues, leaving water for migrants in the desert, or working on education campaigns. In terms of the arrival context, 40% of those I interviewed moved to Arizona prior to 9/11, 20% arrived between 2002 and 2010, and 40% moved between 2011 and 2019. When conducting the analysis of the interview data, I considered the strengths and limitations of these demographics.

The interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes and, with one exception where I took handwritten notes instead, I had permission to make audio recordings of the conversations. Four interviews were conducted over the phone due to scheduling conflicts, but I had met each one of those participants in-person prior to the phone interview. All other interviews were conducted in person, some in public places and some in the participants’ homes. For the first seven interviews, I used the same interview guide with broad questions in three topic areas: “Humanitarian Aid Work,” “Border Communities,” and “Socio-Political Landscape.” Though it is not included in the interview guide, I began each of the interviews by asking the participants what brought them to the borderlands and why they moved to the area. Based on the responses to general questions, I had a series of more specific probing questions to ask specifically about dimensions of border
enforcement especially migrant fatalities. This initial interview guide is included in Appendix 1.

In general, I found that the volunteers would immediately offer experiences related to enforcement strategies. Anticipating that this might not be true for community members uninvolved in humanitarian work, I revised my interview guide prior to returning to Arizona in December 2019. The revised interview guide is also included in Appendix 1. The spirit of the questions is not significantly different, but they are more general and less focused on volunteering. In Table 4, I summarize the questions across both guides by theme and include the introductory questions that were not explicitly identified on the first interview guide. I did not include any questions that specifically asked about migrant fatalities or particular enforcement strategies because I wanted to first allow the participants to share what came to them when asked generally about their relationship with the borderlands. In follow-up questions, I sometimes chose to press on specifics especially if the participants indicated that the border was not important to them or that they did not often think about it.

Analytical method

I followed the traditional inductive qualitative analysis method described by Creswell and Creswell (2018) to analyze my interview data. I made transcripts from the audio recordings of 14 of the interviews, and, in the case of the one unrecorded interview, I transcribed my handwritten notes into a digital format. Through the process of transcription, I listened to each audio file and read over my interview notes three times. To speed transcription, I did not include filler words or phrases such as “um” and “you know.” While this would be significant if I was conducting a language analysis, for the purposes of a thematic analysis it is an acceptable omission (Rubin and Rubin 2005). From this initial review of the data, I identified four recurring themes: (1) exposure to border issues, (2) perceptions of border-related violence, (3) community involvement, and (4)
time-period. I then used NVivo to code each transcript according to those themes. In reviewing the quotes collected under each theme, I revised the parent categories slightly and then developed a series of child categories or sub-themes. Table 5 outlines the final scheme including sub-themes that I used to code the interviews in NVivo.

Apart from “time” which is a predetermined code, all of the themes and sub-themes emerged from an in vivo analysis of the interview transcripts. However, I relied on the trauma literature to guide me in choosing the wording for the themes and their descriptions, so they would clearly connect to my research questions. “Exposure to border enforcement” refers to experiences including residents’ first exposure to border enforcement in Arizona, intentional further engagement with border enforcement such as volunteering, and intentional avoidance of border enforcement such as choosing not to interact with Border Patrol or to hike in the desert. This theme captures the type of discrete events that Alexander (2004) identifies as part of community traumatization. “Perception of violence” specifically denotes violent manifestations of border enforcement. These may have been personally experienced by residents or experienced by others that the residents have heard about. They may be types of violence that the residents identify on their own, or they may be forms of violence identified by others that the residents do not in fact find violent, for example some may find Border Patrol agents abusive while some may disagree. This theme is intended to shed light on the experience of state violence by privileged citizens like the Arizona residents in my sample, a demographic not fully investigated by Mbembe (2019), Foucault (2003), or Agamben (1998, 2005).

The “social relationships” code captures the possibility referenced by Meštrović (1985) for interactions to protect against trauma or to be a source of trauma in and of themselves. This code is further divided between relationships that represent a “connection to community” and
mentions of alienation or isolation. This reflects Erikson (1991) and Eyerman’s (2019) proposition that trauma may serve to fracture community bonds or it may build community among people with similar experiences. Finally, I used the “time” theme to code responses that specifically refer to changes in enforcement strategy or specific periods in the history of border enforcement as defined in Table 2. After coding each of the transcripts according to both parent and sub-themes, I wrote a memo for each parent theme summarizing trends and contradictions in the responses of residents. The results section that follows is an expansion of each of those memos.
Results

“Obviously, you hear about people dying out in the desert all the time. It’s a big factor.” – Jeff

Encounters with enforcement

By the end of the second interview I conducted, it was clear to me that residents are exposed to enforcement activities in a multitude of ways and that this variety carries implications for the way they perceive the violence unfolding around them. In response to my initial question “how did you come to live here?” many residents were quick to offer stories of their first encounters with border enforcement. Beyond these initial encounters, some residents chose to engage further with enforcement, often through volunteer work, while others chose to distance themselves from possible future encounters. Regardless of their intentions, all of the retirees reported some level of interaction with enforcement activities by virtue of their residency in Arizona. In the following sections—initial encounters, intentional engagement, intentional avoidance, and unintentional encounters—I expand on the types of interactions and their implications.

Initial encounters

None of the retirees I interviewed moved to Arizona intending to engage with enforcement activities, so for many, their first encounters were a significant part of their transition to the borderlands. In general, these initial interactions with border enforcement fall into three categories: (1) direct encounters with migrants, (2) community outreach by humanitarian groups, and (3) direct encounters with enforcement activities. It is important to note that these categories are dependent, in many ways, on the residents’ arrival contexts. Retirees that moved to Arizona in the 1980s or 1990s, long before 9/11 or prevention through deterrence, would have been substantially more likely to encounter a migrant walking by their
house or out in the desert. It is rare, however, that a more recent arrival would ever have that experience. They are much more likely to become aware of enforcement by way of educational campaigns or through a direct interaction with enforcement activities.

