Transnational Affective Circuitry: Public information campaigns, affective governmentality, and border enforcement

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Abstract:

Geographers have been central to identifying and exploring the shifting spatialities of border enforcement and how different enforcement strategies alter the geography of state sovereignty. Migration-related public information campaigns (PICs) are one strategy that has received increasing attention from geographers and social scientists more broadly in recent years. While existing research examines the sites and spaces where PICs are distributed, as well as the affective content of their messaging, little research has examined the development of campaigns and the transnational connections that enable their deployment. This article draws on work in the fields of carceral circuitry and transnational enforcement networks in order to expand our understanding of affective governmentality as a transnational strategy of border governance. Based on data collected as part of a large-scale comparative study of the use of PICs by the US and Australian governments, we argue that this form of affective governmentality relies upon transnational circuits through which people, money, and knowledge move to enable the development and circulation of affective messaging. In doing so, we develop the concept of transnational affective circuitry to refer to the often contingent, temporary relations and connections that enable PICs to operate as a form of transnational affective governmentality aimed at hindering unauthorized migration. Our analysis illustrates the transnational connections that enable increasingly expansive and creative forms of border enforcement to emerge while also expanding the scope of examinations of affective governmentality to attend to the relations that undergird and enable this form of transnational governance.

Keywords: border enforcement, affective governmentality, affect, networks, circuits

Introduction

In spring 2021, Elevation, a Washington, DC based Latino public relations firm, was awarded a $4.95 million contract by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to provide "integrated marketing services" including media outreach to unaccompanied minors in Central America (usaspending.gov). This was just the most recent contract to the firm, which has produced public information campaigns (PICs) targeting potential migrants and their loved ones since 2004. PICs first emerged as a strategy of border governance in the 1990s and have become increasingly pervasive (Aucoin 2022; Bajomi-Lazar 2019; Brekke and Thorbjornsrud 2020; Hightower 2013; Oeppen 2016; Musaro 2019; Pecoud 2010; Richardson 2010; Rodriguez 2019; Schans and Optekamp 2016; Vammen 2021; Van Dessel 2021; Watkins 2017; Williams 2020). Grounded in the assumption that potential migrants are simply unaware of the legal, physical, and emotional tolls of irregular migration attempts (Pécoud 2010), PICs work to increase awareness among potential migrant populations by circulating messages through a range of auditory and visual registers. For instance, past Elevation campaigns have included mini documentaries, migracorridos (i.e., migration ballads), billboards and print advertisements, and interactive art installations.

In this paper, we contribute to existing research on affective governmentality and the use of public information campaigns as a form of border governance through an examination of the relationships and connections that make this form of governance possible. While existing analysis of PICs illustrate the way they circulate in spaces of origin and transit (Hirsch and Doig 2018; Vammen 2021; Van Dessel 2021; Author 1), as well as the moral and affective registers through which they operate (Chouliarakli and Musaro 2017; Hightower 2013; Humphrey 2018; Musaro 2019; Vammen 2021; Van Dessel 2021; Watkins 2020), little research has explored the

development and implementation of campaigns to reveal precisely the factors that enable their operation. At the same time, existing research on affective governmentality similarly stops short of examining how the knowledge needed to effectively mobilize affective forms of messaging are developed. In existing research on affective governmentality there is an implicit assumption that those mobilizing this strategy of government simply know how to compel particular affective responses and which affective and emotional registers need to be mobilized to have the intended effect. This is likely because examinations of affective governmentality tend to be examined within one particular place or culture—e.g., the mobilization of shame and disgust by Ugandan government officials within Uganda (Ashworth 2017). However, because affective experiences are highly contextual and culturally specific, thinking about affective governmentality as a form of transnational governance raises important questions regarding how affective knowledge moves across space and becomes operationalized in state programs. By drawing attention to how people, money, and knowledge move across national boundaries in order to make PICs possible, we expand existing examinations of affective governmentality to attend to the ways in which affective knowledge is gathered and power wielded in order to implement transnational effective governance strategies. In doing so, this paper also contributes to research in political geography and related disciplines that points to the paradoxical ways in which border enforcement is embedded within and relies upon transnational relationships and processes (Ehrkamp 2020; Hiemstra 2019; Jones et al 2017; Mountz and Loyd 2014).

The paper proceeds as follows: we describe recent scholarship on affective governmentality and situate research on PICs in relation to these ideas. Next, we discuss our research methods and project context before laying out a conceptual framework for understanding PICs as a form of transnational affective governmentality. We then detail how the

production and distribution of affective governmental attempts are supported by transnational relationships, developing the concept of transnational affective circuitry to illustrate these connections. We conclude by considering the implications of these arguments for other geographic contexts and encouraging geographers to expand the scope of examinations of border enforcement techniques.

Techniques of Governance

Migration governance is often understood as projects of control that aim to directly impact the actions of people on the move; these projects include a wide variety of efforts from laws that prohibit the entry of particular groups of people to walls and barriers that physically deter people from crossing boundaries to efforts that criminalize unauthorized movement and detain unauthorized migrants in inhumane conditions. Yet scholars have also examined projects of governance that, as Michel Foucault (2002, 341) writes, "control the *possible* field of action of others" [emphasis added]. This literature illustrates that the governance of migration occurs both through direct control *and* less direct forms of persuasion and pressure (D'Aoust 2013; Walters 2015). These less direct forms of control fall under the umbrella of what Foucault (1991) defines as biopower and governmentality. Whereas disciplinary power uses force, confinement, and supervision to act on the individual body, biopower attempts to regulate and manage entire populations—fundamentally shifting the scale at which and through which governance happens. This rescaling of governance is also a reworking of how power operates in that it is a shift from governance technologies such as force, confinement, and supervision to technologies of governance that work to arrange things in a way that fosters particular ends not through force but through the shaping of conduct and internalization of particular dispositions (Rose Redwood 2006; Li 2007, 275).

