Navigating Discipline and Perseverance at the Tijuana-San Ysidro Port of Entry

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Self-Introduction

Bio:

- Transfronteriza scholar and advocate
- Educator, storyteller, community leader, mentor, and writer
- First generation middle school→ Ph.D. graduate
- Descendant of a multi-generational transborder family

Education

- Ph.D. in Political Science in (UCLA 2023)
- M.A. in Political Science (UCLA 2019)
- B.A. in Political Science, Interdisciplinary Studies minor (SDSU 2014)

Research interests:

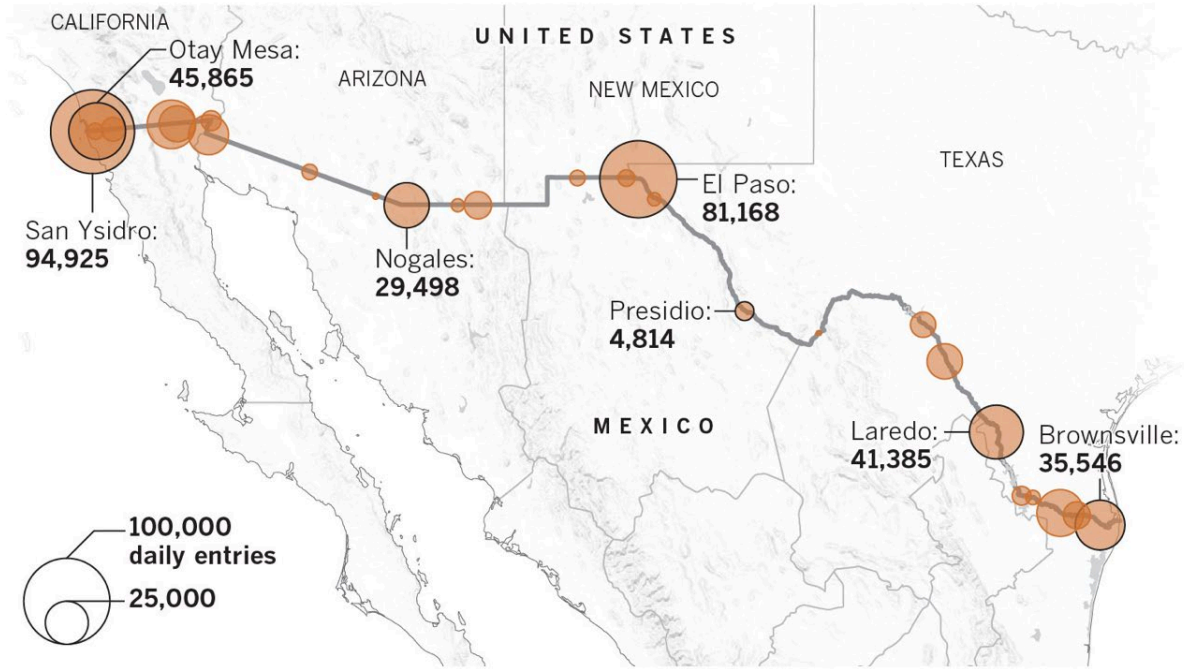
- Latinx experiences with state and surveillance institutions and their impacts on their well-being and legal consciousness
- My primary focus are transborder and migrant communities





Port of Entry: The Border Meant to be Crossed

Daily passenger and pedestrian entries at border checkpoints



Average daily totals of people entering from Mexico by bus, car or on foot at port entries grouped by port code in 2018

Sources: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, OpenStreetMap, Nextzen







162 million crossings
(pedestrian and vehicle lanes)





What emotions arise when you observe these images?