Liam, a seasonal resident who has lived in Arizona since the 1990s, illustrates this exact point in his description of interactions with migrants. “I mean it’s slowed down substantially now, but there were years where they’d just come by our kitchen window,” he remembers. Liam goes on to say that such encounters quickly became routine for him and his wife. They would even offer the migrants food or water on occasion. Luke and Jennifer, also seasonal residents who have owned property in the borderlands since the 1990s, both share similar experiences. They describe initially encountering migrants in the desert during camping trips or other recreational activities where they too would sometimes stop to offer water, although most often the migrants would avoid direct interactions. Since those early years, Luke and Jennifer both report that their encounters have been few and far between. Another resident since the 1990s, Louise, remarks that her understanding of border enforcement has grown gradually through similarly impersonal encounters.

I guess slowly you accumulate experiences one after the other. Where you find the possessions of some immigrant laying in the desert. And then we found a couple bicycles when we were on another hike. And I, in my stupidity, came home, reported the bicycles to the police here, and they just kind of laughed at me.

While her initial discovery of abandoned bikes in the desert was surprising, Louise has since come to accept such experiences as normal and her previous surprise as laughable, similar to Liam’s routine view of migrants walking by his window. Also like Liam, Luke, and Jennifer, Louise has noticed that those first encounters are now a thing of the past. Although she still sees discarded possessions in the desert, she says bicycles are rare.
Sophia and Ava are year-round residents that also moved to the borderlands prior to 9/11; however, their first interactions with border enforcement were less cursory than passing encounters with migrants or abandoned bikes. Sitting across from me in the living room of her home, Ava describes hosting the father of a migrant missing in the desert soon after arriving in Arizona. She says that watching him search for his son “was the most traumatic experience” and remarks that she thinks of him each time a new migrant fatality is discovered nearby. Relatedly, the very first year Sophia settled in Arizona, a large group of migrants died in the area, and she recalls her neighbors organizing a search party to comb the desert for survivors. For these women, their introductions to the realities of border enforcement were intense and personal.

This is in contrast to many newer residents who are often introduced to the violence of the borderlands through the outreach of humanitarian organizations. Betty, who retired to Arizona within the last 8 years, describes an interaction she and her husband had with humanitarian volunteers tabling at a local market.

We didn’t know anything about what was going on down here. And quite frankly the only thing we’d ever heard about was the Minutemen...And we were like, “wow, there’s people that are the opposite of those people. There’s people that really care about other people.”

Another seasonal resident and recent retiree, Rodger, says he first learned about the consequences of border enforcement during a series of educational events organized by local volunteers. Like Betty he describes being curious and somewhat awed by the information. Year-round residents Jeff and Barbara, also recent arrivals, were introduced to humanitarian work and border issues at a symposium organized by volunteers and academics in their community and found themselves similarly captivated. Closer to Betty’s experience, seasonal resident Lisa describes a chance encounter with a humanitarian volunteer at a neighborhood yard sale. Unlike Betty, though, Lisa felt overwhelmed rather than empowered by what she learned. “And I just—I
mean it was like being punched in the gut or something,” she tells me. “Because I really was pretty clueless about, you know, migrant deaths and stuff.”

Of course, not all the experiences of recent arrivals are identical. Ellen, a seasonal resident, currently volunteers with a humanitarian group, but they were not her initial exposure to border enforcement. After coming across human remains during a hike, she says she was drawn to the group for information and subsequently joined as a volunteer. Her experience is similar to those of Ava and Sophia, except for them, unlike in Ellen’s case, there were no well-established humanitarian organizations to turn to. Dan, a seasonal resident who arrived some years before Ellen, remembers the first official meeting about humanitarian work in his community. “We were very disorganized,” he tells me, but in the years since, as the experiences of Betty, Lisa, and others confirm, the organizations have grown and flourished.

Unique among the retirees, Sean, a year-round resident who arrived in Arizona between 2002 and 2010, identifies his introduction to border enforcement as much more overt. During his first trip to Arizona, he and his wife were driving to Organ Pipe National Monument, a popular recreational destination, when they had to stop at an immigration checkpoint.

We came through the first checkpoint. An armed checkpoint on the highway, and I thought, “what the fuck is this? This is like Israel.” I was not aware that the US had armed guards on the highway north of the border, so that was a shock. It took a while to get used to that.

His shock, as he says, at being stopped by Border Patrol stands in contrast to the reactions of older residents encountering migrants or even more recent arrivals learning about migrant fatalities. It is also significant that, though 60% of the retirees I interviewed moved to Arizona after 9/11 and would have had to drive through such a checkpoint, Sean was the only resident who specifically mentioned the experience as formative. Still, like Louise, Liam, and others that described their acclimation to seeing migrants traveling through the desert, Sean tells me that he
eventually got over his incredulity. He has become friends with local law enforcement including some Border Patrol agents, so he says that he has learned to see the checkpoints as just a part of life in the borderlands.

**Intentional engagement**

After their initial encounters with border enforcement, some residents deliberately chose to seek further engagement. Liam, for example, describes providing food and water to migrants that would stop at his house before increased enforcement drove them further into the desert. Most of the residents that are actively involved, though, participate in humanitarian aid work. As Gomez et al. (2020) highlight, there are many different types of humanitarian organizations in Arizona and many reasons why residents choose to join. Those in my sample were no exception. The majority of the volunteers I spoke with were recent retirees whose first encounters with border enforcement were through humanitarian groups.

Betty, inspired by her conversation at the market during her first day in Arizona, has become a devoted volunteer along with her husband.

It’s a choice we made, you know, our lives pretty much focus, from the time we get down here til the time we leave, on the migrant stuff. That’s pretty much—not always a good idea because there’s stresses and things that happen that get us stressed out, but we’re pretty committed to it.

Not only has she chosen to be involved, but she has “committed” herself to humanitarian work, leaving room for little else during the months that she lives in Arizona. Others are less romantic about their reasons for involvement. Jeff describes his first time going to a meeting about humanitarian work after which he “slowly got more involved with it,” he tells me. “Well, you know, it was something for me to do.” Ellen talks about how she sees her volunteer work as an extension of her existing love for the outdoors. “It’s a nice fit for me,” she says. “Because the hiking in the desert and my natural passion to be out there fits the water drop thing and the desert
aid piece.” Ellen is not consumed by her volunteering, but rather fits it into her planned retirement lifestyle.

