

Mexicans deported from the United States to Ciudad Juárez for driving under the influence of alcohol

Mexicanos deportados de Estados Unidos a Ciudad Juárez por conducir bajo la influencia del alcohol

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Abstract

This article analyzes the legislative, social, and economic factors that explain why a high number of Mexican citizens have been removed from the United States under the accusation of driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol. To this end, the recent transformation of United States immigration policy is analyzed to examine, through semi-structured interviews, the deportation processes of 23 Mexican men who were expelled to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico accused of this crime in 2019. The findings reveal that the interviewees had different levels of alcohol consumption and that most of them had started this practice in the United States. On the other hand, there is evidence of the leading role of local police officers acting as “immigration police” and that the longer immigrants reside in the United States, the greater their propensity to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol abuse.

Keywords: migration, deportation, alcoholism, México, United States.

Resumen

En este artículo se analizan los factores legislativos, sociales y económicos que explican por qué un alto número de ciudadanos mexicanos han sido deportados formalmente de Estados Unidos bajo la acusación de conducir un vehículo bajo la influencia del alcohol. Para este fin, se analiza la transformación de la política de inmigración de Estados Unidos para examinar, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, los procesos de deportación de 23 hombres mexicanos que fueron expulsados a Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México acusados de este delito en 2019. Los hallazgos revelan que los entrevistados tenían distintos niveles de consumo

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de alcohol y que la mayoría había iniciado dicha práctica en ese país. Se evidencia el papel protagónico de oficiales de policías locales que actúan como “policías de inmigración” y el que a mayor tiempo de residencia de los inmigrantes en Estados Unidos mayor es la propensión a tener comportamientos de riesgo como el abuso del alcohol.

Palabras clave: migración, deportación, alcoholismo, México, Estados Unidos.

Introduction

The deportation of Mexican citizens from the United States of America (USA) is part of the long history of migration to that country. However, this process has acquired special characteristics since the beginning of the 21st century due to its massive character, its long-term legal consequences, its social composition that includes migrants with long-term residence in the USA, and because of the high percentage of deportees accused of a crime known as *driving under the influence* (DUI) in the USA.

According to data analysis from TRAC Immigration (2021) from Syracuse University for fiscal years 2004 to 2020, driving a motor vehicle under the influence of liquor is the first offense in a lengthy list of offenses that led to the deportation of a sample of 1 000 462 Mexican migrants. Of these, 335 174, one in three (33.5%), were deported without being convicted of a crime. From the 665 288 who were convicted of a crime, 66 246 deported Mexican migrants were convicted of driving under the influence of liquor, equivalent to 9.9%. Of the remainder, 225 862 (22.6%) were convicted of one of the following nine crimes: assault, traffic offense, dangerous drugs, burglary, cocaine sell, cocaine possession, illegal entry into the USA, marijuana sell, and larceny. The remaining 373 180 (37.3%) were deported for other offenses.

Coubès (2018) uses statistics on Mexican returnees from the United States in the Survey of Migration at Mexico's Northern Border (Encuesta sobre Migración de la Frontera Norte de México, Emif Norte) and finds that, in 2017, 29% of Mexican deportees residing in the USA were arrested for driving while intoxicated by alcohol or under the influence of another drug. Daniel Rodríguez, an immigration attorney in Arizona, states that immigration authorities are increasing arrests of immigrants for violations related to drunk driving,

regardless of whether they were arrested for a minor infraction or if it was in the past when a DUI arrest occurred. For the court, the individual becomes a danger to the community and a criminal case, and the authorities focus more on racial profiling to deny bail. (EFE, 2019)

This research analyzes the legislative, social, and economic factors that explain why many Mexican citizens have been formally deported from the USA on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol. To this end, it explores theories that could support the analysis of this process and the transformation of recent US immigration policy that facilitates the formal deportation of many immigrants who do not have US citizenship, which has mainly affected Mexican citizens. The study uses this background to analyze empirical research examining the deportation proceedings of 23 Mexican men removed from the USA to Ciudad Juárez on DUI charges in 2019. Ciudad Juárez is located in an extensive valley on the banks of the Rio Grande in the state of Chihuahua, across from El Paso, Texas. It is one of the most important

maquiladora centers in Mexico. Together with El Paso, it comprises the region of greatest commercial exchange in the economic bloc formed by Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Like other cities such as Tijuana, Baja California, it is an important destination for Mexican migrants deported from the United States.

The methodology used is based on semi-structured interviews conducted between July and October 2019 with 23 Mexican men formally deported from the USA to Ciudad Juárez, who stated that they had been charged with a DUI. All interviewees are of legal age and were duly informed that their participation in this study was completely free; similarly, to protect their identity, they were informed that fictitious names would be used in the publications derived from this research. These interviews sought to reconstruct the life histories of deported migrants and were conducted in four locations in Ciudad Juárez.

