Challenges to Militarization

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In the new "inter-American" epoch to come, our borderlands zones may expand well past the confines of geopolitical lines. Social knowledge of these dynamic interfaces offers rich insights into the pressing and complex issues that affect both the borderlands and beyond. The Inter-America Series comprises a wide interdisciplinary range of cutting-edge books that explicitly or implicitly enlist border issues to discuss larger concepts, perspectives, and theories from the "borderland" vantage and well be appropriate for the classroom, the library, and the wider reading public.
INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUALIZING COURAGE
AND RESISTANCE IN A MIRED HUMAN
RIGHTS CONTEXT

It is important to document and keep records of violations.
We commend you. Also, we invite you to document ways
you have resisted . . .
NORA CORTEÑAS, JUROR, PERMANENT PEOPLES' TRIBUNAL,
MAY 2012, CIUDAD JUÁREZ

The Mexican and U.S. drug wars have wreaked havoc on Mexico,
where at least 60,000 and as many as 120,000 people have been mur-
dered since 2006 at the hands of organized criminals, drug traffickers,
and law enforcement officials in the context of the so-called war on
drugs.1 Both governments have responded with policies that milita-
rizé the conflict: Mexico since President Felipe Calderón (2006–2012),
with its guerra contra el narcotráfico, also known as the guerra contra
las drogas, and the United States, with its forty-year-old drug war, im-
migration control, and antiterrorism efforts. Such solutions have ag-
grivated violence in various parts of Mexico, but pressure has been
building for social investment, with new casts of political characters
and courageous resistance among civil-society activists to militariza-
tion despite an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

In this book, we examine civil-society activism in the borderlands—
what some have called la Resistencia Juarense (the Juarense Resis-
tance)—in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Ciudad Juárez,
its population once hovering at 2 million people and now counted as 1.3
million, according to Mexico’s census (INEGI 2010), is part of a trans-
national metropolitan community that includes El Paso, Texas, with its
population of nearly 800,000 people, thereby creating a space historically
known as the Paso del Norte region of more than 2 million people.
Ciudad Juárez has been the border center point and ground zero for the
violence of the drug war, with annual, always-contested murder rates that rose from over 400 in 2007 to approximately 1,600 in 2008, 2,600 in 2009, 3,100 in 2010, and back down to below the 2008 rate in 2011 until murders spread elsewhere, especially to northeastern Mexico, and sloped downward in Ciudad Juárez through 2013 (see chapter 3 for figures). Although there is a long history of mobilization in Ciudad Juárez, the gender-based violence—specifically what in Mexico is called the feminicidio ("femicide," a contested term)—that began in the 1990s instigated a vigorous activism that previewed and alerted people to the huge growth in violence that ultimately occurred when officials failed to cleanse law enforcement institutions, which operate with almost total impunity.

Ciudad Juárez is also Mexico’s ground zero center point for organizing and activism against the militarization. The second stage of anti-femicide activism—about which we provide analysis in the following chapter—joined anti-militarization forces to provide a gendered counternarrative to the official narratives during the Calderón administration. Like Juarens activists, we frequently use the term "gender," which highlights the social construction of and visibility of women and men, rather than the burial of women in overall figures or analyses of reality—an analytic burial ground so common for centuries. Javier Sicilia, of the national Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad (Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity), organized a caravan to the central border region twice, including on his trip from West to East Coast in the United States (as we analyze in chapter 6). Thus, the Paso del Norte region has also become a center space for activism, and increasingly cross-border civil-society activism, with its triumphs and its challenges.

This introductory chapter is divided into several parts. First we propose a reframing of the U.S.—Mexico borderlands with analyses of social movements during this era of personal and electronic networking. Then we provide the focus of the book: everyday organizing at the border as it connects with transnational organizing. After that, we take some time and space to elaborate on our research methods and then on the theoretical impulses that we hope to advance in the book. To close, we provide an outline of chapters.

REFRAMING THE U.S.—MEXICO BORDERLANDS

Historically, the borderlands have been framed in state-centric ways, focusing on the relative ease of trade and/or immigration controls (see Payan 2006 for periodization). Yet others treat the two sides of the borderline—the borderlands—as interdependent regions (Martínez 1994; Staudt, Fuentes, and Monárrez Fragozo 2010) of hybridity (Anzaldúa 1987; García-Cancino 1995), including hybridized educational practices (Rippberger and Staudt 2003) in a regional zone of “inspection” and control (Lugo 2008), drug wars (Campbell 2009), and cross-border activism (Staudt and Coronado 2002). Some border theorists, increasingly utilizing interdisciplinary and anthropological approaches, ask whether the border region is a hybrid region (Heyman 2012) or a polarized one, with each side treating the “other” side in distancing ways (Vila 2000, 2005; on “othering,” see Bhabha 1994). In this book, we consider that theoretical question—hybridized or polarized?—with regard to civil-society activism in the central, iconic border region of Ciudad Juárez—El Paso, the largest transnational metropolitan region in the world. Gloria Anzaldúa and others have written that the border zone of 14 million people in counties and municipios, according to the censuses of both countries (Staudt and Coronado 2002: chp. 1), represents a special, hybrid place of both conflicting and blending tendencies, what Susan Rippberger and Staudt call morphing (2003) in the complex political socialization that not only constructs public schools and nationalist identities imposed upon students but also reflects the interdependence of the region (see Heyman 2012 on the theoretical overview).