Scholars of border and immigration enforcement have mobilized Foucauldian theories of power to understand the regulation of national borders and mobile populations as biopolitical—i.e., the management of populations to achieve particular ends—and governmental—i.e., functioning not only through force and confinement but also through the production of particular forms of subjectivity that shape the conduct and actions of particular populations. For example, Hiemstra (2010) examines the production of immigrant "illegality" as a local-scale technique of neoliberal governmentality in Leadville, Colorado. She argues the illegality is a racialized, spatialized social condition that operates by marginalizing and criminalizing immigrants, shaping immigrant actions in a way that disciplines labor in the service of neoliberal capitalism. Within this framework, illegality is not simply a legal status, but rather a social condition through which immigrant lives become infused with constant anxiety that disciplines immigrant actions through self-policing rather than literal supervision and confinement (see also Coutin 2010 and De Genova 2002).

Foucault and others have pointed to how governmentality as a form of governance relies upon knowledge production—namely systems of enumeration, naming, and mapping that make space and populations legible and produce particular forms of subjectivity that can be governed (Rose Redwood 2006). In recent years, and in conjunction with the larger affective turn in the social sciences (Pile 2010; Anderson 2012; Merriman and Jones 2017), the tools and techniques of governmentality have been expanded to also include the manipulation and fostering of emotive and affective attachments and reactions (Foucault 2007). This form of governance is referred to as "affective governmentality" and has been examined by scholars in a range of geographic sites and in relation to varied political, economic, and social processes in order to illustrate how affects are mobilized and employed to "regulate and modify, to create and

maintain order, and to produce and assess knowledge" (Leser and Pates 2019, 354). For instance, Ashworth's (2017) examination of disgust illustrates how state and non-state actors manipulate and mobilize disgust to reinforce and uphold state policies that criminalize homosexuality in Uganda. Within this context, disgust is instrumentalized to achieve particular ends, making possible the governance of sexual minorities in particular ways (Ashworth 2017). Similarly, Strong (2020) explores how shame becomes mobilized within governmental projects of austerity within the UK. Like Ashworth (2017), Strong (2020) pushes back against scholarship on governmentality that privileges the acts of counting, enumeration, and statistics, arguing instead that in the context of food banks, shame becomes a way of shaping the actions of people who receive food. Shame works as a technology for both "instilling normative scripts that conduct conducts" and "influencing and transmitting the value and behaviors valorized at a time of austerity" (Strong 2020, 10).

Biopolitical and governmental projects are not simply limited to the territorial space of the nation-state: indeed, Foucault and scholars building on his insights argue that because governmentality works to connect social discourses with everyday practices, it operates across sites and scales (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010; Ettlinger 2011; Hindess 2002). For instance, Ettlinger (2011: 538) notes that a key aspect of governmental projects is that they make "governance at a distance possible." Through governmentality, states attempt to shape the conduct of both the population and the self, what Ettlinger (2011: 539) describes as an "agonistic relation of continual negotiation." Affective governmentality works across sites and scales in similarly expansive fashion, trying to shape the conduct of populations as well as the shaping of individual subjectivities: to take Strong's (2020) example of food banks, shame works at the individual level to curtail food bank use amongst individuals, as well as at the level of the

broader population, as a caution to others about the possible shameful ramifications of needing to use a food bank in the future. While discussions of governmentality at a distance often do not explicitly discuss the way governance works across national borders, it is clear that governance projects—affective and otherwise— can and often do cross national boundaries.

Importantly, scholarly examinations of affective governmentality most often operate at the site at which governance happens—e.g., the food bank, religious services—and/or analyze the mechanisms through which affect is mobilized and circulated—e.g., news media, sermons, institutional policies. However, as we know from the work of Sara Ahmed (2013), affect is deeply contextual and culturally-dependent. In turn, exploring how governmental actors come to understand which affective strategies may have the desired impact is critical for understanding how affective governmentality operates across scales and the relationships and connections that it relies upon, extending existing geographic work on affective governmentality.

The 'Softer' Side of Enforcement: Public Information Campaigns

Studies of public information campaigns (PICs) have drawn on Foucauldian and related affective theories of governance to explore how PICs function as the 'softer side' of enforcement regimes that also include strategies of force and control. Since the 1990s, countries of the global North have designed public relations campaigns to work in conjunction with other forms of enforcement to deter irregular migration by distributing information on the financial, emotional, and physical costs of unauthorized migration among potential migrants. PICs have taken many forms including billboards, comic books, songs, commercials, full-length feature films, and interactive exhibits. Many PICs have involved robust partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in order to enable the dissemination of campaign materials into migrant sending communities. For instance,

in the 1990s the IOM supported European campaigns advertising the risks of migration in Romania (1992-1996), Albania (1992-1995) and Ukraine (1998) (Musarò 2019). Since the 2000s, PICs have become a more prevalent strategy of enforcement globally, with social media increasingly used as a means of distributing campaign messages, even as most research into the efficacy of PICs indicates that PICs are relatively ineffective at substantially influencing migration decision-making (Alpes and Sørensen 2015; Schans and Optekamp 2016; Heidbrink 2023).

PICs have been studied as a form of externalized enforcement, pushing enforcement beyond the territorial borders of enforcing states and into the intimate spaces of daily life (Watkins 2017; Author 1). Within the context of political and social pressure surrounding migrant deaths and other migration-related abuses, PICs have become a popular form of enforcement as they "allow governments to be seen to be doing something to control their borders whilst still maintaining a humanitarian image" (Oeppen 2016, 66; also see Pécoud 2010). PICs use visual and discursive strategies to deter migration, often, as Watkins (2017) writes, "through portraying portray 'home' as safe and financially stable" and irregular migration as "dangerous and destined to fail" (Watkins 2017, 284; see also Dehm and Silverstein 2021; Heidbrink 2020; Vammen 2021). In doing so, PICs obscure the role border enforcing states and transnational economic and political relationships play in shaping migration-related decisions and processes and shift responsibility for the risks of migration to the migrant themselves, rather than ever-harsher enforcement practices (Oeppen 2016; Aucoin 2020).

