

The Efficacy and Impact of the Alien Transfer Exit Programme: Migrant Perspectives from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

The Alien Transfer Exit Programme (ATEP) is a US deportation strategy created in 2008 whereby migrants are returned to border regions of Mexico distant from their initial place of apprehension. The goal of this strategy is to geographically separate migrants from their *coyotes* [paid crossing guide], who are often waiting for them in Mexico, in an attempt to discourage people from attempting additional border crossings. The official government stance concerning this programme is that it is both effective at deterring migration and that it protects migrants from abusive coyotes who often “force” them to cross the harsh Sonoran desert. The effectiveness of this new policy or its impact on the experiences of migrants has yet to be examined. Using a combination of ethnography and archaeology, I describe ATEP and its impacts on the social process of border crossing with an emphasis on the experiences of migrants who have been deported from California to the Mexican border town of Nogales. I argue that recent formalized deportation strategies such as ATEP build on previous lateral relocation programmes that have long been ineffective at slowing migration. In addition, ATEP contributes to sustaining previous migration control policies of exclusion (based on age, gender, and health) that now produce new dangers for both those included and excluded from this programme. ATEP should be viewed as an enforcement strategy aimed at systematically placing migrants in harm’s way by relocating them geographically and by undermining the resources (i.e., human and social capital) that people have come to rely on for successful (and safer) border crossings. These findings contribute to the growing literature on the anthropology of deportation and the critical phenomenology of illegality.

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, heightened border security at urban ports of entry has been shifting undocumented migration towards remote border regions where security is lax but crossing conditions are more difficult (Cornelius, 2001; Dunn, 2009; Nevins, 2002). This enforcement strategy of funneling migrants towards areas where geography and environmental conditions make crossing difficult has been labelled “prevention through deterrence” (PTD) by Border Patrol (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 1997: 64–65). One direct impact of PTD is that the Border Patrol jurisdiction known as the *Tucson Sector* (Figure 1), extending from the New Mexico state line to the Yuma, Arizona county line, has steadily become the primary geographic region for the entrance of undocumented migrants into the US, many of whom cross the border through the harsh Sonoran Desert on foot. As of 2010, the Tucson Sector accounted for 47 per cent of all apprehensions of unautho-

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rized migrants along the southern border, more than twice as many as any other sector (www.dhs.gov).

Initially it was thought that the harsh environmental conditions in these less monitored regions would act as a natural deterrence to migration (Cornelius, 2001). However, over a decade of research has shown this strategy to be ineffective (e.g., Cornelius and Salehayan, 2007; Parks et al., 2009), especially in the case of southern Arizona where despite hundreds of migration-related deaths annually (Rubio-Goldsmith et al., 2006; Santa Cruz, 2010), hundreds of thousands of people still attempt desert crossings there each year. As a response, Customs and Border Protection¹ (CBP) has implemented formalized deportation policies to complement the PTD strategy. One recent policy is the Alien Transfer Exit Programme (ATEP), a deportation strategy created in 2008 whereby migrants are returned to border regions of Mexico that are distant from their initial place of apprehension (known as *lateral relocation*). The goal of this strategy is to geographically separate migrants from their *coyotes* (paid crossing guides), who are often waiting for them in Mexico, in an attempt to decrease re-entry attempts and protect migrants from abusive coyotes who would “force” them to attempt another dangerous crossing (CBP, 2008). Formal and informal deportation policies based on lateral relocation have been employed by Border Patrol since at least the 1940’s (Hernández, 2010: 127–137). Yet critical ethnographic analysis of the impact and effect of these policies on border crossings and the embodied experiences of migrants has been limited, especially following the implementation of PTD.

