

# Canada/U.S. Border Crossing: Facilitation and Constraint

by

Cynthia Nyarko

A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts

MA Program in Social Justice and Equity Studies  
BROCK UNIVERSITY  
St. Catharines, Ontario

June 2004

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this research project is to draw on accounts of experiences of border crossing and regulation at the Canada/U.S. border at Niagara in order to illuminate the dynamics of differentiation and inequality at this site. The research is informed by claims that the world is turning into a global village due to transnational flows of technology, information, capital and people. Much of the available literature on globalization shows that while the transfer of technology, information, and capital are enhanced, the transnational movement of people is both facilitated and constrained in complex and unequal ways.

In this project, the workings of facilitation and constraint were explored through an analysis of ten interviews with people who had spent a substantial portion of their childhood (e.g. 5 years) in a Canadian border community. The interviewees were at the time of the research between the ages of 19 and 25. Because most of the respondents were 'white' Canadians of working to upper middle class status, my focus was to explore how 'whiteness' as privilege may translate into enhanced movement across borders and how 'white' people may internalize and enjoy this privilege but may often deny its reality. I was also interested in how inequality is perceived, understood, and legitimated by these relatively privileged people.

My analysis of the ten accounts of border crossing and regulation suggests that differentially situated people experience border crossing differently. An important finding is that while relatively privileged border crossers perceived and often problematized differential treatment based on external factors such as physical appearance, and especially race, most did not challenge such treatment but rather saw it as acceptable. These findings are located within newer literature that addresses the increasing securitization of borders and migration in western societies.



The study adds to the academic literature on border studies and may inform policy makers on issues of discriminatory regulation and control at the U.S./Canada border.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research project is to draw on accounts of experiences of border crossing and regulation at the Canada/U.S. border at Niagara in order to illuminate the dynamics of differentiation and inequality at the Canada/U.S. border. Because most of my respondents were 'white' working to upper middle class Canadians, much of my focus aimed at exploring how 'whiteness' as privilege may translate into enhanced movement across borders and how 'white' people may internalize and enjoy this privilege but may often deny its reality. I was also interested in how inequality is perceived, understood, and legitimated by these relatively privileged people. Accounts of border crossing shared by largely 'white' respondents suggest awareness that differentially situated people experience border crossing differently and unequally but that such differentiated and unequal treatment, while often problematized, is rarely challenged. For the purposes of this project, border regulation refers to systems of control as well as enforcement of border practices such as decisions regarding who crosses the border and the criteria for constraining others.

The research is informed by claims that the world is turning into a global village due to transnational flows of technology, information, transportation, and capital. Much of the available literature on globalization shows that while the movement of technology, information, and capital are enhanced, the transnational movement of people is both facilitated and constrained in complex and unequal ways.

My interest in border regulation and control was sparked by the work of Lugo (2000) and Heyman (1999) on the U.S./Mexico border. Both authors examine for example, how the more powerful U.S. border officials categorize Mexicans as either desirable or undesirable border crossers through such criteria as race, alleged potential criminality, employment status and class.

## **Acknowledgements**

This work is the result of over a year of research and writing that involved numerous people who showed great concern, direction, and encouragement. I would like to acknowledge the unfailing support, mentorship, and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Jane Helleiner. Without her patience and expertise, I would not have finished this thesis.

My sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr. Anna Pratt, my second reader, for her wonderful insights and suggestions on border control policies and mechanisms. I am grateful to Dr. June Corman, Dr. Murray Smith and Dr. David Butz for their enthusiasm and direction offered through their various courses.

I am thankful to Linda Landry and Jill Debon, for their sense of humour and encouragement throughout my stay in this program. Great thanks to all the masters students of Social Justice and Equity Studies, Brigitte Cecckin, Melissa St. Germaine-Small, Emily Eaton, Rebecca Jansen, Lisa Sharik-Carreiro, Joe Colangelo, and Frank Healey. Special thanks to Miss Kate Zavitz and her family for making me feel at home in Canada. I cannot forget the immense support of all the faculty members who gave up great amount of their time to listen to my thesis presentations and making great suggestions.

To my husband, Benjamin K. Eshun, I say God bless you for your love, support and care in times when I felt like giving up. Last but not the least to my mum, Rita Jamerah, my uncle, Ebenezer Gyamerah and my wonderful friends, Paul Kunke and Rev. Benjamin Ayim Asare for believing in my academic ability.

These scholars have shown that such categorization of desirability or undesirability results in differentiated and unequal treatment at the U.S./Mexico border.

The issue of border control and governance has been a focus of Canada/U.S. relations for some time, but has clearly intensified since the events of September 11 2001. In partial response to allegations that those involved in the terrorist acts crossed into the U.S. from Canada, the U.S. government intensified U.S./Canada border control policies to purportedly keep out potential terrorists and criminals (Adelman 2002, Gabriel and MacDonald 2003). The events of September 11, 2001 have given renewed emphasis to security measures through tougher border enforcement. Increased border control and regulation measures at the U.S./Canada border are linked to a U.S. initiated 'war against terrorism' which is aimed at identifying and constraining people who are deemed potential threats to U.S. national security.

Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002) have used the term 'securitization of migration' to explain how recent changes have affected the way borders are governed. They note that a heightened emphasis on security has led to the criminalization of new immigrants and refugees both in Europe and at the U.S./Mexico border. In similar vein, Heyman (1999) even before September 11, 2001, pointed out how border officials at the U.S./Mexico border tended to view Mexicans who experienced difficulties at the border not only as undesirable but also as criminals and/or potential criminals. To the extent that there is more general public association of difficulty of border crossing with alleged or potential criminality, the actions of border officials are seen as legitimate and rarely challenged by privileged people.

My interest in border crossing and regulation is linked to my own personal biography relating to border crossing. In December of 2001, I was nominated by the Sociology Department of the University of Ghana to come to Brock University, Canada on an exchange program. The

two schools having come to an agreement on the exchange program, getting the visa for me was seen as a matter of formality. When myself and other Ghanaian students involved went to the Canadian embassy however, the immigration official initially denied us the visa. The reasons offered were that the Canadian government did not recognize the exchange, and that we as participants didn't have sufficient ties in Ghana and therefore, it was argued wouldn't return to Ghana after the program. It took the threat of sending the representatives of Brock University back to Canada before we were given the visa.

The above example illustrates how the Canadian border is regulated outside of the nation's territory as officials facilitate or thwart mobility at the global level. Here, the Canadian immigration office in Ghana serves as an external border control and regulation site. As Lahav and Guiraudon (2000) have discussed more generally, the relationship that would be visitors and immigrants have with their host country is determined beforehand in their countries of origin through visa acquisition procedures.

A second experience provided me with some insights into the difference between the U.S. and Canadian border regulation systems as they operate in their respective embassies in Ghana. This experience was with regard to my husband. He was supposed to visit me in December 2002. He had gone to the U.S. embassy in Ghana previously and had been given a visitor's visa. The next day when he went to the Canadian embassy however, he was refused. He was given the same reasons as above; he didn't have economic or family ties to Ghana. The differential treatment by the U.S. and Canadian embassies challenges many Canadians perceptions- specifically the view that Canadian border regulation is more open than that of the U.S. Unfortunately my husband's experience shows that when it comes to border control issues, the US can be less restrictive (at least in Ghana) than Canada.

Such difficulties in the acquisition of travel documents, according to Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002) are part of new surveillance measures introduced by many western societies. They have noted that the emphasis on security in the western world has escalated immigration policies that combine intensified policing at the border with tougher and strenuous visa acquisition processes at immigrants' countries of origin with the aim of avoiding the admission of 'undesirable' migrants or visitors (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002).

My third and related example concerns a more 'on-the-ground' form of regulation at another external border site – in this case an airport. In September 2002, while I was in transit in Germany, I experienced another kind of border regulation, this time by a private actor - the airline carrier. After waiting for almost eleven hours at the Frankfurt airport, I received a brutal shock when we were about to embark the plane. The airline official at the airport was checking passports and tickets. The queue seemed to be going smoothly until it came to my turn. I gave my papers (passport and ticket) but then after looking at it for about two minutes, the facial expression of the official changed. She looked up and asked: 'why are you coming from Ghana but your visa is from Buffalo?' I had to wait for another five minutes while my visa was scrutinized to ascertain its authenticity. My reaction? I felt anger, toward the immigration official, the regulation system, and most importantly I was left wondering why she didn't stop all the white people who went before me.

The action of the airline official reflects what Lahav and Guiraudon refer to as 'private actors' in border control policies (2000). While they are not border officials or immigration representatives of the Canadian government, under a memorandum of understanding governing international air transportation, airlines take on the role of sorting out 'legal' passengers from 'illegal' ones (Lahav and Guiraudon 2000). Thus, while their role is to provide air transportation

services, they also act as ‘border’ control and regulation agents for states. The above experiences provide me with some insight into the impact of border regulation and how it may operate to differentiate by race and nationality at various sites.

In this project, the workings of facilitation and constraint are explored through an analysis of ten interviews with people who had spent a substantial portion of their childhood (at least 5 years) in a Canadian border community and who were at the time of the research between the ages of 19 and 25. Because most of my respondents were white working to upper middle class Canadians, much of my focus is on how differentiation and inequality at the Canada/U.S. border were experienced and perceived, understood and legitimated by relatively privileged people.

It is my intention that this study will add to the academic literature on border studies. I also envisage that this study will help inform policy makers on issues of border regulation and control and maybe lead to less discriminatory border regulation and control at the U.S./Canada border.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter one, I review various literatures on globalization and borders, including the ‘securitization of migration’ in Europe and at the U.S./Mexico border. This is followed by a discussion of the current changes at the U.S./Canada border as well as a brief history of Canadian immigration. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the concepts of racialization, whiteness as privilege and the racialization of crime – concepts that emerged as helpful for my analysis.

In chapter two I outline the methodology used in the thesis. Specifically, I review literature on the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative interviewing and discuss the significance of my social location as a researcher using some of the literature on power relations

between the researchers and the researched. I also describe the recruitment process, sample size, and other characteristics.

Two interviews are used in chapter three as case studies. I use these case studies to explore and juxtapose the border crossing experiences and perceptions of two differently socially positioned people as a way of gaining insights that are then pursued in the analysis of the remaining eight interviews. Looking carefully at these first two interviews, I explore how differently positioned people may experience border crossing in different and unequal ways.

In chapter four, the experiences and perceptions of an additional eight interviewees are used to further explore the experiences and perceptions of the relatively privileged at the border. These accounts point to a number of issues. I am interested in the perception by some respondents and denial by others that racism and criminalization are factors that influence border crossing and regulation. As well, I examine how some respondents legitimize differential treatment through the discourse of securitization.

Finally, I revisit the larger issues presented at the beginning, arguing that in spite of globalization and arguments relating to free flow of goods and services across borders, people experience border crossing differently and unequally. Moreover, while often aware of differential treatment based on external factors such as physical appearance, and especially race, many relatively privileged border crossers may not challenge such treatment. The apparent acceptability of this kind of differential treatment may have increased rather than decreased in the post September 11, 2001 period.



## **CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

As mentioned, this research project is informed by some of the recent literature on globalization. In this chapter, I review some of the literature on globalization and its linkage to borders and border studies. I also examine the 'securitization of migration' with an emphasis on the European context and the U.S./Mexico border. Further, I discuss current changes at the U.S./Canada border as well as provide a brief history of Canadian immigration. The chapter concludes with a discussion of racialization, whiteness as privilege and the racialization of crime.

### **Globalization and Borders**

Inda and Rosaldo describe globalization as an 'intensification of global interconnectedness' (2002:5). While global linkages have long histories, they suggest that more recently the 'radical acceleration in the flows of capital, people, goods, images and ideologies ...across the face of the globe [have] brought even the most remote parts of the world in contact with metropolitan centers' (Inda & Rosaldo 2002:5).

According to Inda and Rosaldo, the processes of globalization have intensified both mobility and cultural flow 'through which the spaces of the globe are becoming increasingly intertwined' (2002:2). They point out that these transfers have led to an intensification of global interrelationships 'suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages and persistent cultural interaction and exchange' (2002:2). Inda and Rosaldo also note that past and present forces of globalization make it 'unreasonable to think of culture in localized terms, or as the natural property of spatially circumscribed populations' (2002:11). They argue that the influx of foreign culture for example, through films, music and media (both print and electronic)

is so immense that one can no longer think of a distinct culture in any country (Inda and Rosaldo 2002).

The shrinking of the world into what has been called a 'global village' is facilitated in part by technological advancements in telecommunication and internet connectivity that facilitate global transfers of information, capital, goods, images and ideologies etc. According to Harvey, one result is that time and space are no longer the determining factors for information reaching people across the globe creating what he refers to as 'time and space compression' (1989)

According to Wilson and Donnan (1998), in an era of globalization, the study of national borders and borderlands can illuminate something of these changing processes. Borders serve as points of geo-political demarcation of one country from another. They mark the limits of a nation state's power, (political, economic and social). The establishment of borders is used to 'secure territories' and safeguard the 'human and national resources' within them (Wilson and Donnan 1998:9). For Wilson and Donnan (1998), borders mark relations whether harmonious or conflictual with neighboring states (1998). Wilson and Donnan contend that borders are the 'membranes' that sort out goods, wealth, information, and people declaring them either 'acceptable or unacceptable by the state' (1998:9). Borders are 'agents of a state's security and sovereignty, and a physical record of a state's past and present relations with its neighbors' (Wilson and Donnan 1998:9).

For Wilson and Donnan (1998), the debate on globalization and its effects on national borders include those who argue that national borders are becoming more open and accessible, as well as those who point to evidence of a reinforcement of national borders. The first group argues that globalization is accompanied by a shift in the nature and significance of nation states 'where state borders are (becoming) increasingly obsolete' (Wilson and Donnan 1998:1).

According to this view, in an era of globalization with its accompanying increasing transfer of images, capital, technology, and culture across borders, 'international borders are becoming so porous that they no longer fulfill their historical role as barriers to the movement of goods, ideas and people, and as markers of the extent and power of the state' (Wilson and Donnan 1998:1). According to Andreas, this process can be referred to as 'debordering' (2000:2).

In many places however, the process of 'debordering' is paradoxically combined with 'a partial rebordering in the form of enhanced policing' (Andreas 2000:2). Thus while national borders have been liberalized to facilitate economic growth, Andreas points out that they are also often becoming 'criminalized to deter those who are perceived as trespassers' through an intensification of border control policies (2000:2). The result Andreas argues is that while 'it has become intellectually fashionable to dismiss borders as increasingly irrelevant to the human experience in the so-called age of globalization' (2000:1), national borders continue to constitute social reality for most people, and borders continue to be sites of state power and influence manifested through intensified control and regulation (see also Satzewich and Wong 2003).

While scholars like Inda and Rosaldo (2002) point to a globalized world, linked through social and market relations, the process of globalization is also characterized by increased inequality. Kay and Gwynne point to a stratified positioning of the world into a 'centre-periphery' (2000:51), with poor countries in the 'periphery' tied to wealthy countries of the 'centre' through unequal trade and exchange relations. Pitts III (2002:179) points to the fact that there is empirical evidence of increased relative poverty for 'peripheral' nations. Border crossing, regulation and control reflect these wider processes of globalization and inequality.

## **Securitization of Migration**

According to Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002), rapid and dramatic changes in the latter decades of the twentieth century have affected the forms and meanings of borders in western societies. Some of the changes they refer to include increased migration and transnational flows of goods and services, facilitated by the rise of supra-national collectivities such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002). Ceyhan and Tsoukala further argue that 'these changes have ...challenged traditional structures, modified social arrangements, transformed the forces of integration and fragmentation, and accelerated the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion' (2002:21).

According to Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002), the above developments have led to anxiety about sovereignty, identity, and security in western societies. They point to intensified feelings of unease in western societies about foreigners, refugees, and immigrants. Within the context of these developments, migration is viewed as a pivotal issue, with the perception of immigrants as security threats to their host countries. As Bigo has noted, in many western countries, 'migration is increasingly interpreted as a security problem' and immigrants, foreigners, refugees are often perceived as criminals (2002:63).

Bigo argues that the security paradigm of migration is not a response to globalization and any resultant negative effects or criminal concerns but rather is the 'result of the creation of a continuum of threats and general unease in which many different actors (politicians, the police, customs and border officials among others) exchange their fears and beliefs in the process of making a risky and dangerous society' (2002:63). The term 'securitization of migration' then has been used to refer to newer debates over migration that often portray immigrants as security risks to their host countries (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, Bigo 2002, Salter 2004).

In North America and the European countries, the process of securitization has been translated into calls for new policies of surveillance and control of immigrants at both external and internal borders (Salter 2004). The external borders are constructed differently in the U.S. and Europe due to their different political and economic make up but operate along the same lines. External borders include the embassies in various countries and the geopolitical border that delineates one country from another. Internal borders include airports, seaports and other sites where migrants are scrutinized in their host country. In Europe however, due to the Schengen Agreement, the external border is made up of sites outside the Schengen perimeter as a whole instead of sites outside of individual countries.

Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002:23) have noted that despite discourses of globalization, there is in fact, increased examination of immigrants, tougher visa acquisition processes, and militarization of borders. They note increased use of database information at external borders, and extensive surveillance of immigrants at internal borders in both North America and Europe. In what follows, I outline briefly how this process of securitization has played out in the European Union, as well as at the U.S./Mexico, and the U.S./Canada borders.