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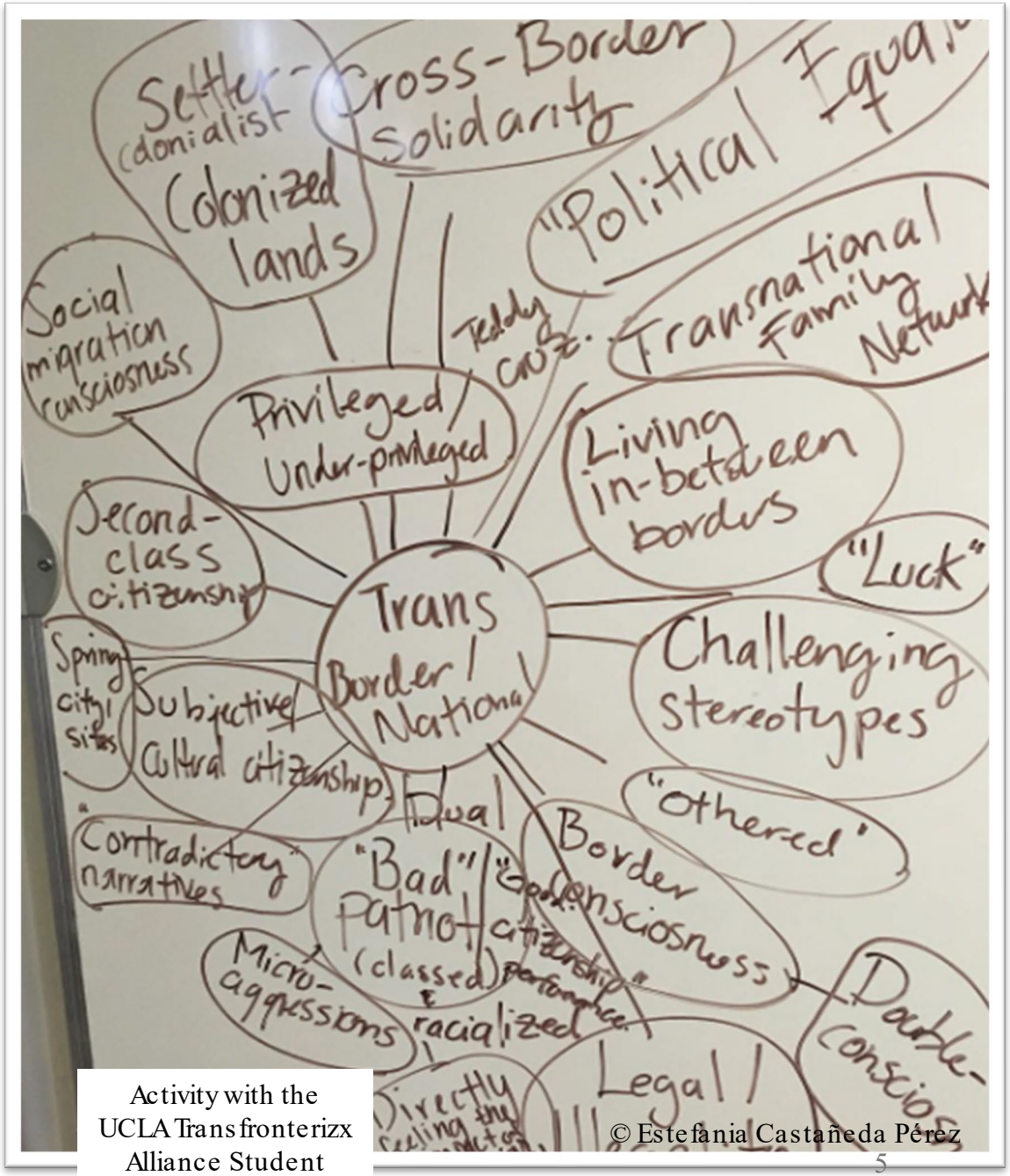
The Unique Case of Transborder Commuters

Transborder commuters are U.S. citizens and noncitizens that reside in Mexican border cities but regularly cross the border

- My research focuses on Latinx/Mexican transborder commuters (workers and students)

Transborder commuters are an understudied population (Castañeda Pérez 2020; Chávez 2016; Bejarano 2010)

They experience the law in unique ways and are exposed to discretionary policing from CBP officers (Heyman 2009)



Activity with the UCLA Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization

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Phases of Transborder Commuting

- Waiting in border traffic on the Mexican side
- Mexican military inspection (2025—present)
- Interact with border inspection officer in the middle of the bridge
- Pre-border inspection
- Interaction with CBP
  - Request permission to travel for longer distances
- Secondary Inspection





Criminalization of Transborder Youth and Families

- U.S. citizen children residing in Mexico are typically ineligible to access public K-12 schools in San Diego due to county and state-residency laws.
    - They are also ineligible for Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or food stamps (CalFresh in California) due to residency requirements.
- These limitations relegate U.S. citizens residing in Mexico to second-class citizens
- The Plyler v. Doe (1982) landmark case does not protect access to public education to U.S. citizens residing in Mexico
- The criminalization of access to social services, public healthcare, and public education is tied to the broader criminalization of immigrant and mixed-status families in the U.S., as observed in the current birthright citizenship debate
- Success Story: AB-91 Program at Southwestern College

CBP Detains US Citizen, 9, Accuses Her of Lying About Identity, Mother Says

By Danica McAdam
Published Mar 19, 2019 at 11:00 PM | Updated 6 hours ago



What is the first childhood memory that you have of the border?



