North of El Norte

Illegalized Mexican Migrants in Canada

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Introduction

Leonel arrived in Canada at the end of 2001. International security concerns were high at the time, but he found it relatively easy to enter the country because there was no visa requirement for Mexican nationals. He arrived as a tourist and then lost his status. Years later he applied for refugee status on the advice of a friend. The claim was denied. Leonel received a removal order and became enveloped in a surveillance web that made him vigilant as he worked and moved around the city, knowing that immigration authorities and the police could be looking for him at any moment.

Zyanya arrived in Canada in 2006 as a tourist after deciding that she wanted to "see the world." Her visa expired as she worked in a series of factories, where managers and co-workers made life difficult because of her immigration status, race, and gender. She eventually found a decent job that promised an employment-sponsored work visa and began to hope for a more secure future, only to find out that the company had been sold and that the new management was not interested in sponsoring her. Zyanya's and Leonel's creative projects helped the two to keep their hopes up throughout their uncertain time and legal statuses in Canada.

Libertad arrived in the mid-2000s, fleeing persecution after exposing corruption in her workplace. She applied for refugee status. While awaiting a response, she became pregnant. However, the child's father was physically, financially, and emotionally abusive. At one point, she had to juggle her immigration case, a child custody case, and a criminal case against him. When her refugee claim was refused, she became deportable and had to rethink her participation in the criminal case.

In the fall of 2006, I made my own journey to Canada. I did not know it at the time, but like Leonel, Zyanya, and Libertad I was part of a growing number of Mexicans travelling to Canada to study, live, work, and/or seek protection. I arrived as an international PhD student after living undocumented in the United States for almost fifteen years. I expected Canada to be very different spatially, culturally, and in terms of its immigration regime. My first impressions were that, though the houses and roads looked very similar, there was a striking absence of Spanish speakers as I walked around Toronto. Coming from California, this was new to me. Were there not many Latinxs in the city? Was I not looking in the right places? I eventually found a Latinx and Mexican presence with varying degrees of immigration status. One of the lessons that I learned, which informs the trajectory of this book, is that the ways in which Mexicans become "undocumented" or experience periods of less than full immigration status are not the same as those in the United States, though there are definite parallels. Navigating the intricacies of immigration status in Canada reveals how the boundaries of citizenship and belonging are becoming increasingly cemented, extended, as well as resisted and blurred.

Each year Mexican migrants who travel to Canada with insecure or precarious immigration status add to these stories. Precarious status is an umbrella categorization for various types of vulnerable immigration status (i.e., not permanent residence or citizenship) (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). It includes temporary foreign workers, refugees, refugee claimants, refused refugee claimants, international students, visitors, spouses being sponsored for permanent residence, and anyone with an expired study or work visa. Many people who experience precarious status also experience violence. A recurring theme in their stories is the idea of *aguantar,* tolerating injustice, violence, and dehumanization at the border or in the workplace and/or community as well as a lack of access to social entitlements. However, stories also demonstrate the piecing together of meaningful and dignified lives, waiting for the right moment to act despite the forces that seek to exclude them.

This book has two interlayered objectives. The first is to provide a snapshot of the context of Mexican migration to Canada, particularly for those arriving without permanent residence in the mid-2000s and 2010s. Much of the research about Mexican migrants, particularly those who do

not have secure immigration status, focuses on migration to the United States. However, the transformation of social, political, and economic structures at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have led to a diversification of migration strategies and points of destination, making Mexican migration to Canada important.

During this time, immigration policies and practices were transformed globally, some of which influenced local experiences of precarious status in Canada. For example, post-9/11 discourses of national security circulated widely, aligning with increasingly punitive immigration policies that intensified border, detention, and deportation regimes globally (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011; Coutin 2015; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Flynn 2015; Gibney 2006). Activist responses also became more visible, including mobilizations against US House Resolution 4437 in 2006 (Gonzales 2008) and later the development of the DREAMer and Undocumented and Unafraid movements (Nicholls 2013), the Sans Papiers in France (Hong 2014), as well as the building of immigrant rights coalitions such as No One Is Illegal in Canada. At the same time, increasing *insecuritization* in the Global South, as well as the global recession in the late 2000s, led more people to evaluate cross-border movement as an option.

For Mexicans travelling to Canada without permanent residence, this period had both ups and downs, including relatively easy entry because of the lack of a visa requirement (until 2009 and after 2016), a high possibility of entering precarious labour markets in Canada, various ways to attempt to stay and "regularize" (including through refugee claims), and the vilification of those deemed "bogus refugees." These interrelated processes provide a context for examining the changing landscape of immigration policy and practice, the categorization of non-citizens, and their experiences navigating these structures. These are not easy narratives or binary understandings of exploitation and resistance. Instead, they are complicated examples of immigration regimes' attempts at capturing, categorizing, and banishing migrants and the practices employed to navigate and challenge these processes.

They also inform my second objective, to build on existing theoretical frameworks to understand migration, the production of migrant illegalization, and the concept of assemblage. Overall, the book will help to clarify

the different processes that influence public understandings and experiences of migration and migrant illegalization and how these processes affect social, economic, and political life.