More recently, journalists and essayists have framed and represented the border as a place of chaos, violence, and mayhem, implying a future of hopelessness (for examples, see, among many, Bowden 1998, 2010; Poppa 2010; Rodríguez 2012; Vulliamy 2010; Washington Valdez 2005) in a “failed state” (Grayson 2009). Gendered social constructions overlay some of the framing. In particular, Rosa-Linda Fregoso uses the word “voyeur” for Charles Bowden, with his “racist and colonialist gaze.”

Nevertheless, economic boosters, such as the organizers of events like Juárez Competitiva 2011 with transnational business-oriented groups, as we develop in the next chapter, continue to tout the size and competitiveness of the border area for secure global manufacturing investments (but see Lugo 2008 and selections in Staudt, Fuentes, and Monárrez Fragozo 2010). The global neoliberal economic agenda shrouds the transnational border region, as does an increasingly militarized war-on-drugs approach that wreaks havoc on the borderlands (see selections in Payan, Staudt, and Krużewski 2013).

In our book, we reframe the border and while acknowledging its complexities in the militarization of both Mexican and U.S. govern-
ment policies, focus on civil-society activists who resist this militarization and tenuously (though at times uneasily) weave together antifemicide and anti-militarization social forces toward a conglomeration of peace and justice movements. Activists have fostered not only close cross-border solidarity in faith-based action and even an electoral campaign, but also distant transnational activism in the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal, in which moral authorities from around the world held the Mexican government to account, deliberately launched in Ciudad Juárez. Civil-society activists do their work through interlocking relationships augmented with Facebook and Twitter in social and electronic networks with multiple names. Egregious cases of violence—whether those responsible are officials or organized criminals—have triggered game-changing shifts in perception about state militarization. By “game changing,” we mean dramatic shifts in organizational strategy that emerge from the public delegitimization of official discourses [further elaborated in chapter 3]6. Local Juarenses activists network with activists elsewhere, especially in Mexico City, Latin America, and Europe, but also with activists on the U.S. side of the border, some of whom work in solidarity with colleagues and others of whom disseminate the doom and gloom of mainstream media–framed messages. Anti-militarization as well as anti-femicide activists maneuver courageously in a country dubbed the most dangerous place for journalists and activists. In fact, UNESCO urged Mexico to approve legislation that would provide protective mechanisms for journalists and human rights activists [UNESCO 2012; also see CPJ 2010]. Within the media, however, one finds both courage and complicity with government and/or organized crime, whether from threats or rewards. One sometimes hears that parts of the media can be “extortionists” in their decisions about what to publish and how to frame the stories, as media owners are always careful of maintaining their highly lucrative contracts for publicity from local, state, and federal agencies. Our focus in this book, however, is on local to transnational civil-society organizing activities.

EVERYDAY ORGANIZING AS IT CONNECTS WITH TRANSNATIONAL FORCES

We begin the book with conceptualizations of civil-society activism. We view civil society, at its most basic level, as independent of the state and of the private sphere of familial relationships. Yet we recognize that conceptions of civil society vary in many nations and even in border-lands where the state and nation may merge in muddled ways. European border theorists Liam O’Dowd and Bohdana Dimitrova (2011) note the different Eastern and Western conceptions of civil society that, while viewed in relation to the state, mean different things in states with more or less attention to the “rule of law” and with higher or lower levels of distrust in society and in connection with the state. One thread in our book involves consideration of whether U.S. and Mexican conceptions of civil society at the border are similar or not, given different state structures. Moreover, we consider the tensions that exist when the idealized independence of civil society becomes, in practice, less autonomous, with registration, tax-exempt legal status, and subsidies from government, whether observed in the U.S. women’s movement of the 1970s (Staudt 2008: chap. 5), international nongovernmental organizations (Korten 1990; Alvarez 1998), or organizations struggling to decide whether to apply for government grants in the violence of Ciudad Juárez during the Calderón administration (Doyle 2011a).

Our analysis of resistance draws on political anthropologist James Scott’s writings about everyday forms of resistance, including artful resistance, and the “hidden and official transcripts” that shape people’s lives [1990]. By “resistance,” we mean conscious actions that challenge, reject, or strategically ignore official discourse and its legitimation discourse. Guided also by Sidney Tarrow’s analysis of political opportunity structures [1998], we consider the ever-dynamic and ever-changing opportunities in the contexts of national governments in the borderlands and in the shifting contexts where once-marginalized mothers, feminists, and human rights activists began to interface with anti-militarization activists toward a more gender-balanced struggle to reclaim civil-society space amid an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Peace and justice activists do their work using social technology, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and listservs, in addition to traditional face-to-face organizing, activism, marches, and rallies. Strong activism, we expect, require personal relationships of trust. Long before journalists coined the phrase “Arab Spring,” Juarenses activists used similar techniques to open up, challenge, and create counternarratives, albeit in a country that calls itself a democracy, unlike the dictatorships that fell during the Arab Spring. We draw also on human rights theorists in international studies (particularly Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink 1999) who posit the ways that local activists draw on transnational activists and that institutions and the media bring leverage and alliances with media, international institutions, and
other governments and thereby create a “boomerang” effect on their national governments (ideally) to negotiate and acquire responsiveness. Yet we know that U.S. drug-war priorities undermine or prolong such negotiations (Staudt, 2014).