Research on PICs illustrates how they explicitly mobilize and manipulate particular affective relations, implicitly functioning as a form of affective governmentality. For example, Vammen's (2021) study of an information campaign targeting potential Senegalese migrants

illustrates how messaging works to circulate positive and negative emotions about irregular migration by mobilizing returned migrants as messengers. She refers to this process as "affective borderwork" for the way in which affect is mobilized to (re)produce the border *within* the minds of potential migrants. As she (2021, 3) writes:

> Instead of creating and guarding external borders by either legally or physically filtering, sorting, or simply stopping, people from entering a territory, affective borderwork promotes an inner, self-regulating border to be governed by the individual subject's own risk management evaluations and morality…affective borderwork uses emotions to draw and reaffirm and exclusionary geography.

In this case, PICs use the stories of returned migrants, often told by them, to try to deter other Senegalese people from migrating, incorporating appeals to emotion in order to "craft sedentary African subjects" (Vammen 2021, 4; 16). Meanwhile, Van Dessel (2021: 17) explores how the spectacles of PICs in the Nigerien context demonstrate how "destination states export not only the means to block migrants preventively, but also ideas and representations intent upon guiding how third-country citizens should view irregular migration." Similarly, scholars focused on the intermediary role of the International Organization for Migration explore how spaces of transit and waiting, such as Southeast Asia, become a "global territory" (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010: 96) where affective messages about the dangers of migration are circulating. This simultaneously provides mechanisms and opportunities for states to expand their governmental reach and further control their own citizens' mobility (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010; Hirsch and Doig 2018; Watkins 2020). Moreover, the circulation of PICs works to further devolve the scales and sites of enforcement by targeting intimate spaces of daily life. For example, Williams's (2020) examination of PICs circulated by US border enforcement agencies in Mexico

illustrates how PICs transform homes, schools, and spaces of leisure into sites of enforcement via the circulation of auditory and visual messages of deterrence. In these ways, PICs work to "govern at a distance" (Ettlinger 2011: 53) through the transnational circulation of affective and emotive messages focused on affecting potential migrants' decision-making and shaping their aspriations (see also Brekke and Thorbjornsrud 2020; Heidbrink 2023; Hightower 2013; Musaro 2019; Pecoud 2010; Watkins 2017).

While existing research on the use of public information campaigns as a mechanism of border enforcement have effectively illustrated the strategies and logics that drive their development and the way in which they operate on the ground in spaces of implementation, little research has examined the 'behind the scenes' aspects of PICs—namely, personal, economic, and logistical relationships that make PICs possible. Exploring the foundational relationships and connections that enable the development and implementation of PICs expands our understanding of this form of border governance and further draws attention to the transnational flows that undergird efforts to hinder transnational mobility.

Methods

This paper draws on data collected as part of a large comparative study of public information campaigns carried out by the US and Australian governments between 1990 and 2018 (Grant Agency Award Number 1853652). The overarching study explores the development and implementation of PICs in these two contexts to explore how PICs alter the geographies of state sovereignty and the shifting rationalities and modes of transnational governance in the 21st century. This study uses mixed qualitative methods including archival research; Freedom of Information (FOI) requests; interviews; and media and policy analysis A comparative research design is used to enable us to understand how the unique economic, cultural, political, and

geographic context of border enforcing states shapes the development and implementation of PICs. We focus on the US and Australia as examples because both states have been engaged in targeted border and immigration enforcement efforts including the production of PICs since the 1990s, yet do not face the regional decision-making challenges that their counterparts in the European Union must negotiate.

The methodological approach central to this project is that of feminist periscoping (Hiemstra 2017; Williams and Coddington 2021). Feminist periscoping is an approach to research that "aims to reveal systems, processes, and experiences typically out of view that have previously been left uninterrogated due to lack of access or awareness" (Hiemstra 2017, 332). Similar to the long-accepted framework of triangulation, feminist periscoping brings together multiple data sets in order to create a broad understanding of the topic of study while at the same time adopting the epistemological position of feminist scholars that recognizes the always partial and situated nature of knowledge (Williams and Coddington 2021). Synthesizing multiple methods not only provides depth to the research, but also encourages the interaction of different types of data and allows for the gaps and absences in the data to be understood in context (Valentine, Butler, and Skelton 2001; Hiemstra 2017). Periscoping is central to this project in part because of the well-documented challenges in obtaining information about border enforcement (Belcher and Martin 2013; Maillet, Mountz, and Williams 2017). Feminist periscoping facilitates the synthesis of information about PICs across and alongside the gaps that emerge in the data: for instance, we often encounter situations where we have significant information about the development of one campaign, whereas for others we only have campaign materials or media coverage – through periscoping, we weave together these examples to explore common logics, strategies, and tactics that emerge across and through these gaps in the data.

We have collected and coded over 1,000 different files across the two national contexts. These files include campaign materials (print, video, audio), governmental documents related to PICs, media articles, and evaluation and other documents produced by contractors hired to produce campaigns (most often obtained via Freedom of Information Requests). We have also analyzed publicly available information about contractors involved in campaigns (e.g., websites, media articles, on-line portfolios). Interviews with key informants involved in campaign development and implementation have been conducted to supplement other data collection methods. Materials have been uploaded to AtlasTI qualitative data analysis software and coded to identify the messages and discourses circulated via PICs; key actors involved in their development and distribution; and the economic, political, and social factors shaping the development of PICs. While data collected for this project explored PICs developed and implemented between 1990 and 2018, only a subset are utilized as examples and are used to illustrate overarching trends identified across the dataset.

