The Material Culture of Migrant Life at the U.S./México Border

Consuelo Helen Cano Crow

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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The Material Culture of Migrant Life at the U.S/México Border
The Material Culture of Migrant Life at the U.S/México Border

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts-Anthropology

By

Consuelo H. Crow
University of Washington
Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, 2010

August 2013
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

____________________________________________________
Dr. William F. Limp
Thesis Director

____________________________________________________
Dr. Justin Nolan
Committee Member

____________________________________________________
Dr. Kirsten Erickson
Committee Member
Material culture is the aggregate of physical objects or artifacts used by or discarded by a past culture or society. Contemporary unauthorized migration at the U.S./México border has left thousands of pounds of migrant goods in what are referred to by United States Border Patrol as “lay-up sites”. Since the late 1990’s, undocumented migrants attempting to cross the Sonoran Desert of Arizona have been exposed to a distinctive set of material culture. This rapidly-evolving material culture is specific to the phenomenon of border-crossing, and it reflects and shapes the experience of migrants attempting the crossing. Migrants Stations, also known as lay-up sites, contain migrant materials that reflect the border crossing-experience for a group or for an individual. Consisting of the items that migrants carry, the material culture is defined as well by humanitarian aid groups, militia groups and United States Border Patrol. Artifacts may include water bottles, government-issued manacles, prepared food packets and features associated with gendered assault. Discussions about border-crossing have focused largely on migrant death and despair rather than migrant life. Media and academic attention has concentrated on the hundreds of migrants who die each year during desert border crossings, but little focus has been paid to the non-lethal harm and maltreatment that hundreds of thousands of people sustain annually. The migrant experience includes a great deal of corporeal suffering through harsh environmental conditions, profound physical stress, psychological terror, dehydration and malnutrition, and the specter of maltreatment at the hands of others. Using a combination of ethnographic, archaeological and geographical data, I argue that
specific border crossing artifacts both reflect and shape a way of being that is specific to the migration process. Expanding upon the anthropological concept of *State of Exception* (Agamben: 2005, 4-7), examining past and current border militarization, and spatial distribution of migrant material deposition, I demonstrate that migrant material culture provides evidence of a clandestine corporeal life of unauthorized migrants traveling through the desert to U.S. destinations.
Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Fred Limp for his guidance through my Master’s work, and to my thesis committee Dr. Justin Nolan and Dr. Kirstin Erickson for their insightful recommendations.

Thanks go to the Undocumented Migration Project and Dr. Jason De Léon.

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Thank you all the people who have allowed me to interview them and record raw, personal narratives. None of this work would be possible without them. Thanks must go to the people of Arivaca, Arizona who have been inviting me into their homes for years. I am indebted to the people at Albergue Juan Bosco, Centro de Recursos para Migrantes and especially Jordan Bullard for giving me unrestricted access to their centers and their records.
Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this thesis to my loving, patient and wise 5 year old Vincent who never let me forget to take care of him and to take care of myself and spent countless nights asleep in my lap while I wrote and studied. I have never met a human being quite like you and I’m grateful for you and to you every single day.

I also dedicate this to all of the mothers and children I have met, both alive and dead, on the U.S.-México border. I appreciate you and you remind me every day that I have it pretty good. And to Chapo, Chava, Fernando and Polo who taught how to laugh through the pain of doing this research, how to dance “Netchy-style” to Shakira in a shitty bar in Nogales and endless supplies of “apple juice” in the pantry. I miss you.
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INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of people have died in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona trying to reach various destinations throughout the U.S., however, there are thousands of people who have suffered through and survived this experience. Traces of these experiences are scattered throughout the area in the form of material objects. This thesis aims to discuss the material objects selected and used during unauthorized migration and how this reflects and shapes individual and collective migrant life and experience.

Part 1: I introduce the declaration of the state of emergency and the state of exception in relation to unauthorized crossing at the U.S.-México border and how federal law enforcement continues to receive funding for policing brown-bodied, non-human entities. Bruno Latour helps us understand how traces of human experience are naturalized which allows for objectifying migrant bodies as non-human. In migration, brown bodies leave traces of migrant life and experience in the form of materials. These materials have been developed into micro-economies that are aimed specifically at the act of migration and introduced into the desert by a variety of actors involved in this performance. The materials left behind in the desert are glorified in its beautiful human suffering through art-making and vilified as the trashing and destruction of the American way of life.

Part 2: I introduce the actors involved in the performance of migration. First, I will discuss the people at the center of this highly controversial and politicized subject in the U.S. Migrants have been coming to America for centuries. Contemporary migration is based in fluxes of people primarily from Latin America who come to work low-skilled, low-wage jobs that U.S. citizens are often unwilling to do. I then introduce humanitarian aid groups that were born out
of the suffering and death of undocumented migrants crossing the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. Militarizing the border in the 1990’s increased the number of Immigration and Naturalization turned United States Border Patrol into a fully-funded government para-military group that patrols the country’s international boundaries. Coyotes, polleros and guías are the people smugglers that negotiate money and desert landscapes to move humans through the desert. Each status performs a different function in moving or inhibiting unauthorized people through the desert and into the United States.

Part 3: The policies that set in motion the construction of the borders walls, fences and border zones has shifted and funneled traditional unauthorized migration routes into the most dangerous parts of the desert southwest. I introduce the border fences along the 2,000 mile southern geopolitical border that divides the U.S. and México. The state of Arizona has borne the brunt of the undocumented migration tide since the border walls were first built in popular urban Ports of Entry. Increased numbers of border agents and increased tensions along the southern border have created a culture where U.S. border enforcement agents operate independent of their central leadership in such a way that corruption is high and insubordination is performed to the detriment of migrant life.

Part 4: I will discuss how migrant human remains and piles of trash, discovered in hyper-remote areas of the Sonoran Desert have helped to identify and track the shifts in traditional migration patterns predominantly used by Latin American migrants on their way to El Norte. I consider how the constant shifts in migrant demographics crossing into the U.S. (Mexican vs. Salvadorean for example) are reflected in the types of materials located in areas where migrants rest during their journey.
Part 5: In 2010, I and the Undocumented Migration Project harvested more than half a ton of migrant materials from the desert for archaeological analysis. In this section I discuss the equipment used to perform this harvesting and how the locations and sites were chosen for this analysis. I will define the desert spaces where migrants have created environments that are ad hoc resting places and places of transition to their final destination. I will discuss the categorization of these migrant spaces that helps to determine the types of activities that have taken place at that site.

Part 6: The types of migrant artifacts contained in migrant spaces can range from a food wrapper discarded on the ground while moving through the desert to a birth certificate lost in haste while being transported from one location to another. I will assess potential negative corporeal impacts on migrant bodies and migrant lives through categorized charts of artifacts found and ethnographic evidence that correlates theories of these potential impacts on migrant life by these artifacts.

Part 7: The selection and use by migrants of particular materials is based on the goal of avoiding detection by United States Border Patrol and to survive the journey through the desert. In this section I will discuss the techniques that migrants employ in the use of material objects to achieve safe passage and have now discarded in the desert. I will further discuss how artifacts and techniques factor into the success or failure of migrants reaching their intended destination.

Part 8: Depositing of materials out in the desert has fostered racist and anti-immigrant sentiments at U.S.-México border. The current state of immigrant demographics and the materials left behind in the desert are currently shifting. I will conclude this thesis with
discussing the current state of migrant material culture and issues that have arisen in relation to materials in the desert, which includes me as a researcher.

Part 9: Each artifact located in the desert leaves traces of migrant life and migrant experience. Through these traces we begin to reframe what we think we know about crossing in the desert. In this final section I will discuss what I have learned from doing this research on contemporary migration through the Sonoran Desert and how this research contributes to unveiling the mystique of how the performance of unauthorized, clandestine migration works.

In contemporary unauthorized migration through the Sonoran desert, traces of migrant life can be found as materials that have been discarded into specific spaces. These spaces have been inhabited by people who perform a function in undocumented migration. Through these discarded materials we can analyze and interpret traces of the people who left these items behind. Through tracing the purposes and effects of these items and the people who use them we begin to understand the migrant life experience of the thousands of people who attempt this journey every year.
BACKGROUND

“...this “Tortilla Curtain” turning into el rio Grande
Flowing down the flatlands of the Magic Valley of South Texas
It’s mouth emptying into the Gulf.”
---Gloria Anzaldúa

Theory

The Department of Homeland Security has declared a state of emergency at the U.S.-México border. Such declarations come during a time of disaster, during periods of civil unrest, or following a declaration of war. The U.S. has declared a war on drugs and has declared a war on colonized brown bodies (Memmi:1965, 90-91). A state of emergency, as Carl Schmitt argued (1988, 33), is used as a rationale for suspending rights and freedoms, even if guaranteed under the constitution. A state of emergency has led to a state of exception, where the sovereign United States has facilitated a transcendence of the rule of law in the name of the public good (Agamben:2005, 3).

War, invasion, illegal, and penetration are pundit buzzwords and political arguments that are routinely used by the U.S. government and by public media to invoke terror of (Latino) threat and (Latino) threat of terror (Chavez:2008,4). Using language in this way allows the United States to identify an enemy in order to declare a state of emergency allowing the government to create a state of exception wherein quotidian law is suspended and replaced with perceived-to-be temporary martial laws until the danger has passed. In the United States, citizens live under the constant threat of political campaign promise by politicians to curb undocumented immigrant bodies from entering the country.

The government continues to spend millions of dollars on invasion prevention methods to control and prevent unauthorized entry into the U.S. by brown immigrant bodies.
Strategically placing fences in areas located in remote regions of the Sonoran is designed to funnel brown immigrant bodies where nature can enforce human laws that restrict movement across geopolitical boundaries. Juanita Sundberg questions why agencies like United States Border Patrol continue to request monies for enhanced border enforcement to police non-human entities that “belong to the realm of nature as opposed to society”, asking whether border patrol is battling undocumented immigration or the desert, as the Sonoran desert “inflects, disrupts and obstructs” border policing (2010, 318-319). As agents have stated to me, the desert and the fences are “deterrence by death”.

Bruno Latour points out that all expression is mediated through instruments and mechanisms (2004). “Hence, all actors can be said to leave traces, whether these take the form of texts, oral narratives, footprints, or feces...landscapes...tell stories through specific configurations of vegetation, soil types, and myriad other traces that can be interpreted and represented through various scientific practices and translations. The notion of traces transcends humanist understandings of talk and text as the only mechanisms through which politics can be registered...traces created in the process of group formation” (Sundberg:2010, 322; See also Dennett:1990).

Objectifying both nature and immigrants in the Sonoran desert “treats rivers, mountains and deserts as objects of geopolitical calculation and instruments of enforcement” (Sundeberg:2010, 323). Anthropomorphizing inanimate objects while removing human qualities from humans allows for the application of what Leo Chavez calls, The Latino Threat Narrative (Chavez:2008). The word trash is interchangeably applied to material remains in migrant stations and the humans whom have deposited them resulting in the objectification of
Mexicans and other brown bodies as trash. “The Latino Threat Narrative posits that Latinos are not like previous migrant groups...assumptions and taken-for-granted “truths” (that) Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating. They are an invading force...bent on reconquering land...destroying the American way of life” (Chavez:2008, 2-3).

Migrants enter into a state of exception where constituent human rights are suspended and border enforcement agents perform in a manner that resembles wartime in a foreign country. The border zone creates a *state of liminality* for migrants where they enter as invisible nothingness into a place that is policed but not watched. They neither are here nor there, human nor object, enemy nor ally, communitas nor structure, anonymity nor systems of nomenclature (Turner:1969, 106-107). The clandestine and corporeal life of migrants who cross the Sonoran desert each day leave behind traces that inform the act of unauthorized migration and inform the unauthorized migrant through material culture.

**Border Fences and Trade Agreements**

The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) “Prevention Through Deterrence” strategy called for the reduction of unauthorized migration by placing United States Border Patrol agents and surveillance tools directly on the border near the urban population center of San Diego, California that borders Tijuana, México. In 1990, CPB began constructing a border fence to deter unauthorized entry of immigrants into the USBP San Diego Sector by employing the authority granted to Attorney General Richard Blumenthal to control and guard the U.S. border. CBP was authorized to replace chain-link fencing at this portion of the border with what is colloquially known in the United States as the “The Wall”, and in México as *La Frontera*. The subsequent “primary” fence, built by the Department of Defense’s
Army Corps of Engineers, was completed in 1993 and covered the first 14 miles of the border, starting ¼ of a mile in the Pacific Ocean (fig. 1), and was constructed of 10-foot-high welded military surplus steel. Building the new fortified fencing initiated new construction of 670 miles of militarized wall in urban areas along the United States 1,933 mile long geopolitical border with México. (Romero:2007, 95, 154, 252, 268-69, 276-77, 318)

Before the heavily fortified border fences were built, immigrants entering the U.S. unauthorized utilized different methods of crossing the U.S.-México border primarily through urban areas. Unauthorized male migrants were more likely to climb through holes in the fencing and walk into metropolitan areas or be picked up by an associate close by. Women were more likely to take a less risky approach to border crossing by purchasing falsified documents and crossing at the Port of Entry and then be picked up by friends or relatives (Durand and Massey: 2007, 238; Cerruti and Massey:2001, 187-189).