In the United States, human rights challenges to officials frequently gain little traction (Sochoo, Albira, and Davis 2007) compared with the hegemonic version of border security that aims to control the border and the flow of drugs and immigrants. Moreover, the exponential growth in alternative media may or may not complement the mainstream media and its decision-maker readers, who presumably operate in the official spheres. For the boomerang effect to occur, media coverage is required, particularly mainstream media coverage, to expand awareness in the wider public and to generate organized constituencies that engage with decision makers to make policy and legal changes, perhaps with a new cast of characters elected to public office.

KEY QUESTIONS

Throughout this book, we ask and explore several key questions:

1. When and how do the hidden and official transcripts become “public,” exposing the problematic nature of the so-called war on drugs, with its militarization and violence? What has been the role of women’s activism in exposing these transcripts, and how does this form of resistance put women at the forefront, provoking resistance as “game changers” in the adverse context of Ciudad Juárez and overall contemporary activism? What is the role of U.S. and other transnational activists in supporting and extending awareness of women’s “public transcripts” and with what import for the attainment of justice?

2. How are coalitions and alliances formed among activists whose agendas have at times clashed? Most particularly, how do the anti-femicide activists come to make alliances with the anti-militarization movement?

3. How do the seemingly disparate agendas of transnational business elites resonate with grassroots activists? Acknowledging diversity among both elites and grassroots people, what sorts of divisions exist within elite and grassroots groups?

Civil-society activism in the borderlands offers the potential to analyze binational and transnational organizations—including the efforts associated with the decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Campo Algodonero [cotton field, located in Ciudad Juárez] case that held the Mexican state responsible for three young women’s murders and that mandated detailed policy and institutional changes—that operate in very different political opportunity structures of two sovereign governments, Mexico and the United States. We analyze the connections, disconnections, and different strategies that justice activists pursue. We further illustrate our analysis with the use of photographs and other kinds of images, also widely employed by activists to document their actions in this age of widespread access to cell phones, digital cameras, tablets, and laptops.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology for this book relies on our participant observation as both scholars and activists, conversations with fellow activists, and the in-depth interpretative analysis involved in ethnography. As Edward Schatz conveys with the subtitle of his book Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power (2009), we are immersed in border civil-society institutional spaces. We are scholar-activists who have lived, taught, and worked in the borderlands for a combined total of sixty adult years. In an additional contribution to qualitative analysis, our book discusses the approach to "knowing" that activism brings to analysis. Each substantive chapter in the book uses case-study vignettes from both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border that are vividly and “thickly” portrayed and analyzed, in ethnographic tradition.

The sources for our ethnographic analysis are cases, public performance events, documents, the media in print and electronic form (so important in international human rights theorizing and activism), and public elections. Our vignettes describe the valiant game-changer women and mothers who have defied official transcripts, and we analyze messages in large listservs that offer (sometimes gendered) regular body counts—a type of border activism that feeds the frenzy of militarization by polarizing and reinforcing borderlines for the United States, pointing at the “other” side, where violence and mayhem reign, as the "laboratory of the future" (Bowden 1998).

Moreover, we offer analysis of a primary-election struggle in El Paso between U.S. Democratic Party congressional candidates, representing two contrasting visions of the border: militarization versus trade. Finally, we examine several events that illustrate contemporary civil-
society activism: one, focused on transnational court-like tribunals, with global precedents in country-specific locations, and another, a faith-grounded effort toward cross-border solidarity illustrating the changing public face of some segments of the Catholic Church at the border and its display/performance of syncretic indigenous and religious symbols. We analyze the visits of Javier Sicilia and caravan visitors to the central borderlands in 2011 and 2012.

Like the year 2000, the year 2012 was once again a time when simultaneous presidential campaigns occurred in Mexico and the United States for the six-year term and four-year term, respectively. In the concluding chapter, we rethread all the elements of this study and offer a grounded perspective of what the future may bring for the border under President Enrique Peña Nieto. In the first part of his six-year term, we observe continuities with his predecessor amid new, globally framed narratives about Mexico, its trading prospects, and its middle-class consumer population that is growing (O’Neill 2012) but still small, given official poverty figures that show a poverty rate of nearly half (O’Neill 2012: chap. 5 footnotes).

In our hope for a post-conflict future in our binational metropolitan region, we seek to document gendered resistance to violence and militarization. We also analyze how this resistance has intervened in and interfaced with femicide deniers’ discourse, thus reexposing this form of violence against women at a critical time in Ciudad Juárez when its incidence has escalated fivefold (albeit when homicide has increased over tenfold). We highlight women’s and men’s agency, and describe and analyze the performances of masculinity in militarization (on gendered resistance, also see Marchand and Runyan 2011).