Twelve of the 23 interviews took place at the Casa del Migrante, which has been offering shelter to migrants arriving in the city for 39 years. Five deportees were interviewed at the Bus Station, and three more interviews took place at the Abraham González International Airport. In these places, the identification of the deported migrants was based on the observation of their clothing, the brown paper or transparent bag that revealed the manila folders containing the deportation documents issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the repatriation certificates issued by the National Institute of Migration. Finally, at the Santa Fe or Paso del Norte Bridge, which connects Ciudad Juárez with the city of El Paso, the remaining three life histories were taken. The deported migrants were detected when they got off the bridge and left the repatriation module of the National Institute of Migration.

The semi-structured biographical interviews are constructed from linking noteworthy events called epiphanies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995), turning points (Smith et al., 1998), or critical moments that marked the interviewee's life. Based on this methodology, the interviewees' lives are reconstructed, paying special attention to the deportation process, work and immigration experience, history of crimes against immigration law, and alcohol or other drug abuse. A migrant deported to Tijuana and who lived almost all his life in New York, since his mother took him to live there when he was a child, offers a useful methodological perspective to assess the advantages and limitations of life histories when he stated the following: "Some things I will not tell you because I do not remember, others because I do not want to, and others because I still cannot overcome them. From then on ask me whatever you want" (Cárdenas Montaña & Alarcón Acosta, 2017).

The article contains three sections in addition to the introduction and conclusions. The introduction presents the research problem, its main objective, and the methodology. The first section analyzes the most relevant theoretical approaches to guide the qualitative analysis. The second section describes the historical development of the policy of mass deportation of non-citizens of the United States, which began in the mid-1990s. Section three analyzes the main findings of the qualitative research, describing the sociodemographic migratory profile of the 23 interviewees, their deportation process, the authority that conducted the arrest, their work and immigration experience, criminal records, and experience with alcohol or other drug abuse. The final part of the article presents the conclusions of the research and its theoretical implications.

Theoretical perspectives on DUI deportation

This section examines the most significant theoretical perspectives and empirical findings made in previous research to analyze qualitative data on the formal deportation of Mexican citizens from the USA on charges of driving under the influence. To this end, it analyzes the prevalence of alcohol abuse in the USA and Mexico. Subsequently, it examines the research conducted in the USA on the factors that condition alcohol abuse among migrants. Finally, it turns to the theory of economic and social integration of immigrants to analyze the integration trajectories of Mexican migrants who arrive in the USA as minors or as adults.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization, 2018), the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking affected a quarter (26.1%) of the general US population over 15 years of age, compared to 18.2% of the similar Mexican population in 2016. This prevalence is defined as consuming at least 60 grams of pure alcohol on at least one occasion in the past 30 days. There is a significant difference in this prevalence between men and women in both countries. In the USA, 45.1% of men had this type of alcohol abuse, and women only 11.1%. In the case of Mexico, the respective percentages were 30.6% and 6.1% in 2016.

The Encuesta Nacional de Consumo de Drogas, Alcohol y Tabaco (2016-2017) (National Survey on Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Consumption) conducted in Mexico defines alcohol abuse as a maladaptive pattern of consumption of this substance, which causes clinically significant impairment leading to non-compliance with obligations, repeated legal problems, consuming alcohol continuously, and in dangerous situations despite having ongoing social or interpersonal problems. Alcohol abuse is present if one or more of these elements occurs within 12 months. The survey results reveal that the pattern of heavy drinking in the past month increased from 12.3% to 19.8% between 2011 and 2016. For men, this consumption increased from 20.9% to 29.9%, and for women from 4.1% to 10.3% (Villatoro et al., 2017).

The WHO (World Health Organization, 2018) found significant differences concerning the type of beverages consumed, measured by liters of pure alcohol in 2016 or the latest year for which information is available. In the USA, alcohol consumption was as follows: beer (47%), spirits (35%), and wine (18%). In Mexico, beer was, without a doubt, the alcoholic beverage preferred by the population with 77%, followed far behind by spirits (20%), wine (2%), and other beverages (1%). This finding had already been documented previously by Medina-Mora et al. (2002), with their research on Mexico having found that beer represents 63% of per capita alcohol consumption, followed by spirits (34%), and, to a lesser extent, table wines (3%). These authors argue that alcohol consumption is not distributed homogeneously in the population, as middle-aged men mainly consume it, and 25% of those who drink the most consume 78% of the available alcohol.

Concerning the experience of Mexican immigrants in the USA, the risk of alcohol and drug use in the country is associated with their migration experience and may be related to certain types of jobs, the length of their stay outside of Mexico, experiences of discrimination, and the stress associated with their lives (Borges et al., 2007). On the other hand, it is argued that Mexican immigrants in the USA have a higher risk of drug use and drug use disorders due to the wide availability of drugs and exposure to more liberal drug use norms (Borges et al., 2013). For Szaflarski et al. (2011),

emotional states such as loneliness, homesickness for wife and family in Mexico, a sense of commitment to work, and “losing control” on weekends are correlated with substance abuse and stress caused by social isolation and economic worries.