In 1993 President Bill Clinton, along with the presidents of Canada and México, signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a neoliberal policy agreement that was designed to remove agricultural trade barriers between the three counties. NAFTA was in force within the U.S., Canada and México by January 1st, 1994. It would forever change Latin American immigration into the U.S. by plunging México into economic crisis. Many of the trade barriers were set to be lifted over a 15 year period, with full implementation of NAFTA by January 1, 2008. The United States Department of Agriculture said in support of NAFTA that it “...allowed for an orderly adjustment to free trade with Mexico...”. The policy and the transition was not orderly for México, especially Mexican campesino farmers (USDA: 2009).
United States subsidization of domestic corn farming created a corn crop boom and over-abundant corn surplus. NAFTA eliminated the quotas that limited corn importation into México, thus U.S. farmers flooded México with below-cost corn and corn seed that left Mexican farmers forced to purchase cheaper U.S. corn and stop growing their own corn crops (Stephen:2007, 124-131). The problem was compounded by companies, such as Monsanto, who flooded the corn seed market in México which forced campesinos to purchase ‘Round-Up Ready’ corn seed. This proprietary corn came with detrimental stipulations that prevented the storing and reuse of banked seed for sowing new crops in subsequent growing seasons. Mexicans bought the cheaper U.S. corn shipped into México and left corn grown by campesinos unsold; therefore no income was being generated for poor families and there were no jobs to supplement lost wages. Displaced and desperate campesinos began to mobilize as economic refugees to the United States. This mobilization peaked in 2005 at an estimated 40,000 people a day (Kino Border Initiative:2013, 20-31), to fill abundant low-wage, low-skilled jobs in the U.S. NAFTA was designed to create more commerce and jobs for México and Mexicans. The result was the mass displacement of campesinos farmers and other poor citizens that unintentionally spawned one of the largest sustained human mass-migrations in North American history.

On April 26, 2006 the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that in March 2005 the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. ranged from 11.5 to 12 million individuals (Passel:2006, 1) living clandestinely in states around the country. With the immense increase of humans moving across the southern border, building new border walls, new surveillance technologies and a heavy presence and policing by USBP along the physical border forced undocumented immigrants to begin crossing in more remote and dangerous parts of the desert. This shift in
immigration patterns, from urban to remote area, caused an increase in migrant deaths, migrant rescues and mass apprehensions.

In 2010, 373 migrant remains were recovered along the U.S.-México border with 67% of those deaths occurring in the USBP Tucson Sector (Pima County Medical Examiner:2012; No More Deaths:2011; Rose:2012). These numbers do not reflect the migrant remains that are never recovered or the number of migrants who die during migration in México. The increased deaths and apprehensions prompted the building and expansion of county morgues and detention facilities (Spagat:2013; Gavett:2011).

**Migrant Goods Economy In Mexico**

Increased migration spawned new economies of migrant goods that emerged in border towns of México (De Léon :2011, 482-483). Border towns are used as migrant staging towns. Staging towns have become the sites where would-be migrants go to find their Coyote (people smuggler) or hire one to help them make the trek through the desert into the United States. People from México and Central America arrive by airplane in Hermosillo, chartered buses in México City and on the tops of freight trains that originate in Tapachula, Chiapas, México. Increased human movement in and out of staging towns created the need for more shelters, food vendors and producing material goods specific to border crossing, such as backpacks, socks, and bottled water.

In the last 5 years United States Border Patrol and humanitarian aid groups began noticing that migrants were being targeted with purposefully manufactured material goods (De Léon:2012). The best example of this targeted manufacturing is the creation of black plastic water bottles (fig. 2) and other bottled water containing desert landscapes on their label that
are manufactured, distributed and sold by Mexican bottled water companies headquartered in staging towns. Other migrant material targeting is present in makeshift bodegas that specifically sell material goods such as black or camouflage backpacks (Fig. 3), socks (fig. 4), foot powder and ski masks.

Border crossing has become more clandestine and more remotely located; therefore the journey has increased from what had been perhaps a hop through a hole in the fence to an average of 5-10 days of walking in the desert with whatever supplies can be carried. During the summer months, temperatures in the Sonoran Desert can reach well over 100°F in the shade. In one of the most heavily traveled migrant corridors, there exists a classic geologic basin and range terrain where a migrant may find themselves walking the low-lying Altar Valley surrounded by 13,000 foot-high peaks or climbing the steep rock-covered ravines of the Tumacácori and San Luis mountains.

It is a common misconception in the United States that unauthorized migrant crossing begins at the U.S.-México border. A migrant originating from Guatemala began their journey upon leaving their hometowns and crossing the Usumacinta River into México unauthorized. Many migrants from sub-tropical regions often come unprepared for their trek through the desert. Many arrive exhausted, dehydrated and hungry before they cross the U.S.-México border. Albergue Juan Bosco, a privately owned and operated migrant shelter in Nogales, México, has responded to the physical condition of migrants planning to cross the border by feeding, sheltering and warning migrants of the dangers of crossing before they leave in an effort to prevent crossing or improve their physical and mental condition if they do.
Due to distance, physical strain and extreme elemental conditions of the desert, migrants must attempt to carry enough food and water to sustain them during their multi-day crossing. Unfortunately, no one is or can ever be properly prepared. Some would-be migrants are given deceptive or false information by their guides about what to expect during crossing (Rauer:2006) and do not carry but one small bottle of water and maybe some tortillas or pan dulce, in my field experience. Others know from previous crossing experience that one person cannot physically carry the amount of water needed to sustain them in the desert. Sometimes personal backpacks containing supplies are discarded for muling over-sized backpacks (fig. 5) containing bales of drugs on their backs for a reduced crossing rate or by force leaving migrants with no supplies at all.

Lots Of Trash

Discarded migrant material goods are found in specifically chosen sites in the desert, on or near migrant trails and roads. Migrant stations are ad hoc resting places used by migrants during multi-day migration, where migrant materials can be piled an estimated one-foot deep and span an area of more than 30 feet. Deposits of materials reflect behaviors, activities, and the needs of migrants. Items commonly carried by migrants and then found in the desert at Migrant Stations are small, single-pocket backpacks that contain canned tuna or sardines, tortillas, garlic, small bottles of water, personal affects like pictures and birth certificates, toiletries and some clothing. Migrant stations are typed into categories by size, content and how their locations are chosen by migrants and coyotes for their shade, privacy, view shed, size and proximity to roads.

Trash or Treasure
The presence of migrant materials in the desert has been the source of fierce battles between government agencies, humanitarians and environmentalists over the health and welfare of the deserts flora and fauna (Sundberg:2008, 878). Humanitarian aid groups and environmentalists organize monthly clean-up crews who go into the desert to pick up the trash/migrant artifacts and haul it to the dump or recycle/repurpose the materials for reuse if at all possible. I have seen evidence of these clean-ups through neatly organized piles of materials waiting for bagging and hauling out of the desert. Ironically, the salvaged backpacks are sometimes donated to Tucson area children’s charities where undocumented migrant children and children of undocumented migrants receive free needed school supplies.

In the Tucson area, there are several local artists who also haul out very specific migrant materials to create art pieces for show and for sale. Artist and Samaritans volunteer, Alvaro Enciso, prefers partially rusted tuna can lids to become earrings, archaeologist Jason De Léon turned backpacks into a multi-media museum installation and other Samaritans volunteers have told me they have collected and converted tortilla cloths into a quilts.

In ethnographic interviews that I conducted, it is a common theme among local residents and law enforcement that are living and working in the Tucson Sector of the border, that mounting piles of migrant materials is a problem for the health of the watershed, the local wildlife, ranch animals, and the vegetation in this ecosystem. Monsoon rains wash the materials out of migrant stations into rivers and roads and wrap around trees and cacti. Cattle have been found sick or dead after having eaten a blanket or a sweatshirt.

Due to the substantial surge each year of border crossers and border crosser deaths since 1994, humanitarian aid groups began to form in the Tucson area. Each group performs a
different function but with a common goal; to prevent migrant death and suffering in the desert. There are approximately ten well-established, well-organized and interconnected humanitarian migrant aid groups in the Tucson area whose volunteer population(s) consists primarily of college-aged youth on school break filling a temporary volunteer position and elderly retired adults, many of which are referred to as “snowbirds” who travel to Arizona only in the winter (U.S. Census Bureau:2010).

Like the State of Florida on the East Coast of the United States, Arizona attracts retirees from Western States for its warm, dry climate, as well as attracting college-aged adults who find themselves in the middle of a highly politicized region of the country. Many retiree humanitarian aid volunteers that I have interviewed have expressed the same sentiment regarding their involvement with one or more migrant-based aid groups. “I just couldn’t sit by and watch”. The young adult population has expressed to me a variety of reasons for engaging in migrant-based aid groups, which can be found in any college town U.S.A., from a personal interest, a desire to make a difference, religious faith and exposure and access to community and voluntary sectors.

The United States Border Patrol is a designated federal law enforcement agency, under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security, whose sole function is to patrol the border zone, also known as the Tactical Infrastructure, with a domestic range of 60 miles into the interior of the U.S. from the border zone. This agency has a custom-made set of tools in the form of material culture to perform their official function that is specifically aimed at surveilling, apprehending and detaining that and who have been categorized as “illegal” and “alien”.
I have collected evidence in the desert which indicates that each of these groups has been present and is represented at or around migrant stations. Migrants, humanitarian aid volunteers and border agents are all collecting, producing, and depositing materials year-round into the desert that are designated for internal and external corporeal consumption in the act and process of unauthorized migration in the desert. The evidence is found in a single food wrapper, an article of clothing or United States Border Patrol-issued Tuff Ties found on a migrant trail or in massive quantities of migrant material goods in migrant stations.

Field Research and Methods

The data and artifacts presented were collected by me during my 2009-2013 field research seasons and by the Undocumented Migration Project during my 2010 field season in the Tucson Sector of the U.S. State of Arizona, as well as in the Mexican State of Sonora. Specific sites of collection were in:

Locations in the State of Sonora, México: Agua Prieta, Nogales and Altar


Locating migrant stations and collecting migrant artifacts presents a specific set of challenges. As a researcher, I rely heavily on humanitarian aid volunteers and local residents who live in areas that are traveled by unauthorized migrants. During my 5 years in the field, I have spent a great deal of time in a small and isolated town of Arivaca, located 11 miles north of the U.S.-México border. As residents recognize me as a constant figure in the local bar and mercantile, they have voluntarily offered me verbal information, hand-drawn or printed Google
Earth maps with the locations of migrant stations nestled deep in the ravines and washes of the local mountains or their own property.

I have conducted 247 interviews with permanent and temporary humanitarian aid volunteers and residents and more than 600 interviews with undocumented and deported migrants who are primarily from México, but occasionally include citizens from countries in Central America. The explanation for the imbalance in nation of origin interviewees is due to United States Border Patrol deportation practices of OTM’s, or Other Than Mexican. USBP will not knowingly deport a non-Mexican citizen into Mexican border towns; rather “OTM’s” are flown to the Mexican State of Chiapas and deported into the México-Guatemala border town of Tapachula.

Artifacts have been collected and given provenience with the assistance of consumer-grade handheld GPS units, as well as a Trimble Geo HX and Trimble Juno ST. The collected data was downloaded into GPS Pathfinder office 2010 to create coded maps for analysis.

The names of at-risk interviewees have been replaced with pseudonyms or other non-descript identifying markers for the protection of their identities. All other participants will be identified by their real names with express permission. Permission for conducting interviews was obtained primarily by verbal consent due to the nature of this research, research sites and transitory populations. Locations of migrant stations and artifacts located and/or harvested will be identified in this thesis as the artifacts and their archeological integrity has been compromised through age, weather events, clean-up efforts, looting and research related artifact harvesting.
I have provided artifact charts that list their intent, source, class, migrant station type and potential negative corporeal impacts. The purpose in doing so is to feature artifacts that are found in the desert and used by or against migrants. Each artifact has been introduced into the act of unauthorized clandestine migration by a different actor or agent. I will use this to support my argument of intended and unintended depositing of materials in the desert.

The terrain, between the Nogales and Sasabé Ports of Entry, is a basin and range geologic province with 10,000-foot high mountain peaks and sea-level valley basins. 30 million-year-old volcanoes created basaltic and rhyolitic lava flows, leaving the desert floor covered with jagged rocks about the size of a fist, making it difficult to walk on flat feet or run for that matter in my experience (Northern Arizona University:2013). The landscape is covered with barbed cactus, mesquite and ironwood trees, and creosote bushes making it difficult to avoid being scratched by their spines. The desert sky at night is dark; even pitch black if the moon is beginning a new cycle, making it extremely difficult to see. This terrain not only offers natural protection to migrants and coyotes from detection by law enforcement, it also offers hidden areas, which can be used by coyotes in which to separate female migrants traveling in their charge.

I focus primarily on Tucson Samaritans and No More Deaths as these two humanitarian aid groups spend more time in the desert working with migrants and migrant artifacts than any other humanitarian aid group in the area. They have been the greatest source of information, with the exception of migrants themselves, on migrant life in the desert.
The People

Migrants

When the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was enacted, Japanese laborers replaced Chinese workers, and then Mexicans replaced Japanese in the agricultural fields of the United States. Mexican nationals have been the dominate Latin American population migrating into the U.S., both documented and undocumented, to fill jobs picking fruits and vegetables, packing meat, washing dishes and raising other people’s children. Mexicans have become a convenient and disposable source of unskilled, low-wage labor for the United States. Since the mid-1800’s Mexican citizens have been given temporary guest worker visas through government sanctions like the Bracero Program and have been just as easily disinvented with actions like Operation Wetback, which deported 865,000 Mexican nationals and Mexican-American U.S.-born citizens into México in 1953 (Oropeza:2005, 42; Crow:2013).

During the 1980’s, the United States saw a massive influx in non-Mexican undocumented immigrants. Guerilla-backed civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua had its citizens fleeing as political refugees from their home countries in search of asylum in the U.S. Many of the refugees came to places like Los Angeles, El Paso and Chicago. The Sanctuary
Movement, a multi-denominational political asylum campaign, gave asylum in churches to thousands of Central American refugees (Tomsho:1987).

Mexican nationals and nationals of Central American countries dominate the undocumented migrant population crossing the U.S.-México border due to geographic proximity with their home countries and towns (Perez:2001; Crow:2013). Fluctuation of undocumented migrants crossing the border, which is still high despite the recent economic downturn which has led to a decrease in people making the journey, has left millions of pounds of migrant material culture in the desert that is directly linked to the performance of and corporeal suffering in clandestine migration.

