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

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”?

- 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?

Friends & family who hire smugglers
• Nohemi’s case in Cd. Juarez

ICE Disruption Initiative 2017
Arrests of parents who paid to get their children smuggled

Women & the elderly
• Often charged with offenses other than smuggling

Children & youth employed as facilitators
• Cd. Juarez’s circuit minors
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