Contextualizing Mexican Migration to Canada

Canada as a Settler Colonial State

Canada is a white settler colonial society whose history is intertwined with the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the exclusion or differential inclusion of non-white subjects, and the exaltation of white citizens (Thobani 2007; Walia 2013). Until the 1960s, these ideologies were manifested through explicitly racist immigration policies and limited access to citizenship and self-determination for racialized and Indigenous nations (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009; Dua 2007; Mongia 2003; Oikawa 2000). After the Second World War, unmet labour demands and the decline of European immigration prompted changes to these explicitly racist policies. One example was the entrenchment of a liberal multicultural project in Canadian nation building and its effects on immigration policy and practice. Although seemingly open and welcoming, multiculturalism essentialized racialized groups to their "exotic" foods and festivals, making them palatable for "mainstream" Canadian audiences and a global neoliberal cosmopolitan project while continuing their invisibilization and neutralizing their equity demands (Bannerji 2000; Sharma 2011; Thobani 2007).

In terms of immigration policy changes, the postwar period saw the development and prioritization of economic immigration streams (Simmons 2010). These streams promote class-based exclusions while implicitly continuing a racialized nation-building project (Chatterjee 2015). For example, the implementation of the Skilled Worker Program in the 1960s focused on importing workers permanently to fill labour needs. Immigrants were hand-selected for their qualifications: language skills, work experience, "Canadian experience," amount of savings/income, and educational attainment. The government has amended the program through the years, most recently with the implementation of the Express Entry system in 2015 (Bhuyan et al. 2017; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2017).

Alongside a skilled migration agenda, the 1973 Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) specifically recruited "guest"

workers for "low-skill" work (Sharma 2002). Initially, it sought agricultural workers (Basok 2003), but now temporary migrant workers participate in a number of both low-wage and "skilled" sectors. Temporary migration streams have grown significantly since the 1970s (Basok 2003; Nakache and Kinoshita 2010). Currently, migrant workers coming into Canada each year outnumber new permanent residents, signalling a shift away from permanent "settlement" – a term used to refer to the process of immigrating permanently into Canada whose link to colonialist ideas about settlers is not accidental – as a nation-building strategy to fill labour needs and toward precarious conditions and deportability (Nakache 2013).

In addition to economic streams, immigrants can enter Canada through family reunification, which entails being sponsored by a spouse or close family member. However, policies in the late 2000s and early 2010s implemented barriers to family reunification, including long application periods as well as the limiting of sponsorship streams. For spousal sponsorship, the government implemented a two-step process in which spouses received conditional permanent residence for two years before receiving the full benefits of permanent residence (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a). This policy (revoked in 2017) limited divorce during the conditional period, making a spouse dependent on her or his partner, and was influenced by the perception of a growth in "fraudulent marriages" (see Chapter 5). The focus on "fraud" and dishonesty was a recurring trend during that period, illustrating a lack of trust of non-citizens who sought to achieve secure status (Gaucher 2014). The sponsorship of parents and grandparents was also curtailed, mostly because of concerns that they would create an "undue" expense, particularly for the health-care system (Root et al. 2014).

Refugee determination is also structured through a racial logic (Razack 1998). The system underwent a number of changes in the late 2000s and early 2010s, including the designation of two streams for inland applications: applicants from "safe" and from "unsafe" countries (Silverman 2014). The former, which included Mexican nationals beginning in 2013, are subjected to a more stringent process, in terms of both evaluation and the period to submit supporting documents. Like the changes to family reunification, these changes drew on entrenched discourses of fraudulent claimants or bogus refugees (Pratt 2005; Pratt and Valverde 2002).

Finally, though there has been little public discussion of the "undocumented" or non-status population, its presence has been documented in policy and academic texts. Citing a 1982 report from the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, Robinson (1984) estimated the undocumented population in Canada at 200,000, a figure that he argued was similar to estimates in the 1970s but nonetheless led to public anxiety. More recently, it has been estimated that between 20,000 and 500,000 migrants live without status in the country, leading to similar manifestations of anxiety, though those numbers have not been corroborated and might actually be much higher if we include a broader definition of precarious status (City of Toronto 2015; Jimenez 2003; Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2009). Non-status and other precarious status migrants face the ever-present possibility of deportation, a process that augments their exploitation. Therefore, non-status workers fill gaps in the Canadian labour market while receiving limited benefits and experiencing long-term temporariness (Bailey et al. 2002; Vosko, Preston, and Latham 2014).

Toronto: The Land of "Diversity"

Although situated within the national landscape of immigration policy, much of my research occurred in Toronto. It is an important immigrant gateway and a major destination for im/migrants to Canada, particularly Mexicans (Lujan 2017). Its motto has been "Diversity, Our Strength" since 1998, and through this branding the city draws on existing discourses of multiculturalism that have shaped the Canadian imaginary since the 1970s and 1980s (City of Toronto 2018; Wood and Gilbert 2005). In recent years, the city has emphasized equity measures related to undocumented migrants, anti-black racism, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and poverty reduction (City of Toronto 2015, 2018). However, these policies have come short because of jurisdictional tensions related to service provision, the power of policing authorities and their continuation of racial profiling, the spatial organization of poverty, health-care disparities, and neoliberal erosions to social entitlements (Hulchanski 2010; Meng 2017; Noble 2009; No One Is Illegal Toronto 2015; United Way 2011). In short, City of Toronto policies can be tasked with what Ahmed (2004b) calls non-performatives: declarations that "do not do what they say" and instead maintain the status quo.