## **Europe**

Prior to the construction of the Schengen area in Europe in 1990, different border regulatory systems existed for the Western, Central, and Eastern Europe due to their different political and economic arrangements. In Western Europe, regulatory system at border crossings resulted in persons and their belongings being scrutinized at militarized national border posts. Also, tight visa acquisition processes existed at external borders of the individual countries, residence and work permits were required of temporary visitors, and frequent inspections were

conducted at work places to detect illegal immigrants. Anderson further argues that the regulatory processes were structured in ways that reflected 'a particular view of state sovereignty in which only citizens had rights' (2000:17).

Up until the 1980s Central Europe (which included countries like East Germany and Poland among others) had the most closed borders. Countries within this region had fortified frontiers and their borders patrolled by armed guards and dogs (Anderson 2000). As Anderson (2000) has noted, greater control of citizens in Central Europe was evident in that while travel was easier for tourists, travel restrictions were placed on citizens, and in extreme cases, exit visas were required before citizens could travel outside their nations.

According to Anderson (2000), in pre-Schengen communist Eastern Europe (including countries like Russia, Ukraine, and Croatia), border control systems were tight and oppressive. He notes that the oppressive nature of border control was followed by a brief period of free movement of people after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc (Anderson 2000:19). However, there was a return to tight border control system due to fears expressed by governments of Western Europe about the 'the possibility of a mass movement of people' to Western Europe.

This changed as negotiations for the Schengen Agreement started in 1985. By 1996 all members of the European Union had signed the agreement with the exception of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The Schengen agreement sought among other things to harmonize economic cooperation and the dismantling of borders among its member states. With the construction of the Schengen area, a new border system emerged aimed at addressing concerns about the 'practicality of border controls' and fears with regard to internal and external security (Anderson 2000:20). The new border system aimed at dismantling travel barriers and

facilitating the flow of goods and people within the Schengen countries. To protect their collective security, the Schengen countries created a common database, the Schengen Information System, where information about criminals, including illegal immigrants, refugees, and drug dealers was shared.

The Schengen border system has been criticized for a number of reasons. For example, the Schengen Agreement is viewed by some as being repressive because it:

Encourages governments to take an unnecessarily harsh line with clandestine immigrants; ...it tends to criminalize immigrants and asylum seekers because they are entered in the same database as drug dealers, arms traffickers, and other 'real' criminals; ...it encourages racist attitudes because most of the immigrants it aims to keep out are non-white from poor countries (Anderson 2000: 22).

The process whereby people from countries outside the Schengen area are excluded from this enhanced movement within its territory by tight and bureaucratic visa acquisition procedures further creates a sense of inclusion for Schengen members and exclusion for non-Schengen members (Vachudova 2000).

It must be noted that while the internal borders within the Schengen area are perceived as more permeable now (at least to citizens of member states), 'public opinion remains overwhelmingly in favour of tight control of immigration', and the discourse of securitization continues to be a primary focus (Anderson 2000:23). Within the Schengen area, tight external security and immigration control have been legitimated and strongly enforced, as any admission of a person to one Schengen country means an open door to all the other countries (Salter 2004).

In the case of Europe then, the Schengen Agreement provides evidence of a bordering of a region against dangerous 'others' especially those from the south or third world.

### **U.S./Mexico Border**

Studies of the U.S./Mexico border in particular have emphasized the dynamics of a first world and third world dividing line. In his study of the U.S./Mexico border, Lugo (2000) argues that the U.S./Mexico border marks a divide between 'core' and 'periphery' countries.

Bandy (2000) notes that the U.S./Mexico border consists of two sides that divide one country with a higher standard of living from the other. Bandy sees the U.S./Mexico border as a 'space defined by successive imperial wars and economic transgressions, and by a process of gate keeping that selectively regulates the flow of people, culture, and capital between members of the core and periphery of the world system' (2000:3).

As Lugo (2000) and Heyman (1999) point out in their studies of the U.S./Mexico border, the U.S. border officials perceive Mexicans, especially those of the working class as undesirable border crossers and often thwart their efforts to cross the border into the U.S. Thus people, especially young adults from Mexico are seen as an economic burden and as socially undesirable by the U.S. government (Heyman 1999).

What pertains at the U.S./Mexico border in terms of differential treatment of border crossers then can be linked to a broader world system of unequal 'core/periphery' relations between the North and South. Within this broad divide, there are other axes of inequality. For example, in his study of the U.S./Mexico border, Lugo (2000) points to a seemingly easy border crossing by people who are light skinned, of upper or middle class background and are English



speakers as compared with those who are dark skinned, of working class status and are non-English speakers.

Lugo (2000) argues that in general, people do not move across national borders nearly as effortlessly as capital, commodities or ideas. The process of gate keeping has been of specific interest to scholars such as Lugo (2000) and Heyman (1999) both of whom have looked carefully at the dynamics of inspections and regulation at the U.S./Mexico border and noted how exclusionary practices are enforced at this border by officials who keep out undesirables from the U.S. Lugo (2000) points to the way in which border crossers are differentiated into 'desirable' and 'undesirable' categories based on nationality, race, and class.

As indicated above, Lugo argues that 'skin color identification is the first domain of border inspections' at the U.S./Mexico border (2000:360). The skin color inspection is geared towards 'the social taste and preference for lighter skin and the respective inverse for darker skin' both in Mexico and at the U.S./Mexico border (Lugo 2000:360). The preference for lighter skin-colored people translates into a more rigorous inspection and regulation for people of color.

Along with skin colour, there are other bases for differentiation. For example, in order for a Mexican to cross the U.S./Mexico border, he or she must have valid documents as well as be able to speak the English language (Lugo 2000). He emphasizes that not everyone manages to cross the border. As Lugo points out, 'those who do not have legal papers of residence, ...are dark skinned and do not speak English at all' experience more difficulty and/or are stopped at the border (2000:358).

The policy of differentiation and exclusion is thus practiced not only along the lines of colour, but also residential status and language. In addition, occupational status is critical. Lugo writes that the ability to resist rigorous and sometimes embarrassing inspections also depends on

the 'structural (mainly economic positionality) of those being inspected' (Lugo 2000:367).

Those with jobs in their countries of origin are able to confront border inspectors while those who are jobless and may be crossing to get jobs are vulnerable to border inspectors (Lugo 2000). As most Mexicans who attempt to cross the U.S./Mexico border are in fact jobless, most are therefore subject to inspection and are unable to resist.

Lugo draws on his study of the U.S./Mexico border to argue that scholars interested in borders need to recognize that most border crossings are constituted by 'inspection stations' that transform the border from being just a demarcation between two countries to being a militarized zone and a site of a state's power represented by the inescapable presence of border officials who wield coercive powers (2000:355). Border officials have discretionary powers and the final say in deciding who crosses the border and they 'inspect, monitor, and survey what goes in and out [of the border] in the name of class, race, [language], and nation' (Lugo 2000:355). In the case of the U.S./Mexico border Lugo argues, inspections categorize people into 'desirable' and 'undesirables' and in this dichotomous categorization, there is 'no third element, no tolerance for ambiguity' (2000:358).

In essence, Lugo (2000) is suggesting that one can gain greater understanding of border crossings by focusing on inspection stations and how they shape the experiences of border crossers. The underlying rationale for the exclusionary practices is the possible risk involved in admitting people from other countries into the U.S. Thus while agreeing with the idea of a globalized world, the U.S. government adheres to it in so far as the perceived risks to U.S. nationals are minimal.

Heyman (1999) looks at how the U.S. government stigmatizes, monitors, and arrests Mexican citizens both at the U.S./Mexico border and in the U.S. for drug law violations through

the use of computer-based technologies. He asserts that the result is that an increasingly large number of young Mexicans are 'permanently earmarked for suspicion and denial of legitimate opportunities to cross the boundary or immigrate to the U.S.' (1999:430). Vigorous laws and border inspections through the use of advanced technologies are used to regulate Mexican border crossers ostensibly to ensure that only Mexicans who do not pose a risk are admitted into the U.S.

According to Heyman then, the U.S./Mexico border is a site of power and domination where the U.S. government's authority is made manifest through surveillance and control of the movement of people across the border through the use of database technology:

We encounter on the border not just the technology of databases, and not just the policy issue of border 'control' good or bad. We discover...the birth and development of a new locus and means of domination, born of the mating between moral panics about foreigners and drugs, and a well-funded and expert bureaucracy (Heyman 1999:431).

According to Heyman (1999) the fear of criminal aliens, and drug trafficking is transformed into a high tech operation where information about peoples' past records are stored in databases. He explains that border crossers and immigrants are criminalized through a link to their past acts or omissions which may not have any relation to their present behavior or situation (Heyman 1999). To Heyman, the U.S. criminalization of Mexican citizens is 'particularly problematic...and the accumulation of unexpungeable criminalizing records for a large number of young people defies simple value judgment' as individuals' past criminal records are used as the basis for not being allowed access into the U.S. (1999:437). Heyman points out that storing

information about people's past records is a 'characteristic of modern expertise of creating and tracking a marked population...efficiently labeled as devils...[thus] isolating their dangerous qualities from the self-disciplined and sanctimonious public' forbidding them from establishing a changed moral or social character (Heyman 1999:431).

Surveillance through database information shapes the interaction between border crossers and border officials as the concept of exclusion is legitimized in the name of defending the border. Excluding people through the use of their past records becomes a legitimizing force in deciding who gets to cross the border.

### **U.S./Canada Border**

This research project is informed by the scholarly literature summarized above but its focus is on the U.S./Canada border and borderlands. The insights from the work on U.S./Mexico border can be useful for analyzing recent developments at the U.S./Canada border but while Canada, like Mexico is part of NAFTA, the U.S./Canada border is between two first world nation states, creating somewhat different processes.

The U.S./Canada border relationship can be traced to their shared economic and trade relationship. They have experienced close economic integration for a long time. The inception of the U.S./Canada Free Trade Agreement in 1994 accelerated this process to greater heights. The events of September 11, 2001 however, have translated into continuous and fast changing policies aimed at partially and selectively rebordering the Canada/U.S. border.

After the events of September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., many Americans were concerned as allegations were made that some of the people involved in the attack may have entered the U.S. from Canada. This fear was sustained by the arrests of people in the U.S.

who were alleged to have crossed the border from Canada, which was deemed by some in the U.S. as a safe 'haven for terrorists' (Gabriel and MacDonald 2003:224). An editorial in the Canadian Niagara Falls Review noted the swiftness with which U.S. politicians pointed 'the finger at what they saw as lax in Canadian immigration policies that allowed these undesirables to make their way into the U.S.' (Niagara Falls Review 23 April 2003: A4).

Since September 2001, the U.S. government has been implementing an intensified regulation of the U.S./Canada border in response to the perceived security threat. According to Macklin (2001) these changes are aimed at tightening the U.S. border in order to keep out certain foreigners, as they are perceived as threats to the security of U.S. nationals. Caher (2002) points out some of the ways in which regulations had already changed drastically from the pre-September 11 2001 period; 'a year ago, travelers were examined only by Canadian authorities when they crossed into Canada and only by U.S. authorities when they entered the United States. Now, the Americans are looking closely at those leaving as well as entering the United States' (2002:1). Along with the double and more rigorous inspection and regulation of border crossers, other forms of regulation include intensified pre-screening of U.S. airborne travelers at Pearson International airport in Toronto before they embark on their journey (Macklin 2001).

The effects of intensified screening especially at land borders have at times led to increased traffic congestion, which have fuelled tensions between the quest to facilitate the free flow of goods and services while tightening border control. The solution is widely believed to lie in increasing better risk management technologies that focus resources on high-risk traffic while expediting passage of low risk traffic. In Canada, these concerns led to the setting up of a border contingency plan. Its aim among other things has been to 'monitor border delays,

mitigate delays to commercial and passenger traffic, set up command and communication posts at all critical border crossings, [and] assist bridge and tunnel operators to set up pre-processing stations for truckers' (Niagara Falls Review 17 March 2003).

Salter has noted that in post September 11, 2001 era, 'U.S. public and governmental opinion has shifted from viewing the U.S./Canada border as 'low risk' to one of 'high risk' (2004:83). The U.S. government as part of its border control and regulatory measures, also works to distinguish between 'high and low risk' borders posts, countries, and border crossers.

The intensity of border regulation in the post September 11, 2001 era has been particularly heightened for people of color and males from 'high-risk' countries. For example in the U.S., nationals from certain countries perceived as terrorist zones or sponsors of terrorist activities like Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen have been identified as 'high risk' border crossers (Salter 2004).

The new U.S. immigration policy now requires males from the 'high-risk' countries to fill out additional forms when applying for the U.S. entry visa (Salter 2004). The discretionary powers given to border officials to search, detain, and arrest people perceived as 'high risk' at the border intensifies the difficulties for certain people. Salter notes that quite often, determination of high risk border crossers is based on people's passports and their visible appearance, a situation he considers problematic since 'guilt [or the propensity to commit terrorist acts] is not written on the skin' of a person (2004:87). Here we see exclusionary measures based on nationality and race. Critics like Caher (2002) and Macklin (2001) have pointed to the ways in

which post September 2001 changes in border governance have intensified differentiating treatment at the U.S./Canada border.

In Canada, Adelman (2002) notes that prior to September 11, 2001, there were concerns about refugees and security issues. The September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. intensified these concerns and led to the passing of bills such as Bill C-11, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (this bill was drafted in 2000 and enacted in 2002), and Bill C-17, the Public Safety Act of 2002. Of particular significance is how these bills were interpreted in security terms. Other measures undertaken by the Canadian government included increased cooperation, coordination, and sharing of intelligence information with their U.S. counterparts (Adelman 2002).

### **History and Politics of Canada's Immigration Policies**

While much recent discussion is focused on the U.S. initiated efforts to distinguish between high and low risk border crossers, Canadian immigration policies have also over the years been guided by explicit policies which aimed at 'filtering' potential immigrants into desirable and undesirable categories (Macklin 2001). In this section, I outline some of the historical patterns of filtration. Immigration policies have been used over time to determine who gets to cross and who gets restrained at the Canadian border. These immigration policies are marked by shifting constructions of 'race', 'national security', and the 'criminal' or 'dangerous' immigrant.

Canadian immigration policies have over the years moved from being explicitly prejudicial and discriminatory to less overtly discriminatory. Immigration first became an important concern in Canada in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jakubowski points out that the term 'race'

(1997:11). She points out that during the period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, race in Canadian immigration was 'associated with the explicit white Canadian policy' (Jakubowski 1997:11). This policy was based on a nationality preference system that favored Northern European immigrants and was meant to preserve the white nature of Canada (Satzewich and Wong 2003). Northern Europeans, specifically British people, were 'preferred' on the basis of their alleged resemblance to Canadians in terms of race, physical appearance and culture. They were deemed more 'desirable' because it was assumed that they could easily be assimilated into Canadian society (Jakubowski 1997).

Section 38(c) of the Canadian Immigration Act of 1910 for example, included explicit reference to 'race' and nationality in a 1919 amendment. The relevant section stated that 'undesirable immigrants who could be denied entry included:

Any nationality or race of immigrants of any specified class or occupation, by reason of any economic, industrial or other conditions temporarily existing in Canada or because such immigrants are deemed unsuitable having regard to the climatic, industrial, social, educational, labour...or because such immigrants are deemed undesirable owing to their peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, methods of holding property and because of their probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry (as cited in Jakubowski 1997:16).

With this Immigration Act, discriminatory policies which legalized differential treatment and exclusion of people based on race, became enshrined in Canadian law. The breadth of this



legislation gave immigration officials 'wide discretion to exclude almost any prospective immigrant on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin or creed' (Henry et al 2000:73).

Canadian immigration policies were directed to favour those whose character was seen to resemble the British culture and also to suit the market demand for labour. Indeed immigration policies were often reworked in response to perceived labour needs including in some cases the admission of people who were previously considered as 'undesirable'. These people included other 'white' immigrants like Ukrainians. When the expansion of the preferred immigrants to cover other whites did not meet labor needs, it became obvious that the strict immigration policies had to be changed to remove explicit barriers to the immigration of those previously deemed 'undesirable' such as the Southern Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, and people of African descent. Canadian immigration policies thus have shifted in part to accommodate people who were hitherto 'undeserving' immigrants in response to changing labor needs (Bolaria and Li 1988, Henry et al 2000).

Along with changing labour needs, further pressure from international bodies like the United Nations and the Commonwealth meant Canada had to abandon its racial orientation or at least make it less explicit (Hawkins 1989). An example of the shift toward a non-racial immigration policy can be seen in the 1967 introduction of a 'points system' that assessed would-be immigrants according to: 'education and training, occupational demand; occupational skill; age; arranged employment; knowledge of French or English; relatives; and employment opportunities in area of destination', as criteria for entry into Canada. (Hawkins 1989:405).

Section 3(f) of Immigration Act of 1976 went further to adopt an explicitly anti-discrimination language noting that:

Any person who seeks admission to Canada on either a permanent or temporary basis is subject to standards of admission that do not discriminate on grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or sex (quoted in Hawkins 1989:426).

Under Bill C-86 introduced in 1992 immigrants were placed under three categories: those joining their immediate families, those included in the immigration quota for the year and independent applicants (Jakubowski 1997). While this bill was meant to ensure clarity in the immigration requirements and process for individual applicants, great emphasis was placed on the specific skills of applicants. The more skilled he or she was, the greater the chances of immigrating into Canada. This emphasis made the ongoing role of economic and labour needs in shaping Canadian immigration policies very clear.