Transnational Enforcement Networks and Carceral Circuitry as an Organizing Framework

Even as researchers have begun to explore the implementation of PICs and their use of emotive and affective messaging, less attention has been devoted to the 'black box' of campaign development: what are the relationships and connections that make it possible to produce PICs? Exploring this aspect of PICs expands understandings of affective governmentality by attending to how those who aim to govern come to understand the affective and emotive messages that may be effectively mobilized. As noted above, while other scholars have highlighted the sites and spaces where affective governance happens, such as the food bank or religious services, or

considered the means by which affect is circulated, such as social media or institutional policies, this paper extends this work by expanding the scope of analysis in order to assess how the knowledge needed to develop and implement affective governmental strategies is gathered. In this section, we draw on emerging work in the field of transnational enforcement networks and carceral circuitry in order to develop a conceptual framework through which we examine the relationships, connections, and networks that make PICs possible.

Scholarship in geography, international relations, and related social sciences has explored how the rise of border enforcement efforts has gone hand-in-hand with the liberalization of economic borders and increased mobility of economic elites (Andreas 2011). At the same time, researchers have pointed to the way in which illicit markets have expanded and flourished as part of the underbelly of globalization (Legrand and Leuprecht 2021). For example, geographer Jeremy Slack and colleagues have shown how the militarization of the US-Mexico border has fueled the rise of criminal human smuggling networks with violent and deadly implications for migrants (Slack et al. 2016).

In response to the transnational nature of illicit markets—human smuggling and otherwise—governmental agencies increasingly use novel methods to push the jurisdictional boundaries of sovereign power (Mountz 2010) and develop transnational collaborations to expand enforcement efforts (Legrand and Leuprecht 2021). These collaborations are often power ladened and inequitable, with more powerful countries leveraging geopolitical and geoeconomic power to garner support and collaboration from less powerful countries. For example, we can look to how the US has pressured Mexico to militarize and securitize its southern border through *Programa Frontera Sur* with the aim of pre-emptively stopping Central American migrants before they reach the US (Van Ramshorst and Walker 2022).

Transnational enforcement collaborations, both formal and informal, provide a mechanism for states to overcome legal questions surrounding jurisdiction and sovereignty in order to advance enforcement goals in a more geographically expansive way (Legrand and Leuprecht 2001; Stone 2013). While emerging research on transnational enforcement networks explores formal and informal collaborations between governmental agencies, our research into PICs demonstrates how this type of border governance relies upon and mobilizes transnational networks that extend beyond state agencies to include private companies, non-governmental organizations, and individual knowledge and culture brokers in order to function. To understand these networks, we draw on the concept of circuitry developed by Nick Gill and colleagues.

Gill et al (2018) develop the framework for carceral circuitry to understand the increasingly expansive, inter-connected, and more than institutional frameworks and relationships that are driving the expansion of carceral landscapes globally. Drawing on the work of Cook (2004, 2006), Gill et al. (2018: 5) argue that theoretical frameworks structured around 'following the thing' – such as food, prisoners, resources – allows for more comprehensive analysis where the "complexity, contradictions, and over-arching logics of their journeys can be laid bare in a way that is not possible if only particular stages or places" are examined in isolation. This approach helps to expose the entanglements between the spaces and places critical to the production of complex socio-economic systems, carceral and otherwise. The framework of circuitry allows Gill et al. (2018) to draw attention to how the carceral extends beyond sites of imprisonment and relies upon and produces connections across institutions and urban spaces. They further suggest that mapping the circuits that enable and emerge from systems of carcerality offers the possibility not only of documenting existing realities, but envisioning alternative futures that challenge enforcement more broadly. Employing the framework of

circuits to understand PICs allows us to focus on these enabling relationships: as we trace PIC materials backwards to the production processes and forwards to distribution processes, we can more clearly identify the relationships and connections that are necessary for this form of affective governmentality to emerge and operate across vast geographic spaces.

Moreover, the metaphor of the circuit expands on those of networks to focus attention not only on the nodes (i.e., sites and places of connection) but also on the relations between these nodes and how these relationships are contingent and evolving. A number of scholars have since used the framework of circuitry to explore the relationships that are both created by and that enable different forms of enforcement. Martin (2020), for instance, uses the framework of circuits to explore the economic relationships within enforcement networks. For her, a focus on the economic circuits of border enforcement, rather than 'industries' or 'complexes', helps to highlight the individual, precarious, and constantly evolving nature of these relationships through which different forms of value are generated. Importantly, she concludes (p. 753) by asking the question: "As these assemblages embed migrant exclusion in broader networks of value, exchange, and circulation, what infrastructure, logistics, and financing are necessary to sustain them?" This question prompts further research into the underlying relationships that enable types of migration control, including projects of affective governmentality.

Taken collectively, research on transnational enforcement networks and carceral circuitry provides a vocabulary and analytical framework through which we can explore the relationships that enable PICs to function as a form of transnational affective governmentality. Viewing PICs through the framework of circuits draws attention to the varied actors involved in transnational governance *and* the way in which the relationships between people and things that undergird transnational affective governmentality are necessary, contingent, and delicate. In what follows

we follow campaign materials through their development and circulation to identify the nodes and connections that compose the transnational circuitry through which PICs operate. We first focus on the nodes of distribution: the sites and spaces through which messages are circulated. We then explore the connections that lead into and out of those nodes, drawing attention to the deeply contextual, contingent, and transnational relationships through which people, knowledge, and money circulate in order for PICs to materialize as a form of transnational affective governmentality. In doing so, we expand existing analysis of affective governmentality by attending to the relationships and connections that are particularly important for this form of governance to function in a geographically expansive, transnational, and cross-cultural way.