Daniel-Ulloa et al. (2014) identify the relationship of typical weekend drunkenness and heavy drinking in the past 30 days in a sample of Latino immigrant farmworkers in North Carolina. This study found that birth in Mexico, entry into the USA as an adult, and year-round job security are correlated with higher odds of weekend drunkenness. In contrast, greater acculturation and religious affiliation with a strict prohibition against alcohol were associated with lower odds of resorting to typical weekly binge drinking.

From the perspective of the theory of economic and social integration of immigrants to the United States, it is assumed that assimilation is a linear process whereby immigrants become more similar to the dominant group over time. However, ironically, the longer the time of residence and exposure to the United States, the greater the propensity of immigrants to engage in risky behaviors such as earlier sexual initiation and abuse of substances such as alcohol (Rumbaut, 1997). Similarly, Borges et al. (2013) argue that among immigrants in general and Mexican immigrants in particular, the longer the duration of residence in the USA, the greater the risk of substance use disorders.

The process of immigrant adaptation to life in the USA is neither simple nor inevitable because both the immigrant population and the receiving society are heterogeneous. Immigrants, even those of the same nationality, may be divided by social class, time of arrival, and generation. Likewise, immigrants may confront different situations that lead to different outcomes in terms of assimilation depending on the arrival time and the context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

The trajectories of integration or assimilation in the USA can be diverse according to the age of arrival in that country; it is different to enter as a child than as an adult. Rumbaut (1997) refers to those who enter as minors as the “1.5 generation” to distinguish them from the second generation, consisting of people born in the United States of immigrant parents. Rumbaut states that the children of the “1.5 generation” are socialized, begin their primary education outside of the USA, and then complete their education in the USA. The age of arrival of an immigrant is a crucial factor in their integration into US society. For example, those who arrive before the age of six (the “1.75 generation”) are more likely to speak English without a foreign accent.

In their study of the second generation in the USA, whose results in this research extend to the “1.5 generation”, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find contingencies and variables that question assimilation as a uniform and direct path and the apparent connection between assimilation and upward social mobility, for which they propose the theory of segmented assimilation. In this scenario, immigrants differ in three fundamental dimensions. First, their characteristics matter: age, education, occupation, skills, wealth, and English proficiency. Second, the social environment that receives them, including government policies, the attitudes of the native population, and the presence and size of the co-ethnic community, is essential to their integration. Finally, the family structure of the immigrants, which reflects the cultures and social structures

of the country of origin, is important for assimilation. Of particular importance in the family is the presence of biological parents. The theoretical perspectives presented in this section are useful in assessing the extent to which successful economic and social integration is possible for Mexican immigrants residing in the USA under undocumented status and, therefore, subject to deportation.

The construction and development of the “deportation machinery”

In the long history of mass migration from Mexico to the United States that has unfolded over more than a century, Doris Meissner et al. (2013, p. 93) find that immigration-related crimes had historically been treated as civil law violations that, at worst, could lead to deportation, which was reserved for those convicted of serious or violent criminal offenses. However, beginning in the mid-1990s, the United States Congress decided to facilitate the deportation of non-citizens by transforming civil immigration violations into crimes and increasing penalties for existing immigration crimes. For this reason, between 2003 and 2013, the number of criminal prosecutions linked to immigration-related violations grew at an unprecedented rate. The two most common immigration crimes prosecuted by the authorities were illegal entry into the United States, previously considered a misdemeanor, and illegal reentry after removal, which is now a felony. The category of non-USA citizens who are subject to formal deportation includes undocumented persons, lawful permanent residents, or recipients of a temporary visa. Only United States citizens by birth or naturalization cannot be deported.

The DHS distinguishes between two types of deportations: removals and returns. In this article, the terms removals or formal deportations are used interchangeably. Removals are formal expulsions of aliens based on a removal order that has administrative or criminal consequences for subsequent reentry to the USA for those who have committed serious crimes and a five, 10, or 20-year ban for other types of deportees. Returns are expulsions of aliens not based on a removal order. Most of the returns are of Mexican citizens who have been apprehended at the border with Mexico by the Border Patrol and deported to their country (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011).

The tightening of the judicial system against non-citizens began in 1988 with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of that year, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, and the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* of 1996. As a result of these laws, the prosecution of immigration-related crimes expanded, as did the number of state and federal crimes that led to formal deportation or removal. Likewise, the discretion of immigration judges to suspend the removal of non-citizens decreased (Meissner et al., 2013, pp. 92-93). All these legislative and institutional transformations led to the creation of the “deportation machinery”, as Finnegan (2013) calls it.

These three laws subject non-citizens to mandatory deportation if they commit crimes classified on an expanded list of aggravated felonies. They also apply stricter standards retroactively to crimes for which punishment has already been served, such as domestic violence and DUI, and severely restrict judicial discretion over enforcement (Fitzgerald & Alarcón, 2013, p. 120). There are now five distinct categories of crimes for which non-citizens, if convicted, can be deported: crimes of moral turpitude, offenses involving controlled substances, offenses involving weapons or destructive devices, crimes of domestic violence or against children, and aggravated felonies (Meissner et al., 2013, p. 98).

