

Humanizing Smuggling Facilitators: A Review of Gabriella Sanchez's Courageous Work in *Human Smuggling and Border Crossings*. Routledge Studies in Criminal Justice, Borders, and Citizenship, 2014.

In *Human Smuggling and Border Crossings*, Gabriella Sanchez takes on a seemingly impossible task. She asks readers not only to listen to the stories of human smuggling facilitators, but to herald those smugglers as members of an important community migration movement. To do so, she relies on her unique understanding of the smuggler's narrative, through years of ethnographic field research and interviews of smuggling facilitators to validate border-crossing operations. Sanchez employs autobiography to lend credibility to the somewhat radical result she asks readers to consider: empathizing with the human smuggler. Sanchez recognizes forthright the widespread literature portraying human smugglers as predators. In order to legitimize her counter-culture proposal, therefore, she discloses at great length her intimate knowledge of the smuggling structures. This is a largely successful approach to arguing her thesis before she even begins to disclose her research.

At the time of publication, Sanchez had spent nearly 15 years working directly with undocumented Mexican migrants, the majority of whom had crossed the southern United States border with the protection of a *coyote*, or acting as *coyotes* themselves. Through her involvement in conducting interviews for presentence reports in an Arizona criminal court, she was often the first encounter detainees would have in their native language of Spanish. It would seem that this shared language, in her eyes, created a default sense of trust, and she has herein leveraged this trust to explore the stories of border crossings. What she discovered, overwhelmingly, were stories of protection and community built by smuggling facilitators. Those voices, she thought, could not remain unheard amidst the noisy narratives of smugglers as predators.

Sanchez begins by introducing the methodology she relied on to conduct her research. Her project is based on the qualitative analysis of 66 cases of men and women over 18 who were charged with human smuggling-related offenses in Maricopa County, Arizona between 2006 and 2011. Some interactions that formed the basis of her research were formal, but the majority were informal encounters, lending credibility to the narratives of her subjects, who had no reason to lie about their circumstances given the informality of their interactions. Chapter 1 reports on the organization of human smuggling as told by these actors with experiential knowledge of its structure, membership, and power dynamics. Chapter 2 offers an historical overview of anti-smuggling enforcement policies, suggesting that practices historical practices have paved the way for inequality in enforcement mechanisms still applied today. Chapter 3 humanizes the smuggler by shining light on the every day experiences of the smuggling facilitators, highlighting smuggling as a mechanism for building quasi-familial support systems and generating income. Chapter 4 further explores the community aspect of smuggling schemes, offering self-perceptions of smugglers participating in these community-serving roles. Chapter 5 explores the unique experiences of women and the niche roles they fulfill in providing care and protection to border crossers. Chapter 6 situates violence as both a cause and effect of smuggling operations along the southern U.S. border. Each chapter reads as a collection of brief personal narratives of lived experiences as smugglers, building credibility through the compendium of anecdotal evidence.

Given Sanchez's intimate knowledge with facilitators themselves and their willingness to share their stories forthright with her, her conclusion turns out to be not so radical after all. She paints a picture of need-based border crossing and thus reframes the dialogue surrounding smugglers from one of crime to one of the facilitation of safe and successful crossing. Her work is

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a combination of firsthand narratives as told by smugglers and those they protect juxtaposed against the backdrop of mediatized tales of dangerous traffickers. The result is the deconstruction of stereotypes by autobiography, her own and those of the migrants she has encountered. *Human Smuggling* is Sanchez's way of proclaiming to the world, "Listen to the other voices!"

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