Governing through Affect: Circulating PICs in the US and Australian Contexts

In this section we explore the nodes—sites and spaces— through which PIC materials are circulated by the US and Australia. PICs in the US and Australian contexts rely primarily on three key technologies to distribute affective messaging: mass media (primarily television and radio), social media, and on-the-ground engagement. Here, we discuss *how* these technologies disseminate affective messaging in both geographic contexts as the ability to disseminate information throughout the population is key to functioning of this particular affective governmental technique.

In each of the geographic contexts we studied, PICs are distributed across a vast geographic area: in the US case, PICs are developed for distribution throughout Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean. In the Australian context, PICs target potential migrants across the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and as far north as China. Television and radio ads are prevalent modes of communication mobilized in the interest of PICs due to their

ability to reach large numbers of people across extensive geographic areas. For example, in the US case, a series of mini-documentaries (i.e., documercials) were produced as part of the No Más Cruces campaign. These documercials were 3-5 minute video pieces featured families of individuals who had died or gone missing during migration attempts sharing their stories and the pain and suffering they experienced. A partnership with Televisa, the largest mass media company in Latin America, was established to air the documercials on local television stations in areas with high out-migration (personal communication, March 2021). Documercials were placed in timeslots before or after the nightly news due to the high number of people viewing television at these times. The partnership with Televisa was critical to enabling the widespread circulation of campaign messages. In 2009 when the No Más Cruces campaign was active, Televisa aired 70 of the top 100-rated programs in Mexico and the average weekday primetime audience share was 72.4% (Televisa 2009). Radio was similarly mobilized within the context of the No Más Cruces and Nuestra Patria, Nuestro Futuro campaigns. CDs of migracorridos (i.e., migration ballads) created for the No Más Cruces campaign were given to 25 radio stations in the 6 states in Mexico with the highest out migration (LeBrón 2009). The radio stations and listeners were not informed that the CDs were part of a campaign financed by the US Border Patrol and the songs were quickly taken up by DJs and requested by listeners (Ceresole 2009). Campaign evaluations of the Nuestra Patria, Nuestro Futuro campaign support circulating campaign materials via television and radio networks, showing that television- and radio-based distribution mechanism garner the highest rates of recall) among target populations (Central America Past Campaign Report 2018). Connections between migrant-sending populations and the US-based enforcement were enabled, in this case by partnerships with DJs and Televisa, relationships that we will expand upon in the following section. Australia similarly places PICs in local radio and

television broadcasts, and has also produced feature films for distribution throughout its dissemination area.

The use of social media-based distribution strategies has increased in recent years and allowed for PICs to be targeted more specifically at certain populations. For instance, Australian campaigns selectively focus on particular audiences through targeted social media advertising, including the purchase of Google Adwords, Facebook advertisements, and YouTube promotional videos. Social media advertisement purchases have targeted people in particular countries *and* people who use particular languages. Asylum seekers in Indonesia browsing online using Dari search terms, for example, were targeted with advertisements promoting the harsh treatment of asylum seekers by the Australian Border Force (Sun 2017). Yet they also more generally target people within Australia *and* transnationally with particular language preferences. Australian Johnny Lieu (2016) tracked the placement of anti-migration advertisements on his and friends' Facebook timelines and realized that all of his Australian friends whose language preferences were set to Farsi, Tamil, Bengali, and Vietnamese received a barrage of advertisements. His friends with English-language profiles received none (Lieu 2016). In another example, emails released under a Freedom of Information request document the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship's 2013 purchase of advertisements in Australian media to raise awareness of immigration policy changes. Digital media advertisements were purchased to particularly target adults 18 years and older who represented "culturally and linguistically diverse" populations, specifically speakers of Vietnamese, Tamil, Sinhalese, Dari, Farsi, Pashto and Arabic within Australia. Similarly, for the US context, in the spring and summer of 2021, one member of our research team who had lived in Guatemala for several years and had many social media contacts in Guatemala began receiving PIC campaign materials as Instagram ads.

While we cannot know for certain, we hypothesize that his social media-based connections with Guatemalans and locational data tying him to rural areas with high out-migration may have been used to algorithmically identify him as a target of campaign materials. Each of these examples demonstrates the targeting of specific audiences by geography, language, and age such that PICs are encountered in intimate spaces of daily life only by selected audiences.

Finally, PICs are also distributed transnationally through on-the-ground engagement strategies whereby materials and messages are circulated via in-person events in migrant-sending communities and spaces of transit. For instance, *one phase* of a large 2010 campaign conducted by Australia in partnership with the IOM targeting potential Indonesian smugglers titled "Aku Tau Penyelundupan Imigran Ilegal Itu Salah," or "I know that people smuggling is wrong" involved ten separate elements targeting each of four selected communities over a period of five months. In addition to radio spots, elements included public workshops, funneling messages through local religious leaders, awareness days, movie nights, family events, and a community festival. Each in-person event had separate objectives, target audiences, and promotional materials such as t-shirts, stickers, mugs, jackets, and, perhaps most interestingly, sample sermons distributed to Islamic and Christian religious leaders. The saturation of community life via these various forms of engagement is overwhelming – typical community members would, over the course of the five months, encounter PICs over the airwaves and in print media and posters, at their religious services, and through multiple community gatherings. They would bring home t-shirts and mugs that would continue their encounters with messaging in their daily life over the course of months or years. Indeed, one activity promoted during a family event was to produce family portraits branded with the campaign logo for local residents, who would receive a free framed photo after the event that they could keep. This strategy explicitly tied the

dissemination of campaign messaging over the long-term to the family relationships that underpin community life, as families would be reluctant to discard a picture of themselves in the future.