Similar to Ellen, Barbara traces her motivation back to her existing skills and passions. “My dream had always been,” she tells me, “to work with Doctors Without Borders. Then I moved, and it’s like, well I don’t need to go to Africa or to Haiti. I’ve got my work cut out for me right here.” Comparing Arizona “to Africa or to Haiti,” Barbara seems to see the borderlands as being in the midst of a crisis which she is unaffected by except in her desire to provide aid. This has led her, like Betty, to spend the majority of her time volunteering which, as a year-round resident, means a lot of hours. Though Sean also compared the borderlands to a country known for conflict, his view of volunteer work is somewhat distinct. He arrived in Arizona before any of the other active volunteers I interviewed, and unlike them, it took him a while to become involved.

I’ve been getting more and more drawn into the humanitarian aid effort. It just seems natural at this time. It is a crisis all across the border from Texas to California, so it’s hard to just stand by and watch that. You eventually get drawn into it, but that’s life here. Sean seems to view his volunteering as almost predetermined, as though once he learned more about the “crisis,” there was no other choice. At the same time, hyper-local humanitarian organizations have only been growing within the last 10 years. Dan recounts that he had never heard of many of the organizations in full force today “until about four years ago,” so Sean’s involvement may have been the result of increasing awareness around humanitarian aid in tandem with awareness around the “crisis all across the border.”

**Intentional avoidance**

There are, of course, other choices. A few of the residents I interviewed explicitly said that they avoided volunteering or going certain places in the desert so as not to be involved with migration and border issues. These people generally expressed one of two reasons for doing so:
(1) political ideology or (2) fear. Liam, the seasonal resident who shared stories of providing food and water to migrants several decades ago, emphasized his disinterest in the humanitarian efforts that have gathered strength in the last decade. “I just don’t participate,” he tells me, “because I don’t think it’s, in the grand scale of things, that important.” Implicit in this choice is a refutation of Sean’s and Barbara’s view of the borderlands as in crisis. Although Liam does express concern over drug smuggling and migration, he believes that the issues touted by humanitarian groups are sensationalized. His emphasis on rationality and logic lead him to dismiss many of the volunteers’ concerns.

Sean also places value on rational thinking, but this ideology does not stop him from volunteering. Instead, he tells me, he tries to limit his volunteer efforts because he fears that the work will consume him. “I don’t want to get too involved,” he says. “I want to have some balance in my life.” This fear is similar to one expressed by Louise when I probed her on why she chose not to volunteer. Initially she talked about her decision in terms of politics, but after a few moments, she clarified.

It’s not the fear of being busted. In my younger life I was a nuclear weapon protester, and I’ve been to jail over it. You know, been there done that. I know that I’m going to come out alive. So that part of it doesn’t faze me. I think it’s the idea that I would have nightmares and make my life unpleasant for the rest of my life.

Louise is afraid that volunteering with a humanitarian group could expose her to experiences that would haunt her. She specifically mentions search and rescue work, implying that encountering remains in the desert would fundamentally alter her quality of life. Luke, also a seasonal resident, expresses a similar thought to me. “I’ve never found a body, and I don’t want to,” he says. Unlike Louise, Luke has occasionally volunteered despite his fears, but like Sean he has a keen sense of where his own boundaries are, and he carefully limits his volunteerism accordingly.
Unintentional encounters

The majority of experiences with border enforcement that residents shared with me were neither the result of intentional engagement nor intentional avoidance. Instead, they continued to have spontaneous interactions as they went about their daily lives. Sophia, a year-round resident who neither volunteers nor expresses any opposition to humanitarian work, tells me she encountered injured migrants often during her time as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). She is one of the few residents that did not move to Arizona to retire, although she has not worked in many years.

One man, that when we pulled up, he was holding his brother who he had carried for over a mile. And his brother was dead. But he wouldn’t leave the body. And then he was sobbing because we’re taking him to the hospital. And he wanted to stay with his brother, even if it meant he would die. And of course, we couldn’t let that happen but...

At the end of her story, she trails off, clearly affected by the experience even after close to two decades. Unlike humanitarian volunteers that intentionally search the desert for injured or deceased migrants, Sophia did not become an EMT to engage explicitly with border issues. There are few jobs in the rural borderlands outside of law enforcement or emergency medicine, another reason why most people moving into the area are retirees.

Jennifer, a seasonal resident, has volunteered a few times to leave water in the desert, but does not consider herself an active volunteer. Rather, she says, most of her interactions with enforcement have been during her frequent bike rides in the desert.

I remember one time I was on my bike and all of a sudden there was a guy with a black water bottle. And he was just high tailing it across the desert. I couldn’t believe how fast he was running. I was on my bike, so I just sort of stopped and watched him disappear into the desert. And so then I continued on, and about five minutes later, I came across—Border Patrol had five guys sitting down, so this guy had gotten away from this group that they had stopped.
In recounting the scene, Jennifer laughs seemingly entertained. At the same time, she also tells me that Border Patrol has stopped her several times during her bike rides. She thinks that there are sensors in the more remote parts of the desert that allow Border Patrol to track her movements, but she is not certain. These two experiences highlight the diversity of ways residents interact with border enforcement in their everyday lives. Sometimes, as with the first story, they are witnesses while other times, like when Border Patrol questions Jennifer during her bike rides, they are directly involved.

In addition to their personal encounters with border enforcement, many residents also shared stories told to them by others. Sean, Luke, and Sophia, in particular, emphasize the experiences of Latino and Indigenous residents as distinct from their own. In explaining how he acclimated to passing through immigration checkpoints, Sean contrasts his experience with that of his Latino friend who, he says, is often harassed by the agents. Luke also mentions several instances in which his non-white neighbors were singled out by Border Patrol at immigration checkpoints, while Sophia explains the challenges faced by people living in the Nation, as people often call the nearby Tohono O’odham reservation. In this way, many white, citizen residents are also exposed to the impacts of border enforcement on more vulnerable people in their communities. Together with the everyday experiences shared by Jennifer, Sophia, and others, this shows how unavoidable enforcement actives are, even for residents that do not volunteer or otherwise go out of their way to engage.

**Perceptions of violence**

Given the variety of ways that residents are exposed to border enforcement, it follows that there is also diversity to their understanding of the same. Although there is an established view of enforcement as a form of violence among border scholars, the retirees I spoke with differ in
their perspectives. The majority seem to see at least aspects of enforcement activities as violent, but there is not a clear consensus as to the impact of that violence. Some residents feel they personally are in harm’s way whereas others focus on the vulnerability of migrants. In the following sections I will first summarize the responses of residents that speak explicitly to personal dangers and second discuss the responses of those that emphasize their perceptions of harm to others.