"Counting" Mexicans

Given this context, why did Mexicans travel to Canada, and what types of "reception" did they experience when they arrived in the late 2000s and early 2010s? Canada is a top migration destination for Mexicans after the United States and Europe (mainly Spain) (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2016). From 2006 to 2011, individuals from Latin America and the Caribbean made up 12.3 percent of the foreign-born immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada 2013). Mexico is a top-three country of immigration from that region (Latin America) and a top-ten source country overall (Statistics Canada 2013). However, official numbers do not tell the full story, for not everyone registers or is counted by the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (Institute for Mexicans Abroad), which measures out-migration, or the Canadian government, which measures in-migration.

Mexican migrants arrive in Canada in various ways: as landed immigrants (permanent residents), refugee claimants, tourists, or on work or student visas. The migration of Mexicans under these streams has been increasing since the 1990s for several reasons (Escalante 2004; George and Young 2006; Lujan 2017; Mueller 2005). First is the relative proximity between the two countries, not only in terms of distance but also in political and trade relationships, particularly after the North American Free Trade Agreement was implemented in 1994. Second is that, until 2009 and after December 2016, Mexican migrants did not need a visa to enter Canada (see Chapter 3). Third is the level of migration through temporary migrant worker programs (Basok 2003; Preibisch and Hermoso Santamaria 2006). Since 1974, Mexico and Canada have had a bilateral agreement to export Mexican workers for temporary periods to work in the Canadian agricultural sector through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). Although workers are documented and have work permits for set periods, they have insecure immigration status and are subject to the ongoing possibility of deportation. Because they are considered low skilled, these workers cannot apply for permanent residence as workers.

Table 1.1 lists the numbers of Mexicans who entered Canada from 2003 to 2015. As illustrated, the rate of permanent residence has risen through the years, but it is low compared with migrant workers and students, whose rates have steadily increased. Refugee claimants increased sharply until

TABLE 1.1

Mexican im/migrants to Canada by category

Year	Permanent residents	Temporary migrant workers	International students	Refugee claimants
2003	1,738			
2004	2,245	11,153	5,582	2,827
2005	2,851	12,266	5,871	3,461
2006	2,830	13,901	6,291	4,946
2007	3,224	16,967	6,481	7,248
2008	2,831	20,745	6,458	9,491
2009	3,092	18,180	6,733	7,614
2010	3,865	18,152	7,108	1,200
2011	3,947	19,115	7,606	653
2012	4,227	21,056	8,094	322
2013	3,996	21,842	8,429	84
2014	4,478	22,521	8,367	80
2015	3,231	22,966	8,241	111
2016	3,400	25,918	9,066	260

Sources: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014, 2015; Government of Canada 2015a, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b.

2008, given the widespread insecuritization in Mexico. They then decreased after the visa requirement in 2009 as well as the designation of Mexico as a "safe country" in 2013. Finally, rates increased again when the government rescinded the visa requirement in late 2016.

In addition, in 2008 Mexicans made 257,000 trips to Canada and spent a total of $364 million Canadian, ranking Mexican tourists fifth in terms of spending and sixth in number of trips to Canada (Statistics Canada 2009). This revenue decreased after the 2009 visa requirement but remained significant: in 2015, 190,000 Mexicans travelled to Canada, spending $330 million Canadian (Statistics Canada 2016). After the travel visa requirement was lifted in 2016, tourism again increased steadily (Statistics Canada 2018). Importantly, a tourist visa is a common pathway to precarious status (see Chapter 2). In terms of return migration, because of the high numbers of temporary migrants and refugee claimants in Canada, Mexicans have also been subject to high rates of removal orders (and by extension deportations; see Chapter 3).

These statistics provide a background for the stories shared here. They illustrate the opening and closing of borders as well as the Canadian state's push and pull between a desire for in-migration, workers, and consumers, on the one hand, and a focus on national security and border management, on the other. The statistics also signal the numerous untold stories of violence, resilience, and triumph.

Theorizing Assemblage, Migration, and Migrant Illegalization

Assemblage

Global migration flows, patterns, and regimes have been reorganized over the past few decades (Sassen 2010). Examples include increased border and immigration controls, an extension of borders beyond and within the nation-state (Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul 2016; Gibney 2006), reformulations of citizenship (Rygiel 2011), and increased emphasis on both free trade and national security. These reorganizations illustrate how migration processes are interconnected to other social, political, and geographic events and actors. Given this reorganization, migration involves a multifarious set of practices that includes the movement of people across different types of borders, facilitated or made difficult by technologies of documentation, surveillance, and detention as well as discourses about the viability and desirability of such movements. These practices are affected by political, social, emotional, and ethical relationships. Therefore, though migration cannot be reduced to, or explained in its entirety by, factors such as neoliberal restructuring, unfettered capitalism, organized crime, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, borders, migrant illegalization, and insecuritization, it can become *assembled* with these factors in contextually situated ways. As an analytical tool, assemblage is useful for framing, disentangling, and understanding such social phenomena.