An aggravated felony is a term used only in immigration law. In 1988, there was a list of four such crimes; however, with the enactment of the three laws mentioned above, the definition of the term expanded significantly to include about 50 crimes, among which are serious and relatively minor offenses, including crimes previously classified as misdemeanors (Meissner et al., 2013, p. 98). The list of aggravated felonies includes crimes such as murder, rape, and sexual abuse of a minor, which threaten persons' life and bodily integrity. Also included are drug trafficking, illicit firearms trafficking, and money laundering. There are aggravated felonies that have to do directly with immigration law violations, such as alien smuggling, reentry of previously a deported alien (which in legal terms is called illegal reentry), falsifying or altering a passport, and document fraud. Driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol or other drugs and driving while intoxicated (DWI) are considered crimes of violence, as are assault, child abuse, domestic violence, involuntary manslaughter, robbery, or resisting arrest.

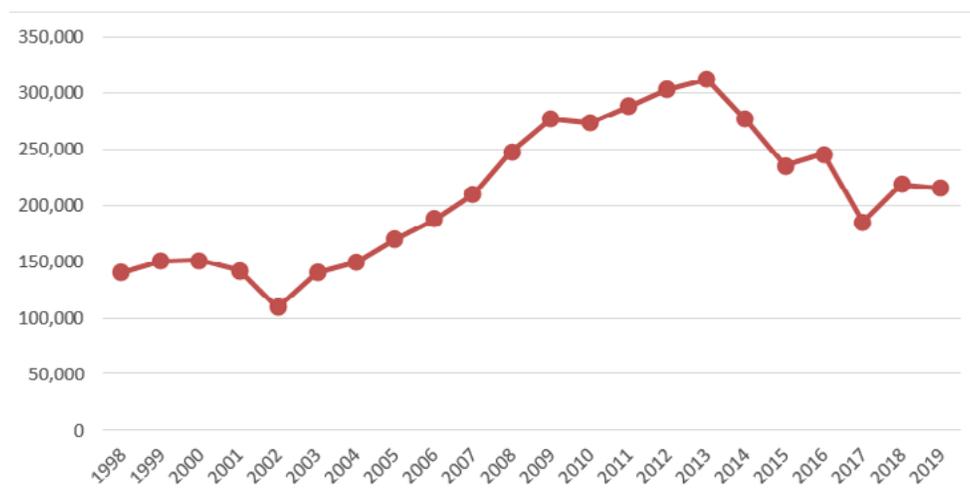
Although the "deportation machinery" was ready to operate in full force since the end of the 1990s, it was not until after the September 11, 2001 attacks that the number of removals of Mexican migrants entering the U.S. judicial system began to increase. On November 26, 2001, the *Patriot Act* became law and, consequently, immigration to the USA became a national security issue (Alarcón & Becerra, 2012). In 2002, the U.S. government began implementing section 287(g) of the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (IIRIRA) of 1996 that makes it possible for the federal government to enter into agreements with city and state law enforcement agencies to train their officers as immigration agents (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011, p. 11). Detention operations of non-citizens in the interior of the United States that can lead to removal came under the responsibility of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2003, while Customs Border Protection, which includes Border Patrol, performs this task at the borders.

President Bush began the Secure Communities Program, with his successor, President Obama, maintaining it until 2014. This program started in October 2008 and aimed to create a biometric database with fingerprint search capabilities in all arrest and detention centers, establishing the immigration status of each detained person at the time of the arrest. Local law enforcement contacts ICE if the biometric test indicates that the person is deportable. This helped local authorities share with the federal government the fingerprints and other biometric data of undocumented

individuals in local and county jails, comparing them with FBI and DHS databases. According to ICE, this helps it prioritize the detention of non-citizens who have committed serious crimes. The operations of the Secure Communities Program were temporarily suspended between November 20, 2014, and January 25, 2017, when President Trump ordered their reactivation as a result of the executive order “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2021).

As a consequence of the strengthening of the legislative and judicial apparatus to facilitate formal deportations of non-citizens, the number of Mexican citizens deported increased exponentially. Figure 1 contains data on formal deportation of Mexican citizens from the USA, taken from the DHS *Immigration Statistics Yearbooks* between 1998 and 2019, which includes the last three full fiscal years of the Clinton administration (1998-2000), the eight years of the Bush administration (2001-2008), the eight years of the Obama presidency (2009-2016), and the first three full years of the Trump administration (2017-2019). These data reveal that the number of deportations of Mexican citizens in this period reached 4 616 540.¹

Figure 1. Number of Mexican citizens formally deported from the United States (1998-2019)



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020

Between 1997 and 2000, during the Clinton administration, in the period following the approval of IIRIRA, there were about 150 000 removals of Mexican migrants per year. Precisely after September 11, 2001, during the Bush presidency, spectacular growth in the number of formal deportations of Mexican migrants began,

¹ U.S. presidential administrations begin on January 20 of the first corresponding year; Figure 1 includes the full years of the administration, thus not adding the first 20 days of January, when they leave office.

reaching 247 000 in 2008, by then under the Obama presidency. However, between 2012 and 2013, the highest deportation figures were reached, with 300 000 Mexicans expelled from the United States per year. Despite threats by Trump, the number of deportations in the first three years of his administration was low compared to the entire Obama period. The “deportation machinery” was prepared and well-oiled since the Obama presidency, but, at least in his first three years, President Trump did not use it to the fullest.