**Humanitarian Aid Groups**

Due to the substantial surge each year of border crossers and border crosser deaths, migrant aid-based humanitarian groups and individual efforts offering aid to migrants began to rapidly form in the Tucson area. In 2013 there are approximately 10 well-established and well-organized migrant aid groups in the Tucson area, each collecting and producing materials that are designated strictly for migrant consumption out in the desert. Humane Borders, Tucson Samaritans, No More Deaths and Coalición de Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Coalition) are the present groups in sponsoring migrant life and experience. Each group exists with a different mission statement, while attempting to achieve the same goal, to reduce or eliminate migrant suffering and death. Each group operates year-round with core volunteers and temporary volunteer visitors.

Humane Borders was established in 2000 with the objective to place stationary blue-barreled water tanks with tall blue flags initially in the boundaries of Organ Pipe National
Monument, where human migratory traffic was concentrated at the time. Tucson Samaritans established their organization in 2001 with a handful of medical professionals who were responding to massive numbers of sick and dead migrants being found in the remote desert and on the sides of Arizona highways and roads.

No More Deaths began in 2004 out of a conference of church officials who felt that water needed to be placed on remote migrant trails in the desert as a disproportionate number of migrant deaths were being ruled by the Pima County Coroner in Arizona as the result of dehydration and exposure to the elements. Coalición de Derechos Humanos established a collective of people concerned about the increased militarization policies at the U.S-México border and the human rights violations that followed.

Tucson Samaritans formed in 2001 with the mission of patrolling remote and less remote migrant trails close to the border in an effort to find sick or lost migrants before they died by carrying clothing, pre-assembled food packs, medical kits and water into the desert. The core volunteer group patrols the desert on a daily basis with the help of visiting volunteers, and church and university groups from around the world. They hold bi-monthly training sessions for new volunteers. The training sessions are designed to educate new volunteers on past and current immigration issues in Arizona as well as how to handle encounters with migrants and law enforcement while on patrol. I attended my first training in July of 2009.

No More Deaths formed in 2004 from a conference of clergy who wanted to do something to relieve the climbing death rates of migrants in the Arizona desert. One of those church officials is Reverend John Fife who was a key figure in the sanctuary movement during the 1980’s, and is credited in what has been termed as the “new sanctuary movement”, as I
have heard it called by the humanitarian aid community in Tucson. NMD employs young, college-aged people to camp in the desert and drop gallon jugs of water on active migrant trails. The group’s credo is to enact civil disobedience by refusing to comply as a peaceful form of political protest with federal law enforcement and federal land agencies in Tucson and in the desert by breaking the law in a civil manner. I have received e-mails and there have been comments in public meetings that I have attended that suggest that their civil disobedience practices have led to uncivil conflicts with federal agencies which in turn have made offering aid to migrants difficult for all humanitarian aid groups in the area.

In 2010 a group of No More Deaths volunteers, dubbed the Basura (trash) 13, were arrested by border patrol agents after being told they were littering by placing water jugs in Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Witnesses that I interviewed stated that the volunteers took an aggressive verbal approach to Civil Disobedience by yelling epithets at agents. Agents asked the volunteers to remove the water and to leave the federal land. Deliberate defiance by volunteers regarding this directive resulted in subsequent arrests. The 13 volunteers were convicted in federal court to 1-year probation and 300 hours of community service. No More Deaths lawyer Margo Cowan told me in July 2011 that their group had changed the way they trained their core and visiting volunteers on what to say in the event they encountered local or federal law enforcement officers.

Due to incidents like this agencies such as Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge and Organ Pipe National Monument have refused to work with No More Deaths and other humanitarian groups who want to leave supplies for migrants on federal lands. Despite the conflict, humanitarian aid groups continue to leave water and other supplies on federal land
while maintaining their efforts of asking federal bureaus for the permits to do so legally. The occasional and rare permit has been issued.

Humanitarian groups have begun to incorporate the help of people not affiliated with their organizations. In this way, the organizations have diversified the type of assistance they can offer to migrants, both in the desert and in migrant shelters in Mexican border towns. No More Deaths and Samaritans have commissioned-for-credit work from an undocumented woman I will call Ramona. Ramona produces what humanitarians terms as “dignity bags” that are specifically created for humanitarian aid volunteers to carry out to the desert and hang from trees along active migrant trails and deliver to migrant shelters in Nogales, Sonora, México. The bags are made of material sewn together and fitted with cord straps to carry like a backpack. They contain food packs, deodorant, toothpaste, Band-Aids, water and socks. The contents of the dignity bags rotate with availability of goods donated by outside sources. I have located the remains of the dignity bags on my desert patrols, on trails and in migrant stations throughout the desert.

Organized humanitarian aid efforts from individuals is rare, but can be seen in the example of Mike Wilson. Wilson is a Tohono O’Odham Nation tribal member and has been vilified by his own tribe for aiding migrants on the reservation (PBS:2008). Tohono O’Odham is the second largest reservation in the United States and has been the site of nearly half of the migrant deaths in Arizona. Mike Wilson drops water on the reservation and salvages bicycles (Fig. 6) left behind by migrants who attempt to ride their way through the desert to meet their pick up on Interstate 8. The bikes are refurbished, if possible, and then redistributed to children
on the reservation. He continues to provide water and aid to migrants despite his tribe forbidding him to do so.

**Border Enforcement Officers**

“The United States Border Patrol is the lead federal agency charged with securing the U.S. international land border with Mexico and Canada” (CRS:2007). USBP has undergone a series of organizational changes since its inception in 1924. Increased discussions of undocumented immigration into the U.S. also surround the topics of a massive influx of refugees fleeing Central America. During this period, there was a “near doubling of border staff positions by congress to enhance the INS’s social control over a specific population, that is undocumented immigrants” (Dunn:1996, 60). Along with the increase in staff positions, detention facilities and the use of space and military-grade equipment, the U.S. now had a powerful para-military unit being deployed domestically (Dunn:1996, 60-61) to police the U.S.-México border for brown bodies.

**Coyotes**

To evade apprehension by Border Patrol and to reduce the risks posed by natural hazards, migrants have increasingly turned to people smugglers, also known as coyotes which in turn has enabled coyotes to charge more for their services (Cornelius:2007, 27). During ethnographic interviews, migrants reported to me that crossing fees are as high as $4,000, depending on their point of departure. In the past a migrant had one coyote to hire who guided them through the desert. Now there are many different categories. Human smugglers at the U.S.-México border are known by several different names. Each smuggler performs a different job in the migration process and experience. Human smuggling has diversified and migrants
may be handled by several people until they have reached their destination. The following definitions are composites from conversations and interviews with migrants, humanitarians and border agents (including Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents).

**Bajadores:** In Spanish, bajadore means to drop you, literally. They are gang members that stand at the fence waiting to potentially rape and/or rob migrants and tell them if they have permission to pass. I have been told many times, by border agents and humanitarians, that bajadores are often affiliated with Mara Salvatrucha 13. MS13 is the Salvadoreño-based gang founded by refugees who had been relocated to the United States during El Salvador’s civil war with left-wing guerilla group, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. The gang members are viewed as an orbiting satellite in human smuggling. They are involved with who gets through the tunnels and fences in or near urban areas, but do not actually cross people through the desert.

**Guías:** Guide in Spanish. They don’t handle money or arrangements. Guías are the people who will walk migrants through the desert to their pick up site and are usually considered the lowest echelon of human smuggler.

**Polleros:** During my 2009 field season in Nogales, I found a notepad in my hotel nightstand. There were names, phone numbers and locations written down. In bold red letters with heavy underlining the notepad read, “CONTAR LOS POLLOS”, or count the/my chickens. Pollero in Spanish translates to chicken wrangler and they are the human smuggling middle-man. Migrants are referred to as pollos or chickens. A polleros job is to wrangle migrants together in one location and get them to their guía.

**Coyotes:** These are the heads of the human smuggling operations in border towns and throughout México. Coyote translates to wolf in English, but also translates colloquially to *The Fixer*. Need to get to the United States without papers? The Coyote can fix that. All arrangements are made and monies exchanged through the Coyote. Coyotes will head to center plazas where would-be migrants congregate, drive the streets in cars and hide in bushes and behind fences whispering, “Tucson? Phoenix?”. Sometimes the deal is brokered before migrants leave their hometowns or home countries for Mexican border towns.

Coyotes were traditionally part of small, sometimes family-run, operations. My own mother brokered with coyotes when I was kid to help friends get across the border. I once
asked her who the coyote was. She responded that it was best that I didn’t know, but it was someone very close to our family. I regret never finding out who it was.

Since the inception and expansion of drug cartels and other organized crime syndicates in México, human smuggling has diversified into a large-scale industry. Coyotes facilitate transportation of human non-U.S. nationals across international borders illegally. Sometimes migrants can reduce their cost of crossing with a coyote by muling drug bales on their backs during the journey, although migrants aren’t always given an option and may be required to mule at no cost benefit to the migrant at all. Migrants have reported in interviews that they are coerced, threatened or physically harmed into carrying drugs on their backs. Media outlets will show a video of migrants crossing in the desert at night with extremely large packs on their backs. It is commonplace to publicly hear the terms “migrant” and “drug smuggler” used interchangeably. Often, the basis for manipulating language in this way is based in migrants being made to carry drug bails on their backs through the desert, thereby further supporting the Latino Threat Narrative by equating Mexican with Illegal Invasion with Drug Smuggler.

There has been an increased demand in smugglers at the U.S.-México border in the last 10 years due to the risk, distance and remoteness of unauthorized crossing. Formerly, the hired coyote was the person who led the group through the entire journey. Currently, migrants may be handed off to multiple coyotes along the way. Humanitarians and I have long suspected that migrants were now routinely being handed off to different people during their journey through the desert.

In January 2013, I visited a known Mexican migrant staging area in a canyon. The original intent was to photograph a migrant-built shrine at this site and to assist Samaritans
with food and water drops. We came upon a group of 25 with their coyote. They were waiting in sub-freezing temperatures and snow to begin crossing. They would have to wait a few more hours to start crossing because most migrant groups travel at night to avoid detection. We spoke with the group. The coyote was well-dressed and very young. He had a black ski mask, nice black military-style boots, and a Gortex jacket and was very clean. He spoke enough English to say “Border Patrol” and “Machine Gun”. He looked like a young Subcommandante Marcos minus the iconic pipe.

After 20 minutes, the coyote became agitated with our group's presence and with my attempt to speak to the only women in the group. He negotiated a small fleece blanket from me for two cartons of Sherriff brand cigarettes. We left after handing out water, food, hats, gloves, food packs and some recycled backpacks. Many of them had on only sweatshirts while standing in the snow and no supplies for their journey.

After walking for 15 minutes into the canyon away from the group, we spotted the coyote hopping over the rocks and boulders through the wash in our direction. We stopped and then he passed us commenting, “Busco algo”, “I’m looking for something”. With their coyote now in the U.S. illegally and scouting for border agents there was the possibility of him being apprehended. It’s impossible to say whether the group would have crossed or gone back to Nogales if he didn’t return.

As we continued to walk through the wash, we passed him again standing a high-point, and heard him on his cell phone making arrangements with the next person he would be handing the group off to. This line of work has become attractive to poor, disaffected youth and deported migrants, who have become stuck in border towns, for its pay and its machismo
status (Urrea:2004, 71-78). It could be even more attractive if the job entails leaving after lunch and being home before breakfast instead of walking and sleeping in the desert for days on end.

Militarization and Misconduct

Border Walls and Law Enforcement

By 2006, Operations Gatekeeper, Hold the Line and Safeguard were firmly in place (Andreas:2009, 94) These operations effectively deployed hundreds of USBP agents to the busiest unauthorized crossing points. Added to the massive increase of border agents in the San Diego, El Paso and Tucson Sectors, was new sturdier border fencing, portable and stationary stadium lights and other military-grade surveillance tactics and equipment. The U.S.-México border was now unofficially a militarized zone. The intent of these installations was to apprehend immigrants as they were crossing into the U.S. Apprehensions decreased dramatically in these urban areas as people crossed in different regions. The new border operations merely shifted unauthorized entries away from urban areas and into more remote locations. Immigrant deaths skyrocketed as a result of this shift, as did migrant materials deposited in the desert (Andreas:2009, 93-96, Pima County Medical Examiner:2012).

With unauthorized migration and migrant apprehensions in the U.S. at a record-breaking high and climbing (fig. 7.1 and 7.2) the U.S. government felt pressure to further
increase security and build more fencing at the border. The Secure Fence Act was rendered on October 26, 2006 as part of President George W. Bush’s immigration reform. This would allow the Department of Homeland Security, formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service, to gain operational control over the entire U.S.-México land and maritime borders. The Act addressed the construction of physical barriers and implementing “virtual fence” technologies for reinforcing the southern U.S. border, and assisting in the enforcement of immigration security in designated areas. In August 2011, President Barack Obama scrapped the Virtual Fence project after taxpayers had invested $1 billion for a system that only yielded 53 miles of border protection. The vestiges of the surveillance towers (Gamboa:2011) still remain intact in the desert as a mode of creating psychological terror in undocumented migrants who see them, as one United States Border Patrol Agent informed me.

“There were 20,745 border patrol agents as of April 9, 2011; 17,659 of them stationed along the southwest border with México”, according to data provided by Steven Cribby, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, to Tampa Bay Times. That’s up 18% from 17,499 border patrol agents at the end of September 2008, four months before Obama took office (Tampa Bay Times:2011). “Deportations have reached record levels under President Obama, rising to an annual average of nearly 400,000 since 2009, about 30% higher than the annual average during the second term of the Bush administration and about double the annual average during George W. Bush’s first term” (Pew Hispanic Center:2011).

On February 12, 2013, President Obama gave his State of the Union speech where he addressed enacting meaningful immigration reform. The President stated, “Real reform means strong border security, and we can build on the progress my Administration has already made –
putting more boots on the southern border than at any time in our history, and reducing illegal crossings to their lowest levels in 40 years” (Obama:2013).