Daniel (2013, 7) tracks one root of the term "assemblage" to the French *assemblance* and links the term to "arrangement," as in physical bodies made up of component parts and the coming together of people, as "an assembly, a crowd, a gathering of distinct bodies." Alternatively, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 23), who use the French *agencement,* "an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities" and operates along two axes. The first axis includes "bodies, of actions and

passions," as well as "expression" – "a collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies" (88). This axis can reveal relationships among "things" in the physical landscape (bodies, places, states, territories, machines, actions), language (discourse), and emotions. The second axis includes spatial and temporal components (de/territorialization). It can clarify the relationships among bodies, language, and emotions from the first axis as they occur in space and time as well as the possibility that such relationships become unstable and reorganized or de/territorialized (88).

Three aspects of assemblages are particularly relevant to my analysis. First, assemblages are *fluid* yet available for examination and inquiry (Ong and Collier 2005; Puar 2005). They can be imagined as having frayed or textured edges that change over time. However, this definition does not mean that assemblages are constantly being rearranged and therefore are unexaminable. An assemblage "brings together disparate elements – social actors, relations of power, regulations, discursive frames, bureaucracies, sectors, etc. – in patterned and changing ways" (Landolt and Goldring 2015, 854). The specificity of elements and how they are situated within space and time provide fruitful avenues for social analysis: we can track their temporal and spatial shifts and relationships to other phenomena.

Second, assemblages are *relational* (Anderson, Kearnes, and McFarlane 2012; DeLanda 2006; Dittmer 2014; Olds and Thrift 2005): they are determined by the relationships among elements or their "agreements of convenience" (Olds and Thrift 2005, 271). These agreements are important to map the relationships among processes that might not, at first glance, be connected. Relationality also means that an assemblage should be considered a "process of becoming" instead of a concrete event (Anderson, Kearnes, and McFarlane 2012; Marcus and Saka 2006, 102).

Third, assemblages are *productive*. They can create newly articulated spaces or forms. These outputs reveal how value is organized in society. Ong (2005, 338) argues that assemblages "not only create their own spaces, but also give diverse values to the practices and actors thus connected to each other." This linking involves power, or what Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) refer to as "assemblages of power," which circulates across and through assemblage elements given the specific spatiotemporal context (Dittmer

2014). I use assemblage to examine such power relations and their connections to insecuritization, precarity, borders, and migrant illegalization, thinking through the often fragile interconnections and entanglements among elements.

My analysis emphasizes five interrelated elements. The first is *ways of knowing* and focuses on knowledge production and how understandings and interpretations of social phenomena are produced in different contexts. This involves the formal production of policy (immigration, labour, health care), academic scholarship, personal experience, and other informational outputs. Such knowledge is produced by and about different *actors* (the second element). Actors include migrants, politicians, non-migrants, reporters, and border and immigration agents. Knowledge production takes work and operates in different contexts or sites, organized under the third element: *institutions* or *organizations.* Included in this element are academia and schooling, the law and criminal justice system, the media, the family, social services, faith-based organizations, and economic institutions. Sometimes these actors and institutions utilize the fourth element – *technologies* – including databases, biometrics, forms of identification, to store and disseminate *ways of knowing.* Therefore, assemblages produce, affect, and are affected by relations among people, institutions, governments, and the types of information that circulate among them. They also produce and mobilize affect or socially circulated *ways of feeling* about migration and its associated processes. Each of these elements exists within a *spatiotemporal* context: changes in time and space can rearticulate elements or make them unnecessary.

Citizenship, Migrant Illegalization, and Precarity

A growing body of literature employs the framework of assemblage to understand the fluid, relational, and productive aspects of migration, bordering, and non-citizenship (Bailey 2013; Landolt and Goldring 2015; Leitner and Strunk 2014; Lindquist 2018; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Ong and Collier 2005; Puar 2007; Villegas 2015a). My analysis of Mexican migration to Canada contributes to these conversations in several ways.

First, I draw on theories of citizenship to understand how precarious status migrants enact claims to membership despite formal legal status. Citizenship involves "*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and

economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual's membership in a polity" (Isin and Wood 1999, 4). The "bundle of rights and duties" is often contingent on a citizen/non-citizen binary. Foundational to this relationship is sovereignty, the idea that nation-states have the right to control what occurs within and across their borders and to define and delimit membership. Furthermore, citizenship rights are not always allocated equitably to the nation-state's members and rely on the construction of boundaries and hierarchies, often based on individuals' social locations. In North America, such hierarchies are organized under the pillars of white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer 2006; Smith 2006) despite, or perhaps because of, liberal ideologies of equality and multiculturalism (Bannerji 2000; Sharma 2011; Thobani 2007).