In the US case, on-the-ground distribution similarly takes place both through free-standing events and through collaborations with non-governmental and governmental organizations. For example, between 2010-2013, Elevation worked with subcontractors in Mexico to produce and implement an interactive art installation called "No Más Cruces en la Frontera Roadshow" in cities in Mexico. According to the creators of the exhibit, it is "a strategy for bringing the border—and it[s] associated horrors—to those communities [in Mexico] in order to touch hearts and save lives" (Güemas and Fernandez 2013). As a "lived experience" the Roadshow "aims to have people feel emotions similar to those felt by someone cross the border undocumented" (ibid). In order to do so, photographs, dramatic plays, and migrant testimonials were featured alongside a shipping container to recreate the experience of walking through the Sonoran desert. As one individual involved in the campaign commented on this strategy: "there was a need to skip the middle men [the media companies] and get closer to the people to understand better and get more control about the impact and the messaging of the campaign" (Personal Communication March 2021). As this quotation illustrates, on-the-ground engagement strategies provide opportunities for campaign creators and distributors to more directly observe the campaign's impact, providing useful knowledge that can be used to pivot campaign messaging or inform that of future campaigns.

Through PIC campaign materials from the US and Australia, fear- and danger-based messaging are woven together with other emotive and affective strategies—such as love, parental/maternal responsibility, and shame—in order to create robust and complex narratives

that affect the decisions potential migrants and their family members make (Williams and Coddington 2023). These narratives are then circulated through distribution methods that saturate daily life so as to shape the affective and emotional attachments and associated decisions of potential migrants and their families. Ahmed (2004, 119) writes that emotions must be read not simply as "psychological dispositions" but as doing particular kinds of work, which she describes as the work of "sticking figures together (adherence), a sticking that creates the very effect of a collective (coherence)." In the case of PICs, messaging attempts to 'stick together' the physical danger associated with migration and the more amorphous sense of being lied to, cheated, humiliated, or endangered through the migration process.

The aim of these efforts is very different from border enforcement efforts that work through disciplinary power. In contrast to disciplinary efforts that function through the construction of particular spaces (e.g. border walls, immigration detention, traffic stops) or surveillance mechanisms (e.g. visa and passport regimes, immigration reporting check-ins, biometric monitoring), PICs employ emotion and affect to influence the beliefs, desires, and actions of potential migrant populations. They function as a form of affective governmentality as they shape the affective and emotional attachments among potential migrants so that their actions align with the interests of border enforcement states, while *appearing* to be in the migrants' own self-interest (see Li 2007). PICs are woven into the context of would-be migrants' daily lives in order to shape their conduct and prompt the internalization of particular, sedentary dispositions. Such enforcement operates pre-emptively, attempting to become part of potential migrants' decision-making processes before, perhaps, they ever imagine migrating in the first place. The diffuse range of affective responses prompted by these campaigns are designed to allow amorphous doubts about migration to circulate as widely as possible. Campaigns strategically

link together messages related to death, economic loss, familial shame, maternal guilt, and humiliation to compel a range of affective responses that work to temper the hopes and desires that drive unauthorized migration attempts. Yet what are the factors that make possible these transnational attempts at affective governmentality? In the next section, we draw on research on transnational enforcement networks and carceral circuitry to create a framework for understanding the transnational connections that undergird PICs as a form of transnational affective governmentality.

Public Information Campaigns and Transnational Affective Circuitry

In the section above, we focused on the 'nodes' of the circuits that make up PIC messaging: the sites and spaces where messaging is deployed, and the kind of affective governmental messaging that is deployed in those spaces. Here we deepen our analysis, by examining the space between the nodes—the connections and relationships that undergird the development and distribution of PICs. In doing so, we expand current scholarship on affective governmentality by exploring not only what types of affective messages and energies are mobilized but how those targets are identified, messages developed, and distribution strategies mobilized and the transnational connections and relationships that make this possible. In doing so, we develop the term 'transnational affective circuitry' to refer to the often contingent, temporary relations and connections that enable PICs to operate as a form of transnational affective governmentality aimed at hindering unauthorized migration. We explore each national context individually before discussing the similarities and continuities identified across sites.

Through key informant interviews and analysis of documents obtained through Freedom of Information Requests and online research, it became clear that the mobilization of PICs by US

border enforcement agencies relied on transnational circuits through which knowledge and expertise travel and personal relationships are leveraged. The US Border Patrol officials involved in the very first PICs (i.e., the Border Safety Initiative, No Más Cruces) quickly recognized that transnational relationships and connections were critical to the success of PICs. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Border Patrol public relations officers worked to build relationships with officials in governmental agencies in Mexico and Guatemala to place materials in governmental offices; reached out to migrant shelters and aid organizations to place posters about the dangers of migration attempts; and even worked to enlist individuals in areas with high out migration to be ambassadors of sort, tasked with distributing and explaining materials in their communities (Personal Communication, June 2021). Importantly, individuals interviewed argued that these strategies were only possible because of the personal histories and backgrounds of those involved. The Border Patrol agents involved in the development of initial campaigns were all Mexican American and had grown up in the borderlands. They were early in their careers and, as one interviewee explained, 'naïve and weren't intimidated by titles or things like that' (Personal Communication, June 2021). Their fluency in Spanish, familiarity with Mexican culture, and ability to cross borders with ease, enabled them to begin establishing the transnational connections that grew over time into an extensive network of governmental and non-governmental organizations and private entities involved in campaign distribution.