In January 2017, after starting his presidential administration, Donald Trump began issuing a large number of executive orders that affected the lives of asylum and refugee seekers, people born in certain Muslim countries, migrants protected under Temporary Protected Status, and young people benefiting from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), among others. In this maelstrom of anti-immigrant measures, on January 25, 2017, the executive order entitled “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” was published (The White House, 2017), which expanded the priorities for which any non-citizen could be removed from the interior of the USA.

Non-citizens who could be formally deported included not only those who had been convicted of a criminal offense, but also those who had only been indicted, committed fraud in connection with their identity in official business, abused any program for receiving public benefits, not left the country after receiving a final order of removal, and those who “in the judgment of an immigration officer constitute a risk to public safety or national security” (The White House, 2017). With this Trump executive order, anyone who is not a U.S. citizen could be removed from the United States. On the other hand, in 2019, expedited removal within the USA was extended to the interior of the USA, and the Secure Communities Program suspended in the Obama administration was reactivated.

As a result of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the US government began a series of actions related to immigration. First, it reduced many administrative operations, significantly reducing the number of removals. It also ordered a temporary ban on “non-essential” trips across its borders. This was an agreement signed with Mexico on March 20, 2020. The same day, the Trump administration announced that unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers would be blocked from entry due to public health considerations, regardless of their nationality. They would be expelled to the country of last transit (Mexico or Canada), or their country of origin. These rapid expulsions have been conducted under Title 42 of the U.S. Code. This same policy has been continued by the Biden administration, which began in January 2021.

Results

Mexican citizens deported from the USA and now residing in Mexico are diverse. They include more men than women, former prison inmates, veterans of the armed forces, young people who were brought to the USA by their parents, homeless migrants, those

accused of committing serious crimes, those deported for minor offenses such as traffic violations or in workplace raids, and those deported based on complaints from employers or neighbors, or after illegal reentry.

This section analyzes the cases of 23 Mexican migrants who were removed from the United States to Mexico through Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, accused of driving under the influence. They were interviewed between July and October 2019 in the days following their expulsion from the neighboring country. It is important to reiterate that the interviewees did not come from a random sample of deported migrants but agreed to participate in the research after confirming that they had been deported for a DUI. This last section presents the most important empirical findings of the research.

The sociodemographic and migratory profile of the 23 interviewees in Ciudad Juárez

The interviews with deported migrants provide information on their most important sociodemographic and migratory characteristics, such as fictitious name, age at last entry and deportation, number of years of residence in the United States, marital status, number of children, whether any of them reside in the United States, and their state of birth in Mexico. The average age of the interviewees is 35 years old. Of these, 65% are parents, and their children live in the United States. Almost half (48%) are married, so, as a consequence of the deportation, there was, in many cases, a breakup of the family unit. The migrants interviewed were born in Michoacán, Oaxaca, and Zacatecas (see Table 1).

The consequences of the deportation process are different for those who were minors when they were brought to the United States by their family members, as they face the situation of being expelled to a country they do not know. Those who migrated independently and arrived in the United States as adults face other consequences. Most of those interviewed (61%) arrived in the USA as minors. As noted above, according to Rumbaut (1997), these immigrants belong to the “1.5 generation”, to distinguish them from the second generation, who are those born in the United States to an immigrant parent. An important piece of information is that none of them reported having applied for DACA. The remaining nine respondents (39%) entered the United States as adults.

The average age of last entry to the United States was 18 years, the average age of deportation was 35 years, and the average length of residence in the United States was 16 years. The interviews provided additional information. In terms of education, none of them, neither those who arrived as minors nor as adults, completed high school. Adding this to the fact that 96% of them were undocumented and only 4% had legal permanent residency, it is possible to understand the difficulty of obtaining better jobs. The analysis of the last occupation of migrants in the USA indicates that most of those interviewed were working in construction (43.4%), followed by agriculture (9%) and restaurants (9%). Among others, Manuel was an English as a Second Language student, Javier worked as a *coyote* (people smuggler) in charge of safe houses, and Francisco was a supervisor in a flower shop.