In this article, I describe ATEP and its impacts on the social process of border crossing. I focus on the experiences of migrants who have been deported from California to the Mexican border town of Nogales. Data are drawn from the Undocumented Migration Project (UMP), a long-term ethnographic and archaeological study of modern border crossing that I have directed since 2009. This project seeks to understand many facets of this clandestine behaviour including the political economy of human smuggling in Mexico, the archaeological fingerprint of migration, and the embodied experiences of border crossers. I argue that recent formalized deportation strategies such as ATEP build on previous lateral relocation programmes that have both long been ineffective at slowing migration and have helped sustain previous gendered policies of migration control (Hernández, 2010: 135, 202) that are now producing new dangers for both those included and excluded from this programme. The goals of ATEP are to “protect” migrants from smugglers and deter them from additional crossing attempts. However, ethnographic data suggest that this programme does neither. Instead, ATEP systematically places migrants in harm’s way by geographically relocating them in an attempt to undermine the resources they rely on for successful (and safer) border crossings. Formalized policies such as ATEP have helped create new traumas and dangers for migrants, most of which are hidden from public view because they occur either in remote desert environments or on the Mexican side of the border.

BACKGROUND: SOCIAL PROCESS OF UNDOCUMENTED MIGRATION

Of the vast literature on undocumented migration, I focus here on two studies (Singer and Massey 1998; Spener, 2009) because of their emphasis on migrant decision making processes, the role that forms of capital play in crossings, and the rich details they provide on the act of crossing itself. In 1998, Singer and Massey published one of the first comprehensive models that sought to explain undocumented migration. Drawing on data from the bi-national Mexican Migration Project and employing Bordieu’s (1977) theories of capital, they outlined a predictive model of border crossing that characterized it as a “well-defined social process whereby migrants draw upon various sources of human and social capital to overcome barriers erected by US authorities” (1998: 562). They define *human capital* as the traits and characteristics possessed by an individual that improve their

FIGURE 1
 MAP SHOWING U.S. BORDER PATROL SOUTHWEST SECTORS AND STUDY AREAS. BASED ON
 MAP FROM [HTTP://WWW.CPB.GOV](http://www.cpb.gov)



performance with respect to some outcome (i.e., a successful undocumented entrance). For example, age and life-experience may help first-time migrants make informed decisions about whether to use a coyote and how to adapt to obstacles during the crossing (1998: 569). *Social capital* refers to “interpersonal ties that enable a person to achieve a desired goal (1998: 568)” such as knowing someone with previous migration experience (1998: 569). *Migration-specific capital* is defined as the human and social capital gained from the crossing experience (1998: 569). As people accrue migration-specific capital, such as knowledge about where, when, and how to cross, they increase their likelihood of success (1998:5 69). Many have since confirmed their findings that migrant decision-making and crossing behaviours are part of a well planned process (e.g., Parks et al., 2009).

Building on Singer and Massey’s model, Spener delineates the types of human and social capital at a migrant’s disposal in his ethnographic account of the role of coyotes in South Texas border crossings (2009: 166). While others (e.g., Parks et al., 2009) have made a strong argument that coyotes are now a necessary resource for most migrants, Spener provides deeper insight into who these coyotes are, the complexity of their jobs, and the environment and social conditions that frame their interactions with migrants. Of note is Spener’s finding that a pre-existing social connection to a coyote is often key to insuring a migrant’s safety and success during crossings (2009: 162–200). In addition, Spener employs Bourdieu (1977) concept of *habitus*, the set of learned world-views, tastes, and dispositions individuals use to orient themselves in their relations with people and objects, to argue that over several generations migrants have developed a high tolerance for misery and death (Spener, 2009: 227; also see De León, in press). This documentation of the suffering experienced during “typical” crossings adds an important dimension to studies of this clandestine process and brings into focus the physical and psychological harm that people experience as a direct result of institutionalized forms of border enforcement (see Nevins, 2005, for discussion of structural violence and immigration control).

The aforementioned studies have significantly improved our understanding of the social process of border crossing, yet they require updating to account for the unique situation in southern Arizona, as well as the impact of current deportation practices. First, Singer and Massey’s model characterizes border crossing as a relatively homogenous phenomenon that becomes easier over time

(1998: 566). Although they acknowledge that the border can be a dangerous place where migrants face physical and psychological difficulties (1998: 565–566), these dangers are downplayed in their discussion. Second, Spener builds on Spener and Massey’s model by examining the physical dangers and psychological traumas faced during crossings in Texas. However, the unique environmental conditions found in the Sonora desert coupled with the highest migration and migrant-death rates found anywhere along the border, indicate that this unique corridor requires more detailed study. I argue that the higher risks in this region impact how migrants prepare themselves for crossings, as well as their decision or ability to attempt additional crossings.