Citizenship is *practised* through cultural, political, and other acts (Isin and Nielsen 2008). Those identified as non-citizens often practise citizenship in ways similar to citizens, engaging in political acts such as public demonstrations, voting in municipal elections whenever possible, and otherwise participating in the communities in which they are embedded (Coll 2010). These practices disrupt normative understandings of citizenship/membership given that some non-citizens might never achieve access to legal citizenship status yet continue to engage in and make specific claims to membership (see Chapters 4 and 5). Another example is the creative practices in which migrants engage (see Chapter 8). These examples illustrate both a yearning for formal citizenship and a contestation of normative citizenship

Second, I further understandings of migrant illegalization, a process that ascribes "illegalities" as inherent conditions of migrant/non-citizen subjects. Despite a shifting understanding of citizenship as practised and inclusive of non-citizens, the reverse is also possible: we are seeing a deepening entrenchment of hierarchies of status, from citizen to non-citizen, that identify non-citizens as illegal, bogus, and illegitimate. By positioning illegalization as a socially constructed and contingent process that incorporates differently situated subjects (Coutin 2003; De Genova 2005; Inda 2006; Ngai 2004; Willen 2007), it is possible to problematize taken-for-granted understandings of migration and immigration status trajectories in Canada.

One way to explore migrant illegalization is through the lens of *multiplication*. This involves problematizing the binary relationships that dominate understandings of immigration status: documented/undocumented, legal/illegal, citizen/non-citizen. As I demonstrate in this book using the Canadian context, the experiences of undocumented, illegalized, and/or non-citizens vary depending on the personal, geographic, political, and historical situation. As immigration regulations change, the border can shift (become reassembled) to encompass new, or expanded, forms of illegalization (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). For example, new categories of precarity can emerge, as in the case of temporary workers or temporarily protected non-citizens (Marsden 2012; Menjívar 2006; Nakache and Kinoshita 2010). Citizen subjects and permanent residents can also become illegalized, as evident in shifting understandings and rewritings of immigration law in relation to the "war on terror," "war on drugs," and "war on gangs" (Burman 2010; Coutin 2007; Henry and Tator 2002). The result is multiple legalities and illegalities within an immigration system that allocates value to individuals categorized through them. To signify this multiplication, I use the term "precarious status" (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009).

Migrant illegalization is also productive. One key example is deportability, the constant possibility of deportation (De Genova 2002). Deportability operates through the spectacle of deportation, produced and disseminated through immigration authorities, media reports, threats from employers, service providers, family members, friends, and rumours. It thus works to place precarious status migrants into marginalized jobs and to receive little access to social services. Deportability is an embodied experience and affects how migrants move around and understand their spatiotemporal contexts (Willen 2007).

Third, extending this analysis, I focus on how migrant illegalization operates across temporal and spatial scales. This process involves the compressing and stretching of time and space across various scales of social analysis (Andersson 2014; Harvey 1989). In terms of space, I examine migrant illegalization both locally and transnationally through the imposition of precarity and borders and their effects on migrants' mobility. For example, I examine how the risk produced pre-migration can affect individuals' experiences during transit and post-migration transnationally. This

occurs when immigration applications are refused or visas expire and in particular contexts: the workplace, the street, the immigration hearing, and even creative spaces. Risky spaces inside the nation have been referred to as *internal borders*. Although not always physical, like a wall, they exist through *everyday* encounters with specific actors – police officers, service providers – and through processes of accessing social goods, decent work, and security (Leerkes, Bachmeier, and Leach 2013; Mutsaers 2014; Francisco Villegas 2016).

Temporal scales also affect illegalization and interlock with the production of space and place. For example, Willen (2007) examines the "temporality of everyday risk" that illegalized migrants experience. This temporality operates through specific time scales, including the production of institutional, biographical, and everyday time (Robertson 2018) and state versus subjective time (Andersson 2014). State time involves processes of coercion, control, and usurpation (Andersson 2014; Robertson 2018). Temporality also involves the wait times that migrants experience at borders, through immigration applications, and how they prove their length of stay in a country, in sum, the continuities and ruptures of their presence and subjectivities (Coutin 2003; Dow 2007; Gutierrez Garza 2018; Mattingly 1997; Villegas 2014). Wait times can be conceptualized as "wasted time" (Andersson 2014, 796), a "long, slowing time of waiting (sticky time), one that can decelerate into complete stagnation (suspended time), a fast time rushing out of control (frenzied time) and tears in people's imagined time frames (temporal ruptures)" (Griffiths 2014, 1994). These temporalities produce material and emotional effects for precarious status migrants, particularly as they await the resolution of applications or endure waiting for the right moment to apply for status. In terms of immigration applications, Goldring and Landolt (2012) refer to a "chutes and ladders" process whereby migrants can move across statuses in an upward and downward manner across time, where some statuses provide increased access to social entitlements whereas others refuse them. These experiences, described in Part II of this book, complicate assumed teleologies from no status to status – the idea that someone will eventually become documented or gain citizenship. They can also act as "time capital" (Andersson 2014) providing migrants with ways to strategize for future or alternative steps (Villegas 2014) and engage in "strategies of defiance" (Khosravi 2014).

While migrants experience these temporal negotiations, they are not frozen in space and often engage in creative work. Thus, fourth, I illustrate the creative work (Grant and Buckwold 2013) in which precarious status migrants engage (Menjívar 2006). I examine how this process generates experiences similar to those of other internal borders (the workplace, health care and other public goods, public spaces). For example, though "passing" as an artist can become a protective mechanism for "uncomfortable questions" regarding immigration status (Bernhard et al. 2007), there are limits to its protection.