Although Canadian immigration policies have shifted from being overtly prejudicial to overtly anti-discriminatory, critics such as Jakubowski (1997) have argued that although absent in written law, discrimination continues to exist and shapes the day-to-day workings of Canadian immigration policy and practice (Jakubowski 1997).

Aside race and labour needs, Pratt and Valverde (2002:137) have also noted that Canadian immigration policies and border control practices are 'increasingly being governed through crime'. They assert that 'criminality has always been an exclusionary category' in immigration and border control policies as well as being one of the guiding principles or rationale for restraining people from entering into Canada (Pratt and Valverde 2002:137). Further, they argue that criminality has 'been used at different moments in Canadian history to exclude or deport dangerous foreigners for various combinations of moral, racial and ideological reasons' (Pratt and Valverde 2002:137).

These authors note that 'during the 1970s and 1980s, the exclusionary categories of criminality supplemented and merged with national security exclusions encompassing ever increasing varieties of criminality, including for example, terrorism, war, crimes and organized crime' (Pratt and Valverde 2002:137). The discourses surrounding the criminal and dangerous foreign national who were believed to pose a threat to life and social systems of Canada entailed a claim that there was a need for increased security and border control measures (Pratt and Valverde 2002).

Over the past few years, Satzewich and Wong (2003) have noted the various changes that have occurred and initiatives taken by the US and Canadian governments especially after September 11, 2001. They note that in Canada, there was increased policing and militarization of the U.S./Canada border facilitated by the allocation of federal funds for technology for intelligence purposes, and to agencies like the Canada Customs, Citizenship and Immigration, and Transport Canada. As they have pointed out, these initiatives were aimed at 'fast-tracking a permanent resident card for new immigrants; intensified security screening of refugee claimants; [and] increased detention and deportation capacities' (Satzewich and Wong 2003:367).

Satzewich and Wong (2003) further make reference to the Anti-Terrorism Act, Bill C-36, passed in December 2001 and the impact it was likely to have on border crossers. They noted that this particular bill 'will undoubtedly affect the militarization of Canadian borders and Canadian space, due to the increased powers and tools of investigation provided to law enforcement agencies, which provide for potentially serious infringements on civil liberties and increased racial profiling' (2003:368).

Macklin (2001: 393) has noted that the lack of any concrete definition of terrorism is bound to lead to infringements on the rights of citizens, as the term terrorism is too vague a

concept to 'withstand constitutional scrutiny'. Macklin (2001) argues that in effect, the Anti-Terrorism Act has done to citizens what the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act had long been doing to non-citizens of Canada.

Macklin refutes the often-held notion that Canadian immigration policies aim at enhancing diversity as a national value by noting that to a very large extent, economic considerations are in fact the main focus while policies such as Bill C-36 'enlarges the scope for state practices that marginalize and stigmatize through heightened surveillance, harassment, ethnic profiling, and the like' (2001:398).

The aforementioned discussions have pointed to immigration policies in Canada and the underlying linkage to economic considerations as well as race and racism. It also noted the dynamism of border control and regulation as state powers and policies affect and are in turn affected by immigration, border control, and regulatory mechanisms.

### **Racialization, Whiteness as Privilege, and the Racialization of Crime**

As previously discussed, Lugo (2000) argues that at the U.S./Mexico border, skin color shapes the experience of border crossing and regulation in so far as those who are darker skinned have more difficulty in crossing, are more likely to be inspected, and/or denied entry into the U.S. The process of exclusion and inclusion based on race at this particular border can be understood within the broader context of racial discourses in the U.S. Omi and Winant note that historically, the U.S. state is 'racially structured', 'inherently racial', and involved in racial formation processes (1999:292). They note in particular, politics in the U.S. and the increasing demands for egalitarian policies on the one hand and privileges on the other lead to conflictual and polarization of people based on race. Further, Omi and Winant (1999) note that state

institutions, which are supposed to cater for the needs of all persons within the U.S., are racially structured and operate along racial lines, thereby deepening the polarization. The issue of race, its associated concerns, and its impact on the contemporary U.S. society can be summed up in the words of Winant:

Race continues to play its designated role of crystallizing all the fundamental issues in U.S. society. As always, we articulate our anxieties in racial terms: wealth and poverty, crime and punishment, gender and sexuality, nationality and citizenship, culture and power, are all articulated in the U.S. primarily through race (1997).

In addressing the issue of race and racism, it is important to note how this concept is being applied in this thesis. In particular, this concept is being used against the backdrop that race being a social construction, is not constant; there are inherent complexities as well as differences. The process of racialization and racial formation changes and takes on different forms depending on the particular society or group and within specific historical moments. In this vein, Omi and Winant argue that the concept of racialization and 'race must be understood as occupying varying degrees of centrality in different state institutions and at different historical moments' (1999:293). Further, scholars like Ansley (1997) and McIntosh (1997) have noted how issues of racial privileging and exclusions can be fully understood through such merging or intersectionality of race with class and/or gender.

In terms of border crossing and regulation and the process of facilitation and constraints based on race, the theoretical work on whiteness can provide another way in which to understand the phenomenon described by authors such as Lugo (2000). It allows for a more critical analysis

not only of racist exclusions but inclusions based on whiteness as privilege. This insight is important for this project's analysis of experiences of border crossing and regulation at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. I am interested in an exploration of how whiteness as a privilege may translate into enhanced movement across borders and how white people may internalize and enjoy this privilege but may often deny its reality.

Mahoney (1997) however notes that whiteness like other racial identities and constructions is not constant but subject to change within certain defined contexts. McIntosh (1997) has noted that the category 'white' or 'whiteness' can be problematic unless it is unpacked to reflect its inherent dynamics. She notes that whiteness, as a racial category is a fluid concept. The fluidity of this concept becomes obvious when one realizes that even within this broad category, there are various degrees of privilege. As McIntosh (1997) also argues that the experiences of one 'white' person may differ from the other depending on such identities as gender, age, social class etc (see also MacKinnon 1997). 'White' privilege at the border then is not a given phenomenon but needs to be understood as both dynamic and complex. This is important for my own analysis of accounts of border crossings.

Frankenberg (2000) argues that whiteness has three dimensions. It is 'a location of structural advantage, of race privilege, refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed...and is a standpoint or location from which white people view themselves and others' (Frankenberg 2000:447). In another U.S. study, McIntosh (1997) points out that in racial discourse, whiteness is an advantage, which categorizes people of other races as the 'other' and puts them at a disadvantage. She emphasizes that while many 'whites' benefit from this structural positioning; they are 'taught not to recognize white privilege' but to see it as 'natural' or the norm which guides all social arrangements (McIntosh 1997:291).

Another interesting aspect of (white) privilege is institutionalized in society through ideological control thus making it invisible to the privileged person. As Mahoney notes 'privileged identity requires reinforcement and maintenance, but not seeing the mechanisms that reinforce and maintain privilege' (1997:307). Such institutionalization of privilege is blurred by stereotypical assumptions about 'white' people on one hand and racialized 'others' on another hand. As illustrative of this argument, McIntosh (1997) points out that while certain acts or omissions (like lateness to work, tax fraud, and traffic offences etc) by 'white' people may be viewed as part of everyday life occurrences, when perpetrated by 'non-whites' they are attributed to or seen as inherent in their race or ethnicity.

An example of the above phenomenon can be seen in the way crime is linked to race and ethnicity in the media. According to Henry and Tator (2002) the media plays a large role in this merging. They note in particular the way the media portrays crimes committed by people of colour, especially blacks. Henry and Tator argue that in the U.S. and Canada, the media portrays blacks as having 'criminal propensities', as being 'criminally disposed' and 'enemies of society' (2002:164).

According to Henry and Tator (2002) such media portrayals of blacks are done in three ways. First, through the use of 'racially coded language and images' (2002:164) where blacks are portrayed as dangerous people who do not deserve public sympathy and cannot be assimilated into the broader society. Secondly, they point out that more media attention is given to 'white' victims than 'non-white' victims. Such racialization of crime through media reporting impacts on fears and anxieties in the general public. As the public perception of crime is structured around often misleading media reports, the media actively 'produces, reproduces, and reinforces racist stereotyping' in society (Henry and Tator 2002:167).

Perhaps most important for my research is Henry and Tator's (2002) argument regarding how the Canadian media focuses attention on how foreigners allegedly bring their criminal activities to Canada. As Henry and Tator note, 'once it is demonstrated that ...crime is imported, the source of the problem can be pinpointed at the border, ... and crime prevention becomes synonymous with immigration controls' e.g. preventing criminals from crossing the border or deporting those who are already in the country (2002:195). Because it is often difficult to identify criminals for deportation, much focus is given to prevention, which is translated into a process of rebordering. As Henry and Tator (2002) note, the process of rebordering ends up creating difficulties and constraints for foreigners, especially people of colour at the border.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined the various literatures on borders and some of the discourses that shape border control and regulation. The literature on borders, including securitization of migration, racialization, white privilege, and the racialization of crime are essential to this thesis in a number of ways. According to Salter (2004, securitization discourses help to explain the increasing rebordering at the U.S./Canada border, for example, as distinctions between 'high and low-risk' border crossers earmark certain categories of people for intensified regulation and control while privileging others. The work on racialization and white privilege helps to illuminate such processes, while also pointing to the complexities of racialization and specifically 'whiteness' and its articulation with other variables. These literatures will guide the analysis of the accounts of the experiences and perceptions of respondents used in this thesis.



## **CHAPTER TWO : METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This research aims to explore people's accounts of their experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation in one border region, the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. The project is informed by recent literature on borders and globalization that points to how on the one hand the transfer of information, capital, and technology across borders is enhanced, yet the movement of people across borders is both facilitated and constrained in complex ways through border regulation. The accounts of border crossing analyzed here are drawn from semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with people who have lived on the Canadian side of the U.S./Canada border.

The research project is part of a larger ongoing SSHRC-funded project titled "Border Kids": Globalization, Nationalism and Children's Culture. When I joined this project, 21 interviews had been completed. My goal was to augment these with additional interviews aimed at exploring the experiences and perceptions of people who had lived near and crossed the Canada/U.S. border at Niagara.

In this chapter, I outline the methodology used in this thesis. Specifically, I review literature on the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative interviewing and discuss the significance of my social location as a researcher using some of the literature on power relations between the researcher and the researched and its impact on the research. I also describe the recruitment process, sample size, and the sample itself.

### **Face-to-Face Semi-Structured Interviewing**

The existing project and my own work adopted semi-structured or qualitative interviewing as the method best suited for the study. In the following section I explore some of the literature on interviewing.

According to Mason, the term qualitative interviewing is used to 'refer to in-depth semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing' (1996:38). It is a form of conversation that has a purpose. The basic premise here is that knowledge and data 'are generated via the interaction, because either the interviewee(s), or the interaction itself, are the data sources' (Mason: 1996:38). The semi-structured interview had a number of advantages given my research interests and I outline them below.

Interviews can take three basic forms. These are structured, semi-structured and non-structured interviews. Structured interviews follow a 'predetermined and standardized list of questions' (Dunn 2000:52). The questions are always asked in the same way and in the same order to all research participants. Semi-structured interviews are similar to structured interviews in so far as they also follow a predetermined set of questions, however they also allow some flexibility in the way the interviewer and interviewee address issues. In unstructured interviews the researcher does not have a strict set of questions to follow (Dunn 2000). The informant directs the conversation but the researcher uses various prompts to keep the flow of conversation going.

In my research, I was interested in collecting information on people's experiences and perceptions and I felt that it would be difficult for me to capture the dynamics of such experiences using a structured form of interview. I decided then to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews, making use of a question guide that covered the basic themes of my research

topic (See Appendix A). The question guide had already been developed for the larger project but slight modifications were made to the question guide to suit this thesis. These included added questions that emphasized experiences of border regulation and control. In all, the questions were open-ended enough for me to pursue prompts that came up as informants narrated their experiences.

In taking this approach, I made the epistemological assumption that through the interactive process of interviewing, participants could share their experiences and perceptions, in this case, of border crossing and regulation. As Mason suggests, a fruitful way to generate data on experiences is 'to interact with people, to talk to them, to listen to them, and to gain access to their accounts and articulations' (1996:39).

Mason emphasizes how 'knowledge and evidence are contextual, situational and interactional' (1996:39). Social situations and conditions do not occur in a vacuum. People's actions or behaviours are mostly relationally situated and occur within a given context. In using semi-structured face-to-face interviews to illuminate experiences of border crossing and regulation, I made an ontological supposition that 'people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of their social reality' which my research was intended to explore (Mason 1996:39). The stories that the research participants shared with me concerning border crossing and regulation reflected their lived experiences and perceptions or those of their relatives and friends.

Using semi-structured interviewing has the advantage of being more fluid and allows respondents to take the conversation in different directions. It also allows informants and the interviewer to ask for clarification of issues that may not be initially understood. The researcher is in a position to ask for clarity or pursue particular issues in order to increase insight and

understanding. This provides the interviewer with the opportunity to know where respondents place more emphasis and which issues they deem to be more important or relevant. It also enables the interviewer to investigate complex behaviours and motivations behind informants' responses as well as enriches data collection due to the diversity of opinions and experiences that are gathered during the interview process (Mason 1996). For example in one of the interviews, the interviewee was constantly making reference to power relations, issues of civil rights, and social justice. It was obvious that his responses were influenced by his interest in political activism.

The face-to-face aspect of interviewing also has the advantage of allowing the interviewer to pick up on nonverbal behaviours and cues that come up during the interview. These behaviours may in turn allow the interviewer to prompt the respondent into a deeper discussion or perhaps steer away from more sensitive issues. Mason (1996:46) contends that interviews help the researcher to be 'tuned into body language and to demeanor so that you are recognizing when people become bored, tired, and angry, or embarrassed'. Thus experiences of border crossing and regulation that informants perceived as personal, traumatic or embarrassing were not pursued unless they felt comfortable to recount them. For example, in the case of Glen (one of the interviewees discussed in chapter three), a harrowing account of his first border crossing experience out of Iran was offered voluntarily rather than in response to any pressure from the interview.

One of the additional challenges associated with face-to-face interviewing is maintaining the confidentiality of respondents. In face-to-face interviews this is difficult because the researcher knows the names and contact information of respondents. In this study pseudonyms and coding systems were used for protecting identities, but it is still problematic as the

interviewer constantly 'poses a threat to the respondent, particularly if the information is incriminating, embarrassing, or otherwise sensitive' or if it is information that readers are likely to associate with the person who gave the interview (Bailey 1987:175). In an attempt to do more to ensure anonymity, in the case of Claire and Glen (two of the interviewees discussed in chapter three), I decided not to add specific information that might reveal their identities.

Other disadvantages of interviewing as a method include the possibility that the respondents may not understand the research questions or that the experiences that they recount are misunderstood or misinterpreted by the researcher. The way questions are structured or phrased may also cause difficulties if their meaning is not clear or is ambiguous. There is also the problem of using leading questions during the interview process. If the researcher asks questions in such a manner that informants' answers are guided, this may deprive the informant of his or her agency within the interview process and/or lead to a violence of interpretation in the subsequent analysis (Mason 1996). In my initial analysis, I encountered at least one example of my own misinterpretation. In the case of one of the interviews, a respondent was recounting how often she and her family would cross the border, and in describing the purpose for these crossings she included the following statement:

...and then a friend of mine, her mother had a store in Niagara Falls, New York and we used to always go over there when she couldn't find a baby sitter (Interview 024).

My initial interpretation of the above response was that the respondent and her friend's mother were the ones babysitting some children in the U.S. My supervisor had to draw my

attention to the response again before I realized that the respondent was actually taken to the U.S. to be baby-sat, and not the other way round.

Along with basic issues of clarity are additional issues of establishing rapport. Establishing rapport is important when the research deals with potentially sensitive issues such as experiences of border crossing and regulation. I anticipated that unless respondents felt comfortable at the beginning of the interviews, they would find it difficult to recount their border crossing experiences such as being turned back at the border, or being subjected to long delays. For this research project, rapport was established at the beginning of each interview through the use of open and non-threatening questions (e.g. asking interviewees to describe themselves and where they lived etc.) that helped to put the interviewee at ease before the interview turned to more serious issues.

Dunn asserts that 'the relationship established between interviewer and informant is often critical to the collection of opinions and insights' (2000:67). He notes that while most scholars agree on the fact that good rapport and ease must be established between researcher and informant, there is no consensus as to the degree or extent to which this can be taken (Dunn 2000). Scholars like Dunn argue that while good rapport enhances the quality of information that can be elicited from informants, when carried too far or without checks, it may threaten the professionalism of the researcher, by impeding his/her ability to analyze the results (2000).

On the other hand, different arguments by scholars like Oakley (1981) emphasize the need to develop an intimate and non-threatening relationship that she argues is important between interviewer and interviewee. In my opinion, while there cannot be strict rules as to the nature of the relationship, there should be respect on my part as a researcher for informants'

views and opinions. At the same time, I have tried to develop an analytical perspective as a scholar.

### **Power and Ethics**

Rapport or the dynamics of interviewing are also influenced by the relative social locations of the researcher and the researched. Some of the literature discussing these issues is outlined below. According to Dowling (2000), an important aspect of research is the way power relations are integrally woven into the research process. England (1994) as cited by Dowling (2000) identifies three kinds of power relations into which social researchers can enter. First, reciprocal relations, where the researcher and informant are situated at relatively the same level. While this relationship does not signify the absence of power differences, there is equal cost and benefit from participating and no one turns out a loser or is exploited. Secondly, she talks of asymmetrical relationships, in which the respondents occupy 'positions of influence in comparison to the researcher' (Dowling 2000: 29). Lastly, there are situations where the researcher wields greater power than the respondents. In this situation the power that the researcher wields can be used in an exploitative manner.