Third, Singer and Massey recognized that becoming familiar with the deportation process was a key piece of migration-specific capital acquired during repeated crossings (1998: 564–565, 574–575). However, their analysis focused on the *voluntary-departure complex*, whereby apprehended migrants are permitted to waive their rights to a deportation hearing and returned to Mexico without lengthy detention (Heyman, 1995: 266). While still in use today, migrants now also face more punitive measures including being jailed for violation of federal immigration laws through an initiative entitled *Operation Streamline* (Parks et al., 2009:36–7), being deported by plane to Mexico City through the Interior Repatriation Programme (DHS 2004), or being laterally relocated through ATEP. These practices can profoundly impact a person’s ability to attempt additional crossings. Moreover, recent scholarship is bringing attention to the disruptive and degrading nature of deportation (Peutz and De Genova, 2010: 2), as well as the insight into complex historical (Walters, 2002), sociopolitical (De Genova and Peutz, 2010), and phenomenological issues (Willen, 2007) that can be gleaned from studying this process. An analysis of deportation as a key component of the migration process has yet to be fully incorporated into discussions of this phenomenon along the US–Mexico divide. Finally, much of the published research on undocumented migration derives from surveys and interviews with migrants long after their crossing experience (although see Ochoa O’Leary, 2009a), an approach that Spener suggests may lead migrants to accentuate the positive and downplay the negative experiences of the journey (2009: 169). Using ethnography, I examine crossing and deportation events either as they happen or immediately afterwards, thus adding to the growing literature on the critical phenomenology of illegality (Willen, 2007) and the anthropology of removal (Peutz, 2006).

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

The data presented here come from archaeological and ethnographic field work conducted along the US–Mexico border, often within visible sight of the border wall. Archaeological surveys of migrant trails and ad-hoc resting areas (known as *migrant stations*) were conducted in the Arizona deserts northwest of Nogales during the summers of 2009 and 2010. Migrant stations are places where people rest, eat, and change clothes while crossing into the US (De León, 2012). To date, the UMP has mapped dozens of migrant stations and collected thousands of artefacts including water bottles, clothing, and other materials. The ethnographic data were collected in the Mexican towns of Nogales and Altar (Figure 1) between June and September of 2009, along with follow-up visits during the spring and summer of 2010.² Altar is the primary traffic hub for migrants attempting a desert crossing into Arizona. Nogales is the most common deportation point for people apprehended in the Sonoran desert of Arizona, as well as those relocated to the region through ATEP. Semi-structured and informal interviews were conducted in Spanish with 125 migrants, either before crossing attempts or immediately following deportation. Of those 125 interviewed, 26 reported being deported from elsewhere (i.e., processed through ATEP). Interviews were primarily recorded through hand-written notes with some longer life-history interviews recorded using a digital voice recorder. In addition, hundreds of hours of observational data on the day-to-day experiences of deported people in Nogales were collected.

DEPORTATION HISTORY AND THE ALIEN TRANSFER EXIT PROGRAMME

The mass deportation of Mexican migrants by the US government goes back to at least the Great Depression when anti-immigrant sentiment fuelled the expulsion of 415,000 people between 1929 and 1935 (Nevins, 2002: 33). However, it was not until the 1940s that Border Patrol began the systematic and concerted effort to deport undocumented Mexicans (Hernández, 2006: 428–429, 2010: 127–150). During the early stages of mass deportations of Mexicans, Border Patrol recognized that standard practices failed to deter the mobility of migrants because those dropped off at the border (near where they were apprehended) immediately attempted another crossing (Hernández, 2010: 127). In her excellent study of early Border Patrol history, Hernández notes that in 1945 Border Patrol and the Mexican government reached an agreement whereby Mexico agreed to transport migrants, who did not reside in border towns, to distant locations in the interior of the country (2010: 127). This was a deliberate attempt to disrupt the social networks that people relied on for successful entry (2010:134). To counteract these relocation practices, migrants from the interior began to claim border resident status so that they would not be transported back to their home regions (2010:134). Border Patrol responded by designing a system of bus transports that returned migrants to distant ports of entry in hopes that people would become disoriented in these new locales and vulnerable to local criminals (2010:134). Early on Border Patrol recognized the dangers created by this strategy and excluded women, children, and family groups from participation (2010: 135). Selectively relocating sub-populations of migrants (i.e., adult men) to different parts of the border and Mexico's interior to deter repeat crossing attempts has been practised sporadically following the implementation of PTD (Cornelius, 2005: 781), but has never been critically examined. ATEP is the most recently designed lateral deportation programme that builds on these long-standing practices.