In his book, taking cues from Michel Foucault on power and resistance, James Scott eloquently analyzes domination and resistance (1990). Like Scott, we note the activists’ creative and clever performance and linguistic arts (see their gendered forms in chapters 3 and 4), sometimes emergent during election season as people mock the candidates and elections with new words like candidato. He highlights the often “hidden” transcripts. We compare the range of not-so-hidden transcripts in the forms of resistance that vary from standard social-movement organizing to social-networking technology among Facebook “friends” and tuiteros, who tweet with widely available cell phones.

Methodologically, we draw both on our participant observation of most of the rallies and marches described herein as well as planning and collaborative efforts and on analysis of some of the content and discourse in technological communications, from electronic communications and Facebook. We are interested in the spread of ideas and action. In political movements and campaigns, the few who attend meetings can become the “messengers.” As active, long-term inhabitants and citizens of the borderlands, profoundly engaged in border community life, we view ourselves as nodos (nodes) who join deep knowledge about context with brokering and connecting roles in various networks. Together, as noted earlier, we have lived at the border, taught courses on the border and its ethnohistory, and researched at the border for more than sixty years. Scholar Sergio Aguayo, of El Colegio de México, has discussed “a mutual distrust between activists and academics,” yet he belongs to both camps because, as he says, “they are two different kinds of knowledge that have to be fused to bring about change” (quoted in Lloyd 2005: A27). In the United States as well, tensions exist between scholarly activists and movement activists, between theory and action. As David Croteau discusses, “Academia can become a velvet cage,” containing obstacles to making relevant and meaningful contributions to action (2005: 20). We wholeheartedly agree and endeavor toward a hybrid practice.

Our participant observation takes place in the binational border community of loosely organized human rights–movement activism. Méndez is a fronteriza from Ciudad Juárez and a lifelong resident of the borderlands. She draws on her activism and work with various grassroots organizations, including Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura (Cultural Pact Movement) and the coalition of organizations known as Grupo de Articulación Justicia en Juárez (Articulation of Groups for Justice in Juárez), as well as her collaboration with other local human rights groups and coalitions such as Red Mesa de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez (Roundtable Network of Women in Ciudad Juárez), to begin to explore and render an admittedly incomplete history of activism and resistance in her community.

It was especially during the last four years of Felipe Calderón’s presidential mandate that an observably increased police state coincided with the establishment of terror in the streets. Activists and citizens resisted and mobilized, despite and amidst the daily displays of brutal violence, including beheadings, public executions, corpses dumped on the streets, extortion, the apparition of mantas with threatening messages, disappearances of people, escalating murder rates, and the constant
violation of human rights by the local police, the federal police, and the Mexican army. In this volatile and complex landscape, Méndez—like other activists, scholars, and journalists—tried to document.

Staudt draws on participant observation in local politics, in past and current activism with human rights and faith-based social-justice non-governmental organizations and the Coalition against Violence toward Women and Families at the U.S.—Mexico Border, and in the dramatic activism of first-stage anti-femicide movements (2008). She was the coordinator of the campus-community binational conference in 2009, the Global Public Policy Forum on the War on Drugs, that brought academics, officials, and advocates together for a huge, first-ever effort to connect the havoc of Mexico’s drug war to those seeking alternatives to the U.S. drug war (http://warondrugsconference.utep.edu), and she participated in follow-up activities thereafter. Staudt values the aspects of this book that unpack further the first stage of anti-femicide activism in 2004, transitioning to its second stage of alliances against all forms of violence and militarization, and linking the mobilizations to anti-militarization peace and justice movements.

Moreover, we both—in different capacities—have participated in planning and implementing various solidarity events, among them one on January 29, 2011, “A Bi-national Day of Action,” which brought together activists at the border wall/fence in Anapra, Chihuahua, and Sunland Park, New Mexico; a follow-up ¡BASTA! Border Activism Summit for Teaching and Action in mid-October 2011; preparation for both the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal in Ciudad Juárez, May 2012, and poet and pacifist Javier Sicilia’s Caravana del Consuelo (Consolation Caravan) to the borderlands in June 2011 and his subsequent U.S. Caravan for Peace, which stopped in El Paso in August 2012 and acquired support from the El Paso City Council [albeit only symbolically, with a resolution] in a central, engaged dialogue rather than the alternative, a sometimes marginalized enclave engagement, as in other U.S. cities.

Anthropologist Ruth Behar has written incisively about the “central dilemma of all efforts at witnessing,” including research. In exploring this dilemma she asks about the “limits” of “respect, piety, pathos” that one should consider in deciding to record or not to record. Yet, in the end, the question poignantly lingers: If horror cannot be stopped, “shouldn’t you at least document it?” (Behar 1996: 2). Individually and together, we agonized over these dilemmas regularly. As organizers and activists, in our personal and academic lives, we have witnessed—from varying perspectives and angles—the “horrors” of the long-term violence in Ciudad Juárez, the early femicide in the 1990s and the current murders and violence of the contemporary era. However, like the citizens of the borderlands, we sought to move beyond victimization and confront and contest the identities that apocalyptic journalism attributes to fronterizos and fronterizas. That is why we are inspired by the work of Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, Dwellers of Memory (2006). We set out to document and narrate—as the horror continues—the valiant activism and resistance of people at the borderlands that has as a backdrop one of the darkest ongoing chapters in Mexico’s history, and in particular, one of the most fatidic episodes in the life of these borderlands: what some analysts call “the sexenio de la muerte” [the six-year [presidential] term of death] (Osorno 2011).