In the case of my research, interviewing potentially placed me in the third category; that is, a situation where I may have had more control over the process and outcome of the research than the participants. Despite my minority status, there was still the potential of power hierarchy because of my social position as an academic and a researcher as well as the power of interpreting informants' responses.

Some feminist researchers such as Oakley (1981) have argued that the relation between researcher and informants in the research process should ideally be non-hierarchical, taking place

between two equal people. In practice though, they acknowledge power inequities and the fact that these cannot be ignored in research. They stress however that this relationship should not be exploitative but one that is mutually beneficial to both respondents and researchers.

Dowling (2000) suggests that the issue of power can enter into the research when there is a discrepancy between an informant narrating his or her story or experience and the researcher interpreting those experiences. I have given an example with regards to one interview where I had earlier on given a different interpretation to what the respondent had said about going to the U.S. to be baby-sat. While this small example is not particularly significant for the overall analysis, Dowling points out that the research process can be extremely powerful since the analysis can have 'a direct impact on people's lives' as well as on social policies (2000:29). Clearly the issue of who controls the interpretation or analysis of research data is a very important one.

Qualitative interviewing involves the researcher in trying to understand or participate in a specific social phenomenon, a situation that ends up situating the researcher and the respondent in 'different speaking positions' (Dowling 2000:29). Dowling suggests that the researcher and informants also have different intentions and social roles, as well as 'different capacities to change situations and other people' as a long-term effect of the research process (Dowling 2000:29).

Dowling (2000) argues that in doing research it is important that power is negotiated instead of either party using their more powerful positioning as a basis for exploitation. The best strategy for dealing with power relations Dunn (2000) argues is for the researcher to be aware of, understand, and respond appropriately to them as they come up in a critical and reflexive manner. Dunn (2000:52) also argues that one way of ensuring mutual benefit is through a



process where the informant's view of the world is 'valued and treated with respect'. The opportunity given informants to think and reflect on their experiences and share them with others may help validate their views as valuable and/or contribute to greater critical reflection.

As indicated earlier on, my research involved an examination of people's experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation at the U.S./Canada border. For this research project, I didn't anticipate any psychological or emotional harm to participants. The only concern was experiences that I thought respondents might consider sensitive or embarrassing and as I pointed out earlier, these were not pursued unless respondents volunteered to share them. Finally, my goal was to allow respondents to speak for themselves in the interview context, and to avoid discourses that were shaped by power hierarchy. Thus, I encouraged respondents to discuss issues they perceived important instead of telling them what was important to me.

### **Interviewing and Social Location**

I have already discussed how my own experiences with border crossing and regulation positioned me in a particular way vis-à-vis the research project. I am a 31 year old, black Ghanaian female graduate student from a lower class background. While it is difficult to know what aspects of my identity might have affected the dynamics of interviewing, I tried to remain self-conscious about the possible effects that my social location may have had on the process.

A number of scholars have done work to show the effect that various identities (age, gender, sexuality etc) of the researcher may have on research generally, and on interviewing in particular (Ladson-Billings 2000, Bailey 1987, Oakley 1981). Ladson-Billings for example argues that various forms of identities of the researcher are important in the construction of

knowledge and work to inform the researcher's 'relationship to knowledge and its production' (2000:266).

Along with positioning the researcher in a specific relationship to the research topic, such identities may also influence the dynamics of data gathering through interviews. For example, Oakley (1981) suggests that greater rapport is possible when the researcher and informant are of approximately the same age and she and others have also discussed the impact of gender, class and ethnic/racial identities.

These variables come together in complex ways in actual research projects. For example, in this particular study, the dynamics of the first two interviews (which I have used for the case studies discussed in chapter three) were different from those of later interviews. In the case of these two interviews, I had recruited one of the participants but because I was learning about how to conduct interviews, I listened while my supervisor actually conducted the interviews after which I transcribed them. In terms of these two interviews, having my supervisor, a forty-two year old racialized white upper middle class woman conducting the interviews no doubt affected the dynamics of the interview process and the way each respondent narrated their border crossing stories in ways that were different from when I did the interviews myself.

More specifically, the first interviewee whom I have called Claire was a middle class, white woman in her twenties who was a student in Sociology. This meant that her relationship with my supervisor was not only in terms of being an interviewee but also as a student in my supervisor's department (although she had never been in a class with my supervisor) and it seemed to me that this location affected the dynamics of the interview. For example, it appeared to me that Claire was keen to demonstrate her already developed sociological understanding of border crossing issues. Certainly, sometimes her interview tended to shift to a more theoretical

analysis of border crossing and regulation. Moreover, my presence during the interview may have affected the way she responded to questions about difficulties faced by immigrants and refugees at the border. For example, when asked whether she knew of any difficulties experienced by refugees or immigrants at the border, she first responded in the negative but later explained that the only stories she heard were sensationalized reports by the media. I was inclined to believe that her later explanation might have been motivated by my presence and the thought that I might have experienced difficulties myself.

The second interviewee, whom I have called Glen, was a middle class, non-white man in his twenties who did not have the professor-student relationship that Claire had with my supervisor. In this case, I have thought more about the possible ways in which my presence as a non-white person at the interview might have contributed to the way he was explicit and forthcoming with his border crossing experiences, especially those that were traumatic.

The effect that the social class of the interviewer and the interviewee may have on interview dynamics has also been discussed by a number of scholars (Oakley 1981, Douglas 1985). Bailey points out for example that in North America 'interviewers are more likely to be from the middle-class than lower class. On the other hand, lower-class people frequently serve as respondents, and perhaps are even over studied' (1987:182). In the case of this study however, this location is different and in some cases reversed since I am from a working class background while my respondents (based on the description of their parents' occupations) were from working to upper middle class.

Perhaps even more significant for my thesis is work by Ladson-Billings (2000) and Anzaldua (1987) that discusses the ways in which their ethnic or racial identity positions may be linked to specific epistemological and ontological stances. Ladson-Billings argues that when a

researcher bears a racialized minority identity, it instantly situates him/her in 'multiple consciousness and multiple jeopardy' (2000:262). The researcher is 'placed outside of the dominant paradigm' and is 'forced into an 'essentialized and totalized unit that is perceived to have little or no internal variation' (Ladson-Billings 2000: 262). In this sense, as a black researcher in North America, I am located outside of the dominant paradigm and positioned as a 'minority' scholar. Ladson-Billings suggests that such positioning creates an 'otherness' for the researcher, and can create a greater ability to acknowledge and understand outsider experiences and to challenge 'hegemonic structures' (Ladson-Billings 2000:266). With my personal biography and experiences of difficulty at the border, I found myself relating more and identifying with the border crossing experiences that Glen described.

Bailey (1987) discusses the effects that the race and ethnicity of interviewers may have on the kind of responses that respondents give during interviews. He refers to the work of Hyman (1954) who found that when non-Jewish respondents in New York were asked whether Jews had too much influence in the business sector of the U.S, the responses that were elicited varied according to the identity of the interviewer. When the interviewer was non-Jewish, respondents were more likely to state that Jews had too much influence, but such views were less likely to be expressed when the interviewer was Jewish. The above example shows the degree of interviewer effect that may influence the data received.

I anticipated that being black was bound to have an effect on the interview process in terms of the responses I received from people. I speculated that 'non-white' interviewees for example might assume that I may have gone through the same experience as they have had, thereby leading to exaggeration or selective recounting of their border experiences. On the other

hand, I speculated that 'white' respondents might have wanted to downplay the level of discrimination at the border.

At the first two interviews, the interviewees had to deal with two researchers at a time. This may have contributed to a sense of relative powerlessness on the part of the respondents. On the other hand, it is possible that having two people of different statuses present (i.e. myself and my supervisor) may have mediated this effect. It is possible for example, that my presence as a fellow student altered the dynamics in such a way as to put both student interviewees at greater ease. It is also possible that the presence of a 'white' and black researcher affected how each interviewee engaged with questions on the way people of colour experienced border crossing and regulation.

An interesting issue that came up in this research project points to the possible significance of gender. Out of the total of ten respondents, six were female and four were male. I realized when I reviewed the interview transcripts that the four males were more forthcoming in their responses, giving more detailed accounts of and opinions about their border crossing experiences. I am not sure how to interpret this finding but I am reminded of Fontana and Frey's observation that the 'sex of the interviewer and that of the respondent make a difference, as the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones' (2000:658).

Fontana and Frey (2000) refer to Oakley's claim that 'interviewing is a masculine paradigm, embedded in a masculine culture and stressing masculine traits while at the same time excluding traits as sensitivity, emotionality, and others that are culturally viewed as feminine traits' (as cited by Fontana and Frey 2000:658). One outcome of this situation Oakley suggests

Fontana and Frey (2000) refer to Oakley's claim that 'interviewing is a masculine paradigm, embedded in a masculine culture and stressing masculine traits while at the same time excluding traits as sensitivity, emotionality, and others that are culturally viewed as feminine traits' (as cited by Fontana and Frey 2000:658). One outcome of this situation Oakley suggests may be that female researchers are in effect granted 'an honorary male status for the duration of the research' (as cited in Fontana and Frey 2000).

In other cases, however, Fontana and Frey (2000) argue that being female can be an advantage as the female researcher is viewed as 'harmless or invisible'. Alleged feminine traits such as women's nurturing nature for example, may result in female interviewers being viewed as less intimidating. In this case, it seems likely that interview dynamics were shaped by gendered identities of the interviewer and interviewees but I am not certain how to explain why the information elicited from males was richer.

### **Recruitment Process**

Because the larger project had already gone through an ethics review, this process was minimal for me. After reflection on the best way to approach the recruitment of interviewees, the following procedures were pursued. The goal was to recruit participants that had spent a substantial portion of their childhood (e.g. 5 years) in a Niagara border community (e.g. Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake) and who were presently over the age of 18. The intention was to recruit 10 participants and within this sample to achieve gender balance and a degree of representation of the ethnic/racial diversity of the region. For ethical reasons, it was determined that as a researcher, I would have no formal relationship (e.g. as a Teaching Assistant) with those who were recruited.

Recruitment was done through advertising for volunteers at Brock University and other areas of Niagara. Signs asking for volunteers were posted in public places at Brock University, public libraries in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake as well as Niagara College (See appendix B). This process yielded seven participants: three males and four females. Potential volunteers contacted either my supervisor or myself through phone or email. Once contacted by a potential volunteer, I responded by elaborating on the research process.

All respondents were assured that their participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time and that they were at liberty not to answer any questions they deemed offensive or inappropriate. They were also told that they would receive no compensation for their involvement and that a coding mechanism would be used to ensure confidentiality and participant anonymity. It was explained to participants that the interviews would be tape-recorded and would be approximately 45-60 minutes in length. An informational letter explaining the goals of the research, and the research process including the points listed above were provided along with a copy of the interview schedules to potential volunteers. (See Appendix C).

Along with posting signs, I also requested permission from one of the introductory Sociology course instructors at Brock University to address her first year class and ask for volunteers for the study. With her consent, I spent approximately 5-10 minutes outlining the goals of the study at the end of one of her classes. In order to minimize the impact on classroom time, those who expressed interest in learning more about the study were asked to meet with me immediately after the class. Initially, three people responded but none of these ended up participating in the project.

Potential recruits were asked for contact number or email and I then tried to set up a time and place for an interview. All interviews were conducted in a public location selected by the participant (e.g. cafeteria and meeting rooms at the university). Before commencing the interview the participants were asked to review and sign two copies of the informed consent form (Appendix D). At the end of the interview, interviewees were asked to select whether or not they wished to review their transcript once it became available. Those who wished to review the transcript were asked to supply a contact number/address. Each participant retained one copy of the informed consent form and the researcher retained the other. Informed consent forms were coded so that they could be matched up with tapes and field notes in the event that a participant wished to withdraw his/her entire interview from the study at a later date. The form retained by the interviewee acted as an information page about the study, with contact information and details about getting a summary of the study results when available.

Following each interview the interviewer provided each participant with a feedback letter (Appendix E), which thanked participants for their time. Following each interview the interviewer also recorded some 'field notes' that described the location of the interview, features of the interview process e.g. any interruptions, distractions etc. that might help to contextualize the information gathered from the audiotape. No names were used in these field notes. Field notes were coded in order to match the appropriate audiotape.

Following the completion of the interviews I transcribed the interviews. If requested, the participants were provided with a transcript of the interview to review. Participants were encouraged to make any desired changes before the transcript was entered into the database for the study. Two respondents requested to review the transcripts but made no changes to them. Access to the tapes and transcripts was restricted to my supervisor and myself.



## **Research Sample and Method of Analysis**

When I joined the research, my supervisor had completed twenty-one interviews, to which seven additional interviews were added during my research period, making a total of twenty-eight interviews. Out of the additional seven, my supervisor conducted three interviews while I conducted the rest. I sat in to listen to the three interviews that my supervisor conducted. The reason being that it was at the initial stages of the research project and I was learning how to conduct interviews and we decided that it would be appropriate for me listen while she conducted them. One interview was not added for lack of richness in border crossing experiences leaving six interviews. I added to these six interviews an additional four interviews taken from the pre-existing database of twenty-one interviews to produce a total of ten interviews that were analyzed for this thesis.

The four interviews from the original twenty-one were chosen based on two criteria. First, I was looking for interviewees who shared more detailed experiences and/or stories of border crossing and regulation. Second, I was interested in people who had reflected more deeply on these experiences or stories instead of just describing or recalling them.

The final ten selected interviewees were between 19 and 25 years old at the time of the interview. They were living in various parts of the Niagara region, notably, Queenston, Thorold, St Catharines, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Port Colborne, and Niagara Falls. My initial goal was to achieve some gender balance as a means of assessing whether gender played an important role in the ease or otherwise with which a person experienced border crossing. However this consideration ended up being abandoned in favour of the two criteria outlined above.

My sample ended up being made up of six female and four male participants. I also ended up with one 'non-white' and nine 'white' respondents. Despite an initial goal of focusing

on non-white experiences, my sample ended up reflecting the largely 'white' population on the Canadian side of the Niagara region. The nature of the sample had the effect of altering the focus of the study from an initial interest in documenting experiences of discrimination and exclusion of 'non-white' border crossers, to a focus on the dynamics of white privilege when it comes to experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation.

The respondents described their cultural background in various ways including Canadian, German, 'German and Italian', 'Italian and Canadian', 'Canadian and Spanish', 'Iranian', and 'Anglo Saxon'. Interestingly, none of the respondents explicitly racialized themselves. With the exception of one respondent however, I argue that nine interviewees may be constructed as 'white' and one as 'non-white'. In coming to the 'white/non-white' categorization I took into consideration respondents' description of their cultural backgrounds as well as their description of 'others'. Through descriptions of racialized 'others' for example, as 'coloured', and/or 'non-white' respondents implicitly constructed themselves as 'white' by contrast. In the same vein, the one 'non-white' respondent constructed himself as such by comparing and contrasting his experiences with his friends whom he described as 'white'.

While as a researcher I more explicitly identify these respondents as 'white' or 'non-white' I acknowledge the fluidity of all racial categories and note the inherent complexities 'whiteness' in the Canadian context. I have noted for example that historically in Canada, northern Europeans were often perceived to be 'whiter' than Ukrainians. The complexities become compounded when these categories intersect with age, class and/or gender.

All the interviewees were students; nine were from Brock University and the remaining one was from Niagara College. None of the interviewees made mention of their class status but their parents' occupations, which included a medical doctor, nurse, elementary school principal,

industrial worker, retail shop manager, funeral director and a bank manager point to the fact that their class status ranged from working to upper middle class.

It must be noted that these respondents represent a small non-representative sample of border crossers and this clearly makes generalization impossible. Representativeness and generalizability however, were not the objectives of the present study. Rather than aiming to generalize findings to all border crossers, this research was designed to be an exploratory study. By gaining insights into the experiences of the ten participants at the Canada/U.S. border, one can identify possible themes, which could then be explored in more large-scale studies.

Following the transcription of the seven interviews that I had been part of, I then proceeded to an analysis of the ten transcripts that I had selected. Following Ryan and Bernard (2000:769), I focused on major themes that came up in each interview by examining 'processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences' of border crossing and regulation as it was experienced and perceived by these respondents.

I began by examining the respondents' reasons for crossing the border, whom they crossed with, their description of their own direct experiences of border inspections, and how they perceived border regulation and control more generally. I also examined accounts from these interviewees about the inspection of other people including friends and family members. The interviews also included direct questions about refugees and immigrants. I was interested in how respondents perceived and explained the experiences of 'others' at the border. Lastly the impact of September 11, 2001 on border crossing and regulation was examined.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the research was to look at people's experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation. The stories or accounts that formed the basis of this project were drawn from people living at the Canadian side of the Canada/U.S. border at Niagara. In this chapter, I have examined the methodology used for this thesis. I focused on the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative interviewing, my social location, recruitment process, and a description of the sample. In chapters three and four, I use the interviews to illuminate experiences of border crossing and regulation at this border as well as the complex ways in which movement across this border is structured.

## **CHAPTER THREE : TWO CASE STUDIES: FACILITATION AND CONSTRAINT**

### **Introduction**

As already indicated, the aim of my research is to look at people's accounts of their experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. I am interested in how these experiences may illuminate the dynamics of differentiation and inequality at this particular site.