Begun in 2008, ATEP currently operates in California, Arizona, and Texas (Fischer, 2010). According to a GAO review, it is a programme:

in which removable aliens are bused from their original apprehension location to another Border Patrol location for removal. ATEP is designed to disrupt the ability of alien smuggling organizations to operate by deterring aliens from repeatedly crossing the border illegally and from seeking the assistance of smuggling organizations... Removable aliens must meet certain criteria in order to participate in the programme. For example, an alien must be a male from the ages of 20 to 60 with no medical conditions or criminal history (GAO, 2010: 11–12).

By disrupting a migrant's ability to reconnect with their coyote, it is assumed they will return to their community of origin, rather than contract a new coyote in a different border town. While ATEP builds on previous practices of lateral relocation, it also plays a unique role in the current PTD strategy. First, ATEP complements the funnelling effect of PTD by physically relocating people to the Tucson Sector from elsewhere. The Tucson Sector is the most difficult and dangerous crossing corridor and the relocation of some people to this region is likely not a random event. Second, the implementation of this formal programme at a time when the majority of migrants successfully enter the US with the help of coyotes suggests it is a direct counter attack to this strategy. Third, the explicit exclusion of particular sub-populations of migrants (e.g., children and those with medical conditions) is not only a public declaration of an exclusionary practice that has been largely informal, it also suggests lateral relocation is dangerous.

Two key questions are: Is ATEP effective at deterring repeated crossing attempts? What specific impacts does ATEP have on migrants? Here I briefly address the first question, and examine the second in the following section. In general, measuring undocumented migration is challenging (Massey and Capoferro, 2004) and statistics related to this phenomenon are subject to wide-ranging interpretation and political manipulation (Andreas, 2009: 36, 82–24, 106–112). The primary measure

used by CBP to gauge the effectiveness of security policies is the number of apprehended foreign nationals caught entering the country illegally each year, a statistic which may actually measure improvements in migrant crossing strategies (Cornelius, 2005: 782). While interpretations of apprehension statistics have long been subject to question (Donato et al., 1992:140–141), quantitative data on the effectiveness of ATEP are non-existent.

In May of 2010, the GAO evaluated the anti-smuggling policies being used by CPB (including ATEP). CBP could only report quantitative data for the number of people (5,830) processed by ATEP in the Tucson Sector in 2008 and were unsure how many had been processed since its inception (GAO 2010:57). CPB officials could also only provide the GAO with the unsubstantiated assessment that programmes such as ATEP “decreased [the] number of apprehensions and deaths in recent years along the southwest border (2010:45)”. The GAO concluded that because sectors are not comparing data on who is processed through ATEP against those apprehended elsewhere, there is no way to evaluate this programme (2010:42–47). In July of 2010, CBP reported that as of June 30, 2010 a total of 73,266 detainees had been removed through ATEP but provided no disaggregated data for fiscal year or sector (Fischer, 2010). Hence, there is currently no way to measure the effectiveness of this programme. Still, previous studies of deportation indicate it is ineffective at deterring migration (e.g., Fuentes et al., 2007). Although data collected by the UMP are currently insufficient to gauge the border-wide impact of ATEP, they do provide insight into both its ineffectiveness in Nogales, as well as the embodied ways migrants experience this programme.

ATEP’S IMPACT ON MIGRANTS

In addition to viewing ATEP as an effective strategy against undocumented migration and smuggling organizations, CPB also characterize it as a programme that helps ensure migrant safety. For example, when commenting on this programme in the Tucson sector, CPB reported:

[ATEP] safely returned 5,830 illegal aliens through ports of entry in California. This programme safely removed aliens from the waiting hands of the smugglers who would certainly force them to endure several days in the harsh environment in another attempt to illegally cross the border only to face certainty of arrest by Border Patrol agents. (CBP, 2008).