It costs the United States government an estimated $17 million dollars to build just one mile of border fence. There are currently a combined 344.3 miles of built fencing along the US-México border. As of 2008, the United States government has spent $58.5 billion building border fences (Dear:2013).

Now in 2013, in some locations, the U.S. government has built or *rebuilt* the fifth generation of border fence. The current generation fence technology is similar to the previous wall. At the Point of Entry in Douglas-Agua Prieta and El Paso-Juárez, DHS has recently built a ‘reinforced’ fence. The design has two fences, with a border-zone created in between the fences effectively trapping humans between the two fences for capture. In Douglas-Agua Prieta, the newly created border-zone (fig. 8) has a moat to prevent unauthorized migrants from reaching the U.S.-side fencing.

**Border Agent Misconduct**

The United States Border Patrol has been bombarded with public accusations by humanitarian aid groups and migrants of corruption and abuse. In a recent investigation, "One agent told examiners that he smuggled 230 people across the border and shuttled drug dealers around border towns so they could conduct their business. Another admitted to various crimes, including transporting $700,000 in drug money and 50 kilograms of cocaine across the Southwest border...The most recent incident involves a border patrol agent in Yuma, Ariz., who was arrested Dec. 2, 2012 when federal agents caught the staffer of two years as he loaded nearly 150 pounds of marijuana into his patrol vehicle while on duty” (Becker:2013). One case
was filed on behalf of four people who were illegally crossing the border and detained by Border Patrol agents. The suit claims “...one man and three women were placed in a holding cell described by CBP agents as the "hielera", or "icebox."... they were forced to stay in the cell for up to six days before they were shipped to other facilities to await deportation proceedings...(they) suffered in the bed-less cell, with their fingers and lips turning blue and their skin cracking from the cold” (Gomez:2013).

On May 9th, 2013, Border Patrol agent Luis Fonseca was acquitted by a jury of choking a detained migrant in front of another agent and two other migrant detainees. The incident was captured on video inside a USBP detention facility and shows Adolfo Ceja’s body convulsing and collapsing as Fonseca chokes and kicks Ceja. Testimony included an emergency room doctor who stated that Ceja was “faking”. Fonseca is currently on leaving pending an internal investigation into his actions and the incident. (Associated Press:2013)

In March of 2012, a memo was sent out from USBP Tucson Sector Chief Richard A. Barlow, after hearing that No More Deaths had surreptitiously recorded video of his agents on the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge kicking water jugs causing them to explode. The memo directed all USBP agents to immediately cease removing or destroying water and supplies that have been intentionally placed on federal lands by humanitarian aid groups (Reed and Barlow:2011). Nonetheless, in 2012 and 2013, humanitarian groups captured United States Border Patrol agents on video destroying water jugs and stealing blankets left out for migrants in the desert. Both videos were featured on news channels and in a PBS documentary created to highlight border patrol abuses against undocumented migrants (Epstien:2012) These actions went against the memo and earlier agreements with and permits issued by federal
agencies to humanitarian aid groups that allowed water drops by humanitarians on federal lands. Even though it is an official state directive by the United States Border Patrol Sector Chief to not damage or remove humanitarian aid supplies, the fact that agents continue to do so indicates that agents are operating outside of the law, their job descriptions and their own agencies rules and regulations. It also indicates that agents are hostile towards migrants.

Migration

Contemporary Migration Patterns

Since the building of border fences in urban areas, where unauthorized migrants were more likely to cross into the U.S., migration patterns have shifted deep into the most remote and isolated areas of the desert along the border. Recognition that this shift was occurring came with increased human remains being found in areas where they had not been found before (Ananda:2012). In tandem with the discovery of human remains in remote areas, were found huge sites were located where migrant materials had been deposited.

Arizona quickly became the site of the most undocumented crossings along the entire 2,000 mile geopolitical border. The heaviest concentration of human movement had been located between the Tumacácori Mountains and Organ Pipe National Monument, with highest concentration located on and around the Tohono O’Odham Nation.

A map, meticulously updated by Humane Borders (fig. 9.1 and 9.2), reflects this migration pattern through the reservation. Despite the decrease in the number of undocumented migrants crossing the border since the U.S. economic downturn in 2008, the
patterns of migration still remain the same, using the same routes and the same crossing methods to cross *La Frontera* as patrols and surveillance increase.

In a March 2013, I received an email from No More Deaths and Kino Border Initiative volunteer and Franciscan friar, Brother David Bruer. In the email he reported what appears to an increase in unauthorized crossing through the Lukeville, Arizona area where he performs water drops bi-monthly. A phone conversation with Bob Kee on March 23rd, 2013 revealed a sharp increase in the number of Central American migrants over the previous two months in Nogales, Sonora, México.

Lukeville is located within the boundaries of Organ Pipe National Monument. In January 2003, National Geographic called this national park the “most dangerous” in the U.S (Clynes:2003). Organ Pipe National Monument is also the 2001 sight of the largest migrant death count from one group. A group of 14 men died over the course of one evening throughout one canyon in the parks boundaries. In 2010, I interviewed Superintendent Lee Baiza. He said, “I got the first call and I found the first body. It was my 2nd day on the job and I didn’t think I was gonna make it. I didn’t think I would last. But here I am”.

With the decrease in the number of people crossing, there has been a shift in migrant nationalities crossing the US.-México border. Mexican-origin immigration is currently down, with an increase being seen in Salvadoreños and Nicaragueños (Samaritans Southside:2012). Phone conversations between Bob Kee and me on April 22nd, 2013, further reflect this recent change based on what he has witnessed in Mexican migrant shelters in the last month. The reason for the increase in these Central American populations still remains unclear and is currently being investigated by Bob and me. With this shift, migration patterns change slightly,
along with the mode of transportation to the border which leads to an increase and shift in the amount and type of artifact found in migrant stations. This shift is reflected largely through personal identification documents and other personal affects by me and humanitarians.

METHODS and DATA COLLECTION

Equipment

Spatial distribution data of migrant stations and artifacts was collected between June 2010 and January 2013. Predetermined locations were selected and targeted due their location, size, distribution of artifacts and content. The locations for study had been previously identified by me and Jason De Léon and were investigated before selection. Selection was based on three factors reflecting our ability to acquire and transport the study materials from the migrant station locations to our research base camp. These were: (a) mileage from the base camp, (b) ease of hiking the terrain, (c) and access and proximity to primitive roads. Consideration was based in how far we would have to carry heavy 30-gallon plastic trash bags out of the sites to vehicles that would take the bags back to the base camp lab.

Site selection was also based on site size as ones were selected for study that represented the three types of migrant stations as determined below. The content and distribution of the artifacts was further considered within size selection. The sites chosen represented the best examples of the variety of artifacts within the sites as well as artifact distribution. While the selection of these study sites has been influenced by the practicalities
of the field work I believe that the ones selected are represented of the wider group. Other sites that have been identified and visited in other remote and less remote locations presented with the same characteristics of size, artifact distribution and artifact content as the sites that were chosen. As will become evident later, a migrant’s point of origin has more effect on artifact variation when considering common items such as water bottles and where those bottles have been manufactured. Ultimately, despite the name brand on the bottle itself, the bottle still presents as a water bottle in migrant stations.

The location data was collected using a Trimble Geo HX handheld unit and a Trimble Juno ST handheld unit using Terrasync and downloaded into Pathfinder Office for analysis. The settings of the Trimble units reflect a margin of error of +/- 3 meters. A Canon A640 point and shoot camera was used to visually record their site distribution and contents. Each photograph was sequentially numbered and labeled to correlate with the data collected at each site. Some sites that were targeted for analysis were not recorded with Trimble units due to mountainous terrain making it difficult to secure signals from satellites to capture GPS coordinates. In this case, sites were recorded with handheld consumer-grade GPS units for coordinates, size, content and recorded in notebooks and with a camera. Collection of migrant materials consisted of sorting materials into categories of like-content. Harvesting of migrant materials consisted of “bagging and tagging” materials, with their provenience, materials by like-content for further analysis and provenience in a field lab and in home-base labs.

Artifacts in the desert are subject to an array of decay and destruction. Decay rates of migrant artifacts have in this arid environment is empirically unknown. However, decay of materials is now being analyzed and considered for correlation when found with materials, like
food cans and other materials with imprinted expiration dates and batch numbers. Other sites and their contents are subject to disturbance and destruction by humans and animals. For example, HDPE 2 is the most recognized recyclable plastic in production and is used to make detergent bottles, bleach bottles, milk cartons, shampoo and conditioner bottles, motor oil containers and many other non-edible goods. Some black plastic water bottles made in México are embossed with this symbol. These plastics will degrade in just under 100 years depending on the thickness of the plastic used. This, however, is a generalized U.S. land-fill based assessment of the plastics decay. As will be discussed later, the expiration and decay rate of the contents in canned foods is rapid, according to the manufacturers recommended handling of their product. Spoiled canned foods can develop botulism and other food-borne toxins.

The sun is an accelerant in the decay and degradation of non-organic and organic material by breaking down the integrity of the material with light and radiant heat in a process called photodegradation. Some locations in the desert are at high elevations causing decay to happen more rapidly due to higher and more direct and prolonged UV ray exposure. Animals will forage through migrant stations, especially when food is present, tearing through the artifacts and sometimes eating them. Groups often go to known migrant stations and will attempt to clean up the site or pick through the site to recycle or reuse items that have recently been left behind and are in usable condition. Ironically, many of the backpacks that are reusable are donated to schools and agencies that give them to “underprivileged” children that typically include populations of undocumented migrant children and children of undocumented migrants. Other people actively seek out migrant stations to pick up souvenirs of migrant experiences and suffering as a keepsake or for art-making.
Migrant Stations

Migrant stations, which are referred to as lay-up sites by border patrol, are ad hoc resting sites used by migrants during multi-day migration. The sites are characterized by migrant material culture deposits that may include water bottles, backpacks, clothing, shoes, personal hygiene items, or other personal belongings. These deposits reflect the behaviors, activities, and needs of the migrants during their journey.

Migrants and coyotes choose migrant station sites based on several factors that include the ability to avoid detection, the ability to protect themselves from the elements and the amount of shade surrounding vegetation can provide during daytime resting. Canyon walls and dense vegetation in washes and ravines can provide substantial camouflage from surveillance by other humans and protection from the effects of weather. Sites are also chosen by guides for their proximity to primitive and paved roads allowing migrants to be easily accessed to be picked up in a vehicle to their final destination.

Migrant stations are typically found in washes and ravines, restricting deposits of migrant materials to a finite area. No migrant station is alike due to variable topographic, geologic and botanical features within each site. Creating definitions for migrant stations based only on the area of the site is not feasible. In order to create a language to define consistent features of migrant stations, the density of migrant materials contained within a migrant station is used, in part, to create definitions.

Density of migrant materials in migrant stations is based on the biological concept of density dependent limiting factor (Legros et al:2009, 411), the limiting factor of a population (migrants) wherein limited space (area) within a migrant station creates competition for area
which then determines how and where migrant materials are deposited within a migrant station site. Content is defined as material remains contained within a site which have been deposited by a human engaged directly in the process of unauthorized migration (primary deposits) or indirectly by natural elements (secondary deposits). Primary deposits consist of materials being located in the place where they were originally laid down in migrant stations. Secondary deposits occur during weather events, from animals moving materials around and human intervention within the sites in the form of picking through and salvaging (Schiffer:1975, 839-842).

**Defining Migrant Stations**

Three categorical types are defined within the term migrant station to reflect size, density, location and content.

**TYPE 1**
Low count of migrant materials, 1-10 items present  
Typically not shaded or hidden  
Found along or immediately beside trails  
Reflect transitory behavior

Type 1 sites (fig. 10) are not characteristic of long-term resting areas due to exposure and are transitory, where a migrant may deposit or discard an artifact while in motion. These site types are in exposed areas, exposed to the sun and weather events, as well as exposed to detection. These migrant stations may be a single electrolyte bottle on the side of a trail that has been discarded because it is no longer useful. Another example is sites where a pair of used socks and a water bottle has been found on or near a trail.

**TYPE 2**
Light to medium count of material, 11-50 items present  
Found in shaded, secluded, or hidden areas  
Primarily characterized by water bottles and/or food remains
Type 2 sites (fig.11) can be found in small clusters of thorn trees, small coves in canyons and ravines and areas that are secluded from a trail, road or viewshed. The number of artifacts contained within the site can range from 11-50 items, and typically contains water and electrolyte bottles, food wrappers and tuna cans. The site may also contain socks, shoes and pants. Migrants often change or discard basic clothing when the items are no longer functional.

**TYPE 3**

Highest amounts of material, 50 or more items present
Found in shaded, secluded, or hidden areas, often in closer proximity to roads
Greater diversity of artifacts, including backpacks and clothing
Prolonged occupation

Type 3 sites (fig. 12) are found in remote and secluded areas that are far from population centers, featuring groves of thorn trees and /or located within deep canyons and ravines. The number of artifacts contained within a Type 3 site ranges from 50 items to thousands of items. Typically these sites contain backpacks, clothing, food remains, water and electrolyte bottles and personal items such as toothpaste and deodorant or birth certificates and family pictures. Type 3 sites are typically in close proximity to primitive ranching roads. This positioning supports the presumption that Type 3 migrant stations are ones of relatively prolonged occupation and serve as locations for resting, eating, changing clothing and preparing for eventual vehicle transportation. While migrants may rest at this location, immediately when transportation arrives they are quickly moved to the vehicle(s). Migrants have reported to me that in the haste of being quickly moved from the migrant station to the transportation, they unintentionally dropped personal property or were forced by their guide to discard personal items, which accounts for the volume of personal documents, such as birth certificates being located in Type 3 sites.
Of the predetermined locations where data were collected I have selected to examine four sites: BK4, BK5, Busters Wash and Lobo Tank. These were selected as representing Migrant Station Type’s 1, 2 and 3. Lobo Tank and Buster’s Wash are both categorized as Type 3 migrant stations. However, Lobo Tank is a large, round wash site nestled between high cliffs with large trees within it. Buster’s Wash is a long, narrow wash site that gently ascends to the North with smaller thorn trees within it.