Impelled—not unlike other human rights activists in the region—by an “urge to remember” (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 1), our aim is twofold: to document and to intervene. We document to memorialize the victims of violence, and we document as a way of intervening and shedding light on the unrelenting work of the “surviving community” (14). Thus, our chapter’s epigraph from Argentinian Nora Cortiñas, cofounder of Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, offers inspiration to us and, we hope, to readers. Ironically or not, her presence at the 2012 Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal establishes threaded connections to the mothers in Argentina who challenged disappearances and military, state-sanctioned terrorism in the late 1970s dirty war [see Winn 2006: chap. 7]. As Barsalou and Baxter remind us, memorials to “the righteous” present communities with the possibility of “celebrating courageous people and positive values that existed even during the worst times” (2007: 6).

Our book threads itself to multiple forms of knowledge, as we relay below. We link the work to transnational activism and Mexican politics, especially focusing on women and gender. First, however, we couch the discussion with the rationale for focusing on women and gender. We follow that with a review of related literature.

**WHY WOMEN’S STUDIES? WHY GENDER STUDIES?**

Some may wonder why our book focuses on women, gender, and gendered relations between men and women. We both bring a feminist perspective to our research, that is, a researchable attention to historic and comparative hierarchies in societies in which men dominate women,
and methodologically, an appreciation for the value of various vantage points in social reality. We are also keenly aware of how, in the academic world before 1970, few scholarly works included women or focused on gender. For example, when Staudt first began to do research on the unequal distribution of policy benefits to women and to men in the mid-1970s, she was taking a risk in the discipline of political science, which had therefore primarily focused on men as elected leaders in political and economic systems that, historically, men had designed and gained privilege from, a constructed reality that varies by class, ethnicity, and nationality.

Academic attention changed markedly beginning in the 1970s, with the rise of public opinion polls that often showed differences between women and men, highlighted feminist and women's political movements, and institutionalized the gendered disaggregation of data in many governmental agencies and international bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme's annual Human Development Report. The highlights of gendered difference reveal a more comprehensive reality, while gender “mainstreaming” sometimes renders women invisible (once again, as in centuries of academic analysis or in violence statistics, which once normalized violence against women, especially in their homes).

Besides that academic research, women's and gender studies programs have gained relatively secure places in higher education since the 1970s. Permanent courses in the university curriculum specialize on women and gender or violence against women. Peer-reviewed journals like Violence Against Women or the journal Men and Masculinities offer space for highly specialized research. And many nongovernmental organizations focus on violence against women in North America and countries all over the world. Indeed, violence against women is the one issue that seems common to women worldwide, regardless of nationality, class, and ethnicity.

In this study, we describe how the visibility of women's murders in early 1990s Ciudad Juárez gave rise to feminist and human rights movements that were born in the city and then spread across national borders and onto other continents. Homicide occurred in the city, but men's murders did not exhibit a sexualized component of rape and other brutalities that were identified in women's murders, so feminist scholars in Mexico named the murders feminicidio, from earlier scholarly work on femicide. This focus on women did not mean that homicide was irrelevant. Rather, homicide was and continues to be tragic and hardly attended to, given the numbing perpetuation of police impunity, or the lack of investigation or prosecution of crimes. Far more men than women were murdered between 1990 and 2010 in both Mexico and the United States. An influential U.S. border listserv moderator, Molly Molloy, raises the question repeatedly, why continue the focus on women, for they are only 10 to 20 percent of the murdered? The question has the possible effects of minimalizing and marginalizing women's murders, just as happened before the 1960s−1970s women's movement, when U.S. police had impunity on assaults, rapes, and domestic violence murders. We analyze that U.S. social media activism in chapter 4. At a 2012 International Studies Association panel, most feminists in the audience underwent shock when it was suggested that women mute their voices on violence against women to sharpen the single focus on demilitarization (Staudt observation April 2012). Violence against women and militarization are inextricably linked, we believe, as did others in that panel audience and as did the feminists who documented, denounced, and condemned militarization during the last Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe (Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meeting), held in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2011. We document these connections in great analytic detail in this book.

In a study of civil-society activism at the border, one cannot fail to notice that women leaders, mothers, and family members of female murder victims have often provided the rallying cry to mobilize social movements, organize groups, and build alliances against public policies that perpetuate police impunity and militarization strategies that do little to end drug and gun smuggling across borders. This book identifies and analyzes deeply and thickly moments and events where women leaders became what we call "game changers"—and by their actions placing their lives in great risk—in countering the dominant official narratives that muted personal, human tragedies or the murder counts reported in some media. The eventual conjunction of the antimilitarization and anti-militarization forces, we argue, offers compelling transformations that are well worth understanding and perhaps modeling in other parts of North America and the world.