The transnational connections that undergird the use of PICs by US border enforcement agencies were deepened in the early 2000s when the US began contracting public relations firms to professionalize and expand the use of information campaigns. The primary contractor brought on to work on campaigns is Elevation, a Latino public relations firm based on Washington, DC. Elevation was known to key CBP officials because of its work developing post-9/11 national

security related information campaigns targeting Hispanic populations in the US (Personal Communication, February 2023). Elevation frames their expertise in relation to the transnational and cross-cultural nature of their workforce. As they write on their website:

> The Elevation family hails from over 12 different countries, resulting in a mosaic of cultures that literally and figuratively bring a world of experiences and perspectives to the work that we do. Our sensitivity and innate passion for the global perspective enables us to understand the nuanced layers and grey areas associated with communicate to diverse audiences, both in the US and abroad (Elevation 2021).

Elevation specifically highlights how the international character of their labor force positions them to effectively speak across borders and cultures. Ironically, it is their staff's ability to cross borders that positions them as particularly well-suited to develop campaigns aimed at hindering the transnational mobility of others.

But it is not just the transnational labor that is key to enabling PICs, individuals involved in campaign development and implementation also cite personal relationships with local non-governmental organizations as critical to effectively disseminating PICs. Elevation refers to this in relation to the need to "ganar la calle" or "win the street." This phrase points to the logic and strategy of PICs as rooted in their ability to be integrated into the fabric of daily life and transmitted by trusted allies. In order to 'win the street,' contractors establish relationships with local NGOs that have "impressive networks" and who will "help deliver and expand the campaign's message directly to the population in urban, suburban, and rural areas" (DHS-Customs and Border Protection 2016). In this example, 'winning the street' by effectively distributing affective messaging is based on culturally-specific knowledge and relationships developed over time and contingent upon personal connections.

The transnational circuits of people and knowledge are also contingent upon extensive financial circuitry whereby funds are moved both within and across borders to pay for services and garner support for campaigns. In the US context, funds are generally transferred from governmental agencies—Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Border Patrol—to private companies (like Elevation) who bid for contracts to conduct PICs. These contractors then further circulate funding across borders as they hire local individuals or companies or contract local NGOs to support campaign implementation, and many of these relationships are built upon personal connections. For example, for the interactive Roadshow implemented as part of the No Más Cruces campaign, Elevation hired a Mexican production agency and a street theatre company that one employee had a pre-existing relationship with (Personal Communication, March 2021). While funding made it possible to hire these companies, their identification and engagement was made possible by the pre-existing personal relationship. The circuit metaphor is particularly illustrative here as it draws attention to the contingent and temporary nature of these relationships. As employees come and go the circuits of connection that undergird particular aspects of campaigns are turned on and off, opening and foreclosing different opportunities for campaign development and distribution.

Financial circuits are central to the way PICs operate in another way as data indicates that financial investment in the form of foreign aid is used to garner support for campaigns from foreign governments. For example, beginning in the mid-2010s public officials such as the First Lady of Guatemala became increasingly outspoken regarding the dangers of unauthorized migration and the need to protect children in particular from falling prey to human smugglers and traffickers. For example, she did press conferences discussing the dangers of migration for unaccompanied youth and promoted materials on social media. Simultaneously, we noted a rise

in the involvement of local development agencies in PIC-related activities, such as distributing PIC materials at public events or on websites. This shift aligns with the adoption of a policy governing international aid to countries of the Northern Triangle (i.e., Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, required the State Department to withhold 25 percent of assistance for central governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras until the countries were able to prove they were engaging in efforts to "improve border security, combat human smuggling and trafficking, inform citizens of the dangers of the journey to the United States, and cooperate with the US government on repatriation" (Congressional Research Service 2017, np). The integration of this requirement into the law dictating the distribution of foreign aid to these countries effectively uses geopolitical and geoeconomic pressure to compel countries to participate in the distribution and promotion of PICs as one way (among many) that they can demonstrate progress towards the stipulated goals. At the same time, the US Department of State and USAID became increasingly involved in the development and distribution of PICs in Central America, including funding allocated to northern triangle countries from the Department of State to support campaign activities (Government Accountability Office 2015). Taken collectively, this illustrates how transnational circuits of geopolitical and geoeconomic pressure are leveraged to advance the use of PICs as a border enforcement strategy.

In the Australian context a wide variety of firms participate in the development and distribution of PICs, securing contracts based on their ability to leverage transnational cultural knowledge as capital. For instance, CulturalPulse (formerly Red Elephant Research) is a market research firm hired to conduct research for a variety of Australian campaigns since the early 2010s, including receiving over $1 million (AUD) to provide market research for the 'No Way'

campaign between 2014 and 2016. They advertise this project on their website as the evaluation of the effectiveness of a $40 million "integrated communications campaign" deployed in 10 countries, and CulturalPulse conducted over 35,000 surveys across six countries to judge its effectiveness (CulturalPulse 2021). The contract to CulturalPulse is reflective of the circuits of knowledge that inform the development of PICs; market research is conducted in order to inform the development of campaign messages that are relevant to the target audience and distribution strategies that can effectively reach the intended audiences. The firm advertises its cultural competency and ability to reach multicultural, multilingual audiences across Australia and the wider Asia-Pacific region through what the founder of CulturalPulse, Patrick Skene, describes on their website as "targeted community strategies that address the different needs of each community" (CulturalPulse 2021).The transnational financial circuits that enable market research and the related circuits of culturally-specific knowledge that firms such as CulturalPulse rely upon and produce are key to enabling PICs to emerge and circulate as a form of transnational affective governmentality.

While CulturalPulse is based in Australia, a diverse range of organizations located throughout the wider region, whose 'cultural competencies' are much more rooted in their geographic location, are also relied upon. For instance, even as CulturalPulse earned over $1 million for its work in the 'No Way' campaign, an additional 19 contractors in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Vietnam were paid $14.5 million for public relations activities during that same time period for their work with 'No Way.' One of the smallest contracts, for $34,000, was with Nalamdana Charitable Trust India, a company based in Tamil Nadu and Chennai who develops and performs street theater, tele-dramas and interactive media to communicate with semi-literate and illiterate rural and urban

audiences. While CulturalPulse and Nalamdana Charitable Trust earned vastly different amounts of money from their No Way contracts, their use by Australian border enforcement agencies demonstrates the emphasis on transnational expertise within the development and distribution of PICs.