Punitive Discipline and Embodiment

- Punishment, surveillance, and power become embodied by victims of oppression (Foucault 1995)
- Ports of entry along the Mexico-U.S. border as sites coercing compliance and obedience to CBP's authority
- At various stages of the border crossing routine, people are subjected to punishment
- Punitive discipline is embodied through impacts to emotional and physical wellbeing, a process I call transborder embodiment

Racial Profiling at the Border

Ports of entry are racialized spaces (Núñez 2020; Dorsey et al. 2015)

- Waivers to the Fourth Amendment legitimize excessive force and racial profiling
- Ports of entry act as states of exception

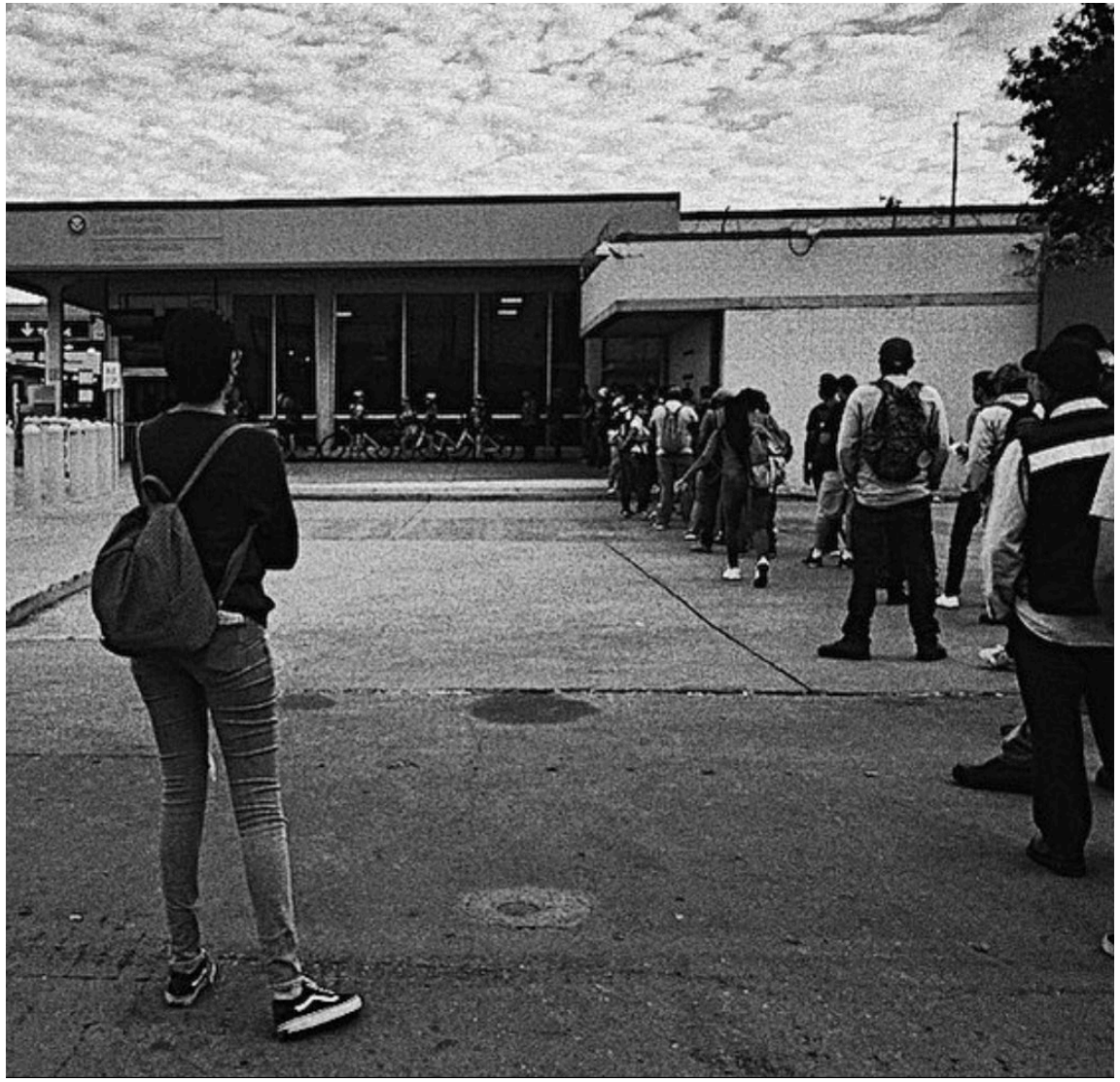
Individual-level responses to racial profiling from law enforcement