**Personal harm**

Of residents’ fears for their own safety and wellbeing, the most common is a fear of arrest and prosecution. For some, this fear is general whereas for others it is connected explicitly to the 2018 high-profile arrests of humanitarian volunteers in Arizona. Interestingly, not all of the residents that shared such a fear are themselves volunteers, and some volunteers actually refuted the idea that they were in any danger. Jeff, a year-round resident who describes himself as an active volunteer, has an intense mistrust of law enforcement related to the prosecution of other humanitarian volunteers, some of which he knows personally.

> They could come in here right now and arrest us all for whatever. And we could go to jail and it’d take us a day or so to get out and yes we’d go to court and a year and a half later we’re found not guilty and that they did everything wrong or whatever, but that’s still, there’s that period of time where you’re totally in their power.

Part of Jeff’s response is his long-held suspicion of the police which, he tells me, comes from his involvement in activism during the 1960s, but he is also referring to a reality of the borderlands. One of the volunteers arrested in 2018 went through two separate trials before finally being acquitted of aiding illegal entry into the US for providing medical care to injured migrants (Devereaux 2019). Jeff feels that he could also be prosecuted for a similar crime and fears that even if he were ultimately acquitted, he would still suffer. Ellen, also a seasonal resident and active volunteer, is even more explicit.
My family knows. I mean we joke, we kind of joke about it—I mean joke about me going to jail. But there’s a reality there, and they know it…My brother and my nephew went out on a water drop with me, and so we’ve talked about it, so they understand it in more detail because they’ve come to visit as has my mom.

Ellen says that even though she and her family joke about her being arrested for her volunteer work, it is a possibility that she takes seriously. She explains that once her family spent time with her in Arizona, they too came to understand the seriousness. Ellen’s story indicates that there is something unique about experiencing the borderlands and humanitarian aid first-hand. Whereas Jeff’s distrust of law enforcement was merely exacerbated by his time in Arizona, Ellen’s family gained an entirely new perspective.

Luke, who is not an active volunteer, also suggests that there is something intense about the borderlands. He tells me that the region feels like a “police state.” An avid outdoorsman, he is particularly concerned about the restrictions on recreational activity in Organ Pipe National Monument and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, two popular destinations in southern Arizona.

Border Patrol is here in force. They closed off the Cabeza. You couldn’t go to the western part of Organ Pipe. Now, in the last year they’ve hired Marshals at the Cabeza, weapon carrying government Marshals to patrol the Cabeza.

Although Luke does not feel in danger the way Ellen does, the increasing law enforcement presence weighs on him. Rodger suggests that this feeling of fear also stops people he knows without US citizenship from contributing to humanitarian efforts.

Canadians feel the same way. Some of them are sympathetic and would like to participate, but they don’t want to risk their—you know the fact that they own property here and might get kicked out of the country.

Because of the number of popular recreational areas in southern Arizona, the state draws many Canadians during the mild winters. As Rodger mentions, some of these visitors end up buying
property and become seasonal residents like himself. He perceives that because of their
citizenship status, they feel particularly vulnerable to the threat of arrest.

For other residents, the danger stems more from other members of their community than
from law enforcement. Lisa describes several different threats she received from neighbors
because of her involvement in humanitarian work. These experiences intimidated and unnerved
her more than any interaction with Border Patrol. On one of her many bike rides, Jennifer
similarly describes encountering people that she thinks may have been part of an anti-
immigration militia group. Although she is not an active member of any humanitarian
organization, even a cursory interaction with men “in camouflage fatigues…dressed
paramilitarily” unsettled her.

Seasonal resident Joy says she thinks “most people [in town] would say they’ve never felt
threatened by a migrant, never been concerned about migrants. We’ve never…it just hasn’t been
an issue.” In her answer she refutes a common justification for increased border enforcement—
that migrants are dangerous. A few other residents also express a degree of ambivalence around
the relative danger of the borderlands. Betty tells me that although she is aware of some level of
risk, she believes that it is minimal compared to the importance of her humanitarian work. She
does not dwell much on the potential danger even after the arrests and prosecutions of other
volunteers. In a similar vein, Louise discusses how she copes with her awareness of the violence
of the region. “As far as just day to day life,” she says, “it doesn’t really affect me that much. I
can kind of partition my brain and put that on the back burner. Whether that’s good or not, I
don’t know.” She is not a humanitarian volunteer, but she still finds herself pushing aside some
of the harsher realities of life in southern Arizona in order to enjoy her retirement.
Describing the impact of immigration checkpoints in particular, Ava, a year-round resident, says, “I don’t like the military, but I don’t feel in danger as a white person.” Similar to Sean who was initially taken aback but learned to view the checkpoints as routine, Ava recognizes the role of her race in her ability to pass through them unbothered. This acknowledgement of degrees of vulnerability comes up often in residents’ discussions of violence and forms the basis of the next section.

*Harm to others*

Echoing Sophia’s concern, Barbara remarks that she feels indigenous communities are often singled out during enforcement activities. “There’s these towers—the surveillance towers,” she explains to me, gesturing out her living room window. “You know, helicopters buzzing around overhead. And I guess who really gets it pretty badly is the people on the Nation.” Barbara dislikes the surveillance equipment along the border in general, but she downplays her own unease and instead emphasizes the heightened danger for O’odham people. While a few other retirees share her worry for vulnerable resident populations, most of the concern centers on migrants crossing through the borderlands. Louise remembers coming across a family including two young children on the side of the road deep in southern Arizona just a few weeks before we spoke.

They knew that the Border Patrol would arrest them sometime that day, and they were just going to wait for it. But I was so concerned about the idea of those little girls being separated from their parents. And the Border Patrolman when he got there and arrested them, assured us that the girls would not be separated, but I thought “we’ve been told so many lies, how can we believe this? You know, is it true?”

Louise does not participate in humanitarian activities, and she admits that she prefers to put thoughts of migrant fatalities “on the back burner.” Yet, when she is faced with reality in the form of this migrant family, she finds herself concerned for their wellbeing and skeptical of
authority. She considers the forceful separation of the children from their parents a very real danger for the family.