Fifth, I focus on affect, which migration scholars are increasingly taking up as a conceptual tool. Although related to emotions, affect goes beyond them. It circulates across and through bodies. Vukov (2003, 339) explains that, "whereas emotions tend to refer to discrete states that are experienced as subjective moments of interiority, affect refers to a less subjective, signifying set of resonances, sensations and intensities that circulate socially between bodies and among bodies and populations; it is a process that cements the feel of everyday life." Similarly, Ahmed (2004a, 117) argues that "emotions play a crucial role in the 'surfacing' of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs. Such an argument clearly challenges any assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals." Finally, Richard and Rudnyckyj (2009) describe affect as a productive and relational "medium" through which subjects are produced and circulate. In other words, affect can be considered a transitive verb – *affecting* subjects.

I explore three interrelated affective processes: the production of anti-migrant sentiments, the maintenance of nationalist ideas about protecting Canada from migrants, and the effects of such discourses/affects on precarious status migrants, particularly through the concepts of yearning (Burman 2002) and aguantar. Burman (2002, 50, 52) describes yearning as a "future-oriented and galvanizing mode of desire," as in yearning for a better life, or better conditions, stating that "yearning moves subjects to change the seemingly fated conditions of their involvement in a globalized socio-economic setting, whether by seeking out the possibilities for physical and social mobility opened up by the technologies of globalization or by articulating new subject positions artistically and culturally."

Related to yearning, aguantar is a recurring theme in my analysis. It refers to bearing, tolerating, and enduring, as in injustices and violence in the workplace or community and a lack of access to social entitlements. Aguantar can also refer to being resourceful, resilient, and strategic: *waiting* for the right time. Thus, it can be considered a future-oriented process of imagining better conditions while tolerating present ones.

Puerto Rican hip hop duo Calle 13, in their song "El Aguante" (Cabra and Pérez 2014), list examples of the things that humans and societies endure: war, oppression, hunger, pain, etc. In a newspaper article, one member of the duo, Residente, explained the song as a list of "events, circumstances and themes that 'encompass the different ways in which humanity endures, permits, molds itself, fights and superimposes itself in light of the diversity of factors we all have to face: from resistance to survival; from tolerance to adaptation; from permissiveness to what becomes unacceptable'" (*El Espectador* 2014). The song specifically refers to the body as a site of endurance as well as the power relations that circulate to make that endurance necessary: racial capitalism and associated precarious employment arrangements, enduring systems of governance and law-making, and enactment of borders. As my analysis illustrates, precarious status migrants' use of aguantar is a strategic form of waiting and tolerating these assembled forces as well as *yearning* and working for a better future. However, this process is not a romantic "overcoming"; aguantar can be a humiliating experience of tolerating negative treatment from employers, peers, and strangers. It can also illustrate an anxiety-producing process of waiting for secure status.

Gathering and Analyzing the Stories

Drawing on my theorization of assemblage, I bring together different sources of data that narrate Mexican migration and precarity in Canada: interviews, media accounts, policy documents, and creative works. I seek to understand how migrant illegalization is produced, experienced, and resisted in relation to and by Mexican migrants in Canada. Specifically, I am interested in examining how notions of space and time have influenced accounts of migration, borders, deportability, and in/security.

I conducted semi-structured interviews between 2009–10 and 2014–15 with twenty-one Mexican migrants in Toronto. The Appendix includes a

summary of participant information. Interviews ranged from one hour to three hours. The first project was part of my dissertation research and focused on understanding how Mexican migrants navigated their precarious status in Toronto. I undertook the second project to examine the effects of deportability on Mexican migrants given the 2009 visa requirement and continued immigration enforcement (see Chapter 3).

All of the participants were born in Mexico and came from several states (Monterrey, Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Guerrero), though many (fourteen) lived in Mexico City and its outskirts before travelling to Canada. Only one participant, Sergio, lived in a rural area (Chiapas). Of the twenty-one participants, eleven were men and ten women. All had participated, at some point in their lives, in precarious work in Canada, mostly in the service and construction industries and mostly without work authorization (no social insurance number). At the times of the interviews, all participants had been in Canada more than one year. All had arrived before the 2009 visa requirement imposed on Mexican nationals. The names included here are pseudonyms that were chosen by the participants and sometimes reflected their lived experiences, creativity, and political ideologies (e.g., Emiliana Zapata and Libertad). In fact, the participants shared two distinctive characteristics. First, many had an interest in artistic or creative expression, including visual, literary, and performance arts. Second, they shared a critical understanding of their insecuritization and illegalization, with many engaging in activism, broadly defined. Some of this activism began in Mexico, but some participants described experiencing a critical formation in Toronto because of their immigration status, racialization, and/or sexual orientation.