This book is certainly not the first to focus on women and gender in times of political crisis and political transition. In Latin America during the 1970s, especially under the authoritarian military dictatorships of Chile and Argentina, women entered the public streets and protested. Among the more visible protesters, we note the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, in Argentina, who hung signs and pictures of their disappeared
and murdered adult children in weekly gatherings—a movement immortalized in Lourdes Portillo’s documentary Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (1986; also see Winn 2006). At the time, women seemed to have protection in their social construction as “mothers” in a respected, sacred sphere during the brutal dictatorship. Had men circled the plaza with those names and pictures, perhaps the military regime would have murdered them with impunity. But are protections still in place? The protection racket called the state may no longer protect women activists.

Moreover, the victimization of women and children seems to generate special attention, even public rage, for reasons that may be linked to stereotypes about their weakness, their enclosure, their traditional covering with modest clothing, their segregation, or, historically and comparatively, their seclusion in private places, such as purdah (even if such places offer little or no legal protection from violence and harm). The private/public divide, corresponding to female and male space, has been historical reality and comparative practice in many societies. The so-called protections, or pretense of protections, may no longer hold for women who “invade” public space, integrate the workplace, and/or defy traditional norms. If and when violence against women occurs, it may appear more shocking to the public than violence against men, given the socially construed precepts described above. Such different perceptions are neither fair nor equal, but they do give rise to social movements with a creative deployment of symbols and performativity to frame and highlight their agendas.

In Ciudad Juárez, women active in human rights movements are increasingly concerned about their safety and that of other mothers and families who demand justice. They have reason to be concerned, for as the cases of Josefina Reyes Salazar and Marisela Escobedo illustrate, women activists in Mexico—as the United Nations sustains—are often stigmatized and criminalized; they become vulnerable targets in the current context of militarization.

RELATED BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE: TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM, WOMEN, AND MEXICAN POLITICS

Analysts of transnational social movements have heretofore focused on established, well-endowed organizations (Keck and Sikkink 1998), antiglobalization movements (Eschle and Maiguashca 2005), contentious politics around the North American Free Trade Agreement (Ayres and Macdonald 2009), and democratic globalization (Smith 2008) as

Cross with a sign reading “Ni una más” (Not one more) and nails commemorating femicide victims in Ciudad Juárez at the international port of entry to the United States. Photo by Renato Díaz.
they interfaced with the World Social Forums of 2003 (Eschle and Majuyashca 2010; see selections in Jaquette 2009). None of these globalization books deal with militarization or connect the global to the local in transnational organizing in specific places, such as the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal, which we analyze in chapter 5. Our book fills a vacuum in that regard.

Our book also addresses a void in Mexican and border politics. Analysts of Mexican politics have heretofore focused primarily on political elites in the twentieth century; see Roderic Camp’s many books, including ones that show the continuous, overwhelmingly male, middle- and upper-class social origins of Mexican leadership (2010: 76, 107). In his mammoth Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics (2012), Camp assembles thirty-one chapters, but none of them focus on border politics and grassroots-movement activism save one, by Shannon Mattiace, on nationally known indigenous and environmental nongovernmental organizations. Basically, the literature obsessively focuses on electoral politics, as does Dresser (2012), as opposed to civil-society activism—the shift that we make and emphasize in this book. Moreover, beyond journalistic accounts, we have yet to see analysis of the impact of social networking and electronic activism on electoral politics. Yet, from the ground, we hear and observe how technology can modernize corruption or disseminate information about candidates. For example, widespread cell phone–camera use has made it possible for people to provide pruebas (proofs) that they voted for the party of the presidential candidate offering vouchers and has aided people in documenting a number of illegal actions to co-opt voters or buy their votes in favor of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) during the 2012 presidential election. For another example, YouTube videos show violence against women in President Enrique Peña Nieto’s state when he was governor and in his personal life, not that it made much difference in the electoral outcome and the alleged corruption associated with his election.

Our book also speaks to analysis of women and gender in civil-society activism in politics. Women’s community and electoral activism has been covered well in Victoria Rodríguez’s edited collection Women’s Participation in Mexican Political Life (1998), as it has also in her fine analysis covering a full and broad range of women and Mexican politics (2003). Adriana Ortiz-Ortega and Mercedes Barquet analyze “gendering transitions to democracy” in Mexico and in particular, “women’s ability to reconstitute politics” (2010: 108), though they focus on state and national levels, rather than on civil society, as we do. Staudt and Ira-

sema Coronado provide analysis of some of the first comparative cross-border activism in multiple policy arenas in their 2002 book Fronteras no Más. In her 2008 work Violence and Activism at the U.S.–Mexico Border, Staudt examines first-stage anti-femicide feminist and human rights activism, well before the exponential increase in violence and militarization and the growing conjuncture of what we call activism against all forms of violence in the peace and justice movement of the contemporary era that we analyze in this book. Martha Estela Pérez García (2005 and 2011) chronicles Juarense anti-femicide activism. Julia Monárez Fragosio, the premier scholar of feminicidio, maintains a database (1998–) of sexualized murders at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) [see, for example, 2009]. Jane Jaquette’s edited collection Feminist Agendas and Democracy in Latin America (2009) contains fine chapters on the new era of organizing after feminist policy achievements, albeit achievements hardly implemented, but most chapters focus on South America. Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano (2010) focus on what they call “feminicide” in the Western Hemisphere with academic chapters and testimonies. The scholarly analysis of electronic social activism is in its infancy (but see Karpf 2012 on the United States).