Many residents told me that they are aware of the risk of injury and death facing migrants in the region. Barbara describes giving medical care to wounded migrants through the humanitarian organization she volunteers with. “Some of the people when they came to us, were…” she pauses, choking up slightly. “They were on death’s door. You know if they hadn’t been found that day they would have died.” For Barbara, the lethal consequences of border enforcement are not just possibilities but realities she confronts often. Others argue that the prosecution of humanitarian volunteers increases this danger. As Lisa says, “human beings need water. And the fact that you’ve developed a policy that is denying that to people—go ahead and live with that for a while.” Betty is even more explicit in her condemnation. “That’s like blood on your hands.” She continues, “you’re deliberately keeping people from helping people about to die a horrible death.”

Even some residents that are not active volunteers draw a connection between enforcement and harm to migrants. Without knowing the phrase ‘prevention through deterrence,’ Jennifer describes the policy just based on her observations. “I think they have consciously funneled the migrants to this most dangerous section of the desert to try to come through,” she explains. “And they’ve whittled it down to this one area here.” Sophia notes that the increase in border enforcement has been paralleled by the increasing strength of cartels in the borderlands adding an additional element of risk for migrants.

Well the cartels...they’re not new, but they have spread and become more powerful. And they are on the border, and unfortunately the...the people who are here to be processed for asylum have attracted the cartels because they can kidnap them...or say, we’ll get you across the border, you just have to carry this package.
This statement reflects Sophia’s understanding of the risk level involved with crossing the border. She has not personally interacted with members of the cartel, but she perceives that they have grown in influence since she arrived close to four decades ago.

Not all residents see the danger to migrants as increasing, however. Liam insists that most migrants are young men seeking temporary work.

They’re just so full of themselves. They want to go show people in their village that they can go up and go to El Norte and send money home, and it’s almost like a rite of passage for them. And I’ve known many of them in my life, and that’s true. It something that’s almost fun for them. It’s like our kids joining the service or something like that. It’s a macho thing to go up, sneak across the border, send money home.

Liam bases these assumptions on his visits to Mexico where he says he often sees young men preparing to cross the border. He acknowledges that he has seen more children and families in recent years, but when I ask about migrant fatalities, he doubles down on his perception of most migrants as “full of themselves.” Sean, on the other hand, does not dismiss the danger to migrants crossing the border, but he does disagree that border enforcement is to blame.

A lot of people are just totally anti-Border Patrol, but this is what I see with my eyes. They do these rescues every week. They pull people in off the desert, and they don’t get any credit for it at all. There’s a few bullies in the system that push people around, but the majority of them are decent human beings.

Based upon his relationships with Border Patrol agents that live in his community, Sean feels that they are good people trying to help migrants. He perceives the injuries and deaths that occur in the Arizona borderlands as consequences of the harsh terrain rather than an intentional Border Patrol strategy. With the exception then of Liam, almost all of the retirees that I spoke with agree that migrants encounter a great deal of risk in the desert. Many also feel that they are sometimes at risk, although this is primarily the case for volunteers who fear being arrested.
Social relationships

The relationships described by the residents I interviewed fall broadly into two categories: (1) those built or strengthened by experiences with border enforcement and (2) those hindered. In the first section that follows, I elaborate on the types of relationships and community that retirees have found as a result of their exposure to enforcement activities. In some instances, this is as simple as joining a humanitarian organization, but it can also take the shape of growing closer to friends and family. In the second section, I highlight residents’ experiences with isolation and other negative impacts from exposure to enforcement. Both types of relationships are particularly salient for seasonal residents who travel between the borderlands and an outside community each year, something I pay specific attention two in each of the following sections.

Connection to community

In general, residents that have chosen to engage with border enforcement by volunteering with humanitarian aid organizations report finding a strong, if small, community of other volunteers. Barbara says she especially enjoys supporting groups of out-of-town volunteers that camp in the desert for extended periods of time in order to access more remote migrant trails. They would do these longer hikes, and we would pick them up. It was really, really fun. And we made some good friends on that camping trip which I don’t think is uncommon in camping trips. If you have a good group.

Because of her age, Barbara is not able to hike long distances, but she still forms strong relationships with other volunteers by participating where she can. For Jeff, another active volunteer, the volunteer community has helped him process some of the difficult emotions that his involvement in volunteer work triggers.

I guess it took me a while to understand what I was going through. But now I talk about it a bit more… but I don’t seem to get in these kinds of discussions except mostly with humanitarian aid workers.
Jeff tells me that during his first few hikes through the desert he was afraid of running into a migrant. Over time though, he says, he came to see his fear as a manifestation of his implicit biases. He feels he was conditioned to view immigrants as a dangerous other, a belief that he has been working to dismantle. Talking with other volunteers has provided him support through this process. Betty also tells me she finds comfort in the humanitarian community. “We do a lot of things together,” she says, “and try to have a little levity because it can be very intense.”

Many volunteers also share that their involvement in humanitarian work has led them to develop relationships with members of the community outside of their respective organizations. Ava, for example, describes getting to know staff and volunteers in the nearby national parks. She says that as the number of migrants traveling through the parks has increased, the staff and volunteers have dropped into meetings on humanitarian aid more frequently. Rodger tells me he has met members of the community that he might not have otherwise at those same meetings. “It’s surprising who turns out to be sympathetic who you wouldn’t have thought,” he says. At a meeting several years prior, Lisa introduced herself to a Border Patrol agent that was there to answer questions. He is one of the few agents that lives in the community, and they have since become good friends. As she recounts their conversation to me, Lisa becomes emotional even tearing up slightly. “For me,” she clarifies, “that was just a little window into, you know, to be in his shoes.” For Sean, who came to volunteer work more recently, the inverse is true. He did not need humanitarian organizations to connect him to Border Patrol agents in the community. Instead, his relationships with agents led him to humanitarian aid.

A substantial number of part-time residents also mention that learning more about border enforcement has changed their relationships to their communities outside the borderlands. Some have become involved in immigration advocacy and developed new connections that way while
others simply report enjoyable experiences sharing their knowledge of the desert with friends and family. Ellen says that even when she leaves Arizona at the beginning of the summer, the issues that she sees in the borderlands are still on her mind.

