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The Portrait of a Smuggler?

Re/crafting Smuggling Facilitation Research



I AM A GUIDE

MY WORK IS
TO BRING PEOPLE
FROM HONDURAS
INTO THE US

Portrait of a people smuggler

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For the cartel and the smuggler, there is an unmovable bottom line:
the migrants are merchandise, to be profited from one way or the other.



Our challenges

- **Absence of empirical data**
 - Focus on “violence”
 - Coupling, interchangeability of HT with HS.
- Unwillingness in counter-smuggling, anti-trafficking circles to be critical of research methodologies, findings and representations
- Mainstreaming of smuggling as primarily a transnational crime issue.
 - Often obscures fundamental socio-cultural dimensions of irregular migration facilitation processes
 - Hides important human rights implications



Who are the “smugglers”?

US Sentencing Commission (2009-2016)

- Almost 2/3: US citizens
- Male
- Age range 32-34
- No criminal history, no criminal record
- No reports of weapons (97%); no physical injury (96%)
- Most from border communities in TX, AZ.

Smuggling Workshop (Comparative Smuggling)

- Migrants and Refugees themselves
- Working poor – women, youth, children, the elderly – supplemental/ survival income
- No weapons, no prior criminal history
- No ties to organized crime



Who is made invisible in the process?





The need for critical approaches to mobility

- Transnational crime, violence-centric framework must be supplemented.
- Critical, innovative engagement with data sources, research, methods is urgently needed. Some examples:
 - **UNODC:** *The Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal & Case Law Database*
 - **IOM:** Special Issue of Migration Policy Practice on innovative ways to measure irregular migration
 - **EUI/UTEP/Monash:** *Smuggling Workshop*

The need for critical approaches to mobility (cont.)

- Inclusive methodologies
 - Gender, race, ethnicity, age
 - Smuggling facilitators are **essential** partners in the analysis, prevention.
 - [Circuit Minors Project in Cd. Juarez, Mexico](#)



Neither “criminals” nor “illegals”: children and youth in the migrant smuggling market on the US-MX Border



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