Artifacts deposited within a migrant station can range from water bottles to a pair of high-heeled shoes. The most common artifacts found in the desert and in migrant stations are water bottles, backpacks and food remains. Less common migrant artifacts include baby carriers and gendered-assault features, which are discussed in detail later.

Each migrant station type represented possesses commonalities such as size, density and natural features. The distribution of migrant stations in the Sonoran Desert shows a pattern of locations selected for their protection, safety and access from the shade of vegetation, access to roads, and invisibility from canyon and arroyo walls. Sites identified in figure 13 are clustered together as they are all located on or near active migrant trails.

The migrant stations contained within figure 13 are located northwest of the town of Arivaca, Arizona. The data for these sites was collected during the summer of 2010 during the Undocumented Migrant Project field school through the UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. Artifacts were harvested from these sites and returned to the field lab for cleaning, packaging, provenience, documentation and prepared for shipment.

Buster’s Wash (fig. 14), a Type 3 migrant station, was revealed to me by a local Arivaca resident, named Steve, who has prospector’s permits in this area. Steve drove Jason De Léon
and me to the site for an initial survey of the area on a 4-wheel ATV. Buster’s Wash is located within a very long, narrow and gently sloped wash with heavy vegetation. This site was recorded to be just over ¼ mile in length and 1 to 10 feet wide depending on location within the site. The site consisted of primary and secondary deposits of migrant materials.

Buster’s Wash is located in a wash where weather events have disturbed the primary deposits by moving the artifacts downstream when water is present. Artifacts contained within the site consisted of clothing, water bottles, food remains, pictures and documents from four different individuals. Artifacts were collected over three days by field school students into 30-gallon trash bags and returned to the field lab for processing. Buster’s Wash was discovered, at the top of the sites slope, to be four feet from a primitive ranching road making this site consistent with a migrant pickup site.

Lobo Tank (fig. 15), a Type 3 site, is located in a deep wash ravine that possesses some large trees which provide protection from detection. This site was identified and selected during a 13 mile long migrant trail desert hike with Samaritan Bob Kee. This site contained substantial deposits of clothing, backpacks, water bottles, food remains and blankets. Deposits were located on the ground throughout the site but also were heavily deposited into a large decommissioned cattle tank infested with rattle snakes. One of the distinctive features of this site was the presence of “graffiti” scrawled and etched into the canyon wall recording names, places of origin and prayers. Artifacts harvested from this site were selected on a piece by piece basis, largely due to the remoteness of the location and feasibility of hauling large quantities of artifacts out of the site to the field lab. Some artifacts were not selected due to advanced
photodegradation, making transportation of the item impossible without it turning to dust. Most artifacts were sorted, counted, photographed and catalogued at the site then left behind.

In analyzing the physical site, it was unclear how Lobo Tank could be a Type 3 site with no obvious or visible roads in view at the time. Our group traveled further up the wash only to be met with a cliff wall that was too sheer to be safely scaled by migrants at night. Consideration was given to this site, while consistent with a Type 3 migrant station based on material deposits although it was unusual in not clearly being in close proximity with some type of road. In March 2012, Robyn Dennis and I discovered through examination of aerial images from Bing Maps of the area near Lobo Tank that there was a primitive ranching road located approximately 1,000 feet northeast from the site. Visibility of this road was obstructed by a cliff and vegetation.

The following charts were created to condense basic characterizations and functions of certain artifacts that are located in migrant stations. I am choosing to focus on the potential negative corporeal impacts in these charts. Most of what has been interpreted from the artifacts located in the desert, in the lab and correlated with ethnographic interviews focuses almost entirely on the negative impacts that these objects have (or reflect) on migrant bodies that have survived the crossing. Migrants at the point in which I am speaking to them are in position where negatives are overwhelming any possible positives of their experiences at that moment. Watching people file through a Port of Entry or into migrant shelters with horrific injuries and illnesses makes it difficult for me as a researcher to ask about the positives of unauthorized crossing while helping to carry them to a bed, or a chair, or the floor for medical treatment.
Objects are left by people at migrant stations as intentionally and unintentionally discarded trash. The charts reflect simplistic categorization by artifact, intent, source, class, migrant station type, and potential negative corporeal impacts. I define each category as:

**Artifact:** an object of archaeological and cultural interest. The objects of interest, for the sake of this thesis, are located within migrant stations, as defined previously that can be analyzed archaeologically and culturally in relation to unauthorized migration in the Sonoran Desert of the United States.

**Intent:** This is defined in relation to the systematic selection, use, and discarding of objects by migrants, border-based groups and/or law enforcement into migrant stations. The process of selection is based in the intent to use that object for a specific purpose to deflect or aid detection and apprehension and successfully complete or prevent their journey.

**Source:** A person from which an object originates from who also introduces and deposits the object(s) into migrant stations, either directly or indirectly contributes to the introduction and depositing of the artifacts.

**Class:** Categorized by the numbers 0-3 to establish the occurrence in which an object is located within a migrant station.

**Migrant Station Type:** Categorized by the numbers 1-3 as defined previously to define the location in which the occurrence of an object is likely.

**Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts:** The capacity to develop into a direct or indirect health issue causing negative harm to migrant bodies and migrant life.
### Migrant Artifacts

#### THE BASICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Migrant Stations Type</th>
<th>Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backpacks</td>
<td>transport food, water and/or other personal items</td>
<td>TRAK backpack company, migrants</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Strain on the knees, balance, neck, torso, hands and shoulders. Can create swelling in extremities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Plastic Water Bottles</td>
<td>prevent water from reflecting light, avoid detection</td>
<td>Mexican Bottled water manufacturers, migrants</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Increased body temperature, dehydration, anoxic water, putridness, rhabdomyolysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrolyte Bottles and Powder Packets</td>
<td>replace lost salt due to excessive perspiration, dehydration</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Vomiting, cramping, dizziness, diarrhea, hypernatremia, rhabdomyolysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Foods</td>
<td>Non-perishable foods</td>
<td>Fish canning, migrants, humanitarians</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Botulism and other food poisoning, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, hallucinations, rhabdomyolysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Shoes</td>
<td>Protect from elements, flora, fauna</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians, USBP</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Clothing may not be climate appropriate (pg. 27), hypo or hyperthermia, massive blistering of the feet, bleeding, infection, rapid shoe decay, stinging insects, cactus needles, rocks, sharp objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>Prevent detection, weather, hypothermia, cover migrant remains</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians, USBP</td>
<td>3,2,3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Damp clothing, body temperature rheostat, skin chaffing, scavenging of human remains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are fundamental items that migrants routinely bring with them on the journey to el otro lado, if they are properly prepared for the journey. Backpacks are an essential element during crossing and entire economies have been created around the business of migrants and backpacks as previously discussed. Backpacks are used to transport food, water, clothing and other personal items. TRACK brand backpacks are the most commonly found backpack in migrant stations. These backpacks are sold on both sides of the border and are usually offered in black or camouflage. These cheaply made backpacks are found in the desert with broken straps, broken plastic buckles, shredded fabric and gapping tears. The tattered condition renders the backpack useless and is discarded into Types 1, 2, and 3 migrant stations.

In 2009, I was introduced to the new black water bottles, manufactured by multiple Mexican bottling companies and marketed at migrants for their journey beginning at the border. These bottles are extremely common at all migrant station types. Traditionally, migrants would coat white or clear plastic water bottles with black or green spray paint. This is a tactic is used to prevent detection in the desert by keeping the water from reflecting light, even at night, when most migrant groups are walking. Over the past two years, I have noted that the quality of the plastic has changed from a stiff plastic to a more pliable plastic. The theory, according to Samaritan Bob Kee, is that this booming industry has found a way to make

| Fleece-soled Disposable Shoe Covers | Cover shoe soles, conceal foot prints | Migrants, coyotes, narco-traffickers | 1 | 1,3 | Not durable materials, defeats preventing detection,

Table 1 Basic migrant materials
Class= 0-never, 1-sporadically, 2-habitually, 3-continuously

There are fundamental items that migrants routinely bring with them on the journey to el otro lado, if they are properly prepared for the journey. Backpacks are an essential element during crossing and entire economies have been created around the business of migrants and backpacks as previously discussed. Backpacks are used to transport food, water, clothing and other personal items. TRACK brand backpacks are the most commonly found backpack in migrant stations. These backpacks are sold on both sides of the border and are usually offered in black or camouflage. These cheaply made backpacks are found in the desert with broken straps, broken plastic buckles, shredded fabric and gapping tears. The tattered condition renders the backpack useless and is discarded into Types 1, 2, and 3 migrant stations.

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more money by cutting material costs. Black plastic water bottles are manufactured by several companies in México such as Las Montañas bottled in Sasabé, Sonora (the label ironically depicts snow-capped mountains and a glassy lake) and Sun Water is bottled in Altar, Sonora, a staging town that exists almost entirely by supporting would-be migrants with supplies for their journey into the desert, as I have witnessed.

Water bottles and electrolyte bottles have proven to be the most consistent and most consistently shifting artifact in the desert. Bottles are discarded because they are no longer useful or are reused to collect water from bacteria-infested cattle tanks and then discarded. Discarded bottles have been located and identified as having cattle tank water in them still with lumps of green algae.

In 2010, Jason De Léon held his first field school through the University California Los Angeles for the newly formed Undocumented Migration Project and Migrant Material Culture Project where I worked as the school’s lab manager. The field school’s goal was to locate and harvest migrant materials from migrant stations around the Arivaca, Arizona area. De Léon asked his students to conduct experiments of their choosing as part of the curriculum.

Student Steven Ritchey performed an experiment where he recorded the temperature of the water contained within different size and type water bottles during different times of the day on different days. What he recorded was that the water temperature differed by 13.5°F between the black water bottles vs. the white water bottles, on an (average) 100.7 degree day. The white bottle of water reached a maximum temperature of 112.8°F while the black water bottle reached a maximum temperature of 126.3°F. (De León:2012, 488) The implications of drinking hot water on a hot day when a body is dehydrated is that a human body’s internal
regulator is unable to reduce the temperature of its internal organs which can lead to rhabdomyolysis and renal failure, according to Samaritans volunteer and co-author of Crossing With the Virgin (Ferguson, etal:2010,23-24), Norma Price, RN:

“Rhabdomyolysis is a condition where the muscles cells begin to break down and the protein from the muscle cells gets into the bloodstream and circulates through the body. In the filtration job the kidneys perform, this muscle protein becomes trapped in the microscopic tubules of the kidneys and causes the kidneys to shut down”

Migrants typically begin the portion of their journey at the U.S.-México border with one to three gallons of water for the entire journey and sometimes less. The recommended amount of water that should be carried by one person for a summer day hike in the desert is 2.5 gallons, which weighs approximately 20 pounds (Craig, etal:2001, 418; Ferguson etal:2010, 146-148; Regan:2010, 133). Water is purchased or procured at the start of their crossing in migrant staging towns. Water for sale in prepackaged plastic bottles is readily available in bodegas. Occasionally, bottles that once contained Clorox Bleach or motor oil have also been found in migrant stations. What has been the most fascinating aspect of the Mexican water bottle industry is the migrant economy that is manufacturing and marketing specifically designed bottled water for migration. Two examples of this phenomenon can be found in the form of black plastic water bottles and bottled water containing landscape feature depictions (fig. 16) on their product label.

During a time when concentrated crossing was located in the Altar Valley of Arizona, Baboquivari Bottling Company based in Sasabé, México, began manufacturing small 20 ounce bottles of water specifically for migration. The label contains an image of the Altar Valley’s famous Baboquivari Peak which can be seen for miles from several vantage points in the
Sonoran desert. In an interview with 22-year-old migrant Fernando from Puebla who stated to me, “if you keep Baboquivari to your left, you won’t get lost.” Since 2010, migration through the Altar Valley still remains frequent, but has subsided from its 2005-2008 numbers making this bottle less common in migrant stations than previously.

In summer 2013, during a scheduled weekly Samaritans meeting, it was revealed that canned foods provided by Samaritans, had presented several problems for migrants in the desert. Earlier, in the spring of 2012, Samaritans made the decision to add 1-gallon water jugs and 234 gram individual serving cans of refried beans to their standard food pack offerings that are dropped at pre-determined locations on known-to-be-active migrant trails in the desert. Prior to this new decision, Samaritans only carried pre-made food packs that contain salty snack crackers, granola bars, salty chips and a variety of other high-salt, high-fat and high-protein snack foods obtained through public and private donations. Previously food packs were only handed out by volunteers to migrants encountered in the desert who wanted or needed them.

However, the Samaritans had come to realize that in their efforts to help in any way that they could to prevent migrant death and reduce suffering, they were failing to help well. Food-borne illness in migrants had been directly correlated to having eaten small cans of refried beans found in the humanitarian-established water and food drop locations. Markings on the water bottles where the canned beans were found, as reported by sick migrants, were traced back to Samaritans.

It should be noted that I have in that last statement intentionally used “in the desert” rather than “on the migrant trail”. Migrants who are in distress are likely to be found on roads or trailheads because they are actively seeking assistance from USBP or anyone they can find.
**Typicality Of The Basics**

Clothing items are typically found in Type 3 migrant stations, they can be found in Type 2 sites but rarely in Type 1 migrant stations. Shoes of all sizes and styles can be found in all site types. Shoes can reflect not only the hardship of walking several miles in the desert for days on end; it can reflect a person’s age, gender, socio-economic status and perhaps their place of origin. Cheap plastic shower sandals, huaraches (Mexican sandals), running shoes, children’s booties, and even high-heels can be found in migrant stations. Clothing and shoes can be destroyed on the body during migration from thorny plants and trees, falling and general overuse in which the article may not have been intended to be used.