The first question that must be asked is that if ATEP protects migrants from the attempting desert crossings, why does this programme also relocate people to Nogales from elsewhere? Second, if ATEP is a protective measure, why are those migrants who Border Patrol consider the most vulnerable (e.g., the elderly and sick) excluded from participating? Third, just how “vulnerable” are migrants to coyotes? In the following section I argue that ATEP is not an effective and humane enforcement strategy and that many people impacted by this policy face new dangers upon lateral relocation.

Relocation to unfamiliar border towns

Migrants deported to border towns have long been preyed upon by local criminals (Hernández, 2006: 433). This practice has been exacerbated by post-PTD increases in deportation numbers and the narrowing of repatriation locales to a few major ports of entry. ATEP adds to this trauma by relocating migrants to unfamiliar ports of entry where deportees are easily identified based on their clothing (e.g., dark coloured clothes, camouflaged backpacks) (De León, 2012), their possessions (e.g., deportation tags on backpacks), and their dishevelled physical condition (see Peutz, 2006:223 for similar scenario among deported Somalis returning to Mogadishu). Adding to this trauma, many are deported in the middle of the night. A 43 year-old migrant named Andres³ talked about his experience:

We were dropped off at *la linea* [port of entry] at 4am. We couldn't leave because they [criminals] will rob you and we didn't have any money...If you don't have any money, they will beat you. We slept on a bench until sunrise and then found a group [of migrants] to walk with. We left at 6am from *la linea* really tired...Many people leave detention and they are starving. All they feed you are some orange crackers...You may have to spend several days in there and you don't eat much...You are always starving when you come out of there and get dropped at *la linea*.

CPB claims that ATEP disrupts (and sometimes shuts down) smuggling operations at different points along the border (GAO, 2010:57). This assessment overlooks the fact that smuggling organizations are present in all major border towns and coyotes wait at ports of entry to aggressively offer their services as soon as migrants cross into Mexico. Entering an unfamiliar city, often at night, can be overwhelming and many migrants are cajoled into going with a coyote who may rob or kidnap them.

Migrants are usually familiar with shelters in the region where they attempted their previous crossing, but this migration-specific capital is often neutralized by transport to an unfamiliar city where finding help can be difficult. In Nogales, the largest migrant shelter is located miles from the port of entry in a neighbourhood that is unsafe at night. People who cannot get to the shelter before nightfall are often forced to sleep in public areas (e.g., bus stations and park benches) where they are vulnerable to assault. Adding to this difficulty is the fact that many are deported with few personal possessions (e.g., money and identification), often because they were robbed during their crossing or their possessions were lost while being apprehended by Border Patrol. Without identification, many cannot directly receive money wires from relatives to pay for food and temporary housing. These people often have funds wired to a third-party (e.g., a fellow migrant or local citizen) who possesses identification. In Nogales, this is a common practice with many charged exorbitant fees by their third-party broker. I observed brokers who charged fees ranging from 10 to 75 per cent per transaction, with higher rates charged to people travelling alone, indigenous migrants with minimal Spanish skills, and those unfamiliar with Nogales. In this instance, even when migrants had family (i.e., social capital) who could send money, they often had to risk dealing with a third-party who could exploit their unfamiliarity with Nogales.

Group separation

Only males between the ages of 20 to 60 with no medical conditions or criminal history are eligible for participation in ATEP. However, there is no public information available regarding how males are selected or what the protocol is for people travelling with friends or family. During an information session for deported migrants in Nogales, a Mexican official had this advice about ATEP for those contemplating another crossing:

[US Immigration] can return you to any border town. They are not obligated to return you to the place where you crossed. For example, if you get caught in Nogales don't think that they will have to return you to Nogales...The Americans can leave you wherever they want along the Mexican border. The intention is so that you will not try and return again through the same place... They are trying to "break the chain". There are occasions where you may come with someone, perhaps a family member or a friend. They may send one of you to one town and the other to another.