In his study of the U.S./Mexico border, Lugo (2000) points out that skin color, nationality, class, language, and appropriate documentations (e.g. travel identity, resident permit, etc) are determining factors for the ease or otherwise with which one experiences this particular border. Frankenberg (2000) and McIntosh (1997) in their studies in the U.S. assert that whiteness is a privilege, which permeates almost all facets of social life. They point out that while experiencing race privilege white people often deem it as a 'natural' everyday occurrence and often deny the possibility of an inverse treatment of racialized 'others'.

I deem the above works key to this research project as insights drawn from them enhance greater understanding and appreciation of factors that contribute to border politics, control and regulation mechanisms.

In this chapter, I present an in-depth analysis of two interviews. The purpose of using these interviews as case studies is to reveal two differentiated border crossing experiences and perceptions of border regulation and control practices at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. For the purposes of anonymity, I use the pseudonyms Claire and Glen for the two interviews. The direction of their crossings was from Canada to the U.S. and back again. They thus had to deal with both the Canadian and the U.S. border officials anytime they crossed.

### **Claire's Border Crossings**

Claire is a 'white' woman in her twenties whose entire life has been spent growing up in a Niagara border community in Ontario. She and both of her parents are Canadian citizens and her family has had a gradual move from a working to middle class status. Claire crossed the Canada/U.S. border quite often in her childhood and teen years.

Claire's early childhood experiences of border crossing involved crossing over to the U.S. to buy groceries with her dad and clothes with her mum and sister. According to Claire, these childhood trips were necessary and beneficial in economic terms for her and her family. The exchange rate between the Canadian dollar and the U.S. dollar at the time meant that groceries were cheaper in the U.S.

The purpose for crossing changed in her teen years when she crossed the border with her church youth group for roller skating excursions in the U.S.:

When I was younger, probably, grade eight, grade nine, into those years, I was part of a youth group so we used to go over to do roller skating because there were no roller rinks here.

She also crossed on organized school excursions. For Claire and her friends crossing the border was not a big deal. As she recalled in her interview, some of her friends would cross to the U.S. to have coffee or to window shop. She maintained that these childhood and youthful crossings, which occurred from late 1980s and early 1990s, were marked with ease. In particular, there was minimal border search or regulation especially when she was with her mother:

I remember at the time, it was always relatively easy to go across with my mother. Like we never had any hold ups. They'd just basically ask where we were going? How long we were going to be there? And when we will be returning and that was about it.

On the other hand, she had more of a sense of apprehension when she crossed the border with her father. She argued that while this crossing was fairly easy, her father's physical appearance often led to more prolonged questioning by immigration officials at the border:

He had a bit of rough exterior at that point in time and the long shaggy hair, you know...so I found simply with him, we would get stopped for quite a bit longer and have a lot more questions. They would ask questions all the time; [like] where he was going? The same thing with my mother but just more in-depth... But I don't think we ever really got stopped at the border, like pulled over like other cars and that kind of stuff. We were fairly lucky that way, I would say.

This description from Claire suggests that her father's 'rough exterior' led to the more prolonged questioning that he experienced at the border. From Claire's perspective, there was a connection between the physical appearance of her father and the treatment he received at the border though she does not make any reference to the way her own more conventional physical appearance may have put her in a privileged position at the border.

For the most part, Claire's experiences of border crossing were easy. Indeed she herself expresses surprise at how easy it was to cross on some occasions. One example of this is

provided in an account of a school trip where she was part of a busload of high school students from Niagara Falls going over to the U.S.:

There was a busload of high school students ...three teachers. Everybody had suitcases and they stopped us for maybe about five minutes, asked us where we were going and just let us go through. So I was always very surprised at how easy it [was] for us to just go right on through.

Although her own experiences were easeful, Claire's border crossing experience with her father vis-à-vis that of her mother did provide her with an awareness of differentiated crossings at the Canada/U.S. border. The two experiences with her father and mother portray her awareness that physical appearance could translate into relative ease or difficulty in crossing. Her reference to the fact that she and her parents were not pulled over like other cars also points to her awareness of other people having even greater difficulty at the border.

When asked whether any of her friends had had difficult experiences at the border she mentioned that some had experienced prolonged questioning similar to that experienced by her father:

Not particularly negative stories, just people being held up longer than we were...being pulled over and you know questioned for their status and having to wait a lot longer to be able to go over than what we had. I wouldn't say there were any horror stories, no.

Interestingly she claimed very little knowledge when she was asked whether she was aware as a child or teenager that other people such as refugees or immigrants might be having



problems crossing the Canada/U.S. border. She suggested that the little she heard was derived from 'sensational' media reports:

You did hear the sensational stories every now and again of people trying to cross the border illegally, and of course [these] were broadcast in the news. But other than that, I had very limited knowledge of it.

Her response suggests that what she had heard pertained only to illegal border crossers and these stories were, in her opinion, sensationalized by the media. It could also suggest however that she is aware of having little knowledge of what may or may not be going on at the border. Her linkage of difficulties at the border to the issue of illegal crossings obscures other forms of difficulty e.g. difficulties faced by refugees, and exclusions based on other factors like racism that scholars like Lugo (2000) have noted at the U.S./Mexico border.

Interestingly, the intersectionality of race and class were highlighted in Claire's account of her experiences and perceptions of the U.S. side of the border. Despite her ease in crossing, she was apprehensive of the other side of the border. As Claire pointed out later on in her interview, she always had a sense of fear and apprehension of 'slum areas' and 'African American families' on the U.S. side of the Canada/U.S. border:

I just found growing up in [a Niagara border community] it wasn't very diverse for a very long time. I just found recently in the last few years the ethnic backgrounds of families who moved into [the community] becoming much more diverse. But I just found, again going back over to the States, because, you know, living in a white middle class

neighborhood you are not used to seeing various things. Like going over to the States, the slum areas and large populations of African American families. And again stemming back to the media, especially in the high school years, the negative portrayals that were given especially to [youth] gangs which instilled more fear in myself.

Though the focus area for this research project is the U.S./Canada border at Niagara, respondents who had crossed other international borders were asked to share their experience of these crossings for the sake of comparison. In this context, Claire referred to a trip to the Dominican Republic (this was her only other experience of international travel). She pointed to the same ease of crossing in this context as she experienced at the U.S./Canada border:

Again I found that to be a fairly easy process to go through. Getting through with paper work was fine for us, like my whole family was done in about half an hour.

### **Discussion of Claire's Account**

Claire's account of her border crossing experiences reveals easeful crossings both locally and internationally. Yet she was also aware of some differentiated treatment of her mother and father; a situation she attributes to the physical appearance of her father. Also, though she was fearful of poor African-Americans and their neighborhoods on the U.S. side of the border, she continued to cross for shopping and recreation.

Claire's account of her border crossing experiences raises a number of interesting issues. Her positioning as a middle class young woman might have contributed to easeful and frequent border crossing, which also translated into her ability to take advantage of lower prices of goods

in the U.S. Her class affiliation could be seen to have intersected with her racialized whiteness and probably her age and gender, giving her relative ease of crossing at the U.S./Canada border and into the Dominican Republic as a tourist from a first world to a third world country. As already discussed, Frankenberg (2000) argues that whiteness is a race privilege which categorizes people into privileged positions and McIntosh (1997) points out how white privilege may be evident in almost every facet of social life, transcending boundaries, whether geographic, cultural, or social.

Claire's border crossing stories can be illuminated by Lugo's discussion (in his study of the U.S./Mexico border) of how different criteria are used at the border to differentiate people into desirable and undesirable border crossers or people who are perceived as a potential risk. According to Lugo (2000), physical appearance becomes a guiding principle for the ease or difficulty with which people experience border crossing and regulation. Claire's account of her father's border crossing experience revealed that even border crossers who are in privileged positions such as her Canadian, white male adult father, may nonetheless experience greater hassle if their physical appearance (in this case a 'rough' appearance) is unconventional in some way. This example reveals the complex nature of 'whiteness', notably how it may intersect with other variables in ways that reduce racial privilege, in this case resulting in more difficult, rather than easeful border crossings for Claire's father.

Significantly, when Claire was asked whether as a child she was aware that others like refugees and immigrants might be having more difficulty in crossing the border she claimed a lack of knowledge and suggested that what she heard were 'sensationalized media reports'. That response (she was only aware of the more difficult border crossing experiences of refugees and immigrants through sensationalized media reports) may suggest a denial or down playing of

border crossing inequities. At the same time, her earlier acknowledgement that she and her parents were not 'pulled over [at the border] like other cars', clearly acknowledges the reality of differentiated (if not unequal) border crossings.

Claire recalled an account of the ease of crossing of presumably largely if not exclusively white school children (based on Claire's description of her community as being predominantly white until the last couple of years) on a school trip to the U.S. This easeful crossing could be seen as a reflection of what Frankenberg points to as the 'normativity' and 'and structural invisibility' of race (white) privilege where people in privileged positions enjoy the benefits that come with their status but do not acknowledge or try to deny it (2000:451). As McIntosh (1997:292) asserts, race privilege is an 'elusive and fugitive subject', which creates a 'myth of meritocracy' but in effect, many of the opportunities that are available to privileged people do not reflect any inherent virtues.

Claire's retroactive expression of surprise at the ease of border crossing experienced by a busload of Canadian school children is of interest in this regard as it obscures the nature of privilege. As Frankenberg (2000) and McIntosh (2000) note, racialized white people are taught to internalize and enjoy race privilege while at the same time denying it as a reality thus obscuring its importance in their day-to-day life. Claire expresses surprise, but no acknowledgement of racial privilege. It is possible to see how Claire and her schoolmates' ease of crossing may have served moreover, to produce a sense of 'proper' border crossers. Their experiences of ease may have had the effect of reassuring them that they were not crossers whose movement across borders needed to be regulated or controlled.

### **Glen's Border Crossings**

The border crossing experiences and perceptions of Claire can be compared with those of Glen. Glen is a racialized 'non-white' male Canadian citizen born in Iran. Though he did not mention his class status, his parents' occupations (both of his parents worked in the medical field as a doctor and a nurse) lead me speculate that they may be middle class. He and his family fled religious persecution in Iran and moved to a border community in the Niagara region. He and his family came to Niagara when he was a young child and they have been living there since then.

Unlike Claire, Glen's personal biography includes a traumatic border crossing experience when he and his family were fleeing Iran. Though Glen was only four when they undertook this border crossing, when he was asked if he had had crossed other borders as a child or teenager he easily recalled this early childhood experience suggesting the centrality of this border crossing for his sense of himself:

The first border crossing was when I was four and my brother was two. We had to escape from Iran because of the religious persecution there. We couldn't leave legally so we had to go with smugglers across the desert on camel back to Pakistan...I was crying because they took me away from my mum and put me with someone else and I just wouldn't stop crying and it was at night and they didn't want the border guards to catch them. So one of the, I think it was one of the smugglers, put a knife to my neck and said 'shut up or I'll kill you' and that just made me be quiet right away...it wasn't a fun experience at all.

Once in Canada, Glen used to cross the Canada/U.S. border at a Niagara border community as a child with his parents for grocery shopping and to buy gas. Like Claire, Glen also maintained that these crossings were basically for economic reasons as it was cheaper to shop in the U.S. than Canada.

In his teen years, Glen noted, he often crossed to buy trendy clothes that he could not get in the local Canadian stores. Unlike Claire, Glen also crossed the U.S./Canada border to visit his trans-national extended family and religious friends of the Bahai faith in the U.S.

Comparing the accounts of childhood and teenage crossings from Claire and Glen, what is striking is how Glen's account highlighted not ease but hassle. He pointed out that his experiences of border crossings in Niagara have been wrought with difficulties and constraints in border inspections. He recounts a childhood experience at the Canada/U.S. border when he and his family were to attend a family member's wedding in the U.S. His childhood anticipation of being part of the wedding and then going on to Disneyland were shattered when they were turned back at the border by border officials because they didn't have some documents that were required of them at the border:

I remember one time we were going to go to Florida for some [family] wedding and we were looking forward to it a lot...we got turned back at the border because my dad didn't have some kind of paper that he needed. And so it was really disappointing, we got sent over to the immigration office and they checked our papers and everything like that.

It took Glen and his family four years to get Canadian citizenship and according to Glen, the change made some difference, resulting in some improvement in border treatment but the

ease or difficulty with which he and his family experienced the U.S./Canada border was still subject to the discretion of the particular border official that was encountered:

It improved a little bit to say that you are [a] Canadian citizen. It helped a bit depending on the person, [immigration official at the border]. Some people still gave us trouble.

As a teenager, Glen crossed the border alone or with his brother to buy computers and computer accessories or trendy brand name clothes that he saw in music videos and magazines that were not available in the local Canadian stores. But as he recalled, although his accent occasionally helped him ('I sounded like I have been living here [in Canada] for a while'), he asserted that there was usually difficulty at the border with his birthplace or country of origin [Iran] playing a key role:

They [border officials] gave us some trouble. And it seems to have gotten worse as I got older. I got hassle especially when I was driving. When they find out that I was born where I was born [Iran] and even though I was a Canadian citizen and everything, sometimes they still seem not to trust me.

While Glen pointed out that he experienced more hassle at the border as he got older, I am hesitant to conclude that his age was the only reason for that experience. It could have been that as a teenager, he now had to deal with the border officials himself. As well, the issue of gender needs further exploration to determine its significance in border crossing.

When Glen compared the border experiences of himself, his family, and friends who were Iranian born with those of his white Canadian-born friends he perceived the issue of differentiated treatment based on place of birth and race. While his family members had similar experiences of difficulty in crossing the U.S./Canada border, Glen's Canadian-born white friends seemed to have no difficulty at all. Here, his race articulated with place of birth (Iran) and in his view was used as the basis for discrimination i.e. exclusionary treatment:

Just by talking to them, [his Canadian-born white friends] I used to tell them certain stories of like trouble that I had going over and they never seemed to have the same kind of trouble going there [U.S.]. I talk to relatives that are from Iran as well and they had similar stories that they got into a lot of trouble and they seemed like they got bad attitudes from the people that were there.

Interestingly, in contrast to his experiences at the local Niagara border, Glen did not experience the same difficulty when he crossed other borders as a young adult, for example when crossing into Ukraine, India, and Israel as a service volunteer with a religious based youth group. He pointed out that these crossings were easy due to his Canadian citizenship:

Certainly, my Canadian passport helped a lot. The only issue was baggage.



### **Discussion of Glen's Account**

Glen's border crossing experiences illuminate a number of interesting issues. The traumatic border crossing story told by Glen about how his family had to flee Iran due to religious persecution points to the dangers and difficulty that many people (refugees and immigrants) go through in their attempt to flee their countries of origin in the hope of seeking a better life in their host countries.

Like Claire, Glen pointed out in his interview that he and his family crossed the Canada-U.S. border for a number of reasons. The most significant of these was to shop in the U.S., but also important were trips made to sustain relationships with a trans-national religious community and an extended family. Interestingly, despite hassles at the border itself, Glen does not express Claire's racial and class fears about the other side (U.S.) of the border. Rather, he appears to have a more easeful trans-national positioning as family and religious relationships link him to American and globalized space in a way that seems to be lacking in Claire's account.

Glen's continuous hassle of border crossing and regulation at the Canada/U.S. border points to the complexities of border crossing regulation and control. His account reveals his perception that his place of birth (Iran) led to discriminatory treatment at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara despite the fact that he was a Canadian citizen. Interestingly however, at other international borders he perceived his Canadian citizenship as having eased his passage.

Lugo (2000) points out that the possession of certain documents, e.g. legal papers indicating one's place of residence may affect the ease or difficulty with which people cross the U.S./Mexico border. The residence document does not only determine the country in which a border crosser is domiciled, but it is also used as proof that he or she is rooted in a particular place and will return to that country. Even then, as in Glen's case, it was not always a guarantee

of an easy crossing at the border. The reason for this, Lugo (2000) points out is because border control practices and mechanisms are multi-faceted, and pertain to a broad spectrum of issues like skin color, nationality, class, language, and appropriate documents.

### **Impact of September 11, 2001 on Border Crossing**

While the interviews with Claire and Glen discussed above focused on their childhood and teenage experiences and therefore only indirectly addressed the events of September 11, 2001 in the U.S., reference to their impact on people's experiences at the U.S./Canada border can shed more light on border regulation and control practices as well as their historical and socio-political underpinnings.

Border control policies and mechanisms change with time to reflect the broader socio-political concerns existing in any particular place at any given time. In his study of the U.S./Mexico border, Heyman (1999) points to restrictive border control practices being legitimated by constructions of criminality and moral panics with regards to dangerous immigrants who had to be restrained from crossing over to the U.S. As well, Salter (2004) asserts that following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. intensified border control practices legitimizing these through the discourse of terrorism with particular emphasis on the need to increase scrutiny of people from Arabic countries in order to improve national security.

Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002) have noted that in the immediate post September 11, 2001 period discourses of national security and criminality at U.S./Canada border merged with the criminal immigrant whose movement has to be controlled at the border. Likewise, Pratt and Valverde (2002) have noted that criminality had merged with national security in the governance of border crossing even before the events of September 11. It is important to note that the border

is not an autonomous arena. The various modes of operation and border control mechanisms have a lot to do with what goes on in the broader society. Thus, the various concerns expressed in the larger society and local region influence the way the border is regulated or controlled.