During interviews, I situated myself by relating my undocumented experience in the United States. I saw this as a way to create a bridge or point of departure and to demonstrate that my interest in the project was personal, political, and intellectual. However, I also recognized that my experience was very different from those of the participants and that experience is contingent and socially constructed (Scott 1992). Although participant narratives cannot be celebrated uncritically, in this book I attempt to make visible experiences often invisibilized to paint a picture of the interlockings of migration, citizenship, illegalization, and precarity. This follows De Genova's (2005, 422) proposal of not studying migrants

themselves, as objects or units to count, but focusing on the conditions that led to their illegalization and deportability.

In addition to interviews, I participated in meetings, social events, and informal sessions with participants, other Mexicans with precarious status, and social justice activists. I also regularly volunteered at a health clinic that provides services for uninsured clients, mainly precarious status migrants. These encounters influenced my analysis and corroborated the trends that I saw during participant interviews. However, I avoided noting names and descriptions of meetings and places to protect participants and the community at large, given that the Mexican community is small and that some participants had public personas.

I also utilized media accounts, government documents, grey literatures, and creative work that addressed Mexican migration in Canada, particularly precarious status migration. Newspaper sources were primarily Canadian, though I also used sources from the United States, Europe, and Mexico. Canadian government documents came primarily from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada), Statistics Canada, and the Immigration and Refugee Board. Grey literatures came from local social service organizations: health clinics, community centres, and workers' centres. Finally, I also drew from creative work, particularly the poetry of Jesús Maya (2012), a Mexican migrant living in Toronto whose work speaks about insecuritization in Mexico, difficulties during migration, and precarity in Canada. His poetry frames my conception of the three sections of this book: immigration trajectories, immigration status trajectories, and internal borders. It also influences my analysis in Chapter 8.

In the data analysis, I paid attention to the elements outlined above: ways of knowing, actors, institutions/organizations, technologies, and ways of feeling. This analysis centred on discourse and power relations, examining how "specific views or accounts are constructed as real or truthful or natural through particular regimes of truth" (Rose 2001, 140). Such regimes include the belief that nation-states have the sovereign power to dictate which bodies can cross national boundaries (Torpey 2000), the belief that illegality is a condition ascribed to individuals instead of being socially produced, as well as the belief that the law and its associated discretionary practices are fair instruments to differentiate between citizens

and non-citizens and the benefits to which they are entitled. Finally, the analysis involved examining sources as interrelated components of a patchworked and contingent story given that precarious status migrants do not live in and embody fixed conditions or subject positions. Instead, discourses of illegalization and deportability, among others, have significant effects on their lives. Therefore, I analyzed migrant illegalization as an event or practice, "as an active 'occurring,' . . . that implements power and action, and that also is power and action" (Hook 2001, 20).

Organization of the Book

The book is organized into three sections. In the first section, I discuss the insecuritization that influences migration decisions as well as the im/mobility produced through transnational border practices. I examine how this occurs through violence and impunity in Mexico, border policing through transit, and affective and discursive manifestations of anti-immigrant and bogus refugee sentiments. In the second section, I focus on migrants' immigration status trajectories and discuss the options that exist to achieve secure status as well as the barriers in place to prevent it. Given those barriers, in the third section I explore internal borders by examining how they relate to social exclusion and inequality, with a specific focus on work, health care, and creative practices. Throughout the book, I highlight the ways in which migrants, despite the conditions that situate them as abject, exploitable subjects, engage in creative practices and resourceful processes that negotiate their status and work to counter feelings, discourses, and practices of illegalization.

PART I

Immigration Trajectories

Soñaba que ya no estamos en México
Y no éramos Ninguno de los 72
asesinados, asesinadas En Tamau-
lipas.
Que nos tocábamos nuestras carnes
No éramos parte de los 72, Ni de
los 400 que caen todos los años, Ni
de los miles que son puntos en el
mar, Arizona es sólo una noticia.

Soñé que tú y yo cabíamos aquí Que
no fuimos plantados en Toronto

I dreamed that we were no longer
in Mexico and that we were not
among the 72 murdered men and
women in Tamaulipas.
We searched our bodies for any
wounds, relieved That we were not
part of those 72 Or the 400 that
collapse on the way every year
    Nor those thousands who are
now just specks on the sea. Ari-
zona is only a news story.

I dreamed that you and I might actu-
ally fit in here, That we weren't just
plopped down in Toronto

– Excerpt from "Toronto," by Jesús Maya (2012, 53),
translated by Jeannine Pitas

Immigration trajectories are transnational. Basch et al. (1994, 7) define migrant transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." This does not just mean that migration trans-gresses national boundaries through the movement of bodies across borders. Migration is constituted transnationally by factors that occur

within the edges of nation-states, in spaces that exist across and beyond formal boundaries. Maya's (2012) poem alludes to this process. The narrator, a migrant in Toronto, describes a dream about a real-life event: the assassination of seventy-two migrants in the northern state of Tamaulipas by the Zetas cartel (Pérez Salazar 2015). He also refers to those who perish trying to cross the US-Mexico border or large bodies of water such as the Mediterranean Sea, two border regions that have become increasingly policed and rigid in recent years. Thus, he points to the factors that lead migrants to leave their country of origin and their conditions during transit.