Table 1. State of birth, age at last entry and deportation, and years of residence in the United States of migrants interviewed. Ciudad Juárez, 2019

	Fictitious Name	Age at last entry to the USA	Age at deportation	Years of residence in the USA	State of birth	Marital status	With children in the USA	Number of children
1	Manuel	13	29	16	Guanajuato	Single	No	0
2	Jorge	22	37	15	Zacatecas	Separated	No	0
3	Gabriel	15	18	3	Oaxaca	Single	No	0
4	Alfredo	5	43	38	Mexico City	Free union	Yes	7
5	Martín	17	38	21	Michoacán	Separated	Yes	2
6	Miguel	16	31	15	Puebla	Single	No	0
7	Gerardo	28	41	13	Jalisco	Married	Yes	2
8	Esteban	20	27	7	Michoacán	Separated	No	0
9	Federico	11	42	31	Guerrero	Married	Yes	7
10	Javier	21	22	0.5	Puebla	Single	Yes	1
11	Mauricio	14	48	34	Oaxaca	Married	Yes	3
12	Isaías	21	35	14	Michoacán	Married	Yes	4
13	José	17	34	17	Michoacán	Married	Yes	4
14	Raúl	24	34	10	Michoacán	Married	Yes	1
15	Felipe	47	52	5	Sinaloa	Married	No	0
16	Inocencio	13	18	5	Veracruz	Single	No	0
17	Arturo	23	39	16	Chihuahua	Married	Yes	6
18	Noé	14	31	17	Chiapas	Married	Yes	2
19	Ramiro	25	45	20	Zacatecas	Free union	Yes	1
20	Juan	17	44	27	Michoacán	Married	Si	1
21	Eduardo	13	25	12	Michoacán	Single	No	0
22	Francisco	6	27	21	Oaxaca	Free union	Yes	2
23	Aurelio	14	48	19	Oaxaca	Married	Yes	3

Source: Data from fieldwork interviews in Ciudad Juárez, 2019

Formal deportation from the United States: background and consequences

Most of the interviewees reported that they had more or less severe alcohol or other drug abuse problems before their last deportation and that they habitually drove a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Moreover, as presented in Table 2, almost half of them (48%) had a previous DUI arrest or deportation before being deported to Ciudad Juárez in 2019. This table also reveals that two out of the three (66%) were deported directly from prison because they were serving sentences for crimes they committed, in most cases related to DUI.

The prohibition to return to the USA after removal can vary from five years, 10 years, or 20 years to lifetime deportation, depending on the circumstances of each case. Table 2 indicates that the punishment for committing DUI is generally 10 years, and this sanction was given to 16 of the 23 respondents (69%).

Table 2. Prison stays, arrests, prior deportations, and punishment of Mexican migrants deported from the United States to Ciudad Juárez, 2019

	Name	Number of months in prison	Previous arrests or deportations due to DUI	Number of years of re-entry ban into the USA
1	Manuel	36		Lifetime
2	Jorge	12	DUI arrest warrant	10
3	Gabriel	0		10
4	Alfredo	24		10
5	Martín	6	Arrest warrant and previous deportation for DUI	10
6	Miguel	0		10
7	Gerardo	24		10
8	Esteban	0	Previous deportation for DUI	20
9	Federico	0		10
10	Javier	0	Previous deportation for DUI	10
11	Mauricio	12		10
12	Isaías	0		Lifetime
13	José	6	Two arrests for DUI	Lifetime
14	Raúl	12	Previous arrest and deportation for DUI	10
15	Felipe	24	DUI arrest and previous deportation	Lifetime
16	Inocencio	12	Previous deportation order for DUI	10
17	Arturo	0	Previous deportation for DUI	10
18	Noé	0		10
19	Ramiro	0		10
20	Juan	24		10
21	Eduardo	24	Two arrests for DUI	Lifetime
22	Francisco	36	Previous arrest and deportation order for DUI	Lifetime
23	Aurelio	12		10

Source: Fieldwork interviews, Ciudad Juárez, 2019

Given the evidence that several of the interviewees were arrested or deported before their last deportation, the life histories of Alfredo, Francisco, and Manuel are used

to demonstrate how the abuse of alcohol or other drugs led them to commit serious crimes in addition to DUI and for this reason they were in prison prior to deportation.

Alfredo entered the United States at the age of five with his family and resided in Yakima, Washington. “I thought I was just another American citizen”. As an adult, a friend invited him to work. He had to go every week from Washington to Chicago to deliver drugs. He did this for 10 years and believed the police were already looking for him. Furthermore, he offered drugs to the newly arrived paisanos and brought them women. “People who emigrate on their own get caught up looking for a vice; there is nothing worse than loneliness. I used to profit from it, and I do not feel good now”. He was stopped on his way back from Chicago at a checkpoint near his home. He was charged with driving under the influence and was deported for 10 years after spending two years in prison.

Francisco was born in Oaxaca and came to the United States at the age of six, later working in a flower shop in Las Vegas, Nevada. His father was deported on DUI charges. He drank alcohol to excess and then started using methamphetamines and crystal meth. He was arrested when leaving a friend’s house: “I already had an arrest warrant for failure to comply with probation, for assault and fighting without a weapon. On top of that, I was drunk and had consumed marijuana”. He spent 36 months in prison, and his deportation was for DUI and a previous deportation order. He cannot return to the United States. “I’m tagged for life”.

Manuel was born in Guanajuato and lived in Tacoma, Washington, from the age of 13. He worked in irrigation in the fields, and together with his siblings, he obtained legal permanent residency that he later lost with deportation. He started hanging out with people who came to his house, and in the garage, they would play music and drink beers, and everything was going well until they got the idea of trying crystal meth. He and his friends saw a parked car on one occasion, and it was easy for them to steal it.