Due to the typical population migrating through the desert southwest, clothing may not be climate appropriate for the crossing. Discarded women’s high-heeled shoes and unisex shower slippers have been found in both in Type 2 and 3 migrant stations, often torn or missing entire pieces of the upper. Torn sneakers that have been tied together with string or cloth or are missing their soles are found all over the desert floor having been abandoned by their wearer.

Sweatshirts or pants are found discarded in Type 3 sites during a time of year where the temperature rises and falls by 30 degrees each day. Despite being 85 degrees at night in the desert, hypothermia can set in on a dehydrated body that has been exposed to the sun all day then enduring a rapid temperature fluctuation. We have discovered that the closer to the border wall a clothing item has been discarded, the more likely it was deemed unnecessary by their owner.
Socks, found in Type 1, 2 and 3 stations, are routinely found ripped open and sometimes bloody. The person who wore them removed and discarded their old socks for a fresh pair or to remove cactus barbs or perhaps treat gapping blisters that have developed. Socks from migrant stations are usually not collected because they are considered by us a biohazard.

Blankets, found in Type 2 and 3 stations, are likely to have been provided to the travelers originally from humanitarian sources, although traditional hand-woven Latin American blankets are also found. The blankets given to the migrants are typically donated to humanitarian aid groups by private citizens. Blankets are then deposited in migrant stations and on active migrant trails by humanitarian aid workers and migrants. They are used by migrants to protect themselves from cold, hypothermia and weather events. Migrants will also use blankets to conceal themselves to prevent detection by law enforcement and have been used to cover a deceased body while waiting for law enforcement or the coroner.

Ranchers have expressed anger over blankets being left out on their lands because their cattle eat the blankets. Cattle have been found sick or dead with blankets in their stomachs or protruding from their rectum. Humanitarian aid groups continue to argue that the life of a human is more valuable than that of cattle and continue to leave blankets out despite protests by ranchers. Now, blankets are typically left at predetermined sites inside 5-gallon plastic buckets with a lid to prevent damage and dampness to the blankets, as well as to prevent the cattle and other wild animals from eating them.

In January 2013, a hidden surveillance camera placed by No More Deaths captured video of a border agent at one of their water drop sites removing blankets from buckets that had been left for migrant use (Huffington Post Staff Writer:2013). This action by the border
agent was in defiance of a previously issued official memo to all field agents directing them to cease removing and/or destroying water jugs and other supplies left by humanitarian aid groups for use by migrants (Reed and Barlow:2011)

Fleece-soled disposable shoe covers are typically found in Type 1 migrant stations. This artifact is used by coyotes or narco-trafficantes to prevent detection by concealing foot prints. In interviews with migrants in Nogales, Sonora, six men reported to me that they had also used foot-covers to prevent detection and were readily purchasable in the staging town where they began their crossing into the U.S. Oscar reported discarding them in the middle of his journey because they had quickly broken apart. One informant, German, reported to me that he wore them until he reached mile marker 11 on Arivaca Road before discarding them on the desert floor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migrant Artifact</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Migrant Station Type</th>
<th>Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ephedra-based Pill Blister Packs</td>
<td>Force migrant groups to move at a rapid rate</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical companies, coyotes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>severe skin reactions, irritability, nervousness, dizziness, trembling, headache, profuse perspiration, dehydration, vomiting, and hyperthermia, irregular heartbeat, seizures, heart attack, stroke, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>Eat, rub on skin, combat mosquitos, other predatory animals</td>
<td>Migrants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Folk remedies, folk medicine, insect repellent, antimicrobial, natural blood thinner, functions negatively in the event of injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapers</td>
<td>Babies, young children, fecal and urine containment</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Rashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Hygiene and Grooming Products</td>
<td>Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Deodorant, Maxi-pads, Foot Powder, Lotion, Isopropyl Alcohol</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Compromised oral and physical hygiene, rashes on skin and genitals, blistering, infection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Hygiene Migrant Materials  
Class= 0-never, 1-sporadically, 2-habitually, 3-continuously
Ephedra-based pill blister packs are typically found in abundance in Type 2 and 3 migrant stations. A common theme during my interviews with migrants, men and women, young and old, is that they are forced by their guías to consume “handfuls” of ephedra-based pills throughout their crossing. The intent in forcing migrants to consume large quantities of ephedra-based pills is to keep the group members alert through the night as well as prevent them from falling behind during the crossing from exhaustion. It has been reported to me by migrants and humanitarian aid volunteers that migrants who are unable to keep up with their group due to exhaustion or illness are left behind alone in the desert.

Josseline Jamileth Hernández Quinteros, a 14 year old girl from El Salvador who was crossing with her 8 year old brother, became sick on the trail and was left behind by her guide. She died and was found about a month later face down in a wash next to a road. (Regan:2010, prologue) In 2011, I attempted to obtain a copy of Josseline’s toxicology report from the Pima County Medical Examiner. I was informed that due to the large number of migrant remains in their morgue and lack of funding, no toxicology testing was performed on Josseline. Migrants have reported to me that ephedra pills they had consumed made them feel like they were “going to die”, like they were going to “have a heart attack”. This has been especially reported to me by men and women over the age of 40 years old.

I visited a migrant-supply-based bodega in Altar, Sonora in 2009. I located a basket full of garlic bulbs next shelves lined with water jugs. It was not until I found a garlic bulb in a backpack I was inspecting that I made the connection between garlic and migrant artifacts. Desiccated garlic bulbs are found in backpacks that have been discarded in migrant stations. During my interviews with Samaritan Bob Kee and two migrants (Eric and Flaco) I met in
Nogales in 2009, it was explained to me that garlic is used to eat because it helps with a dry mouth, to rub on the skin in an effort to keep animals and insects away and that some indigenous groups believe it wards off bad spirits. Flaco later told me that the connection of garlic to spirits and indigenous migrants was probably a “myth about Chinos”.

The introduction of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the performance of migration presents a specific set of questions. The dominant demographic in migrant populations are Indigenous Maya migrating from rural and/or remote villages in their home countries. Many of these migrants are traveling outside of their place of birth for the first time, from sub-tropical climbs. The knowledge base of flora, fauna and climate does not compare to what the Sonoran Desert presents. A question to be answered is whether TEK that is believed to be effective back home can, instead, be a detriment to them in the desert?

If we look at garlic as an insect repellent and consider the biggest insect bite danger is from massive colonies of Africanized bees, does the garlic help repel them? I have never interviewed anyone who has denied or confirmed this effectiveness and a search for literature on the subject proved to be fruitless. In using garlic as an antimicrobial, I have found it to be ineffective when we consider the hot, dry, dusty environment and profuse sweating and bacteria growth that most likely renders any beneficial properties useless on open wounds. In other contexts, such as blood clots and cholesterol, blood thinning is extremely beneficial. However, considering the intensity of some of the most common injuries migrants incur in crossing, blood thinning is a life-threatening detriment to the body when trying to control bleeding from open, gapping wounds. I would argue that garlic has serious potential negative corporeal impacts in migrant life.
Undocumented migration has routinely been considered and presented as a young, male activity in the media and in academia. With a few exceptions, only recently has academia begun to represent women and girls as viable actors in the performance of migration through increased application of a Latino Threat Narrative as I have defined in the introduction of this thesis. This is particular when discussing women’s sexuality (gendered assault), fertility (birth control regimen specifically during migration) and reproduction (anchor babies) (Chavez:2008, 70-110; Rosario:2009; Falcon:2007, 3; Sieff:2009). The media has not followed suit, except when equating gendered-assault and gendered-assault features with “trash” (Banks:2009). In interviewing U.S. citizens who live and work in the border region, more often than not, the discussion is about young men who are migrating to the U.S. to steal blue collar jobs.

Women and girls routinely begin or are forced to begin consuming birth control pills before heading into the desert because the probability of their being sexually assaulted is so great, that measures to prevent pregnancy during these assaults are introduced (Falcon:2001, 6; Rosario:2009).

In contrast to the actual evidence of the use of birth control during migration there are anti-immigrant and neo-nativist groups who talk about “anchor babies.” This is a derogatory race-based term describing an ostensible strategy to “anchor” the mother and other family members in the U.S. with a U.S.-born child. This term is placed on brown females and defines a contradictory stereotype that claims that Latina/Mexican women are biologically as well as culturally and religiously unable to stop reproducing and that these intentionally manufactured pregnancies are designed to acquire citizenship in the U.S. (Chavez:2008, 70-110).
Diapers, when found in migrant stations, are indicators that very small children have been traveling through the area. I have received a variety of reports regarding diapers and the changing of diapers while crossing, primarily from mothers. During the summer months, particularly, babies are prone to diaper rashes due to heat, sweat, urine and feces. Women have reported not having enough diapers with them to change their babies as needed. Other women have reported that their guía(s) refused to stop or slow down so that diapers could be changed and were threatened with being abandoned in the desert with their babies, still others reported that guías were more than willing to stop for a moment so that a fresh diaper could be put on the baby.

In 2010, while working at the Centro de Recursos para Migrantes in Agua Prieta, Sonora, a Chamula woman who had just been deported walked in with her three-week old infant. The baby had developed a rash so severe that oozing blisters had developed. She reported to a volunteer that border patrol refused her baby treatment for the rash, as is guaranteed under Geneva Convention I-III and Protocol I-II. The center volunteers treated the baby as much as they could, with limited supplies and limited medical knowledge, while listening to the woman’s plan to cross again the next day with her newborn.

Personal hygiene products, such as toothpaste, deodorant and maxi-pads, are typically found in Type 2 and 3 sites. Due to Type 3 sites being typically in close proximity to roads, personal hygiene products are used to “freshen up” at the behest of guides before their pick up arrives. The intent is to not “look like a migrant” in the event that drivers and passengers in the vehicle are racially profiled by law enforcement. Personal hygiene products are also used during the multi-day journey as a matter a self-care while traveling. Isopropyl alcohol, as reported to
me, is used to rub on the skin for a cooling effect during heat of the day and to treat insect bites. However, just like garlic, self-remedy items like alcohol may promote negative effects to the body.

In feminized spaces within migrant stations, where women have intentionally separated themselves from men in the group during resting periods, maxi-pads are found in abundance with feminine lotions, undergarments and clothing. Spaces that are clearly identifiable as feminized make it easy to track women specifically around those spaces by men, leaving woman vulnerable to assault.
LA MIGRA/IMMIGRATION POLICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migrant Artifact</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Migrant Station Type</th>
<th>Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manacles</td>
<td>Restrain prisoners</td>
<td>TUFFTIE, USBP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Loss of circulation, ligature marks, open wounds, joint injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)</td>
<td>Seize, seal, give provenience for evidence and contraband</td>
<td>ICE, USBP, migrants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Anti-Mexican, anti-immigrant language dehumanization, humiliation, non-personhood, person as material object, creates non-human identifiers of human beings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Migrant-based Border Patrol Materials  
Class= 0-never, 1-sporadically, 2-habitually, 3-continuously

The United States Border Patrol employs the use of disposable nylon wrist restraints, known as “Tuff Ties: The Inescapable Choice In Disposable Restraints” (fig. 17). These wrist restraints can be found in areas, including migrant stations, where apprehended migrants are assembled together to prepare them for transportation by vehicle to a detention facility (De Léon: in press). These one-time-use restraints are cut and discarded as apprehended migrants are loaded into border patrol paddy wagon-style trucks. At the site of discard, the restraints can typically be found in piles of 5-20 restraints, depending on how many migrants have been apprehended in that one instance. Tuff Ties often leave ligature marks on the wrists that reportedly go untreated once the prisoner is in detention with the border patrol.
Immigration and Customs Enforcement employ the use of plastic bags, in a variety of sizes which are intended to “bag and tag” non-human criminal evidence. Once a migrant has been apprehended and transported to a detention facility, their personal items on their body, including their shoe laces, are confiscated by agents and placed into an evidence bag and sealed. It has been my experience that no identifying information is ever recorded on the bags even though there are spaces on the bag for such information.

Once the prisoner has been processed and transported to a Port of Entry for deportation, the bags are thrown into a pile on the ground and migrants are told to sort through them to find their personal affects. Typically these bags are found empty in Mexican border towns in the street, on a sidewalk or trash cans, however, rare exceptions in finding these ICE bags (fig. 18) has occurred in migrant stations in the desert. The discovery of these bags in migrant stations supports rapid turnaround rates of deported migrants attempting to cross again within a short period of time.
HOPE AND DESPAIR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migrant Artifact</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Migrant Station Type</th>
<th>Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand-Embroidered Cloth</td>
<td>protect perishable foods, embroidered with personal design and message</td>
<td>Mothers, sisters, wives, children, migrants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Contaminated with dirt, bugs, bacteria. Foods exposed food-borne illness (Table 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrines, Candles, Prayer Cards</td>
<td>Prayer, safe passage, commemorate migration, memorialize death</td>
<td>Migrants, humanitarians, general public</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Emotional and physical distress, negative physiological symptoms, increased adrenaline, cortisol, stomach distress, dehydration, depleted nutrients, exhaustion, post-traumatic stress disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Certificates Or Other Personal Documents</td>
<td>Personal identification, citizenship, education, employment, tax status</td>
<td>Introduced by migrants and USBP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Physical distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Shrine and document Migrant Materials  
Class= 0-never, 1-sporadically, 2-habitually, 3-continuously

Hand-embroidered cloths created by wives, mothers and daughters are given with the intention to protect migrants’ tortillas when they leave for La Linea. The tortillas will most likely be replenished at a bodega in one of many migrant staging towns before crossing. Tortilla cloths are adorned with brightly colored flowers, birds, and words, stitched with crocheted
filigree and string. The words can read, "Para ti, Mama," or "Siempre estoy pensando en ti" or “Suerte”. These artifacts are typically found in Type 3 migrant stations among the discarded water bottles, clothing and backpacks, likely quickly discarded (perhaps unintentionally) as pickups or border patrol arrive. Artists in the Tucson area have been harvesting these cloths and creating quilts and art installations with them. Some of these quilts have been put on display in the Tucson area as an art exhibit to show the hope and despair of a migrant leaving home.