In the case of Canada/U.S. border regulation, the discourses of national security and popular fears about terrorism in the post September 11, 2001 period were used to justify and define methods and severity of border control practices. As Macklin (2001) argues, the events of September 11 have intensified regulatory policies at borders. She points to intensified pre-screening of airline passengers at the Pearson International airport by U.S. officials before they embark on their plane. Salter (2004) notes that this measure is part of the U.S. Entry-Exit controls policies aimed at fighting terrorism. Other measures aimed at increasing security at borders include inspection and regulation of people at both sides of the Canada/U.S. border, a hitherto unknown process.

While both Claire and Glen seem to have had different experiences at the U.S./Canada border, they both agree that the events of September 11, 2001 changed the way the border is regulated. Claire's experiences and perceptions are that since September 11, 2001 the Canada/U.S. border has become more restrictive, a process which Andreas (2000) refers to as 'rebordering'. She points to increased questioning and scrutiny of documents at the border:

I had viewed it [border] as much more open. Now I ...view it as being quite restrictive. Like even my last experience [of] crossing the border, ...was only about a few months ago, and I hadn't gone over since September 11. And I hadn't seen the increased security that was going on at the border at that point in time. And we were the only car going across the border at that point in time and it took us forty-five minutes, just because of the

series of questioning that [we] went through so I just viewed it as so much more restrictive. Before it was 'where are you going? What will you be doing? When are you going to be back? Have a good time'. And now they are probing into everything. They want to see I.D. so I see it as much more restrictive.

The above response and reference to the 'before' and 'now' accounts clearly indicates that for her, the border has changed in the post-September 11, 2001 period, something that sharply contrasts with (as we shall see below) Glen's experiences of continuous hassle before and after the same attacks.

This situation has affected the frequency with which Claire and her friends cross the border. She maintains that while previously her friends would cross over to the U.S. just to shop, they now cross in a more purposeful way. Claire explained that she now hears horror stories of the border and the long periods of waiting to cross it. She maintains that these changes have led to people crossing only for a 'particular purpose' and not just to window-shop:

And now I find for people that want to go over to the States, they want to go over for a particular purpose, whereas before they would just go over to spend an afternoon or you know, just look through a few things. But now it is like 'ok, well, I am going here, to go here because I want this'. Because it is such a hassle to go across in the first place.

Glen also points to increased policing and border control practices at the border after September 11, 2001 but notes that the hassle was nothing new for him:

I think the only real change I have noticed was, (well since I was basically used to getting hassle going over), coming back, there was on the American side, there was some, it seemed like military guards or police or something I can't remember, asking us a few more questions before we go over to Canada on the American side. And it really confused me, I didn't understand why, because we were leaving their country. What do they care?

Here we see resistance by Glen to the legitimacy of the changes at the U.S./Canada border, something that is not present in Claire's account despite her frustration with the new 'restriction' and 'hassle'. For Glen who has had frequent hassles at the Canada/U.S. border, the changes at this border mean staying and buying needed items in Canada (just like Claire notes of her friends) as much as possible to avoid having to deal with border officials:

I want to stay in Canada more if I can. Like I was going to order another computer part ... [and] I was looking at the American price [but] I was more hesitant. I wanted to find a price that was good in Canada so I wouldn't have to cross the border. And this past weekend I went snowboarding with my brother and we used to always go to the U.S. because it was closer but I found that the price was a little cheaper in Kitchener. And even though it was further, we still went there because we wanted to stay in Canada.

According to Claire and Glen, the rebordering is due to the events of September 11 2001, which have resulted in increased delays for people crossing the border. They acknowledge that the changes and increased control policies at the U.S./Canada border have impacted on the

frequency with which they cross it. As is evident from their interviews however the impact is not the same for and perceived in the same way by everyone. Thus, while Claire, is frustrated by the delay in crossing, Glen is apprehensive of intensified scrutiny by officials and possible constraint at the border. In the post September 11, 2001 era, it may still be easier for a privileged 'white', middle class woman like Claire to cross this border than it may be for Glen, a 'non-white, middle class male.

Upon reflection as a young adult, Claire admits that she experienced a kind of ease in the pre-September 11, 2001 period that she now realizes was not necessarily available to everyone:

It just sort of dawned on me that I had that ease just to, you know, hop in a car and be in the United States in ten minutes and I didn't realize that a lot of other people [refugees, immigrants and people of colour] didn't have that opportunity. I never really contextualized that with myself until that point when you sort of branch out into different areas and people that you deal with.

Her response and acknowledgement of the fact that she never really contextualized the hassle that 'others' experience in border crossing points to a new awareness of a privileged positioning which not everyone shares. Her easeful border crossing experiences coupled with her earlier perception of the 'other' (as potential terrorists and criminals) may be seen as factors that impact border control and regulation.

While the above construction of the 'other' as Claire pointed out is partly related to her own sense of fear of people from different classes and 'races' as well as to media reports, it can be seen as reflections of the broader social and political contexts and conceptualizations which

impact on the day to day activities of border crossing regulation and its trickling down effect of privileged ease or difficulty experienced by various border crossers, specifically racialized 'others'.

While Claire acknowledges fear and apprehension of what is across the border, Glen's sense of apprehension pertains to border guards and the increased border regulation and control practices before and after September 11, 2001 and not what lies across the border.

### **Conclusion**

I have used the interviews from two research participants to illustrate the differentiated ways that two differently situated Canadians experience the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. Accounts of their childhood and youth experiences suggests relative ease for a Canadian born, white middle class female and the greater difficulties experienced by an Iranian born Canadian, non-white middle class male. Their differentiated experiences in childhood and youth continue to be evident, though altered, in the post September 11, 2001 environment. The insights gained through careful analysis of these two case studies will inform the analysis of the rest of the interviews.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DIFFERENTIATED BORDER CROSSINGS**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I used the analysis of two interviews as case studies to illuminate the complexities of border crossing regulation and control at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. Accounts from the two case studies pointed to differentiated experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation. While the two interviewees each mentioned increased security and control measures after September 11, 2001 for example, it was apparent that they experienced these changes in different ways.

In this chapter, I use the above insights as I analyze the eight remaining interviews. Four of these eight interviews were chosen from existing interviews (which formed part of the larger research project) and four were those that I had conducted myself. All of these interviews involved respondents that can be described as racially 'white'.

In this chapter, I examine how these relatively privileged interviewees experience and perceive differentiated and unequal treatment at the border. I am particularly interested in how this may involve complex acknowledgements and denials of racism and attributions of criminality that are in turn linked to discourses of securitization.

### **Reasons for Crossing**

As with Claire and Glen, most of the respondents' recollection of their childhood experiences of border crossings emphasized the frequency of crossings with their families to the U.S. for various reasons. As children, most of them crossed to the U.S. with their parents to shop for groceries:



We [interviewee's family] used to go to Tops [Supermarket] for groceries. We also frequently went to, there was a Pillsbury factory, [a] factory outlet kind of place there. So we would go and get pastries and breads and that kind of thing there and gas at the Mobile station that we go to (Interview 016).

One respondent pointed to the fact that in addition to crossing the border with her next-door neighbour for groceries, she would sometimes join her friend to be baby-sat in the U.S. by her friend's mother when there was no baby sitter for them in Canada:

I never actually crossed with my family... My next-door neighbour... she always [went] to the states to do her grocery shopping, so she used to always take me. But when I was younger, it was twice a month maybe for a few months. It wasn't like throughout the [whole] year. And then a friend of mine, her mother had a store in Niagara Falls, New York and we used to always go over there when she couldn't find a baby sitter (Interview 024).

One respondent described how he would take advantage of the frequent trips to the U.S. to satisfy a childhood desire and yearning for cereals, candies and other items, which were not available in the local Canadian stores:

They would have this special kind of Captain Crunch [cereal] that had the crunch berries in it. We didn't have those in Canada. There were special kinds of candies, but then everything would also be dirt cheap compared to what was in Canada. They used to have

milk in the plastic jugs rather than milk in the bag that we always got at home. And they would always get you know, chocolate milk in the jug. It was always this sort of you know, we will go over [and] get the stuff at Tops (Interview 028)

While shopping was the primary reason for border crossing during their childhood, some of the respondents also noted that they would sometimes cross to the U.S. for sporting activities either as active participants or spectators. As one respondent recalled, he would sometimes cross the border with his family to watch hockey games:

As a child, I did travel to the United States regularly, maybe twice a week up to once every couple of months mainly for shopping or to see a hockey game. Mainly day trips and I would mainly go with my father or friends parents (Interview 027).

For one respondent, visits were made for medical purposes to visit an orthodontist; while three others noted that visits were made to attend plays and movies, or to have dinner or to buy pizza. Some respondents crossed as part of longer trips to the U.S., for example, to Disney World.

Some respondents were well aware of the economic importance of such crossings for their family household budgets during the 1980s. As children, they recall, they were aware of how the exchange rate made it cheaper to shop in the U.S. than in Canada:

Mainly because it was cheaper to get things like gasoline, clothes and even services for the car. It was cheaper until the exchange rate changed (Interview 027).

This situation as one respondent recalled made it possible for his family to save some money for more discretionary activities such as dining out:

[In the] earlier years I guess when I was growing up through the eighties, dollar wise, it was smarter I guess to go over and do shopping there. So quite a bit when I was younger, the whole family would go Friday nights and go for dinner and a little shopping. But my mother would go Saturday morning and do some grocery shopping (interview 016).

From the above two responses, it is clear that childhood and teenage experiences of border crossings were significant and reflected various purposes; economic, recreational, and medical. Explicit in their responses as well were issues pertaining to social class, where on the one hand, affluent families crossed the border for recreational purposes, while less affluent ones consciously made efforts to save on their budgets.

### **Treatment at the Border**

Respondents easily recalled their childhood and teenage experiences of border crossings including the treatment they received from border officials. Most of these recollections pointed to easeful crossings. As one respondent noted, border crossings at Niagara were devoid of any hassles:

Mainly, they would just ask us our citizenship, where we are going and when we would be coming back. And we crossed with little difficulty (Interview 027).

When asked about how she felt about border officials interrogating her, the above respondent explained that border regulation and questioning by border officials was a normal routine for all border crossers and didn't pose a problem for her:

It just felt routine because I was so used to it. People do it everyday and there is not [a] problem (Interview 027).

One female respondent alluded to the fact that while her crossings were mostly easeful and characterized by 'pleasant' border officials, occasionally one could meet a difficult or 'cranky' official at the border:

They [border officials] were always really pleasant actually. Every once in a while there would be somebody that was pretty cranky but just going with my mom and stuff, it was always just 'hi, how is it going? Good. Ok, go ahead'. Yeah, I guess it was just that they thought I was cute or something (Interview 018).

One male respondent who viewed his border crossings as routine nonetheless did recall a situation he and his parents had at the U.S./Canada border when returning from Florida, a situation that he pointed out caused his parents to be 'taken aback':

In terms of crossing the border, it was kind of you know, citizenship. I mean you got to know the routine. But I remember the one time when we came back from, I guess it was Florida, and my parents had this Blazer [car] but it had tinted windows in the back. I

remember the Canadian customs person you know, doing the citizenship...and the customs officer obviously couldn't see us because they were giving my parents a really hard time... This had never happened before and I thought, I wonder what is going on and they would say 'well, how can you prove that you were in Florida'? You know, my parents were taken a bit aback until the border security guy actually looked inside the car and saw that there were children. He thought it was another couple. And then he said, 'Oh, go ahead'. I thought it was really weird how you would see people having trouble (Interview 028).

Another female respondent always had a sense of fear and apprehension when crossing the U.S./Canada border at Niagara:

I always, I remember when I was younger... I was scared of the border officials because I always thought you know, we are trying to get into America so they [U.S. border officials] would arrest us because we were Canadian...I was always scared of them (Interview 026).

When she was asked whether she had any experience with border officials to cause her fear she answered in the negative but then mentioned the inspection of their car as the cause of her fears:

Not really, I always got nervous when they checked the car. Like you know, I knew that it was procedure but I always just got nervous and we weren't hiding anything. But you know, they are going into your car (Interview 026).

While most of the respondents pointed out that their parents would be the ones to answer questions asked by border officials, sometimes they were directly addressed. Some respondents referred to the fact that their parents gave them specific instructions and guidelines as to what answers to give to the border officials in order not to be viewed with suspicion:

On some occasions, they would ask you directly, you know, just the basic questions, where you grew up or where you were from, you know, what your citizenship was. And I can remember getting instructions as well from my parents about you know, if they ask you where you are from, just say St. Catharines and say Canadian (Interview 016).

In some cases, efforts were made to adopt 'appropriate' behaviour and dress code before one reached the border. One respondent recalled how wearing sunglasses in the summer was viewed by her aunt as inappropriate and a recipe for trouble:

I remember even when I was a little [girl], I would be wearing sunglasses, you know what I mean in the summer and she [her aunt] would go like 'take them off; we are coming to the border. That makes people think you are suspicious'...she would always tell me about ... people getting stopped or we would see ... people's cars being like ripped apart (Interview 024).

While most interviewees reported very little time spent at the border during inspection, two respondents reported delays. The first one reported a delay of between 10 to 15 minutes while the same respondent who reported how 'pleasant' her crossings were, pointed nonetheless to a significant delay at the Canadian side of the border of over an hour that she and her family experienced. It happened that her uncles had been drinking in their car:

Once we were coming back [from the U.S.], we had a big family dinner over in the States and we just all went out and on our way back we were pulled over. And it was wintertime and it was cold and we had been pulled over for over an hour. They were looking through [the car] and everything else. Well it was kind of dumb because a couple of my uncles decided to open a can of beer in the car... I mostly slept but it was cold and everyone ...had had enough (Interview 018).

The respondent who as a child looked forward to buying Captain Crunch Cereal also described his awareness of periods of increased questioning by border officials:

It was always this sort of you know, we would go over, get the stuff at Tops, and it was sort of like a trip but, and then I remember at that time there were more problems crossing because they would always ask for what you were there for (Interview 028).

According to him, the customs officials on the Canadian side of the U.S./Canada border were not specifically targeting his parents per se but rather sometimes targeted every border crosser as a potential smuggler making it difficult for everyone:

I don't think they were targeting my parents but on certain days, they would target everybody and make everybody pull over and check everybody's trunk (Interview 028).

His response suggests an interesting perception pertaining to border officials and control practices. That is, border officials do not necessarily single out particular people for differentiated treatments. Rather, border crossing can be difficult at certain periods regardless of who may be crossing.

### **Constructions of Criminalized 'Others' at the Border**

Significantly, when asked whether as young people they had any idea of the difficulty or risks that some people like immigrants and refugees had to go through to cross the border, seven out of the eight respondents initially expressed a lack of knowledge of such experiences. One male respondent pointed out, he was so used to an easeful crossing that he never thought others would experience anything contrary. In his view unless one was a criminal or indulged in some kind of criminal activity, crossing the border should be easy:

I wasn't really aware of any risks of traveling because I was like I said, I was so used to it and if you weren't a criminal and you didn't have any reasons to hide, then it shouldn't be a problem (Interview 027).

In his view then, criminality was a key factor underlying the ease with which a person might experience border regulation and control. Even as a young adult, he claimed no knowledge of the difficulty immigrants or refugees faced in crossing the border and rather



pointed to one's birth certificate as important at the U.S./Canada border since it determined one's status as either a Canadian or U.S. citizen:

No. Unless they were criminals ...you are always supposed to have birth certificate to prove your citizenship. So if you had that [birth certificate], then there shouldn't be a problem (Interview 027).

This view was shared by another respondent who noted that though he was aware as a younger person of people having difficulty in crossing the border, it was only with regards to criminals, and not immigrants or refugees, a position that implied that he did not necessarily associate refugees and immigrants with criminality:

I guess I was aware of it but it was more maybe thinking of criminals I guess. I never really thought too much about you know, immigrants or landed immigrants that you know, would have more difficulty crossing back and forth than we would (Interview 016).

The direct association in these narratives of difficulties at the border with criminality is consistent with the insights of Heyman (1999) and Macklin (2001) relating to how criminality, securitization and more recently fear of terrorist acts are translated into intensified enforcement actions at the border. It is interesting to note how these interviewees linked difficulties at the border crossing with criminality. Such a linkage, I argue reveals how these relatively privileged border crossers identified the border infrastructure as appropriately targeting criminals for delay

or exclusion. The linkage made between difficulties at the border and criminality led to little sympathy for those who were experiencing prolonged interceptions. It also meant that the actions of border officials were generally viewed as legitimate. One respondent emphasized the justification as he recalled an incident of difficulty faced by an aboriginal woman who was trying to cross the U.S.-Canada border:

I do remember a border event. There was an aboriginal woman in a car and we had been pulled over to check groceries and stuff. I remember there were two customs people at her car wrestling with her to take the keys out of the ignition and saying that she had cigarettes and this kind of stuff. And her screaming, and I remember sitting there in our car, we were right beside it. And I was thinking whoah, someone did something wrong. I mean she was screaming and I remember that (Interview 028).

The perception that people who experience difficulties at the border like the aboriginal woman might have done something 'wrong' demonstrates how notions of good and bad border crossers who ought to be regulated differently can be used to justify the different treatments given to different people. A similar logic appeared to be used by another respondent who noted:

They do random searches. I didn't find that they gave us a hard time but I haven't heard of many stories of innocent people having a problem at the border (Interview 027).

The suggestion again is that 'innocent' people have easeful crossings and those who are subjected to more rigorous inspections, delay or exclusion are at some level 'guilty' and

therefore deserving of the differentiated treatment. From the above responses, it appears that the interviewees perceived border officers as doing their job; a view that can be seen as a product of their own privileged identities, which situates them in a different category from those who experience hassle at the border.