This statement suggests that some of those processed through ATEP are relocated without consideration for their travelling companions. This was confirmed by many conversations I had with migrants, often women, whose male travelling companions (e.g., husband or relative) had been relocated elsewhere (also see Ochoa O'Leary, 2009c:532). This group separation undermines a key form of migrant social capital (Donato and Patterson, 2004: 114; Singer and Massey, 1998: 566; Spener, 2009: 166). One understudied side effect of lateral relocation is its impact on female

migrants travelling with male friends or relatives (Donato et al., 2008: 341) who are thought to act as a form protection (i.e., social capital) against sexual assault and robbery (Bauer and Ramirez, 2010: 17; Valdez-Suiter et al., 2007: 107). Although it is highly problematic to characterize men as “protectors” of women or as effective deterrents against sexual assault, travelling with friends or relatives (of either sex) is a desirable form of social capital. When male and female companions are separated, it may, however, have more detrimental effects on women who are estimated to have less migration-specific capital (Donato et al., 2008: 342). It may also impact what happens to a woman on a subsequent crossing attempt. For example, research in Nogales by Ochoa O’Leary (2009a: 102) suggests that women travelling alone are more likely than men to be abandoned in the desert by their guide.

One female migrant named María, whom I interviewed many times, exemplified some of the negative impacts that ATEP has on those excluded from participation. María had travelled to Sonora from Southern Mexico with her husband and seven year-old daughter. They were apprehended during their first desert crossing. She and her daughter were sent to Nogales while her husband was sent elsewhere. After a week, with no word from her husband, she travelled to Altar where she contracted a new coyote and attempted another crossing. This crossing was also unsuccessful and they were again deported to Nogales, this time penniless. She eventually determined that her husband had been sent to Tijuana. In order to pay for bus fare to Tijuana, María and her daughter spent days at a bus station begging for change. During this time she turned down job offers from local bar owners who solicited her for sex work and several coyotes who offered to “watch” her daughter while she travelled to Tijuana. I asked María if she would consider returning to Chiapas instead of attempting another crossing. She responded: “I borrowed \$3000 dollars to pay for the trip...I am out of money and can’t go back empty handed...Begging for money to get to Tijuana is easier than going home to nothing in Chiapas...I have to keep crossing.”

“Breaking the chain”

Separating travelling companions and sending people to unfamiliar border regions are residual impacts of ATEP’s primary goal, which is to disconnect people from their coyotes. The assumptions are that people will not return to their initial crossing point to reconnect with their coyote and that they will not cross the border in the sector they are relocated to. Those I interviewed who had been relocated to Nogales often had previous border crossing experience in Tijuana and were able to navigate that environment easily. The migration-specific capital that they had accumulated through crossing in California was undermined once they were faced with the prospect of an unfamiliar Sonoran Desert crossing. A 33 year-old ATEP deportee named Ricardo exemplified this dilemma. Ricardo had lived in California for 15 years, was married to an American citizen, and was the father of an American-born child. Ricardo had been deported on multiple occasions but had always successfully crossed back into California through Tijuana. For Ricardo, who had an established life in the US, the only option he considered viable was to continue crossing the border until he was successful. When we first met, he had just arrived and was trying to determine what to do. When asked about his plans, he stated: “I don’t know...I might try and go with those guys who seem ok (he motions to a group of coyotes sitting nearby), but they are expensive. If I need to, I will return to Tijuana because I know that city well and I crossed there before. It would be easier for me to cross near there. There is a lot of violence here (in Nogales).”

Ricardo eventually decided his best option was to attempt an unfamiliar desert crossing. However, he faced the problem of whether to trust a coyote he had only recently met. Ideally, migrants contract coyotes that are based in their home community or recommended by a family member (Spener, 2009: 163–171; Fuentes et al., 2007: 64). These coyotes are ideal because of the accountability created by pre-existing social ties (Spener, 2009: 174). Contracting an unknown coyote

increases the likelihood of being robbed, swindled, or abandoned in the desert and is the least desirable (Parks, et al., 2009: 52–53; Spener, 2009: 179) and most dangerous option. People such as Ricardo know this, but they have few options in a place like Nogales where it is virtually impossible for a first-time migrant to successfully cross the desert alone.