I make sure that I do let people know that that’s happening. Because that’s one of the things that I think people don’t understand is how many—just those Humane Borders death maps—about how many people are actually dying in the United States, on our southern border because of our border policies. And so, to me, continuing to get that word out there is important.

Ellen feels driven to share what she has learned about the border and migrant fatalities with her other community which, she says, has brought her closer to her family members who now share her views. Lisa expresses a similar passion for educational outreach. She tells me she recently joined an activist faith community in her summer home where she has helped to lead programming on migration-related topics. This work gives her purpose, and she says she wishes that she could spend all her time on it. Betty is, likewise, involved in advocacy work when she is not in Arizona, collecting clothing donations and doing educational outreach. She admits that her summer community also offers her a respite from the intensity of the borderlands.

I have to say last year I was really looking forward to leaving to come back up here…I really was happy to just escape. You know, there was a guilt that came with it because I just thought “there’s so much that needs to be done and I’m leaving.” But there was also my sanity—like I’ve got to get out of here for a while.

Volunteer work takes up the majority of Betty’s time in Arizona, so when she leaves for the summer, she feels a degree of relief that she will be away from the pressure to be involved. At the same time, she feels guilty, as though she is abandoning her fellow volunteers in the borderlands.

**Alienation from community**

Related to Betty’s feeling of guilt, other seasonal residents describe feeling as though they are not accepted or fully integrated into the ‘local’ community. This was true regardless of
how long the part-time residents had lived in Arizona. Luke has lived in the borderlands for over 30 years. “I believe—it’s been this way since I’ve been here at least,” he says. “There’s a division between the snowbirds and the locals.” Luke does not have any memories of year-round residents saying anything to him about his part-time status, but he perceives a tension, nonetheless. Joy hypothesizes that this tension is just a manifestation of the guilt that Betty describes and not the result of conflict between part-time and full-time residents.

I’m wondering more and more if it isn’t coming...from a person like me from my inside voice, not what anybody has ever said to me so much as my own...guilt in not being here when the going gets tough. To only being here when life is easy. We don’t contribute when the temperatures are 110, when people don’t have electricity. We’re not in that same pool, so I am very cognizant that what I do and what I say—that I’m a visitor.

Joy says she does not feel this same tension in her summer home. Even though she has lived there for less time than she has lived in Arizona, she feels like a local. She attributes this difference to the unique challenges of the borderlands especially the heat and the relative poverty. Joy does not volunteer with any humanitarian groups, so her guilt is personal. Lisa, on the other hand, describes feeling dismissed because of her outsider status.

And so I’m not totally embraced by either community. And that’s been really hard for me....I’ve given my heart. I’ve given myself wholeheartedly. And I understand it’s a real hardship for the people that are there year-round, and I get that. But I also feel like my commitment to the greater cause is year-round…I’m just, I’m an outsider and that’s a hard part of it. I’m just being really raw and real with you.

Lisa does not feel guilty because she believes she has gone above and beyond as a volunteer in Arizona and as an activist in her summer home. Still, she does not feel accepted completely, a fact which is very painful for her. From the perspective of a non-member, Louise observes that the volunteer organizations have very high bars to entry. She says, “they have their own group and it’s very tight and not especially welcoming to strangers.” This is perhaps some of the tension that Lisa feels.
In addition to isolation in Arizona, some seasonal residents also feel that moving to the borderlands has alienated them from communities outside Arizona. Many report that their friends and family in other parts of the country perceive the borderlands as violent and dangerous. Jennifer tells me that she and her husband had to “coax people to here because they were scared to death of the border.” Ava likewise remembers planning an event where several speakers cancelled because they were too uncomfortable with the idea of passing through immigration checkpoints. Dan says that he loves his community in Arizona but that people ‘back home’ do not share his sentiments.

There’s still some of our friends that come down to visit us, and they say “my god, what are you doing? This is the ugliest place, all of these old shacks.” And then of course when we take our grandkids down to Mexico, they say “what? What about all the shootings and kidnappings?” Dan does not feel that his grandchildren are in any danger when they visit him and his wife in the borderlands, but his friends perceive risk very differently. Although this disconnect does not weigh on him the way Lisa is disturbed by her feeling of alienation, Dan tells me that it does frustrates him.

Lastly, many residents expressed concern over the presence of law enforcement especially Border Patrol in their communities, noting that the agents are distant and uninvolved. Several residents expressed fear or anger about the participation of the agents in enforcement activities. Jennifer sees this tension clearly.

I mean it’s like the whole community has little pockets that are separated. There are the locals that live here always, and I think they’re not wild about us snowbirds coming in. And then there’s people that work for the Border Patrol, and they hang with each other, but they don’t really hang with us.

Like the perceived division between seasonal and year-round residents, Jennifer says that the Border Patrol families in the community seem to remain separate from everyone else. She does
not suggest why this might be the case, but Dan offers several hypotheses. “Somehow,” he remarks, “they haven’t really melded with the community because they’re not here that long. And I think we kind of sense that the wives are not that crazy about [it here]. There’s no place for them to shop.” Liam also thinks that the issue is the lack of retail in the region. He says he used to be involved in fundraising for the local school district and that Border Patrol families would often complain about the absence of amenities. Betty feels differently. She describes the community’s relationship with Border Patrol as “awkward.” Barbara also thinks that Border Patrol agents feel that many people in town disapprove of their presence. As a result, she theorizes, they are inclined to keep to themselves.

Changes over time

There are two significant ways that time emerges in the interview data. First, many residents that have lived in the borderlands for several decades have noticed changes in enforcement activity and readily shared those experiences with me. Second, even if residents themselves are not aware of changes, comparing their experiences based on the decade in which they arrived, in some cases, illuminates patterns. Of the emergent themes I identified through coding the interview transcripts, “encounters with enforcement” and “perceptions of violence” were the most time period dependent.

The ways that residents are exposed to border enforcement has changed drastically since the 1990s. Before the increased enforcement activity in the wake of prevention through deterrence, residents would often encounter migrants near their homes. As Louise explains, “for the first, I’ll say 10 years, that we lived here, there would be immigrants coming through the neighborhoods, frequently. We would see them pass by our door on almost a daily basis.” Residents that have moved to Arizona, since rarely report such proximately to migrants. Changes
in the demographics of migration have also been apparent to residents. Louise again says that she and her friends often talk about this.