### **Subverting Border Regulation**

The general support for the legitimacy of border inspections among these respondents however coexists with considerable evidence of their own knowledge of, and participation in 'criminal' activities at the border. The respondent who referred to how routine her crossings were also revealed how nervous she became when she crossed back into Canada with undeclared goods:

Unless [I was] coming back and not declaring some things in order not to pay duty on them, then I was nervous (Interview 027).

Another respondent noted how intensified questioning by Canadian border officials about the amount of goods bought in the U.S. led to his parents downplaying the extent of their purchases:

I remember at that time there were more problems crossing because they would ask for what you were there for... you know, and in this you start realizing your parents start to lie too. Where they say, 'Oh we were just over and we picked [up] a few groceries (Interview 028).

Despite reference by respondents to intensified border regulation and control, it was obvious that some people attempted and succeeded at not declaring some purchased goods in order to avoid paying the required duties on them. One respondent recalled, how even in her childhood, her parents indulged in a number of behaviours when re-entering Canada in order to avoid paying duties on goods; a situation that always made her nervous at the border:

I can remember, I don't know, I still do get nervous I guess when I cross, but there was always that sense of nervousness. On the way over or on the way back [or] both, but once in a while I guess my parents used to bring things back illegally and I can remember my dad specifically ... buying cases of pop and ...we were actually sitting on the cases of pop on the seats in the car and pretending that we weren't sitting on cases of pop, and [he told us] to act very nonchalant and yeah, being very nervous about that coming back (Interview 016).

Another respondent who recalled her friends crossing the border with drinks and marijuana, an illegal drug in Canada and the U.S., shared the above sentiment:

They usually bring things like marijuana and drinks or whatever over when they were at the ski hill or whatever. So they were always nervous. They are like; we are going to get caught. I remember my friend told me about his one friend who had a secret zipper thing in his shoe where he could hide marijuana. And he is like it is the coolest shoe; you've got to get it if you are going to be doing this. So I mean, they never catch him (Interview 015).

The above respondent went on to elaborate on the effectiveness of this particular strategy at the border:

One of my friends told me this story how they [border officials] told him just to pull over to the side and then they just kind of said ‘Open your trunk’ and there was nothing in there. It was all in his shoe so he didn’t really get caught (Interview 015).

The above responses suggest a clear acknowledgement, even a celebration of criminal acts on the part of respondents at the border. The accounts of familial or peer smuggling were presented as evidence of cleverness, rather than problematic, criminal or illegitimate activity. Despite evidence of active subversion of the border infrastructure through small-scale smuggling, what is interesting is that these respondents ultimately accepted the legitimacy of border processes in part because they linked differentiated treatment to legitimate assessments of potential criminality.

### **Stories of Differential Treatment at the Border**

I have suggested that many respondents associated any difficulties experienced by others at the border with potential or real criminality although in the case of their own family or peers, things like smuggling were largely viewed as acceptable behaviours. Those views coexisted with some interesting acknowledgements of other bases for differentiating treatment. Five out of the eight respondents revealed a perception of differentiated treatment of people at the border based on such criteria as ‘skin colour’, ‘age’, ‘gender’, ‘racial profiling’, ‘Arabs’, and

‘stereotypes’, or ‘race’ more generally. Some of those interviewed suggested that stereotyping and racial profiling play a part in the way the border is regulated and controlled. Some respondents had friends who worked on the Canadian side of the border, and recounted their friends’ experiences in the interviews. One respondent pointed out that she has had to rethink her view of the border due to her friend’s experiences:

Her experiences ...have made me really consider the border... All of a sudden she started working there and hearing about the types of situations, like having to send back people that have abducted a child ... And all of a sudden a lot of that is becoming like ...stereotypes that they [border officials] do follow... Like you see two young guys in a car, you see one black guy and some are white or you see two black guys in a nice car and they will pull them over, ...most definitely (Interview 018).

In the view of this respondent, some of the regulation mechanisms or criteria for stopping people at the Canadian border are based on ‘stereotypes that they [border officials] follow’. Thus ‘young guys in a car’ trying to cross the border are likely to be stopped for questioning. Here age is perceived as an important factor in border crossing with people in their youth likely to experience more hassle. Her reference to a ‘black guy’ and some white guys in the same situation being viewed with suspicion suggests an additional emphasis when age is linked with a mixture of races though it is not clear why this is so. Of great interest is the idea that Canadian border officials will ‘most definitely’, pull over ‘two black guys in a nice car’. Here there is inference that black guys are not supposed to be in a ‘nice car’ thus associating ‘race’ with criminality.

Another respondent also shared his sense (based on the stories of his friends) that Canadian customs and border officials make it difficult for some people to cross the border based on race, gender and age:

I had one very good friend and then I know of several people who I went to elementary school with who work there [at the Canadian side of the border]...she was working as a customs official and so you know, she knew all this stuff and disagreed with what most of the rules were. So you know, she had talked about racial profiling especially after September 11<sup>th</sup> [2001] and signals about how you are lying and they target you based on gender and age and these sorts of things (Interview 028).

One respondent made reference to cultural background as an important factor when crossing the border. As this respondent pointed out the stories of friends who worked at the Canadian border made it clear that being an Arab could spell difficulty when trying to cross:

I just knew from my friends who worked at the border that if you happen to be Arab, you would have a hard time going through [the border] (Interview 028).

Interestingly however crossing the border was described as easier for residents of the Niagara region; a situation that pointed to the importance of locality:

I always thought it was really weird how you would see people having trouble, but then I seemed, and I don't know this, I only know this from talking to other people, that if you

say that you are from ...Niagara Falls, they will wave you through without even questioning you. But then other people, they say they are from Toronto or something, they ask them more questions (Interview 028).

While the above response pointed to the importance of locality in border crossing, it is uncertain whether this operated evenly across racialized differences and class.

According to some of these respondents then, categorizing border crossers into desirable and undesirable, 'high risk' or 'low risk' border crossers was sometimes acknowledged to be based on 'stereotypes'. In the view of one respondent, some of these perceptions are based on the 'different colour' of the border crosser, which singles them out to be suspicious or perceived to be 'violent':

Well, I know, like a few people, I know it is racist and I don't believe in this but you know, a lot of people, their skin colour, because they have a different colour right? I find that ...they [border officials] think they [people of different colour] are violent... Because I remember I had a friend growing up and she is coloured, right? And sometimes... like they would stop her and they would be asking her all these questions. And they won't ask me all the same questions, which I find wrong, but for some reason, they link those ['coloured' people with violence] (Interview 026).

Another respondent described the predictability of racially based rejections of 'black Americans' at the Canadian border; a situation that she claimed is 'stereotypical':



They always pull over [black Americans] no matter what. This is very stereotypical and racial but if there were a car of black Americans, ... they would be turned away. But you just knew they were coming, like we used to sit there when I was on traffic and we had to sit on outside the booths and direct them over and we used to be able to ... pick out who was getting pulled over. We could just tell by how long they were talking and what the people looked like that they were getting rejected back, like we just sort of knew (Interview 019).

Explicit in the above responses is recognition that those who are 'non-white' or 'coloured' experience greater difficulty in border crossing. The responses also include a clear labeling of this as racist behaviour on the part of Canadian border officials. Interestingly, the above responses were from a white male and female who volunteered the most explicit discussions of racism during the interviews. My supervisor conducted one of them while I conducted the other. This challenges my earlier speculation that white respondents may want to downplay the level of discrimination at the border, as these respondents were forthcoming about the issue of discrimination. It is also likely that the respondents' educational background (university and college students) impacted on their perceptions, explanations, and critical analysis of discrimination.

Another respondent suggested that people of colour, regardless of citizenship status, as well as would-be immigrants, and refugees experience more hassle at the border due to an 'underlying racism' and the largely 'white' racial demography of the Niagara region:

I know this from living in Toronto and then in Niagara Falls that there is this underlying racism in Niagara and I think it has to do with the ethnic makeup... Working in the service industry and seeing how people would treat people of colour, whereas in Toronto, most of the staff, the overwhelming majority of staff would be people of colour, so ... you get this kind of white trash, kind of attitude [in Niagara] (Interview 028).

According to this respondent, the ethnic make-up of the Niagara region, which is predominantly racialized 'white', is linked to racist treatment of racial minorities as well as support for anti-refugee and anti-immigration policies:

Yeah, I know that growing up there, yeah, people would not have supported more immigration or more refugees, not at all (Interview 028).

Significantly though, he pointed out that while most white people would readily agree to increased security and control mechanisms at the Canadian border especially for refugees and immigrants, they would want a more relaxed and free flowing access at the border for themselves:

This is funny because they want easy access for themselves too and so if they get any hassle whatsoever, they will say, you know, 'what the hell is going on here, let me through, let me through'. So I don't think they say tighten it [the border] up but they would make the exception to tighten it up for immigrants and refugees (Interview 028).

Certainly this view is supported by one respondent's account of the flow of refugee claimants at the border:

I have seen so many refugees and I have heard so much about it, it just...I have honestly a negative view of the refugee system and how it works in Canada and how we do it. And I just find it that it is too expensive...how the refugees come over, they just come over, they just come over in herds and they walk across the bridge and taxi drivers like will just drop them off and they come over and they lie. So I have seen, like I have heard the lies, I hear it through immigration too, like I would hear behind the scenes stuff (Interview 019).

Would be refugees and immigrants here are constructed as liars and described using animalistic terms as 'herds', terms that have been noted in racist discourses (Starr 2000).

Another issue that came up in the interviews was that of age. One respondent suggested that age played an important role in determining the ease or otherwise with which one was able to cross the border. He pointed out that he and his friends started having more hassles and had to answer more questions at the border during their teenage years (something also mentioned by Glen):

They [border officials] were very stringent with questions in terms of 'do you own this car? Who are you? Who are you?' Asking for everyone's licenses. 'What are you doing here? How long are you going to be there?' They gave you a far harder time when you are seventeen, eighteen [years old] (Interview 028).

The basis of such age based differentiating treatment is not clear but it is possible that teenagers may be experiencing what they perceive as hassle because they now have to deal with border officials themselves instead of their parents doing it as in their childhood. I am tempted to speculate too however, that there may be an association of youth, especially males with criminality by the border officials as is evident in broader social context. It is difficult to conclude more without further study.

While one respondent explicitly made mention of gender as an important factor in border crossing, it is also not clear from the interviews analyzed here, the extent to which gender may have operated at the border.

### **Privilege at the Border: Local and Global**

While seven of the eight interviewees pointed to forms of discriminatory treatment at the border- particularly of racial minorities, there was little explicit acknowledgement of their own ('white' and other) privilege at the border site. The experience of relatively easeful crossings combined with the equation of difficulties with criminality (despite explicit acknowledgement of racial profiling) meant that this easefulness was not seen as based on ascribed characteristics but rather on a status of being a 'good' crosser. The position of privilege was also apparent from accounts of international border crossings. Three out of the eight respondents made reference to their international travels and their ease of experiences of those borders. While one of them referred how the heavy presence of armed security guards at other borders could sometimes be intimidating, in comparing his experience at the Cuba border with that of the U.S. border, he noted that he had experienced more delays at the US border than at the Cuban one:

Well, that is certainly different from crossing to the United States... I didn't seem to think that there was a big hassle...except that everyone there was dressed in like military garb, which made it seem more intimidating. But no, I have been held up longer at the U.S. border. Let us put it that way (Interview 028).

Another respondent also pointed to the presence of armed guards at international borders. He noted that crossing other borders (e.g. Morocco, Spain, England) could occasionally be difficult due to a language barrier [inability of border guards to speak fluent English] and inspection of ones' luggage and passport and the fear of losing ones luggage:

Armed guards, they always checked your passport. That is about it, we didn't have any problems going back and forth. But ...those crossings, some of them were in airports so it is different. They search your luggage sometimes, or you lose your luggage and they speak less English (Interview 027).

Yet another respondent referred to crossings he undertook when he visited Boston and Calgary, which he claimed were without problems:

I went to Boston once and then even when we went to Calgary, there is you know, never any problems. Like it was just like claim all your stuff [luggage] and they let you just keep going (Interview 024).

The experiences recounted by these respondents suggest a relation between international borders and the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. For these respondents, both local and global spaces were crossed with relative ease. The relative privilege that this represented however, was unacknowledged.

### **Impact of September 11, 2001**

As indicated earlier in chapter four, the focus of this project was not to address the impact of the September 11, 2001 events in the U.S. but to look at people's experience and perceptions of border crossing and regulation at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara more broadly. However, it is evident from the subsequent changes in border control and regulation around the world and the U.S./Canada border in particular that the events of September 11, 2001 have had enormous repercussions on border regulation and control and have significantly altered the way people experience and perceive border crossings.

This situation implies that the border does not operate in an autonomous fashion; what occurs in the broader socio-political and economic context impinges on and shapes day-to-day border operations and enforcement practices. In this vein, the issue of the border opening up or closing and the extent of security measures as well as factors that determine who crosses the border at any given time is based on a socio-historical context that includes such factors as the fear of terrorism, criminality, moral panics etc.

Some respondents noted that in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks there were increased concerns about the safety of people especially in high-rise buildings and other important landmarks in Niagara. One respondent whose friend happened to work at the U.S./Canada border shared this feeling. She expressed fear of a possible terrorist attack on the

Peace Bridge at Fort Erie and the safety of her friend who worked at the Canadian side of the border:

It made me worried for a friend of mine... my friend was moved to ...the bridge in Fort Erie and that was the one they mentioned might have the [hydro] plant or whatever. [It was said that] the hydro plant was going to be bombed. And the bridge is right near there. So I was more afraid for her and I still am because she is dealing with the border and it is a pretty hectic time still and just the way she talks and everything else... I think she is a little frightened by everything. But she still has to continue to do what she is doing. And she is the one that gets to deal with the immigrants that come in that they have to stop or send back and everything else (Interview 018).

Though the above respondent did not give reasons why she should be scared about her friend dealing with immigrants at the border, her response about her friend having to 'stop' or turn 'back' immigrants suggests an awareness of the border as a site of exclusion of would-be immigrants.

Fear of potential terrorist attacks were translated into increased border security measures, something another respondent experienced as a new phenomenon, totally different from what she had previously experienced in her childhood years:

Yeah, actually it was, like up until 9/11 issue, I didn't really realize it [increased security] as much, I didn't really care about it, really. And then after that, you know, since it was all over the news, I was watching it and you just noticed that things, like they have

tightened this. Yeah it was definitely more after that [September 11, 2001], that I realized it [increased security] (Interview 026).

The above respondent suggested that after September 11, 2001, there was the need for enhanced security at borders as a means of safeguarding lives and property:

It was definitely because of 9/11 and you know, all this crazy terrorist stuff that is going on. So they [border officials] are taking these big protective measures. So that is definitely the huge number one factor. Like it is just to keep everyone safe and everyone knowing that they are safe (Interview 026).

Here, we realize a clear justification of the various security changes at the border though it is not clear who is included or excluded when she said the changes were necessary to make 'everyone' feel safe.

Two respondents were critical of the occasional long delays at the border, which had intensified temporarily after September 11 2001. One respondent while critical was still supportive of the changes:

The officials; they make it both easy and difficult. It makes it easy for the people when the officials are checking everyone ...you know you will feel safe, but ...it also makes it difficult because it sometimes takes so much time. You know, you just want to cross the border but they do have their reasons (Interview 026).



To this respondent, while the increased delays can be frustrating for border crossers, it is a necessity to ensure public safety. Border officials are thus not to blame since in her view 'they do have their reasons', and justifiable ones for that matter.

Four of the respondents indicated that the increased security measures at the border have greatly altered the frequency with which they used to cross the border. One respondent asserted that while previously he didn't notice the reality of difficulty at the border due to his own childhood experience of ease, the various changes in the post September 11, 2001 environment has made him alter the frequency with which he crosses:

Up till a month ago, I would have agreed I guess that the border is becoming a little more invisible ... Canadians and Americans ...very readily crossed and very easily crossed back and forth. Like we were talking about for just a couple of hours to go to a hockey game or to go shopping or for dinner or whatever ... Now, I have been over within the last month [but] all this terrorism [that] has happened in the States [is] ... obviously ...a big deterrent. A lot of people haven't been going and then there was the waiting and I guess this was in the first couple of weeks after it happened ...the waits at the border (Interview 016).

Despite acknowledging increased difficulty in border crossing in post September 11, 2001, one respondent asserted that the increased security measures at the border were important and necessary to curb terrorism:

It is not going to be as free flowing and I mean after what has happened I don't wish it to be as free flowing...[and] both the ...Canadian and American immigration...need to be stricter and tightened and I am very okay with that (Interview 019).

Responses from interviewees suggest that border regulation and control in post September 11 2001 greatly altered people's experiences of the border. Three respondents made reference to the role of ethnic and/or racial profiling in the post September 11, 2001 period. One stated:

After September 11, [2001], things have changed and they are increasing security. Unfortunately some of it is ethnic and the way that they identify suspects is racial profiling (Interview 027).

The above respondent recalled an incident in which a 'man from the Middle East' was delayed and queried extensively at the border for having what was considered too much money on him while traveling:

A friend of mine ...was visiting his girlfriend in Boston but he was taking [an airbus] shuttle and on the way back ...there was a man from the Middle East on the ...van; I think he had 25,000 dollars cash on him. And they [border officials] didn't like that. So for whatever reason, the man claimed he was going to buy a car and he was held up at the border for two to three hours while they called the dealership and confirmed that he was

in fact buying a car; having that much money in cash does look suspicious (Interview 027).