- Resistance to authority (Kerrison et al. 2018)
- Altering behavior to appear compliant (Garcia 2019)
- Internalized violence and deference to authority (Salinas Thomas 2023; Núñez 2020)



Transborder Youth Stories

- I will read excerpts of interview data demonstrating punitive discipline
- Audience members will be asked to reflect on the ways discipline becomes embodied in these excerpts
- After the excerpts, we will take a collective deep breath



Suspicion of Family Members

El CBP me preguntaba de que si el señor con el que venía era mi papa. Como no respondí y me quedé callado nos llevaron a inspección secundaria, porque pensaban que no era mi papa

yo creo que las autoridades saben el poder que tienen sobre la gente. Si a un adulto lo hacen sentirse dudoso, imagínense un niño, ellos saben lo que están haciendo.

–Sebastián (él, doble ciudadanía, 30 años)

CBP asked me if the man I was traveling with was my dad. Since I didn't answer and stayed quiet, they took us to secondary inspection because they thought he wasn't my dad.

I think the authorities know how much power they have over people. If they can make an adult feel uncertain, imagine how they can make a child feel. They know what they're doing.

–Sebastián (he/him, Dual citizen, 30 y/o)

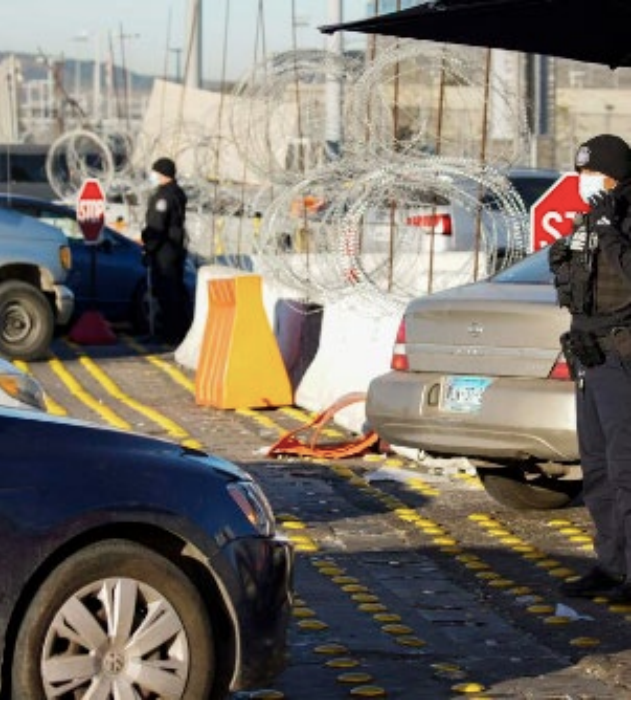
Temporal Investment - Diego

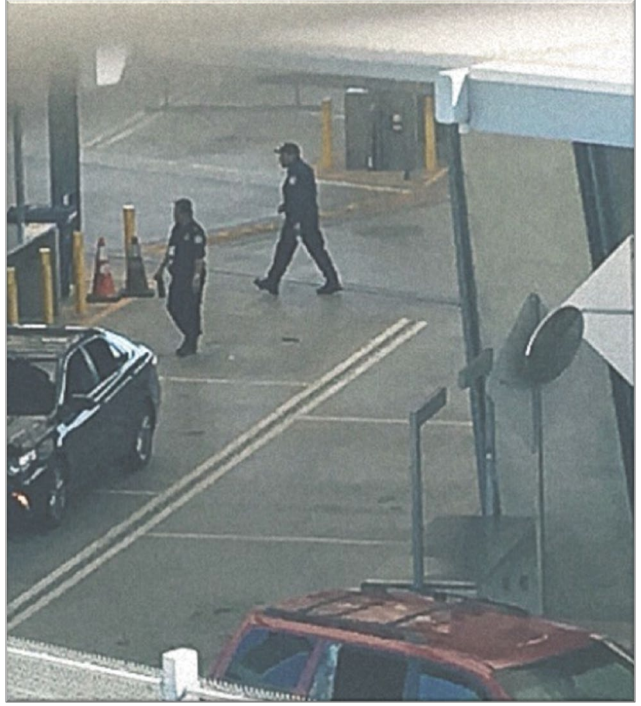
- Profile: Non-Binary, 20 yo, AB-91 student/Mexican National
- Woke up at 4:00am, then waited 30-60 mins for a taxi to arrive
- Arrived at the SYPOE at 5:30am, waited 30 mins for Chaparral to open
- Waited 1.5 hours to cross the border
- SYtrolley and bus commute to community college: 1 hour
- Return commute from college to the border: 1 hour
- From the border to his home: 1.5 hours
- Total time: 6.5-7 hours