One reason to fear unknown Nogales coyotes is that many work with armed bandits known as *bajadores*⁴ (Fulginiti, 2008; Ochoa O’Leary, 2009b), who prey on migrants:

They [bajadores] lined us up and had us fill a plastic bag with all of our valuables... They had *cuernos de chivo* [machine guns]. It was clear that the coyote knew this was going to happen and he sat down and watched.... They made some of the women take off their clothes, while they [bajadores] groped them. (Emilio, 23 year-old migrant)

The coyote told us to wait while he went to make a call on his cell phone. After he left, bajadores showed up and robbed us. They took our money and jewellery and left... Eventually the coyote came back for us and we continued walking. (Christina, 19 year-old migrant)

Bandits have been preying on migrants since the early days of lateral relocation (Hernández, 2010: 134), but those in Tucson Sector have reached new levels of organization and violence (McCombs, 2010). One new form of migration-specific habitus appears to be an increased expectation of encountering bajadores. Some migrants offered advice regarding how to avoid them: “I always try to cross on Friday and Saturday nights when bajadores are out partying. Early Sunday mornings are good too because they are hung-over. They take the weekends off... Robbing us is a full-time job for them.” Many also carry extra money to give to bajadores as payment to ensure a safer crossing, with the understanding that those with no valuables or cash are more severely treated. In addition to robbery, people commented on the propensity of bajadores to strip search entire groups of migrants (also see Ochoa O’Leary, 2009b: 32), as well as fondle and sometimes rape women. In a sign that female migrants are developing a form of migration-specific habitus distinct from men, it has been reported that some now prepare for crossings by taking birth control pills to prevent pregnancy should a sexual assault occur (Bauer and Ramírez, 2010:17).

Days after my first interview with Ricardo, he was robbed during a crossing by bajadores who were working with the coyote he had contracted locally. He stated:

We didn’t walk far...I was just on the outskirts of town with my group and our guide...only 20 minutes from here...They had a gun to my head and they took everything [crying]. They were high on drugs and well armed...They made us take off our clothes...The coyote ran off with them.

Ricardo’s story is one that I would hear repeated by many who hesitantly contracted an unknown coyote upon relocation. After being robbed at gun point, Ricardo returned to Tijuana to try crossing there.

DISCUSSION

I have evaluated ATEP and highlighted how it impacts migrants who are included and excluded from participation. It appears that smuggling organizations are not seriously impacted by the relocation of migrants to different parts of the border. Smugglers are present in every border town and migrants can easily (and typically do) seek out new coyotes once relocated. ATEP shuffles the clientele pool for smuggling operations across border regions but it does not significantly undermine the business of human smuggling. The forced relocation of people to Nogales (who did not want to cross there in the first place) may actually help smuggling organizations in that region by sending more clients directly to them. Nogales coyotes can catch vulnerable people who are repatri-

ated into an unfamiliar environment and convince them that a desert crossing is the best, cheapest, and safest option available.

The ethnographic data on relocated migrants in Nogales highlights what other scholars have noted previously: Deportation practices and the PTD strategy are ineffective at stopping undocumented migration. These practices may hamper the efforts of migrants (Heyman, 1995:270), but they do not deter. Many ATEP participants who I interviewed expressed how much more difficult (and traumatizing) their crossing experiences had become, but no one stated that they were turning back. Most had prepared themselves for hardships that would result from crossing elsewhere in a different environment (e.g., Eastern California) and their relocation to Nogales only exposed them to a different form of suffering (i.e., the Sonora desert). Migrants relocated to Nogales had initially chosen to cross elsewhere but now found themselves crossing the desert out of necessity, not preference. Simon, a 53 year-old migrant, summed it up best: "There are many ways to cross over, but not here. Here you have to enter the desert... This was the first time that I have tried to cross here because they deported me from California."

Border Patrol claims that ATEP protects migrants from exploitative coyotes who would force them to attempt a dangerous desert crossing. Blaming coyotes is a long-standing discursive practice used by Border Patrol to obfuscate the violence created and perpetuated by federal immigration policies. While it is true that many coyotes exploit and abuse their clients, Spener's (2009) study shows this relationship to be far from a simplistic situation of abuser and victim. Relying on social capital (e.g., recommendations family or community-based coyotes), many go to great lengths to procure the services of a coyote who will be less abusive and more trustworthy. In essence, migrants attempt to counter the abuses perpetuated by coyotes by selecting one with whom they have some previous social connection. While this does not guarantee that their trip will be successful or "pleasant", it is a strategy of self-preservation. When ATEP disconnects migrants from their self-selected coyotes, it places them into a situation where they are likely to contact a new (and potentially more dangerous) coyote to undertake an unfamiliar desert crossing. In other words, ATEP does not protect migrants from smugglers, but rather exposes them to the less trustworthy ones they had been trying to avoid.