THEORETICAL IMPULSES

Below we introduce the main theorist on whom we draw for this book and whose ideas we advance with border and gender perspectives in the analysis and conclusions. Our theoretical emphases in this book draw on bottom-up, grassroots perspectives, and on social networking at multiple levels and in multiple spaces.

READING JAMES SCOTT WITH A BORDER GENDER LENS

Some analyses assess border space in top-down, deterministic ways. Drawing on James Scott’s concepts, we avoid “seeing like a state” (his 1998 book title) or even social scientifically reifying statist gazes. Rather, we argue that bottom-up, or grounded, grassroots perspectives reveal important insights about the totality of the population in the Paso del Norte region, which consists of two nation-states, the United States and Mexico; three states, Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua; and several local governments, county and city in the United States and municipal in Mexico.

Scott, a political scientist, developed the concept of “hidden tran-
themes in comparative and international perspectives. He incorporated literary works, memoirs, and even the narratives of people deemed "slaves" into the book. He analyzed many instances of individual and collective resistance that, when accumulating and widening over time, nudge at and finally augment the decay and crumbling of seemingly powerful elites and political-economic regimes encased in dominant public ideological transcripts. Scott also said that "the notion of a hidden transcript helps us understand those rare moments of political electricity when, often for the first time in memory, the hidden transcript is spoken directly and publicly in the teeth of power" (1990: xiii). In this book, we offer vignettes of such politically electric moments.

Although Scott says the public transcript term is a "shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (1990: 2), his perspective draws enough on Antonio Gramsci for him to acknowledge that official public transcripts provide "convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse" (1990: 4). The dominant speak to, at, and about subordinates.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, some subordinates internalize this ideology. Yet at borders, we must ask who or what is the hegemonic force, given that there are two nation-states in which global economic forces shape a landscape of transnational manufacturing operations, its workforce, and the everyday life of its residents. In Ciudad Juárez, there is real fear in a city where murder rates increased nearly tenfold from 2007 to 2010, involving not only organized criminals but also federal, state, and municipal police, against whom many human rights claims have been filed.

Scott, one of many who analyze discourse critically, gives us language to contrast and analyze the context of power relations in Ciudad Juárez. These power relations are rendered complex by the presence of global manufacturing capital (Fuentes and Peña 2010), national military and police forces in what is a federal system of government with state and municipal control, transnational criminal networks, and the always-hovering U.S. presence, sometimes called the "Colossus of the North" (Winn 2006). Chapter 2 sets the context with the interplay of activism and official discourses. Global manufacturers' organizations reimage the city as one of the most economically competitive worldwide (as the "Juárez Competitiva" conference emphasized), for foreign investment and for profitable business, given low labor and transportation costs to the United States. Chapter 5 examines competing
derous consequences when Marisela Escobedo was assassinated after her persistently public demands for justice over her daughter Rubi's murder, with the killer gone free (at least for a few years, until allegedly killed by organized criminals).

**Social Networking**

In this book, our attention is also devoted to civil-society organization and its cross-border activities and impacts. Some Juárez-based networks and organizations target their media messaging and dramatic resistance rallies to transnational audiences, as well as to the Mexican state and national representatives, though with uneven results. Occasionally, activists' media messaging can backfire, as happened with Javier Sicilia's press conference in El Paso during his first caravan to the border. Yet this approach was precisely the one used by anti-femicide activists of the 1990s and a few years after—an approach that generated some symbolic changes in legislation, but hardly dented the U.S.-Mexican hegemonic ideology that maintains and prioritizes a militarized response in its longest "war," the war on drugs.

At the border, a vacuum exists in binational political institutions with policy-making authority, representatives of border spatial con-

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Young men and women carry a sign with the words "Alto a la Impunidad/Fuera soldados de la ciudad" (Stop Impunity/Soldiers out of the city) with emblematic anti-femicide "Ni una más," showing the convergence of two movements (against militarization and violence against women). Photo by Zulma Y. Méndez.

discourses about the border—one that it is to be controlled through militarization and the other that it can be managed with efficient binational trade—among Democrats in the primary election for one of the few genuinely "border" seats in the U.S. Congress, the Sixteenth Congressional District of Texas.²

Our analysis is gendered in the sense that it uses the social construction and lenses of men and women in the multiple layering of relationships among people. In Scott's work on the (backstage) drama of linguistic performance, he notes the "hyper-polite forms" of respectful address (1990: 30). Women, central to the way civil society is organized in Juárez, whether as leaders, mothers, or victims, might use "hyper-polite forms" of language. Hyper-polite language uses, so ritualized in neocolonial Mexican traditions, were deliberately transgressed in risky acts of defiance and resistance. In chapter 3, we describe several gendered examples of courageous acts that not only insult, but do so in emasculating ways. Such gender defiance became coupled with mur-
musicians—augmented through technological means—facilitated a wider scope and spread of awareness among new audiences, especially those who did not usually identify with political activism. At that time, websites, fund-raising, and information and misinformation campaigns enhanced but also complicated the efforts of those “close to the ground” in the region (Staudt 2008: chap. 4).