As can be seen in the Australian examples cited above, PICs involve increasingly large financial investments due to the skills, expertise, and technology needed to create high impact content and effectively distribute them across large geographic areas and to large numbers of people.

Data from both the US and Australian contexts illustrates that a circuitry of people, knowledge, and funding undergirds and enables PICs to function as a form of transnational affective circuitry. While existing research on PICs explores the messages that are circulated and how they are taken up (or not) by different communities, by following the materials from development through distribution we are able to illuminate the temporary, contingent relationships that are necessary for affective governmentality to be mobilized as a tool of governance aimed at managing transnational mobility. Attention to the transnational affective circuitry that enables the operation of PICs across vast geographic spaces and in various cultural contexts deepens our understanding of both PICs as a topic of inquiry and the mobilization of affective governmentality more broadly. The metaphor of circuits is particularly useful in relation to PICs because of its focus on the contingencies of these connections. Circuits are not always on; rather they can be activated and deactivated, turned on and turned off, based on changing conditions. Similarly, the circuits of people, knowledge, and money that enable PICs shift as laborers move from one job to another, contracts are won or lost by different public relations firms, media companies, or international NGOs, or new laws are adopted. However,

without these circuits, the highly emotive and affective materials and messages created for campaigns would not be possible nor would their distribution across national borders to reach their intended audiences.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the circuits connecting border enforcing states with the sites and spaces of public information campaign messaging, we highlighted the foundational role of culturally-specific relationships and connections to the production and distribution of transnational affective messaging. Whereas much literature in affective governmentality has focused on the types of affects produced and their impacts on targeted populations, and much literature on PICs has stressed the importance of the sites and methods of distribution, taken together, emphasis the transnational circuits that structure PICs as affective messaging allowed us to extend our analysis and highlight the networks of people, money and knowledge that extend across national borders and make PICs as strategies of border enforcement possible. Through an account of the culturally-specific relationships through which PICs are developed and distributed across the US and Australian contexts, we illustrated how circuits of people, money and knowledge enable the production of PICs in different geographic spaces. Circuits show the geographical scale and scope of these relationships, as well as their ability to shift over time and space, serving as key spatial metaphors for understanding the enabling factors that make different forms of governance possible (Gill et al. 2018). Circuits can indicate the directionality of these relationships as well, directions generated by geopolitical inequalities and the contexts of colonial and neocolonial relationships, white supremacy, and the histories of migration governance in different national contexts. Finally, circuits allow for translating these

relationships to different contexts and different places. Tracing this affective circuitry for both the US hemispheric context and the Asia-Pacific region illustrates how relationships that enable the transnational affective governmental work of PICs are differently oriented in different places, but in all cases rely on constellations of people, money and knowledge that are *themselves* transnational.

Researchers such as Sparke (2006) and Ong (2006) argue that border enforcement under neoliberalism is not about fully stopping transnational mobility but instead about creating classes of differentially mobile political, social, and economic subjects; some become hypermobile while others' mobility is increasingly restricted. Comparative research informed by feminist periscoping illustrates not only key differences in affective messaging across contexts, but also their important similarities: how in each case, the personal relationships built on transnational mobility support enforcement efforts. PICs provide another illustration of the way in which border enforcement efforts both create and rely upon differential forms of transnational mobility. The transnational mobility of people, money, and knowledge is foundational to the creation of campaigns designed to deter the mobility of (potential) unauthorized migrants.

Our conclusions suggest the need for researchers of PICs and other forms of border enforcement to continue extending research on enforcement technologies and practices to attend to the spatial relationships and connections that make different forms of governance possible. While it is clear that disciplinary, governmental, and affective forms of power are mobilized to regulate transnational mobility and hinder the movement of the poor and marginalized, it is not enough to just point to different types or technologies of governance. Rather, it is critical that we dig deeper to expose the very relationships and connections that make different forms of governance possible. Recent work on humanitarian governance has pursued precisely this

approach: Tazzioli's (2019: 392) study of financial support for asylum seekers begins by analyzing the not only the financial assistance as a political technology, but importantly also the "modes for governing refugee populations in transit." The focus is not only on the novel forms of political intervention in humanitarian spaces, but also the enabling conditions that make such intervention possible (Tazzioli 2019; also see Papada et al 2020; Torres et al 2022). Similarly, our analysis of PICs presented here highlights the deeply transnational nature of enforcement, both in the highly visible practices of messaging as well as the enabling conditions and relationships upon which enforcement efforts rely.

The increasingly expansive and creative techniques of border enforcement and governments that shape our transnational world require researchers to be equally creative and expansive in our theoretical and methodological approaches. Our examination of PICs and the transnational affective circuitry that enables their mobilization as a form of border governance serves as one example of what can be gained when we question not only the technologies of governance being deployed but also the spatial relationships and connects that they rely upon. In doing so, this research illustrates the deeply transnational character of this form of border enforcement and affective governmentality more broadly.

Acknowledgements:
We gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by research assistants Elisa Sperandio, Natasha Rapp, Masen Webster, Richard Johnson, Gaby Ramos, and Georgia Weiss-Elliot. Special thanks to the reviewers and editor whose careful readings and thoughtful feedback greatly improved the manuscript. Finally, thank you as well to our families and childcare providers who provided us with the time and space to think and write amid a global pandemic and its aftermath. We contributed equally to this manuscript and are collectively responsible for

any errors or omissions. This work was made possible by the financial support provided by the US National Science Foundation under award 1853652.

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