These cloths endure the journey with their person. Exposure to contaminants while traveling increases the risk of obtaining food-borne illnesses. These illnesses can be mild with flu-like stomach symptoms to much more severe symptoms such as bodily convulsions that lead to dehydration and rhabdomyolysis. It is not uncommon to find human remains of migrants with their pants pulled all the way down due to the intestinal effects of food-borne illness and rhabdomyolysis.

Throughout the Sonoran desert, shrines containing prayer cards, candles, teddy bears and crosses have been erected by migrants to ask for safe passage or by humanitarians to memorialize someone who has lost their life while crossing. Heather Pringle wrote in an article for Archaeology Magazine that, “…along the rock face, travelers have transformed a small, secluded hollow into a shrine lined with offerings: rosaries, crucifixes, candles, scapulars, and small pictures of saints, each bearing a printed prayer in Spanish. “Take care of me in dangerous places,” reads one card. “Protect me from thieves and in evil times,” entreats another. Nearby, a small engraved plastic pendant offers a more direct prayer: “The other side, Tucson, Arizona, 2010” (Pringle:2011, 1).
In July 2012, I was part of a group who discovered the body of a woman who had been dead for a few days at migrant station BK4. She was laying face-down with her arms in a position that indicated she was clawing her way up this steep hill and died. A shrine was erected for her 16 days later at the site of her death as I was told by Jason De Léon. The shrine contained prayer cards, a statue of Jesus, rosaries, a cross and Mexican tiles to memorialize her death and commemorate her unsuccessful struggle to reach her intended final destination. My return to the shrine in January showed that other migrants stopped to add something to her shrine on their way up the hill she couldn’t climb.

Birth certificates and other personal documents, like pictures, are typically found in Type 3 migrant stations. It would seem unlikely that official documents that are issued in order to record a birth or validate a person’s educational credentials and family photos would be carried all the way into the United States from México or countries in Central America only then to be discarded close to one’s final leg of their migratory journey. Due to the function of Type 3 sites and its proximity to roads, discarding these items is almost certainly unintended.

The presence of documents in migrant stations also presents issues around identity theft or coyotes using them for locating and contacting a traveling migrants’ family for extortion by reporting their loved as being in trouble or in threat of being murdered.

In 2009 and 2010, my business card was found in somewhere in México, most likely in Nogales. I received phone calls, day and night, for a year reporting that “my cousin” was crossing, but that person needed more money and that if I didn’t comply, my relative was going to be harmed. I had no one crossing, but imagined how terrorizing this is for families in sending communities who may not have heard from their loved one yet. In finding personal documents
in migrant stations, I also consider that it may also be difficult to obtain new documentation from a person’s home country once living undocumented and perhaps off of the grid in the United States. Because Type 3 migrant stations are located near roads that serve to pick up migrants from these locations to travel to other locations, often coyotes will intentionally force migrants to drop all of their belongings as their bodies are stuffed 10, 20 or 30 to a vehicle. Or in the haste of scrambling in the dark to pack oneself in to a vehicle, personal belongings are unintentionally dropped and lost.
**STRANGE FRUIT**

**La encrucijada/The crossroads**

*A chicken is being sacrificed at a crossroads, a simple mound of earth
A mud shrine to Eshu, Yoruba god of indeterminacy*  
*Who blesses her choice of path, she begins her journey.*  
---Gloria Anzaldúa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migrant Artifact</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Migrant Station Types</th>
<th>Potential Negative Corporeal Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's Undergarments</td>
<td>Bras, underwear for changing</td>
<td>Migrants, Coyotes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>Physical and/or sexual assault, humiliation, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Assault Features</td>
<td>Terrorize, shame, commemorate, memorialize, demarcate territorial power and control</td>
<td>Currently unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Physical and/or sexual assault</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Gendered-Assault Feature Migrant Materials  
Class= 0-never, 1-sporadically, 2-habitually, 3-continuously

Evidence of women and girls migrating from their homes to *El Norte* can be found in migrant shelters, as well as in migrant stations. Menstrual products, women’s clothing and undergarments are found in abundance where feminized spaces have been created within migrant stations. Women’s undergarments present themselves in a couple of ways in the desert. They are most abundant in Type 3 migrant stations where migrants rest, eat, change clothing and change modes of travel. In migration, walking, climbing, falling and excreting bodily fluids are routine. The landscape is unforgiving with extreme temperatures that promote heavy perspiration and cactus barbs tearing clothing, shredded socks creates blistering on the
feet and the ground whips up with the winds which covers a person in abrasive sand, inside and outside of a person’s clothing. Migrants often change clothes in Type 3 sites when given the opportunity for personal comfort, hygiene, and preparedness for transport. Personal undergarments are no exception.

Undergarments are a frequent sight in Type 3 migrant stations. Undergarments can be found strewn across the desert floor or found in clusters, with other feminine products, where women have voluntarily separated themselves from the men in the group for safety and privacy.

On occasion however, undergarments can be found hastily tossed into bushes or found meticulously displayed in trees. I will focus here on the latter. Billie Holliday recorded a song that spoke of “strange fruit” hanging from poplar trees as a narrative of black bodies that are blowing in a Southern breeze. Brown bodies are not found blowing in the breeze of Arizona, rather undergarments of brown bodies blowing in the breeze of mesquite trees. Gendered-assault features are intentionally built structures characterized by the intentional placement of female undergarments in trees and bushes in various manners ranging from singular displays of bras or underwear, to more elaborate configurations (fig. 19). Finding women’s undergarments “presented” in these configurations provides evidence to suspect that a form of humiliation or assault has occurred. Finding undergarments in this context furthers a male-only migrant ideology in relation to men using women as a weapon of war. Women’s undergarments displayed in this way are a migrant artifact specifically targeted to invoke terror, to humiliate and shame women and girls by creating what border patrol calls a rape or trophy tree.
Figure 19 shows two trees with ten pairs of underwear elaborately hanging from the branches. Rocks have been placed in the crotches. The picture does not show that to the right, a roll of toilet paper hangs from a broken branch close to the ground. On the ground, in between the two trees, earth has been heavily disturbed of an area approximately the size of an adult.

These sites are found both in isolation and as a feature within migrant stations, primarily where migrants rest, eat and change clothing, in Type 2 and 3 migrant stations (De Leon:2011). I have chosen to use the term gendered-assault feature in place of rape tree or trophy tree, as it:

1. Removes the incendiary connotations towards the victims of assault and humiliation
2. Allows us to consider other intentions in the creation of these features
3. And helps us focus better on understanding this phenomenon.

It is not clear when or where gendered-assault features were first sighted. I will not attempt to construct their history. More research is needed to determine the origins of this phenomenon. Rather, I will consider the current state of this phenomenon among the key actors and agents who are in the desert almost daily. Sightings and documentation of gendered-assault features is still relatively recent, there is almost no literature written, academic or otherwise, about gendered-assault features in Arizona. As recently as 2008, reports of gendered-assault features were still a matter of question as to its validity and not many people in border-focused communities had heard of them. In Arizona an anti-immigrant militia group, the Minutemen Project, were one of the first documented groups to report sightings of gendered-assault features and one of the first known groups to start discussing what appeared to be rumors of these features as being the result of female migrants being
raped in the desert by their coyotes (Burgard:2009). Militia groups routinely use gendered-assault features as part of a group Latino Threat Narrative.

In 2008 Bob “Chromedome” Wright, director of Minuteman Civil Defense Corps New Mexico revealed that the Minutemen Project members collectively felt definitively that the sightings of women’s undergarments in trees in the desert are in fact the result of raping of migrant girls and women by their coyotes (Burgard:2009). Minutemen Project members used gendered-assault features to further support their anti-immigrant and anti-immigration position citing these as evidence of depraved behavior and, therefore, a threat to American women.

Much of the language used by members of the Minutemen Project is intended to frighten United States citizens into believing that Americas freedom and safety is threatened by the “invasion of depraved animals” (Thomas:2008). Often, claims made by Minutemen Project members about events in the desert are dismissed or ignored as this group is viewed by humanitarian and human rights watch organizations as “racist, sensationalist, misinformed liars”. (Burgard:2009; See also Chavez:2008, 132-33; Wascinski and Weissman:2012). In a 2008 film interview, Ray Ibarra of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), for example, chuckles and states that his organization had begun to hear “rumors” of gendered-assault features from the Minuteman Project. He also points out that Minutemen Project members “somehow know the story” of this (gendered-assault features) as an indicator of rape, and that the ACLU’s documentation and research has never been provided with evidence that this is in fact what these assault features indicate (Burgard:2009). Ibarra’s reaction and language indicates a
dismissal of credibility of the Minuteman Project members and the information they are reporting to the ACLU, specifically about gendered-assault features.

However, in the same film, migrant Ángel Hernandez reports, “they take the ladies separate and the men led her in a room...the ladies, I don’t where they go.” The interview between the film maker Brugard and Ángel continues:

    Brugard: They...they hurt the ladies?  
    Angel: I think so  
    Brugard: They hurt the ladies?  
    Angel: I think so

The film’s director and producer, Chris Brugard, is an admitted border militia sympathizer, proud Tea Party member and self-described “real American”. In this segment of his film, he titles these features “rape trees” and includes Ángel’s “testimony” as more evidence that Mexicans are trafficking Mexican women and girls for Mexican men, raping women in the desert and creating these gendered-assault features. Ángel’s interview appears to be covering his eye-witness testimony of women being separated and taken into a room which implies an indoor built environment, not a gendered-assault feature in the open desert. I do not dispute the evidence and reports that women and girls from Latin America are sex-trafficked, however, Ángel’s testimony is not definitive evidence of how, where and by whom gendered-assault features are created.

Lack of credibility for the Minuteman Project, I would argue, delayed the investigation by humanitarian organizations and other pro-immigrant groups into the validity of gendered-assault features. While research shows that sexual assault and sex trafficking of undocumented migrant women and children is not new, research and analysis is still missing about this form of hyper-masculine rape-trophy shrine making (Staudt:2009). Humanitarian aid volunteers have
received reports that sexual offenders have established these gendered-assault features as sites of sexual violation and control by placing female undergarments into the trees, as a trophy of rape. As I discussed in the previous section, evidence at that particular site indicated that this was the location of the assaults and primary material deposits. Conversely, the presence of a gendered-assault feature may not necessarily indicate a site of the assault itself. Other sites presented evidence indicating possible secondary depositing of undergarments after having been relocated from a nearby migrant station. What I have established is that any gendered-assault features are sites representing violation and humiliation.

Sylvanna Falcón states, “that by international standards, rape is a war crime, a form of torture, and a link to genocide.” In America’s “War on Drugs”, human and drug smuggling, which once were two separate enterprises, have increasingly become one. With the melding of these two operations, women have become a spoil of this war through sexual assault. If this is a so-called war and women are having a war waged on their bodies in this “conflict”, then where are the protections for victims of rape at the border? Falcón also states that rape is one outcome of militarization along the U.S./México border and there are contributing factors that “facilitate militarized border rape” lending to a need to for the advancement of human rights for women in the border region. (Falcon:2001, 4)

Rape in wartime is intended as an “abuse of power and control in which the rapist seeks to humiliate, shame, embarrass, degrade and terrify the victim” (U.N. Economic and Social Council:1993). In the execution of what Timothy Dunn (1996, 20-21) refers to as, low-intensity conflict doctrine rape can be one result due to the association of militarized rapes with power, control and national security, “creating a climate conducive to rape” (ibid:2001, 3). There are
conditions in which rape has been militarized. First, “national security rape” as an instrument for bolstering a nervous state and second, “systematic mass rape” as an instrument of open warfare (ibid:2001, 3-4). Falcón also writes that “militarized rapes in the name of national security emerge if certain conditions are in place and that national security rape and systematic rape characterize the reality in the border region.” (ibid:2001, 3-4)

Rape is can be part of the price of passage on undocumented female migrants, although this portion of the price is not negotiated between the coyote and the migrant. The militarization of the U.S./México border, compounded with U.S. Border agents and policies that have forced undocumented migrants into more remote regions of the desert affords this type of rape and the production of gendered-assault features to occur and with more frequency. Gendered-assault features create corporeal shame and humiliation for the victim while marking for others who pass through the area a symbol of domination and control, of migrants and of territory. Women’s undergarments, that have either been left in the desert and taken or taken directly from the victim, have become a symbol of hopeful women and girls paying the highest price to enter the United States.
DATA INTERPRETATION

Quantifying material goods in detail in this paper is not possible because analysis of the more than half ton of migrant materials that have been harvested between 2009 and 2013 and migrant station physical dimensions continues. I have focused on the presence of migrant materials in the Sonoran desert that are deposited in a way that shows patterns of migrant life. It should be noted that I am not suggesting that all migrants who cross through the desert are represented based on the patterns that these studied migrant materials offer. However, migrant goods found in the desert and in migrant stations do consistently show patterns of behaviors of a high number of Latin Americans populations traveling in the Sonoran desert unauthorized.

The collection of materials present in migrant stations is “relatively uniform that reflects a specific groups set of techniques used [by the migrants] to overcome border enforcement” (De Léon:2012, 492). Migrant stations also tend to be relatively uniform primarily in their locations and contents. It should also be realized there is always a risk to the migrant becoming stationary for a few minutes or for a few hours. Remaining in one place is one of the greatest risks that migrants have when crossing in the desert as it can increase the potential for discovery and can provide the coyote or others an opportunity to abuse the traveler.