Two weeks later, the cops came looking for me at the house. They arrested me for stealing the car and allegedly driving under the influence. I ended up in prison, where I spent three years. I cannot believe I was deported for life.

By way of contrast, the stories of Esteban, Federico, and Mauricio, who, although deported for DUI, did not commit other serious crimes, will be described.

Esteban was born in Michoacán and lived in Las Vegas. His last entry to the United States was when he was 20 years old. He worked as a mover, and on weekends he drove drunk. “My friends told me that I could do anything because I was *güerito*, *ojo claro* (white, light-colored eyes)”. The last time he was stopped, he was driving alone, leaving a party. “I had hardly got to the gas station, and the lady who served me looked at me funny; she even gave me advice that I could not drink and drive. I told her, smiling, that I was not buying beer but gasoline and that she was not the police”. Two blocks away, the police stopped him. They detained him for three days, and when he was

about to be released, ICE went after him because he had a previous deportation for DUI. “They took me out and punished me for 20 years”.

Federico was born in Guerrero, crossed over to the United States in 1988 at the age of 11, and lived in Las Vegas. On weekends he drank beer and ate grilled meat. He was raided several times. “They found that I was half-drunk, and they let me go because the breathalyzer said it had not been that much”. When he left work, he got on the freeway to go home one afternoon.

I felt that they were following me. I think it was because my truck was painted black (...) very elegant. I was earning quite well, working at wiring in construction. When they stopped me, they searched me, and I had to pay bail of 1 700 dollars for being slightly drunk (...) they could not prove drug use, so they kept me detained for a few days because I did not have papers and because my case was suspicious.

His deportation order states that he cannot return to the United States for 10 years.

Mauricio was born in the city of Oaxaca; he came to the United States at the age of 14 and lived in Miami. He worked helping repair boats, for which he was incredibly careful. “Since I came here as a kid, I did not drink in Mexico, so I did it here only on weekends”. He was arrested after drinking 15 beers and four glasses of tequila. He was driving alone because he let his wife leave in another car with their children before leaving a family reunion. “I went out drunk and was stopped by the police because I fell asleep waiting for the traffic light to change. They took me directly to detention. After four days, they sent me to Orlando, where I spent 12 months in prison”. In the United States, he has his family, and he asserts that he will return for them; he was deported and punished for 10 years.

The authority that conducted the pre-deportation arrest

In the interviews with the 23 deported migrants, an important piece of information emerged: most were detained by local police (69.5%), 21.7% by Highway Patrol, and 8.8% by ICE. Emif Norte corroborated this information, revealing that, during the July to September 2019 quarter, the highest proportion of arrests of Mexicans residing in the United States was made by local police (48.5%), while ICE ranked second with 24.2% of the arrests. Other law enforcement agencies conducted the remaining arrests (27.3%) (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2019). It is surprising that ICE, the DHS agency in charge of deporting non-citizens in the interior of the country, detained the lowest percentage of those interviewed. In their research on women deported to Tijuana and who were interviewed at the Madre Assunta shelter, Rocha Romero and Ocegueda Hernández (2013, pp. 16-31), in their research, point out that the arrests made of 10 women interviewed were not by ICE agents but by local police. These arrests took place in places where the Mexican immigrant community in the United States gathers, such as stores, recreation centers, or religious centers.

The high number of arrests and deportations of Mexican citizens in the interior of the United States illustrates the active collaboration of subnational authorities in immigration control tasks through the 287(g) and Secure Community programs. As indicated previously, the 287(g) program is a section of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* that since 1996 allows the federal government establish agreements with city and state police agencies to train their officers as immigration agents (Meissner et al., 2013). Through the Secure Communities Program, initiated by President Bush in 2008, and kept in operation by President Obama until 2014, and then revived by President Trump in 2017, local jurisdictions share with the federal government the fingerprints and other biometric data of undocumented individuals in local and county jails that are matched against FBI and DHS databases (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2021).

The arrest experiences of Raúl, Noé, and Ramiro, presented in the following lines, illustrate how these three Mexican migrants were arrested before deportation by local police officers. In fact, in the six cases presented before, it is also local police officers who conduct the arrest, often at roadblocks, which highlights the effectiveness of the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs. On the other hand, most of the interviewees were arrested when they were under the influence of alcohol for drinking beer.

Raúl was born in Michoacán and entered the United States at the age of 24. He lived in Arizona for 10 years, working in construction. When he was leaving work, the police arrested him. He had been drinking

a little bit. I did it, and I paid the bail. I felt they would let me out like the last time, but ICE came after me to deport me for being undocumented, not because I had an open case. The charges they threw me out for were alcohol and drugs (...) they never mentioned my lack of papers, and I do not do drugs. I spent almost a year in jail, and I cannot return for 10 years.

Noé was born in Chiapas. His last entry to the United States was when he was 14 years old. He lived in North Carolina, where he worked on a golf course. He was driving to work when he was stopped. The police were following him and ordered him to stop. The police officer asked him if he was drinking, and he said yes because he had open beers inside the car. "I think my passenger was drinking beer". He was detained for two days. "My family was trying to get me out, but they turned me over to ICE quickly. Once there, it is harder to get you out". They took him to a Georgia prison, and from there, he was deported for 10 years.