Suggesting that for a person to have 'that much cash does look suspicious' implies that the treatment at the border was justified. He explained further that in his opinion, the rationale for the delay and query was due both to the amount of money the man had as well as prejudice based on his Middle Eastern provenance:

I think it was both because anyone [e.g. non-Middle Eastern] traveling with 25,000 dollars must explain the reason [for having such a huge amount on him]. But again, since the fact that he was from the Middle East and people are just experiencing more prejudice now, that is becoming a fact of life that people have to deal with (Interview 027).

The above response acknowledges 'prejudice' at the border but this is explained to be 'a fact of life' that people have to 'deal with' rather than something to be challenged or changed.

Respondents accounts confirmed what Salter (2004) had suggested that the events of September 11, 2001 have greatly altered the way people experience the border especially people of colour who have become the targets of increased security measures, and therefore experience more hassle. One respondent pointed out that due to the increased hassle, he and his friend who happens to come from Turkey avoided crossing the border:

One of my friends is from Turkey ... and so we deliberately didn't cross the border because it was right after September 11, [2001] and I knew they [border officials] would give him a huge hassle (Interview 028).

Turkish provenance is assumed to result in 'huge hassle' at the border in a way that the respondent suggests would not have been the case previously. Of course, it is possible that there could have been hassle prior to September 11 2001 but the interviewee saw September 11, 2001 as the source of increased vulnerability to such treatment.

### **Conclusion**

The above responses and sentiments expressed by the interviewees point to a number of interesting experiences and perceptions of the regulatory and control mechanisms at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara. The stories told by these racialized white people suggest that differentially situated people experience border crossing, regulation and control differently. This is evident when the ease of border crossings they themselves experienced is juxtaposed with their acknowledgement of experiences of others especially people of colour.

The different experiences of border crossing, border stories told and the explanations given to them by these privileged border crossers point to very pertinent issues. First, there is a clear paradox or even hypocrisy when it comes to perceptions of criminality. This became evident from the interviews, as interviewees associated behaviours like the alleged smuggling of cigarettes by the aboriginal woman as wrong as well as their perception of people of colour as being potentially violent but downplayed or even celebrated their own criminality, e.g. smuggling, drug possession and lying at the border.

Of great significance were the perceptions and explanations of racism in the way the border is regulated and controlled. While some were critical, overall there was an acceptance, even legitimization, or justification of the hassles experienced by 'non-white' people. As one respondent noted, border officials perceive people of colour as being 'violent' and potential criminals. Thus, there is the need for their exclusion at the border to make 'everyone feel safe'.

Responses also suggested that the border was not an autonomous entity; the way it operates and the mechanism of its operation reflect and reproduce broader social inequalities. Stories about refugees and would-be immigrants at the border for example, impact on perceptions of such people in the broader society, reproducing inequalities that are subsequently reinforced through the differential treatment of people at the border.

The interviewees' discussion of changes that have followed the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. revealed intensified border regulation and control due to fear of terrorism and security concerns. While these security measures are not new, they have been intensified in the post September 11, 2001 environment, altering the ease and frequency with which people now cross the border, but still in differentiated ways.

## **CONCLUSION**

This final chapter begins with a summary of the entire study by reviewing the purpose of the study, methodology used, and findings. Following this is an examination of the conclusions in relation to the literature on border crossing and regulation. The chapter concludes with an outline of the implications of the study for further research.

The purpose of the study was to explore people's experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation at the U.S./Canada border at Niagara in order to illuminate the workings of inequality at this site. The research was informed by the literature on globalization that assumes a deterritorialization of national borders. The literature points to how on the one hand the transfer of information, capital, and technology across national borders are enhanced while the transfer of people are facilitated and constrained in complex ways. The research was further informed by my personal experience in relation to border crossing and regulation.

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with ten participants (six women and four men) who had lived a substantial portion of their lives in the Canadian border region of Niagara. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. The respondents were asked about their experiences and perceptions of border control and regulation at the U.S./Canada border.

The interviews suggest that differently positioned people may experience differentiated treatment at the U.S./Canada border. In chapter three, for example, the analysis of the interview of Claire and Glen pointed to how a racialized 'white' person may experience more easeful border crossing and regulation than a 'non-white' person who described experienced constant difficulty and hassle at the border. Moreover, there was evidence of the dynamism and the multi-faceted nature of border control and regulation. Claire's father's story leads me into more critical analysis of 'whiteness' in border crossing and its inherent complexities.

In chapter four, a further eight interviews were analyzed to examine not only experiences of differential treatment but also how these were explained in different ways. Important here were attributions of criminality and concerns about security that allowed more privileged 'white' border crossers to describe but ultimately legitimate differentiated treatment at the border.

The interviews revealed some of the impact of September 11, 2001 on border crossing and regulation. Of particular interest is how the Canada/U.S. border has shifted from being a 'low-risk' border to a 'high-risk' one. The shift in how this particular site is perceived has influenced the rebordering of a site that was once regarded as the longest unguarded border in the world. While the rebordering may have made border crossing less easeful for everyone in the post September 11, 2001 era, the interviews suggested that people of colour, and those from 'high-risk' nations may experience greater difficulty and constraints at the border because they may be constructed as potential security threats.

Legitimizing differentiated and unequal treatment of border crossers through the discourses of criminality and/or securitization is problematic because while the securitization paradigm is allegedly meant to make 'everyone feel safe', in practice, the result is discrimination through the categorization of border crossers into those who deserve to be put under surveillance, scrutiny, and/or constraints at the border and those who are free of such actions because of their profile (Bigo 2002). As Salter (2004) has noted, the selective categorization of people into 'high or low-risk' border crossers is mostly based on a person's physical appearance, and more specifically skin colour. He notes that this is an erroneous assumption since 'guilt is not written on the skin' of a person (Salter 2004:87).

Salter further argues that defining people as 'high-risk' does not necessarily prevent possible terrorist actions but only 'creates a cycle of insecurity that leads to the increase of police

powers and bureaucratic structures of control' and regulation, especially of a targeted group at the border (2004:78).

In all, the accounts analyzed in this thesis question the concept of globalization and the perceived notion of a borderless world. The interviews suggested that the movement of people is both facilitated and constrained in complex and unequal ways. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S., this facilitation and constraint is increasingly legitimized through the discourse of securitization.

The findings of this research contribute to the field of border studies through an exploration of experiences and perceptions of border crossing at the Canada/U.S. border at Niagara. In view of stories that suggest differentiation and inequality at this border, it is important for researchers studying globalization and borders to further understand factors that contribute to such differentiation and inequality. Such research might help to probe into factors such as age and gender that this research was unable to assess.

The accounts analyzed in this research are however based in part on respondents' recollection of their childhood experiences, thus limiting the extent to which such experiences can be viewed as a reflection of current border regulation and control measures. Further research might focus on their adult experiences, paying greater attention to the post September 11, 2001 era of border crossings and regulation.

The focus here was primarily on privileged people's experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation, but the experiences of Glen point to the need for more attention to be paid to accounts regarding treatment of 'others' at the border. Another interesting dimension would be to examine the perceptions of border officials of border control and regulation. As Ladson-Billings argue, various forms of identities and positioning are important



and work to influence 'knowledge and its production' as well as our perceptions and explanations of social phenomena (2000:266). A fuller analysis of experiences and perceptions of border crossing and regulation would require a much more extensive and diverse sample of respondents.

Whatever the nature of future investigation, it is essential that research on border crossing continue to be conducted not only to add to the academic literature on borders but also to help inform policy makers on issues that will lead to less discriminatory regulation and control at the U.S./Canada border.

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## APPENDIX A

BROCK UNIVERSITY

### "BORDER KIDS": GLOBALIZATION, NATIONALISM AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE

December 2002

Interviews will be informal in nature structured as an interactive conversation. Participants will be encouraged to share their experiences of border childhood and to elaborate on those aspects that they see as most significant. The following questions however, can serve as a guide to some of the issues that may be explored.

#### 1) Background

While there has been a lot of debate in Canada about the impact of globalization, little is known about the actual experiences of children growing up in a border region like Niagara. We are interested in learning more from you about the everyday experience of growing up close to the border.

It would help us to better understand your childhood experiences if you could tell us a little bit about your history of living in a border community/region e.g. what age were you, which years did you live there? Can you also tell us something about your family background in terms of length of residence in the border region? Educational and/or occupational background? Cultural background?

#### 2) Crossing the Border

We now want to focus on your experiences as a child growing up in a border community/region and begin by asking questions about your experience of border crossing.

How often and with whom did you cross the border at Niagara as a younger child? Did this change as you got older? What were some of the reasons that you crossed the border e.g. shopping, visiting friends/family, tourism, recreation etc? Did the reasons change as you got older? What happened as you crossed the border e.g. experiences with border officials? Did these change as you got older? What did it feel like to cross the border when you left Canada and when you came back to Canada? Can you provide any stories about particular crossings that you can still remember?

Do you think that your experiences of border crossing were similar or different to those of other kids/families that you knew? Why did other kids/families cross the border? What stories do you recall hearing from other children about this experience?

As a child were you aware that some people might have problems crossing the border e.g. friends and neighbours, tourists, immigrants, refugees? As a child were you aware of the risks that some people took in border crossing e.g. being turned back, arrested, deported, injured or killed in the crossing process? What factors do you think make it easy or difficult for people to cross today?



3) Other Borders-What if any other borders did you cross as a child? Did you have family or friends in other countries that you visited or visited you? Did you communicate with family and/or friends in other countries via phone, letters, internet? Did many kids that you knew have family or friends in other countries? Can you provide any examples?

4) Living Near the Border- Apart from the experience of border crossing itself, in what other ways do you think that living near the border affected your life as a younger/older child? Did you interact with non-Canadians on the Canadian side of the border? Did you have any work experiences that were linked to living in a border community? How did living in a border community affect the lives of other kids you knew? Can you provide any examples?

5) Childhood and Identity- Can you recall for us how you tended to identify yourself as a child? Was it for example, important to be from Niagara and/or Canada? Do you think these identities were important for other kids that you knew? What other identities were important to you? Other kids you knew? Can you provide any examples? Has your own sense of identity changed over time? Do you feel that racial/ethnic/gender/class or other identities affect border living and/or crossings? Why or why not? Have you had experiences that you would like to share? Do you think that your experiences are shared by others?

6) National Identity-People have many ideas about what Canada and being Canadian is like. What were your impressions of Canada and Canadian identity as a child? Can you provide any examples? People have many ideas about what America and being American is like? What were your impressions of America and Americans as a child? Can you provide any examples? Are there any other countries that you know a lot about? Could you describe your impressions of that country and those living there? Some people think that being Canadian, American or another nationality doesn't matter so much now because some things like the economy, the media and/or environmental issues are affecting the whole world not just one or some countries. Do you think that most kids in Niagara feel more connected to the whole world than part of a particular city/region/country? Do you think that even if you are part of a larger world it is still important to be Canadian or American or another nationality? Why or why not? Do you think that being part of a larger world has an impact on the lives of children and youth?

7) Globalization-There has been a lot of debate in recent years about globalization and its effects. One straightforward definition of globalization would be an increased movement of people, goods, money, and/or ideas across national borders. Is this increased movement of people, goods, money or ideas something that you have been aware of growing up in a border region?

Some argue that not only is there increased movement across borders but that national borders are also changing. Has your lived experience of the border changed over time?

It has been suggested that globalization is linked to changes in the ways that governments provide services to citizens including children. Can you comment on recent changes in the areas of schools, health care, youth employment and/or child and youth programs in the Niagara border region? Do you think that your own life has been affected by these changes? If so, in

what ways? Can you provide some examples? What about the lives of others you know? Can you provide examples?

8) Other Issues-Are there any other aspects of being a "border kid" that you think are important to this study?

APPENDIX B

Did You Grow Up in a                      Niagara Border Community?

(Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, NOTL...)

Are you between 19-25yrs?

If so...please consider participating in a new Brock University research project on childhood experiences of border crossing and border living.

**We are looking for individuals willing to share their experiences in 45-60 min. audiotaped interviews (interview questions are provided in advance).**

**To participate or for more information, please contact:**

*Dr. Jane Helleiner, Sociology*

**jhellein@spartan.ac.brocku.ca**

**905-688-5550 ex. 3711**

*OR*

*Cynthia Nyarko, Graduate Student, MA Social Justice and Equity Studies*

*cindy nyarko@hotmail.com*

**905-688-5550 ex. 3477**

**This project has been reviewed and approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board as file #00-239. For information contact the Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550, 4315.**

## APPENDIX C

BROCK UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Information Letter

Thank you for your interest in this study!

The title of the study is: "BORDER KIDS": GLOBALIZATION, NATIONALISM AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE

Principal Researcher:

Dr. Jane Helleiner, Department of Sociology  
phone number: 905-688-5550 ex. 3711  
email: [jhellein@spartan.ac.brocku.ca](mailto:jhellein@spartan.ac.brocku.ca)

Research Assistant:

Cynthia Nyarko, Graduate Student, MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies

For this study we are recruiting volunteers over the age of 18 years who have spent a substantial portion of their childhood (e.g. 5 years) in a Niagara border community (e.g. Niagara on the Lake, Queenston, Niagara Falls, Chippawa, Fort Erie). Volunteers are asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview that covers such topics as experiences of border crossing and border living. The interview questions are provided in advance of the interview (see attached sheet). The interviews will be tape recorded and then transcribed. Participants will have an opportunity if they wish, to review and revise their transcript before it is included in the database for this study.

The following rights are assured to all volunteer participants:

- 1) Volunteers may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.
- 2) Volunteers are under no obligation to answer any interview question that they consider invasive, offensive or inappropriate.
- 3) Volunteers are assured that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that their names are not associated with any answers. Only Dr. Jane Helleiner, her research assistants and/or thesis students will have access to the data.

Please note: Unfortunately volunteers will not receive any payment for their participation.

If you have any further questions about your possible participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Jane Helleiner (see above contact information above).

This study is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (grant #410-2001-0894)

## APPENDIX D

### BROCK UNIVERSITY

#### Informed Consent Form

#### “BORDER KIDS”: GLOBALIZATION, NATIONALISM AND CHILDREN’S CULTURE

Principal Researcher: Dr. Jane Helleiner, Department of Sociology

Research Assistant: Cynthia Nyarko, Graduate Student, MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies

Name of Participant: (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate explores growing up in the Niagara border region. As a volunteer participant I have agreed to participate in a 45-60 minute interview that covers such topics as experiences of border crossing and border living. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and then transcribed and that I will have an opportunity if I wish, to review and revise the transcript before it is included in the database for this study.

This study is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through an Institutional Grant and a Regular External Research grant #410-2001-0894

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that there will be no payment for my participation.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any interview question that I consider invasive, offensive or inappropriate.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that only Dr. Jane Helleiner, her research assistants and/or thesis students will have access to the data.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock Research Ethics Board (#00-239)

You have the option of reviewing this transcript and making any desired revisions (e.g. clarifying information or omitting information) before it is included in the database for the study.

Please indicate below whether you wish to exercise this option and if so, how you may be contacted.

1) Yes, I would like to review my transcript before it is included in the database for the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

You can contact me at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please provide either email, phone or street address where you can be reached for the next two months).

2) No, I do not wish to review my transcript. It can be placed in the database for the study without my prior review. \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

Thank you for your help! Please take one copy of this form with you for further reference.

## **APPENDIX E**

**BROCK UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Title of Study: "Border Kids": Globalization, Nationalism and Children's Culture**

**Principal Researcher: Dr. Jane Helleiner, Department of Sociology**

**Research Assistant: Cynthia Nyarko, Graduate Student, MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies**

Thank you very much for your participation in this study of growing up in the Niagara border region. This study is made possible through the cooperation of people such as yourself who are willing to share their time and experiences. It is hoped that this study will advance understanding of how children experience and imagine border, national and global processes and identities.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you may contact Dr. Jane Helleiner at 905-688-5550 ex. 3711 or [jhellein@spartan.ac.brocku.ca](mailto:jhellein@spartan.ac.brocku.ca).

Feedback about the results of this study will be available by mid to late 2004 from Dr. Jane Helleiner. A written summary of the findings will be available upon request at that time.



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**Brock University**

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Senate Research Ethics Board

Extensions 3943/3035, Room AS 302

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**FROM:** Joe Engemann, Chair  
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB) Chair  
Research Ethics Board

**TO:** Jane Helleiner, Sociology

**FILE:** 00-239, Helleiner

**DATE:** December 16, 2002

*Joseph Engemann*

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The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the research proposal:

***Border Kids: Globalization, Nationalism and Children's Culture***

The Research Ethics Board finds that your *modification request* to an ongoing project involving human participants conforms to the Brock University guidelines set out for ethical research.

JE/dvo





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## Brock University

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Senate Research Ethics Board

Extensions 3943/3035, Room AS 302

FROM: Joe Engemann, Chair  
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

*Joseph Engemann*  
Chair  
Research Ethics Board

TO: Jane Helleiner, Sociology

RE: Continuing Review/Final Report  
*File #: 00-239*  
*Originally Accepted: April 30, 2001*  
*Estimated Date of Completion: December 30, 2005*

DATE: December 16, 2002

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Thank you for completing the *Continuing Review/Final Report* form. The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this report for:

*Border Kids: Globalization, Nationalism and Children's Culture*

The Committee finds that your original proposal and ongoing research conforms to the Brock University guidelines set out for ethical research.

**\* Renewal approved.**

JE/dvo