Impact on Sleep

Previo a este semestre me sentía de la patada. Tener que volver a levantarme es como que: "Otra vez, otro perro día a cruzar la frontera". Más que nada mentalizarme de que: "Tengo que hacer esto rápido. Me voy, porque cinco minutos ya valió madres todo". Es sentir que tengo a un pinche militar tras mío de que: "Despiértate, cabrón". Una vez estoy en camino ya me relajo un poquito más, pero la levantada sí es una chinga. - Diego (alguno, F-1 visa, 20 años)

Before this semester, I felt like absolute crap. Having to get up all over again is like, "Here we go again, another fucking day of crossing the border." More than anything, it's about mentally preparing myself, thinking, "I have to do this quickly. I have to leave, because if I'm five minutes late, everything's fucked." It feels like I've got some fucking military guy right behind me saying, "Wake the fuck up, asshole." Once I'm on my way, I can relax a little more, but getting up is a real fucking struggle- Diego (any pronoun, F-1 visa, 20 y/o)







Discipline and Coercion

- Surveillance technology
- Pre-inspection
- Witnessing arrests
- Primary inspection procedures
- Secondary inspection

Unilateral Power

Creo que me ha entrenado mucho esta experiencia fronteriza para mi paciencia, porque es increíble lo que algunos guardias de la frontera te harán, como mujer, como estudiante, como alguien que cruza de Tijuana. Lo horrible que te pueden tratar por el mero hecho de que ellos pueden mandarte a la cárcel, ellos pueden mandarte a segunda, ellos pueden hacerte un montón de cosas y no puedes hacer tú nada más que comply […]Ellos tienen el poder y tú no

- Flor (ella/elle, ciudadana estadounidense, 19 y/o)

I think this experience of crossing the border has really taught me to be patient, because it's incredible what some border guards will do to you—as a woman, as a student, as someone crossing from Tijuana. The terrible way they can treat you simply because they have the power to send you to jail, send you to secondary inspection, and do all kinds of things to you, while you can do nothing but comply […] They have the power, and you don't

- Flor (she/they, U.S. citizen, 19 y/o)


Breathe

Perseverance

Se me hace que es muy importante vocear a los estudiantes, porque son muy maltratados en la frontera. Nos metemos en la fila porque llegamos tarde a la primera clase, no queremos falta y no queremos reprobar. Nosotros venimos porque vimos una oportunidad. Estamos cansados. No queríamos esta vida de cruzar la frontera. Nosotros la elegimos porque vimos una oportunidad y la agarramos. Mucha gente no recibió una educación. Nosotros tenemos esa oportunidad y no venimos a hacer daño, sino a conseguir una mejor vida. Ya ni una vida mejor, porque ni siquiera es una buena vida la que tenemos al cruzar. Queremos una vida.

- Flor (ella/elle, ciudadana estadounidense, 19 y/o)

I think it's really important to speak up for students because they're treated so badly at the border. We get in line because we're running late for our first class; we don't want to be marked absent, and we don't want to fail. We're here because we saw an opportunity. We're tired. We didn't want this life of crossing the border. We chose it because we saw an opportunity, and we seized it. Many people never had the chance to get an education. We have that opportunity, and we're not here to cause harm, but to build a better life. Actually, not even a better life, because the life we have crossing the border isn't even a good one. We want a life.