Currently, activists in Mexico widely employ digital technology and social networks, especially e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter, to mobilize people and communicate their perspectives. This is true for groups and activists in Juárez whose legitimate concerns with reprisal for their activities have found that the use of digital media offers an efficient way to denounce human rights abuses, to enhance the organization of rallies and marches, and to disseminate information. In preparing the research design for this book, we pondered the task of creating an inventory for all the anti-femicide and anti-militarization Facebook pages in the region: the “likes,” the “shares,” the “friendly” (or “unfriendly”), but determined that such a project would be breathtaking in scope and ultimately too ambitious for an area with new dynamics in shifting contexts that would be imperfectly tapped electronically. With e-mail monikers that disguise names, our ability to trace friends, foes, government intelligence agents, and voyeurs in social networks would be nearly impossible.

**OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

In chapter 2, “Historicizing and Contextualizing the Place: Three Historic Junctures,” we examine the Paso del Norte metropolitan region as a global manufacturing site, a gateway for drug shipping, and the location of extensive local, binational, and transnational human rights and feminist organizing from the 1990s onward, including the anti-militarization resistance. The chapter sets the stage for our analysis of President Calderón’s militarized drug war—a war that meshed with the lengthy war on drugs in the United States, which has the world’s largest drug-consuming population.

In chapter 3, “From Fear and Intimidation to Game-Changing Activism,” we focus on three case-study public vignettes that highlight women whose no-longer-hidden resistance transformed many Juarenses’ and Mexicans’ responses to the president’s militarized war: [1] Luz María Dávila, whose sons were killed in the Villas de Salvácar massacre in 2010 and who challenged President Calderón at a high-
visibility public event when he was announcing the Todos Somos Juárez program, (2) Marisela Escobedo, who was assassinated after her many protests about the injustices associated with her daughter’s killer gone free, and (3) the activists who protested the way the government responded to some mandates by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, including the construction of a public memorial for the victims of the Campo Algodonero murders.

Chapter 4, “Fed Up’ with Militarization and Murders, via Social Media,” analyzes the reach and power of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, e-mail) in several case-study vignettes, including one in which thousands of people “friend” “Harto de la Violencia” (fed up with violence) on Facebook. Moreover, we discuss Facebook followings, Facebook exchanges, and Twitter tweets in a false-alarm massacre that generated attention from the media and officials at the municipal and state levels. The chapter also examines large electronic listservs on the U.S. side that regularly report (sometimes gendered) body counts, publicizing skyrocketing murder rates among men, sustaining the violent border narrative, and periodically undermining Juarensian feminist activism. Despite the speed and scope of dissemination, such listservs also pose risks to activists for surveillance and backlash. We also analyze what we call other “e-actions,” such as the protests against U.S. cosmetics and clothing manufacturers who aimed to commercialize the murders in Juárez.

In chapter 5, “Toward Transnational Solidarity: Contesting the Border Narrative in a U.S. Congressional Race, Tribunals, and Faith-Based Activism,” we examine the ways solidarity events moved outward and upward among activists and electoral competitors representing divergent border agendas. The agendas reflect the Democratic Party primary contest between the two main U.S. congressional candidates: a long-term incumbent, who was a former border patrol sector chief and partial architect of the border-security apparatus, and his challenger, who focused on trade and employment issues.

In chapter 6, “South-to-North Solidarity: Sicilia and Peace and Justice Movements at the Border,” we describe and analyze two caravan visits that Javier Sicilia and caravaneiros and caravaneiras made to the region in 2011 and 2012. Sicilia’s early ambivalence about an all-out critique of militarization contributed to some polarization among activists. However, his 2012 U.S. Caravan for Peace, around which many U.S. organizations partnered in states from the West to the East Coast, generated rallies and press coverage, most of it alternative and Spanish.

except for places like El Paso, where Sicilia engaged local officials on the city council and obtained consensus support (with one abstention), after some posturing over gun-control policies.

The final chapter, “Conclusion: Reflections on the Possibilities of Post-Conflict Peace and Justice,” revisits the key questions of the research on new alliances among activists and on feminist agendas in making formerly “hidden transcripts” public, the electoral regime where policy decisions are made, and the transnational elite, some organizations of which challenge militarization and seek more economic interdependence on their terms—terms not necessarily conducive to economic justice. We tie together the theoretical impulses of this book and hope to advance them with this analysis and its spatial location in the transnational borderlands. In the 2012 Mexican presidential election, the PRI triumphed, albeit with challenges from youth movements and charges of national Televisa media complicity. And Ciudad Juárez’s murder rates have declined, the causes and consequences of which we unpack. We close with considerations of the effects that the border movement activists, the caravan, and Javier Sicilia might have for demilitarization, peace, and justice, including gender justice.