It’s changed over the years from being the innocent things of bicycles and wallets and things like that to now—and marijuana in backpacks—to now being hard drugs and desperate families. There were never the families. There were never children coming across the border in the earlier years. That was unthinkable.

Jennifer and Liam echo these same observations in their interviews, but although there is consensus that migration and enforcement patterns have changed since the 1990s, there is not agreement on what these changes mean. Some, like Jennifer, think they represent a violent government strategy to drive migrants into dangerous, remote areas where others, like Liam and Louise, think about these changes as more representative of an increase in the power of the cartels that are able to smuggle people and drugs more effectively and clandestinely.

This focus on the role of the cartels is also frequently mentioned in residents’ perception of violence, but for most residents, the policy changes that came out of 9/11 were more significant. Although Sean did not move to Arizona until after the increased fencing and other measures were in place, he says he is aware that “9-1-1 changed a lot of things.” Jennifer and Luke, residents since the 1990s, both remember the “first wall” that went up in the early 2000s as a result of the Secure Border Initiative, and Jennifer specifically mentions the installation of the immigration checkpoints on highways in the borderlands. Residents’ reactions to the increased enforcement in the wake of 9/11 is significant because they describe a tangible impact on the social fabric of their communities. Having noticed more barriers and law enforcement activity, they report feelings of lost freedom and increased fear and suspicion. The only comparable change in resident’s perception of risk to themselves and others comes in 2018 with the arrests of humanitarian aid volunteers. Even residents not involved in volunteer work, including those that think the volunteers are misguided, still feel that the arrests impacted them.
Discussion and Conclusion

_We have less power crossing a border than at any point in our lives._ – Liam

As the interview data show, white retirees in southern Arizona are exposed to border enforcement in a variety of ways—some through direct interactions with Border Patrol and others, more indirectly, through encounters with migrants. These different exposure pathways also mean that residents are differently impacted by enforcement. Humanitarian volunteers and others that choose to expose themselves more frequently to border enforcement are generally more likely to perceive potential risks to themselves as a result. They also report more instances of both tension and community-building in their social relationships directly related to their experiences with enforcement. The distinction between volunteer and non-volunteer are somewhat blurred, however, because many volunteers describe gravitating towards humanitarian work after becoming more aware of border enforcement. This is the case for the majority of residents that moved to Arizona within the last 10 years and report being educated on border issues by older volunteers soon after their arrival.

Residents who choose not to volunteer, including those who are actively opposed, still find themselves encountering border enforcement often. As Figure 5 shows, migrant fatalities are continuously being discovered across the majority of southern Arizona. Interactions with Border Patrol as well as with migrant possessions abandoned in the desert are routine. It is impossible to travel most anywhere in the borderlands without passing through an immigration checkpoint—they are set up on every road within 100 miles of the border to create a bottleneck. These experiences appear to non-volunteers less overtly, but those residents still describe feeling disturbed by some of their encounters especially in relation to migrant fatalities. This is especially true for seasonal residents that report a degree of alienation from their Arizona
communities because they are gone for half of the year.

Even given the diversity of resident experiences, encounters with the structural violence of the Arizona borderlands are common. Lomnitz (2008) may have been overdramatic in suggesting that all residents mourn the migrants whose deaths occur around them, but I do find that the violence of border enforcement especially as manifested in compounding numbers of fatalities is visible to most white retirees in the region. This finding suggests, similar to Zhang (2010), that bearing witness to violence has a significant impact on residents. Zhang (2010) focuses on those who choose to volunteer and argues that they are uniquely privileged in that they may also choose to cease volunteering and remove themselves from the violence of the borderlands. Although the volunteers that I interviewed are exposed more often to the violent impacts of border enforcement, even those that choose to avoid volunteering still encounter these impacts. The trauma that Zhang (2010) finds in humanitarian volunteers as a result of their enforcement-related experiences, then, is more widespread than she suggests. This follows the works of De La Ossa and Miller (2019) and Williams and Boyce (2013) who find, respectively, that Latino residents and ranchers in the area also have emotional responses to their encounters in the borderlands.

As De La Ossa and Miller (2019) note, however, the Nogales residents that they spoke with and the ranchers interviewed by Williams and Boyce (2019) do not process their fear and suspicion in the same ways. This was certainly true for the retirees in my sample, some of whom share their difficult emotions with others and some of whom pushed negative experiences to “the back burner.” With such a wide range of responses to violent enforcement activities, it is not immediately clear that a theory of cultural trauma as articulated by Alexander (2004) and Eyerman (2019) accurately captures the experiences of residents. In several ways, the impacts
that residents describe—social bonding in some cases, isolation in others—follow Erikson’s (1991) model of collective trauma. His argument that trauma can ripple through a community and reach even those without firsthand experience is similar to how seasonal residents describe feeling guilty and alienated from the residents that stay immersed in the borderlands year-round.

What is missing from the communities I spent time in is the collective reckoning described by Alexander (2004) and Eyerman (2019) as critical to the formation of a cultural trauma. Alexander (2004), and to an extent his critic Demertzis (2009), argues that individual traumas gain collective meaning primarily through media coverage and exposure. The trauma, its cause, and its effects must be litigated publicly. Eyerman (2019) echoes this, adding that the outcome of this public process is often a new or altered identity for the affected group that is tied directly to the trauma. Outside of activist and academic circles, there has been little movement to call attention to the violence of border enforcement especially the deaths of migrants so quickly erased by the landscape. Even within border communities, many residents seem inclined to use their privilege as white US citizens, following Zhang (2010), to shy away from confronting the implications of the border enforcement activities they witness. This is one explanation for the residents that simultaneously express worry about the increasing enforcement activity while maintaining that they feel unaffected.

The hyper-local humanitarian groups in Arizona are a critical exception to this trend. Members of these organizations describe how conversations with other members have helped them to process their experiences, and many of the volunteers are active in educational efforts to spark discussions on border enforcement and migrant deaths in their communities. More attention and pressure from humanitarian organizations may crystalize individual trauma into a collective reality for borderlands residents, but it is also likely that resistance will continue to be
strong. As Sean talking about migrant fatalities explains, “it’s easy for people to see what they don’t want to, especially snowbirds.” His assertion that denial is particularly strong in seasonal residents, again reflects the role of privilege in obscuring trauma as articulated by Zhang (2010). Further studies are needed to fully understand this dynamic. For example, a focus on residents’ experiences with migrant fatalities exclusively rather than border enforcement generally could yield interesting results more directly tied to manifestations of trauma.