- Flor (she/they, U.S. citizen, 19 y/o)

Emotional Consequences of Immigration Enforcement



Necessary Support Systems

Advocating	Amplifying	Supporting	Advocating	Collaborating	Building	Hosting	Developing
Advocating for binational mental health care support	Amplifying access to welfare/health/ education	Supporting transborder families attain housing and education	Advocating for student lanes with CBP and related agencies	Collaborating with legal advocates in Know-Your-Rights campaigns	Building partnerships with local high schools and higher education institutions	Hosting binational public health campaigns addressing the needs of transborder families	Developing participatory research on the consequences of transborder commuting

Ongoing Recruitment

IRB # UP-25-00445

CRUZAS LA FRONTERA DE SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA ?

Estamos reclutando a personas que cruzan la frontera regularmente y que estén dispuestas a participar en una entrevista confidencial de 60 a 90 minutos (llamada telefónica o por Zoom) para hablar sobre sus experiencias al cruzar la frontera, como parte de un estudio académico del Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales de la Universidad del Sur de California (USC). **Los participantes recibirán una tarjeta de Amazon de $30 USD.**

Elegibilidad:

- Cruzar (o haber cruzado en el pasado) a San Diego por motivos de trabajo o educación
- Tener 18 años o más
- Identificarse como Latino/a o latinoamericano/a
- Ser ciudadano estadounidense, residente permanente legal, o tener visa de estudiante, visa de trabajo o visa B1/B2



Para participar :

- Escanee el código QR para completar la siguiente encuesta para verificar elegibilidad o
- Envié un mensaje de WhatsApp al:
  - 664-301-4206 o
- Envié un correo al ec31156@usc.edu

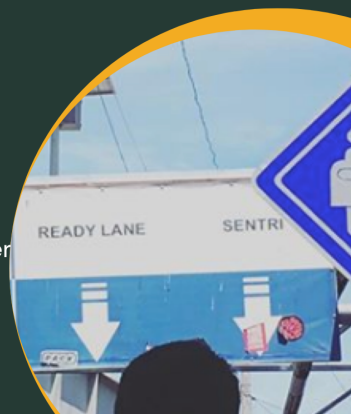
IRB # UP-25-00445

DO YOU CROSS THE SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA BORDER?

We are recruiting transborder commuters willing to participate in a 60-90 min confidential interview (phone call or on zoom) to discuss their border crossing experiences for a research study from the University of Southern California (USC) Department of Political Science and International Relations. **Participants will receive a $30 USD Amazon gift card.**

Eligibility Criteria:

- Currently (or previously) cross the border to San Diego for work or educational purposes
- Be 18 years or older
- Must identify as Latino/a or Latin American
- U.S citizen, lawful permanent resident, or have a student visa, worker visa, or border crossing card (B1/B2 visa)

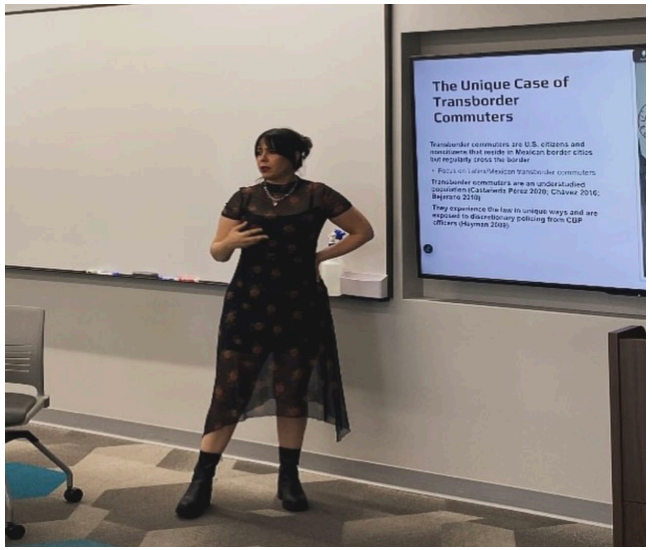


To participate in the study:

- Scan the QR code to fill out a survey to check eligibility OR
- Send a WhatsApp message to: + 52-664-301-4206. OR
- Send an email: ec31156@usc.edu

Transborder Advocacy

- Expert trainings and workshops: transborder commuters, transborder students, border politics, and immigrant well-being
- Port of Entry Tours
- Commentary, public speaking, and evidence-based analysis for media
- Resource development including toolkits, consulting, and research





Thank you

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