Type 1 migrant stations are not the result of carefully chosen locations to avoid detection but are more “ad hoc” in origin. They are characterized by a low number of materials of 1 to 10 items present at the site. The majority of Type 1 migrant’s stations that have been analyzed appear to be created while migrants are in motion on or around migrant trails, allowing a migrant to continue to walking making the location of the Type 1 stations less
detectable. Food remains are the primary artifact located at these station types. That artifacts contained within a Type 1 migrant station appearing to have been discarded while in motion indicates the performance of consumption in motion and is supported by the presence of portable foods in soft wrappers (rather than cans or jars) and beverages that are contained in bottles that are easily raised and lowered.

Type 2 migrant stations are located in shaded, secluded or hidden areas to prevent detection, such as in a small cluster of thorn trees or a geologic feature such as an eroded stream channel that provides a space where one can hide. These migrant stations are defined by a medium quantity of materials that can range from 11 to 50 items indicating a temporary periods of rest and food consumption. Commonly found migrant materials in Type 2 stations are socks and other clothing, water bottles, food remains and toilet paper.

Type 3 migrant stations are characterized by a high quantity and density of migrant materials, with 50 to thousands of items present within the station. These stations are located in remote areas that feature heavy vegetation for shade, seclusion and/or detection prevention but that also are located in proximity to roads to allow for pick up for travel to the travelers final destination within the United States. Here, the greatest diversity of artifacts can be found primarily due to the performance of preparing for transport to another destination and (what may be) the prolonged occupation of the site while waiting for pick up. Personal documents and other personal effects are likely to be found here due to intentional (by coyotes) deposit or unintentional deposit (migrant) of these materials that were likely intended to make the entire journey with its owner.
Gendered-assault features have been categorized within migrant stations in this thesis, however, consideration is being given to whether it should be defined and characterized as a separate migrant station. Gendered-assault features are not common in the same way that migrant stations are common. There is limited understanding of these features making research slow and tedious. Limited access to gendered-assault features makes data collection difficult. What can be stated about them is that they are sites of humiliation, whether violation has occurred at that precise place or somewhere nearby.

Migrant goods have spawned entire economies in México as well as in the United States. Goods are purposefully manufactured and marketed for unauthorized migration through the Sonoran desert creating an increase in small business enterprises who sell these goods directly to migrants form bodegas. Research is currently being conducted by me on whether the manufacturers of goods not produced specifically for migration are aware that their products are routinely being specifically marketed and sold to migrants preparing to cross into the U.S.
CONCLUSION

My first day in the field, I saw something startling in the Centro de Recursos para Migrantes in México. A map of México and parts of Central America hung on the wall with push pins and stickers that marked migrants’ places of origin. The portion of the map that represented Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz and Puebla had been touched so many times in an effort to locate hometowns, that the color had faded and much of the typeset was no longer legible. Campesinos are predominantly from rural Mayan villages in Southern México and Central America. Many speak their native Mayan dialect, some with no Spanish.

Indigenous campesinos are the most marginalized population in México and they are the most affected by NAFTA and México’s stock market crash in 1995. Due to United States Border Patrol deportation practices, the majority of migrants that I have interviewed have been Mexican nationals. Recently, non-Mexican nationals have been allowed to access certain private services in México bringing Central American migrants out of the shadows in staging towns. Increases in the number of Central American migrants currently being witnessed with greater services access to them will make it easier to interview non-Mexican national migrants in my research.

Undocumented immigrants are often assumed to be or are conglomerated together under the umbrella of “Mexican”. Discourse on the US-side of the border also allows the use of the words “trash” and “Mexican” to be used interchangeably. Language like “invasion” or “penetration” of the border is designed to create a state of emergency in the U.S. and invoke images that are dehumanizing of Mexicans and those who are determined as “Other Than Mexican” hyper-sexualized language produces metaphors that imply rape...raping of lands,
liberties and jobs. The “trash” that has been deposited in the desert has come to represent the Mexican Other as object and subject in the destruction of American freedom and its sense of security. The objectified image of non-human “illegal aliens” invading, penetrating and trashing our borders invokes imagery of naturalized animal objects who are threatening America’s way of life. Anti-immigrant groups and individuals will simply ask “to just look at the trash in the desert” as a technique of explaining and impressing an image of who’s coming across the line.

Fluctuations in undocumented migrants crossing the border, which is still high despite the recent economic downturn, has led to a decrease in the total numbers of individuals making the journey yet hundreds are still crossing the border every day as I witnessed in January 2013. Sustained migration through Arizona has left millions of pounds of migrant material artifacts in the Sonoran desert that is directly linked to the performance of clandestine migration and corporeal suffering and life of migrants.

Humanitarian aid groups leave abundant materials intended for migrant consumption in the desert. Much of these materials are seated in direct experiences with migrants and interactions with migrant stations. Debates of unintended racism and food-borne illness were particular focal points during a Samaritans meeting in January 2013. The decision to offer small cans of refried beans was well meaning but based in a reductionist and essentializing racist ideology by those who routinely attempt to combat it by existing and self-identifying as a pro-immigrant humanitarian aid worker. In deciding to offer canned refried pinto beans, there was a conscious consideration to high-protein, hermetically sealed offerings to what was unconsciously assumed to be a Mexican-only migrant population compounded with the unconscious notion that all Mexicans eat refried beans.
To further the unintended consequences of making a decision to offer refried beans, it was revealed to the medically-trained humanitarian aid volunteers that there had been some cases of food poisoning reported by sick migrants in a Tucson hospital after finding and eating the beans found at water and food drop sites while traveling. Samaritans, and other humanitarian aid groups, code-mark their food and water to monitor usage, need and activity in an effort to supply aid in active areas. Migrants reported the markings to medical staff and it was determined that Samaritans had indeed contributed to the illness of some migrants. Samaritans began researching the issue, in part, by contacting the manufacturer of the canned refried beans. The manufacturer gave the volunteers the recommended information regarding packing, exposure and shelf-life of their refried bean products. It was determined that canned foods exposed to the desert elements, particularly during the summer months, were a dangerous venture and Samaritans has now ceased to offer any canned foods.

Migrant material culture in the Sonoran desert is informing an enhanced understanding of Latin American immigration at the southern border that has been elusive and speculative to those of us who have not experienced it first-hand. Migrant material culture in migrant stations offers an interpretation of migrant life, behaviors and patterns while crossing into the U.S. Deposits of clothing, food remains and personal affects have been integral in estimating and evaluating class, gender, point of origin and individual and group experience.

None of the U.S.-based interviewees have commented to me on having any recognition of their own potential personal or group culpability in contributing to the migrant materials found in the desert. Some humanitarian aid workers have commented to me about “all the things they’ve left behind” while placing dignity bags, blankets and water out on trails and in...
migrant stations. Migrant materials are often viewed as a source of evidence for supporting the Latino Threat Narrative or as the wages of battling a low-intensity conflict to save migrant lives and rescue their dignity. Migrant interviewees will acknowledge leaving materials behind, but few have directly correlated the materials they leave behind with the larger deposits of materials. Migrant materials appear to be a personal experience and narrative for migrants that rarely culminate in a discussion of group activity outside the act of physical traveling. However, correlating the depositing of migrant materials has correlated with initial theories of migrant presence within migrant stations.

In the course of doing this research, I am aware that at times I will overlook minute details in migrant stations that fill in the gaps that are still present in understanding fully the environment of migrant material culture. Looking at the most quotidian human activities through the lens of an undocumented migrant has forced me to reconsider how I perform in the desert myself as a researcher...walking, eating, drinking, and protecting myself from nature. All of these things help me to better understand how migrant bodies perform and how migrant material culture is produced in migrant stations. As Jason De Léon points out, “the observer is...vulnerable to becoming desensitized to the steady hums...” of doing this type of research, still shoes and water bottles have important lessons to teach us (De Léon:In Press).
CONTRIBUTIONS

I sit quietly at my dining room table sifting through countless hours of written and recorded ethnographic interviews while looking at pictures of the desert and the artifacts that are all over my house asking for their stories to be demystified to me. I try to think back to that early point in my research where my mind had not become cluttered yet with horrific images of death and dying, the sound of wailing men crying for help for their girlfriends who were raped the night before, the women with PTSD thousand-yard stares from experiences that will probably never be spoken of out loud and the voices of tiny children recounting their stories of walking the desert while getting their blisters bandaged.

When I began this work in 2009, I wrote down my observations in my field notebook. On the plane from Seattle to Tucson the first sentence in my notebook reads, “I’m a little worried that two weeks in the field wouldn’t be nearly enough observational time”. Since then, I have returned to the U.S.-México border for field research fourteen times for two to twelve weeks at a time. No two trips have ever been quite the same. Yet my observational experience is that people are still coming into the U.S. unauthorized, people are still being deported into or back into México, people are still dying alone in the desert and people are still leaving things behind that records that they were there and what their life was like at that moment.

Objects in the Sonoran Desert are systematically selected, used, and discarded by migrants and are bursting with etic perceptions towards the process of unauthorized border crossing, as well as how migrants physically experience it. The material culture of undocumented migration involves quotidian objects redefined for border crossing survival. The material culture of border crossing speaks to a migration-specific sub-culture that defines how
to avoid border patrol, how to survive the desert, and what types of physical suffering they should expect. Those who are preparing to migrate through the desert generally recognize that this process will be tough, treacherous, and filled with varietal forms of suffering. This recognition is reflected in materials selected that are intended to conceal oneself, combat dehydration and treat injuries.

This shared migration experience becomes apparent when we consider that more than 11.6 million people have been apprehended by border patrol between 2000 and 2012. Almost 10.7 million apprehended people were Mexican nationals. 912,097 apprehended people were listed as Other Than Mexican (OTM), with apprehensions of OTM’s growing from 47,000 in 2011 to 95,000 in 2012 for an increase of 50.28% in OTM apprehensions over the last two years. People like Bob Kee estimate that those walking through the desert can deposit as much as eight pounds of material in one trip. More than 260,000 Mexican nationals were apprehended at the Southwest border in 2012, creating an estimated 2,098,728 pounds of materials left in the desert just by this group alone.

Migrant performance is learned through doing and through prior experience, employing selected tools that directly shape this process. Crossing the desert with only one gallon of water invokes the need to reevaluate how to conserve your water to prolong your journey and your life. Those who do not develop this practice will turn, if presented the opportunity, to replenish water supplies with open-source green cattle tank water. This creates a dichotomy where you conserve what water you have in the first place and risk organ failure anyway or replenish what is gone with water that can cause organ failure anyway. The millions of empty water and electrolyte bottles that are dispersed across the desert is evidence of both successful and failed
attempts to conserve lifesaving fluids during crossing. Failure of knowing the shared migration experience performance can mean failure to cross undetected or save one’s own life.

When I find a ruined pair of shoes or an empty bottle I’m offered some insight into one person’s subjective experience of having their feet torn to shreds by the desert or their body becoming dehydrated. This research seeks to show the connection between people and objects and how those connections leave traces that can be correlated with corporeal migrant experience. When analyzed, these traces can open up new understandings of crossing methods and migrant ways of being in the desert. “These objects can tell us a great deal about what happens in the desert, but we diminish their voices when we reduce them to mere trash” (De Léon:In Press).

There is an entire ecosystem within unauthorized migration. Living bodies interact with each other and their environment using material objects to negotiate power, control and money. These material objects are then discarded leaving behind traces of the inhabitants lives in this transitory ecosystem. Materiality of unauthorized migration in the Arizona desert is strongly tied to the ways in which people perceive, adapt to and experience this environment. By analyzing material goods, we can begin to comprehend migrant life through patterns of object selection and usage. Each trace left behind reflects an individual(s) experience in the desert.

In this thesis I have presented preliminary analysis and interpretations of materials collected from migrant stations in the desert. While further research is currently being conducted, the information and data has established and identified migrant specific spaces in the Sonoran desert which contain migrant specific materials that help us to understand the
microeconomics of material goods that are introduced into the act of migration and how they shape and reflect the migration experience. These material goods leave behind evidence of the migrant experience in both life and death. Materials contained within these sites inform the performances during clandestine crossing. Pairing material analysis with ethnographic research is creating a composite sketch of migrant life.

Future research on this project involves further analysis of artifacts that were collected in 2010 as well as artifacts that have been collected since then. Part of this analysis will look at the how migrant artifacts change or don’t change over time in quality, quantity and material. Spatial data collection and analysis of migrant stations based on size, content and location continues. A specific focus on feminized spaces within migrant stations is necessary to understand gendered experiences of women and girls during the act of migration. This analysis will also contribute to unlocking the secrets of gendered-assault and gendered-assault features on the migrant trail. Current preliminary analysis indicates that gendered-assault and the creation of gendered-assault features is almost exclusive to women and girls.

Millions of Mexican and non-Mexican nationals have made the difficult decision to leave wives, husbands and children behind to cross the U.S.-México border for a variety of social, economic and personal reasons (Archibold:2013). Their stories and their experiences are all at once individual and collective, personal and public. Without their shared knowledge individually and collectively, and their willingness to share this knowledge with me, this research would not be possible. Without their help the life of migrants and migrant materials would continue to be spoken of as a mythical beast that hides under America’s bed. I am indebted to the people,
through tears and through pain, whom have taken even a moment to share with me what they know and what they have learned.

Incredible focus has been placed in the American consciousness to migrant experiences in the U.S. court and welfare systems and to transnational communities of those who have made the journey successfully. Speculation and misinformation from anti-immigrant groups, politicians and broadcast news networks has been the dominant source for American understanding of the migrant experience while crossing. Performing this archaeological and ethnographic based research in tandem has already begun to lift the fog that shrouds the U.S.-México border and migrant crossing experience in racialized and gendered mystique.
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**Figures**

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2010d Gendered-assault Feature Found 200ft from Arivaca Road. Photograph.
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2010f Type 2 Migrant Station at Lobo Peak. Photograph.
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APPENDIX

November 5, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Consuelo Crow
       W. Fredrick Limp

FROM: Ro Windwalker
       IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 12-10-185

Protocol Title: The Material Culture of Undocumented Migrant Abuse at the U.S./Mexico Border

Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 11/05/2012 Expiration Date: 11/04/2013

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 300 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.