

With the support of the Tinker grant, I returned to Tijuana and Rosarito in the summer of 2022 to continue preliminary research. As this was my second summer of fieldwork, I was able to continue building relationships with interlocutors. My research is focused in a few different field sites: 1) a refugee shelter opened by a group of Mexican Muslim women serving Muslim refugees and migrants; 2) a mosque in Tijuana; 3) a mosque in Rosarito. All of these sites are heterogeneous spaces, serving Muslims from around the world (Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Russia, Chechnya, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Pakistan, Iran, Somalia, etc.). While the focus of my first summer was introducing myself to religious leaders and gaining a very general sense of what life for Muslims in the greater Tijuana area looks like, this summer I was focused on narrowing my research questions based on what issues most impact the lives of Muslims in this area.

To that end, I spent most of my time in the summer of 2022 in the shelter continuing to build relationships with its leaders. As the shelter is run by Mexican Muslim women, building connections with them has been easier for me for a variety of reasons. First, being a woman makes having conversations with women in religious spaces easier. Since the shelter serves Muslims and includes a prayer space run by an imam, I consider the shelter itself a religious space where certain customs and norms are followed. Thus, I am able to enter the women's quarters where women and girls do not wear hijab (veil). I am also able to have one-on-one or small group conversations with women in private. On the other hand, conversations between me and the imam or me and other men whether at the shelter or mosques in the area must happen in public spaces. Second, given my mother's Mexican heritage, the women who run the shelter appreciate that I understand Mexican culture through my own family's history and traditions. Finally, I am able to help in the shelter in ways that I cannot elsewhere. There is always work to be done in this space, and my access to a car to help pick up supplies or drive people to immigration appointments is greatly needed.

Other factors have impacted my decision to make the shelter my primary field site. At the mosques and the shelter, there is an overall wariness to outsiders. Conversations this summer reinforced my hypotheses of the complicated histories that have created such dynamics—surveilling and policing of Muslims, mistrust of the U.S. and Mexican governments, histories of government authorities posing as researchers or other types of experts, etc. In continuing conversations with imams at the mosques this summer, it is clear that my presence is confusing and that they cannot be sure of my intentions. At the shelter, in comparison, the director has been able to verify my position as a PhD student and other aspects of my personal history through mutual connections in Southern California's Muslim communities. For these reasons, the shelter is where I now plan to conduct the bulk of my future fieldwork.

Spending time in the shelter this summer also gave me a greater understanding of its leadership's complicated relationship to the Mexican state. While the shelter's leaders must maintain relationships with the state to operate and help migrants gain work visas and other permits, there is also a sense of being under surveillance due to the constant unannounced check-ins by local government authorities and police. In preparation for my qualifying exams, I am now developing a field statement on affective atmospheres of mistrust to begin building a framework to think through the dynamics between the state and migrants, as well as how my presence as an outside researcher fits in.

The Tinker grant enabled me to continue building connections with interlocutors this summer, narrowing the scope of my dissertation project. Spending time in the shelter, I was able to gain a greater understanding of the places from which migrants are coming and why as well as the particular types of challenges Muslim migrants face in northern Baja California. Finally, attending events at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) enabled me to meet other researchers in Tijuana and to gain a better sense of the academic landscape. I now feel adequately prepared to begin my year-long fieldwork next summer.