Ramiro was born in Zacatecas and entered the United States at the age of 25. When he was stopped in El Paso, Texas, it was "for something stupid, when I got into the car I did not turn on the lights, it was nighttime, but there was no one on the road". When the police stopped him, they smelled alcohol; he had drunk two beers.

They asked me for my license, and I did not even have a piece of paper. I told the officer that I had had a couple of beers before the soccer game started, but no way, he wouldn't believe me; I was wearing my uniform. He told me that he would have let me go if I had brought my license.

Because of the deportation, he cannot return to the United States for 10 years.

Conclusions

This research analyzes the legislative, social, and economic factors that explain why many Mexican citizens have been formally deported from the United States on charges of driving under the influence. To this end, it examined the most relevant theories and the most salient research that could help understand this process and the U.S. immigration policy that currently facilitates the formal deportation of many immigrants and that has affected Mexican citizens to a great extent. The theoretical and contextual frameworks guides the analysis of the empirical research, which consisted of examining the deportation process of 23 Mexican men who were removed from the United States to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, charged with DUI in 2019.

The first main finding of the research is that, according to the WHO (World Health Organization, 2018), alcohol abuse was higher in the US population over 15 years of age than in the similar Mexican population in 2016. This suggests that Mexican migrants are exposed to a more widespread practice of alcohol abuse upon entering the United States than is the case in Mexico. It is likely that, for this reason, most of the interviewees began consuming alcohol in the USA, although it should be noted that most of them were brought there when they were minors by their parents. Another important finding is that, in both Mexico and the United States, beer is the preferred alcoholic beverage. Almost all interviewees reported that they consumed it regularly and that they even abused its consumption and that this led to their deportation. The popularity of beer in Mexico has been documented in research conducted by the WHO (World Health Organization, 2018) and Medina-Mora et al. (2002).

The interviewees cannot be considered young according to their sociodemographic and migratory profile since the average age is 35 years old. As expected, none of them are U.S. citizens, most of them had undocumented status, and only 4% had a legal permanent residency, which was canceled at the time of their deportation. On the other hand, all of those interviewed had little schooling since none completed high school, even those who arrived as minors. For this reason, none of them applied for DACA protection against deportation because they did not meet the educational requirement of this executive order. Most of them reported having construction, agriculture, and catering jobs.

The interviewees decided to drive a car to work and to conduct other activities in their daily lives despite having consumed varying amounts of alcohol and were stopped, in most cases, by local police officers. This is another relevant finding and documents the leading role of these local police department officers acting as “immigration police”. This action is a direct result of the enforcement of the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs that began operating after the passage by Congress of the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* in 1996 that transformed DUI into an aggravated felony that can lead directly and retroactively to formal deportation (Meissner et al., 2013).

Another finding of this research with theoretical implications concerns the interviewees’ long average number of years lived in the United States: 16 years. Consequently, many deported immigrants have children in the USA, are married, or

are in free unions. The long residence in the USA leads to relating the findings to the theory on the economic and social integration of immigrants that many US scholars refer to as *assimilation*. Assimilation is assumed to be a uniform and straightforward process in which all US immigrants participate and which inexorably leads to upward social mobility over time. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) question this postulate and, following the theory of segmented assimilation, argue that some immigrants live in conditions of poverty in the lower and degraded segment of US society instead of achieving upward social mobility. Rumbaut (1997) highlights the irony that the longer immigrants have lived and been exposed to living in the USA, the greater their propensity to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol abuse.

This type of degraded economic and social integration is what the interviewees, most of whom lived in the USA undocumented, experienced. This led them, in most cases, to live in communities of single men, employed in a precarious labor market and in a social environment of discrimination. Research on alcoholism indicates that this situation leads to alcohol abuse. For Szaflarski et al. (2011), loneliness, homesickness, stress caused by social isolation, and economic concerns correlate with substance abuse. Borges et al. (2007) argue that Mexican immigrants have a higher risk of drug use because in the USA there is greater availability of these substances and more liberal norms regarding their use.

The 23 interviewees had varying levels of alcohol or drug abuse from before deportation that caused almost half of them to have a previous arrest or deportation order for DUI before being deported to Ciudad Juárez in 2019. The practice of abusing alcohol or other drugs in spaces and times of work and socializing with family and friends became a felony when they drove a motor vehicle under the influence of this substance that put their lives and the lives of others in danger. This felony carries severe penalties for US citizens who may lose the privilege of having a driver's license or end up in prison; however, for non-citizens, this offense can lead directly to deportation. Hagan et al. (2011, pp. 1388-1389) point out that deportation has become a form of social control since immigrants are required to be legal residents and adopt unprecedented behavior patterns at the risk of facing permanent deportation. This research found that alcohol abuse affects many Mexican migrants residing in the United States. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct prevention work with the participation of the migrant communities themselves, churches, and Mexican consulates.

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