A different sample could also provide insight. Though my sampling strategy allowed me to actively recruit a diverse cohort of residents, the final pool included far more volunteers than not and far more seasonal residents than year-round residents. A study with fewer active volunteers, for example, might be able to speak more clearly to the organic ways by which retirees are exposed to enforcement, just as a study with more year-round residents might shed light on the tensions many seasonal residents highlight in this interview data. The retirees I interviewed are also all residents of relatively large, developed borderlands communities. Even though their communities are not incorporated municipalities and have no more than a few thousand residents, the retirees I spoke with lead very different lives than the ranchers sampled by Williams and Boyce (2013), for example, that spend most of their time in extremely remote areas. A study that draws participants from a broader array of residential areas might illuminate interesting variation in the types and perceptions of encounters with enforcement.

Beyond the limitations of my sample, this project was also complicated by my own social identities and experiences with border enforcement as I mention in the previous section on reflexivity. When talking about their perceptions of violence or sharing their encounters with enforcement, for example, residents may have chosen to downplay those realities in order to make their communities seem more appealing or so as not to alienate me. Ultimately, I find this
unlikely given the intense stories that many residents did share as well as their curiosity to hear candidly from me about my own experiences. Still, I considered this possibility, and I have addressed all of these challenges in manners consistent with qualitative measures of reliability and validity (Creswell and Creswell 2018). I spent several months in total in Arizona building perspective and gathering observational data to augment the interview data and to build credibility. I have also made efforts to be transparent about the perspectives from which I approach this research and the potential implications. In detailing the results of my analysis of the interviews, I not only summarized the themes that emerged, but I presented conflicting and contradictory responses in order to show the residents’ experiences in their full complexity.

With the addition of these perspectives from relatively privileged retirees in the borderlands, it is clear that the violent reach of US border enforcement, identified by so many empirical studies of vulnerable populations, extends even to those who are mere witnesses. As my analysis of these interviews also shows, the impacts of proximity to this violence are felt most intensely by retirees that have moved to Arizona in the last 10 years. This finding intensifies the need for further focus on the borderlands and especially on the harmful enforcement policies currently at work. Perhaps, as Erikson (1991), Alexander (2012), and Eyerman (2019) suggest we need a collective reckoning with trauma in the borderlands. At the very least, it is not enough to understand the violence of US border enforcement; the work must begin to dismantle it.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guides

Interview Guide June/July 2019

Humanitarian Aid Work

What humanitarian aid organization do you volunteer with? What is the work like?

How did you become involved in your organization?

What does humanitarian aid mean to you?

Why do you volunteer? What is your motivation for doing so?

Border Communities

What is your town or community like?

How does proximity to the border affect you or your community?

Has your community had much direct experience with migrants?

What kinds of experiences? How have those experiences affected the community?

Socio-Political Landscape

Does your community feel very political?

How do other members of your community view migration?

What are their views on humanitarian aid work?

Are there conflicts of opinion within your community? What is that like?
**Interview Guide December 2019**

*Community Involvement*

Are there community organizations or particular social groups you’re involved with?

How did you become involved in your organization?

What is the organization or group like?

How does it relate to other organizations/groups within the town?

*Border Communities*

What is your town or community like?

How does proximity to the border affect you or your community? Has your community had much direct experience with migrants?

What kinds of experiences? How have those experiences affected the community?

*Socio-Political Landscape*

Does your community feel very political?

How do other members of your community view migration?

Are there conflicts of option within your community? What is that like?

*Personal Experiences*

Why did you decide to live in this town?

Are there particular experiences you have had here that stand out to you? Why?
**Appendix 2:** Tables and figures

**Table 1: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona from 1980s-present**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Reported fatalities</th>
<th>Average fatalities reported each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Operation Safeguard (1981-1994)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&lt;1 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Safeguard through 9/11 (1995-2001)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>~7 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 9/11 (2002-2010)</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>~188 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent changes (2011-2019)</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>153 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Timeline of significant changes in the Arizona borderlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-2001</td>
<td>• ‘Prevention through deterrence’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More fencing installed and personnel deployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Migrants increasingly traveling through the Arizona desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2010</td>
<td>• Anti-terrorism efforts result in more fencing, surveillance equipment, and personnel deployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing migrant injuries and deaths in Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing deportations by the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>• Large numbers of unaccompanied minors crossing the border</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arrest and prosecution of humanitarian volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Construction begins on the border wall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Arrival Context</th>
<th>Type of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rodger</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2002-2010</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2002-2010</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2002-2010</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pre-9/11</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme/Topic</td>
<td>Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>What brought you to the borderlands initially?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why did you decide to move here?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was proximity to the border a consideration for you? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Involvement</strong></td>
<td>Are there particular community organizations or groups you’re involved with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you become involved in your organization?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the organization or group like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does it relate to other organizations/groups in the area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-Political Landscape</strong></td>
<td>Does your community feel very political?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there conflicts of opinion in your community? What is that like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Border Communities</strong></td>
<td>What is your town or community like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me about experiences you have had that are specific to being so close to the border?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has living close to the border affected you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main theme</td>
<td>Exposure to border enforcement</td>
<td>Perception of violence</td>
<td>Social relationships</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-themes</td>
<td>Initial exposure</td>
<td>Personal harm</td>
<td>Alienation from community</td>
<td>1990-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Harm to others</td>
<td>Connection to community</td>
<td>2002-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unintentional encounters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>An interaction with an aspect of border enforcement including initial exposure and intentional decisions to engage or avoid further interactions</td>
<td>Reference to a violent impact of border enforcement including the both the identification of violence and the denial of violence</td>
<td>A relationship to a broader social network or lack thereof as the result of border-specific experiences</td>
<td>Reference to a particular time-period in the history of US border enforcement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona 1980-1994
Figure 2: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona 1995-2001
Figure 3: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona 2002-2010
Figure 4: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona 2011-2019
Figure 5: Migrant fatalities reported in Arizona 1980-2019
References


Nail, Thomas. 2015. *The Figure of the Migrant*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.