Border Patrol excludes women, children, elderly, and the infirm from participating in ATEP because they consider these populations to be vulnerable and they recognize that lateral relocation exposes people to danger. However, this "protective" exclusion often comes at the cost of separating travelling companions who provide key social support during crossings. The difficulties, dangers, and stresses faced by male participants laterally separated from their travelling companions are equalled, if not surpassed, by the experiences of those who are excluded from lateral relocation (see Ochoa O'Leary 2009c). Separating these "vulnerable" populations from their healthy, male travelling partners puts them at higher risk upon deportation and during subsequent unaccompanied crossings. This collateral trauma created by ATEP goes largely unseen because it occurs in the desert or on the Mexican side of the border and is historically linked to previous Border Patrol practices that sought to hide the impacts of deportation on women and children (Hernández, 2010:136). This examination of what happens to those who are excluded from modern lateral relocation suggests that programmes such as ATEP are forging new ground in both the forms of trauma and violence being created by the latest enforcement strategies, as well as the effective ways in which Border Patrol's discourse is masking these impacts.

The ethnographic details of what happens to people who are both processed and excluded from programmes such as ATEP provides new insight into the importance of understanding the deportation and post-deportation stages of border crossing and highlights the need for more focused studies of these often violent and traumatizing phases (Peutz, 2006). Preliminary UMP data show that under-studied populations of deported migrants such as non-Mexican nationals (who disguise themselves as Mexicans), members of the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered community, and children are facing largely-hidden traumas that will need to be addressed in future studies. Given the chang-

ing demographic profile of undocumented migration (Donato et al., 2008; Valdez-Suiter et al., 2007) and the increasing migration of family groups (e.g., Ochoa O'Leary, 2009c) to the US, future studies of the social process of border crossing will need to further examine the impacts of gendered, aged, and health based-exclusion practices of deportation.

CONCLUSION

Formal and informal lateral relocation programmes have been used sporadically by the Border Patrol since at least the 1940s. However, their impact and effectiveness following the 1990s paradigm shift in border enforcement have not been critically examined. Building upon previous studies of the social process of undocumented border crossings, I have examined ATEP and highlighted both its ineffectiveness at deterring migration as well as its impacts on peoples' post-deportation experiences. Contrary to Border Patrol rhetoric, the data presented here indicate that ATEP neither deters nor protects migrants from attempting dangerous crossings. For over a decade, over PTD has funnelled migrants towards the deadly Tucson Sector through indirect measures. ATEP is a programme that now physically relocates people to this region. This relocation places migrants in harm's way both geographically and by undermining the various forms of migration-specific capital that many rely on for successful (and safer) unauthorized entry.

Border crossing is now more arduous and dangerous than ever before. Moreover, the deportation and detention processes have become longer, more complex, and more disruptive. Still, migrants are not deterred by deportation practices. They are, however, being exposed to new dangers and coming to accept many of those dangers (e.g., *bajadores*) as a normal part of the process. Two decades of research on the efficacy of PTD suggest that migrants will not only continue to seek new ways to resist changes in enforcement and deportation strategies, they will also ratchet up the tolerance level for the many forms of suffering that now characterize the process (De León, in press). Future studies will have to address these new and evolving obstacles to better understand the role of deportation and post-deportation in the social process of border crossing.

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NOTES

1. Customs and Border Protection is the federal law enforcement agency housed within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that is charged with regulating trade, as well as enforcing customs and immigration. Border Patrol is the armed agency within CPB that is in charge of regulating the admission of foreign-born people. CPB oversees Border Patrol and its deportation policies
2. Because of the transient nature of migrants, people interviewed during follow up visits to Nogales and Altar were different from those interviewed during the summer of 2009.
3. All names are pseudonyms.
4. Bajadores derive their name from the Spanish verb *bajar* (“to lower”), which refers to the fact that they often force people to undress, empty their pockets, and drop their valuables into a bag.

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