An understanding of migration as transnational involves going beyond the "push" and "pull" factors traditionally understood to frame cross-border movements. According to Gonzalez and Fernandez (2003, 32), the problem with push-pull theories is the disconnect between the push and the pull. Because of globalization and the transnational assemblage of economic, political, and social processes, push and pull factors do not occur in isolation from each other. One example is migrant illegalization. Migrants and non-migrants are also subjected to a transnational system of unequal distribution of resources, capital, and opportunities, leading to insecuritization, which in turn influences migration decisions as well as how potential migrants will be treated in the country of migration. Therefore, individuals in their contexts of departure might have experiences of precarity and insecurity that then extend, in similar or new manifestations, to the country of migration. For example, people fleeing persecution can become refugee claimants subjected to state processes of legitimation (of their refugeeness) that do not guarantee full status. Similarly, people unable to migrate through state-accepted (read "legal") channels – such as applications that require certain work experience, education, and capital – might also be channelled into precarious status.

However, transnationalism does not always signify mobility. Espiritu (2003, 2) argues that "immigrants – in this age of transnational flow of labor, capital, and cultural forms – are *both spatially mobile and spatially bounded*" (emphasis added). Migrant illegalization is often accompanied by a diminished freedom to move across national borders, in effect "locking" precarious status migrants in place post-migration. Migrants often cannot return to their "homes" or travel elsewhere for fear of being denied

entry, or they might not want to travel if they have fled persecution. Being "locked" into place makes them (physically) absent in their country of departure, which can be especially frustrating when they are needed for family celebrations, births, deaths, or legal matters. Thus, migrant illegalization shapes the transnational practices in which migrants engage.

In the following chapters, I map some of the factors that affected immigration trajectories for Mexicans travelling to Canada in the 2000s and 2010s. These factors include the Mexican context of heightened insecuritization in the 2000s and 2010s, the process of transit, and policy responses to increased Mexican migration to Canada. In Chapter 1, I provide an understanding of push factors: economic insecuritization given the growth of transnational corporations, neoliberal restructuring, low wages, and underemployment; the criminalization of dissent to maintain the political order; and the interlocking processes of racism, class-based exploitation, sexism, and homophobia. The examples of insecurity discussed in this chapter parallel the examples of deportability in Canada that I discuss in Part III.

Chapter 2 follows with a discussion of cross-border travel, the mechanisms in place to control it, and the resourcefulness of migrants. Returning to Maya's (2012) poem, I relate the experience of transit to conditions of security/insecurity. Because of increased border enforcement at the US-Mexico border, Mexicans found themselves making their way farther north, to Canada. I outline participants' plans to migrate, their experiences with border officials, and the techniques used to enter Canada.

In Chapter 3, I examine Canada's 2009 visa requirement for Mexican migrants (and its revocation in 2016). The policy was implemented as a response to a growth in refugee applications from Mexico. It led to the construction of a de facto border that contributed to the criminalization of Mexicans in Canada. The visa was lifted in 2016 after changes to refugee policy made it more difficult for Mexicans to apply for and receive refugee protection.

1

Assembling Insecuritization in Mexico

Güero and I met in my Toronto apartment in early 2015. At the time, he worked as a landscaper and participated in creative community projects in music and theatre. Given his busy schedule, winter was a good time for the interview to take place, for his work was slow. Born and raised in Mexico City, Güero felt that his life was going nowhere in the late 2000s. Although he was involved in creative work in Mexico, particularly theatre, it was badly remunerated, and he felt pressure to provide for his young son. He described his decision to travel to Canada as a strategy to create some distance between himself and the insecuritization that life in Mexico City offered working-class persons. He made his decision after experiencing a lightbulb moment one day:

> I wanted to leave Mexico City . . . Through a series of events, I realized that I was trapped in the city. I realized that, that, I had a son that was about to start elementary school and that I had nothing. Right? I did not have a future, I did not have a career, I did not have a stable job, and I was very into, into . . . the streets, the city. Drugs, all those things, and I had, it was one of those five minutes of clarity, first time in my life.

Leonel experienced a similar process. He lived in Estado de Mexico on the outskirts of Mexico City and worked as a street vendor until 2001, when he accepted an invitation from his sister to migrate to Canada. When I asked him why he agreed, he stated, "I'm going to try to be objective, but I feel it was a lot of things." Leonel's reference to objectivity was an attempt

to create a coherent narrative from diverse experiences of insecurity. However, as the conversation continued, Leonel became more specific: "The fucking police. My inability to accept, to not resign myself to having to live that life. The need to have a bit of security, perhaps not for myself. I now think that I refused to accept that my daughters would grow up there." Although his business was not thriving, he had survived for some time until he had to pay for an impromptu surgery and was forced to borrow money. His decision to migrate meant leaving his daughters behind, with the hope that they would be reunited in the future.

Güero's and Leonel's experiences are a point of departure to examine and problematize why Mexican migrants travelled to Canada in the 2000s, particularly binary framings that identify reasons for migration either as economic or because of violence. Instead, I examine how insecuritization influenced participants' emigration decisions, a process that included economic instability because of poverty, underemployment, lack of opportunities, and threats to their well-being ranging from physical harm to more generalized feelings of fear.

Cruz (2009, 2) explains insecuritization in the following way:

> Economic security, institutional performance, ecological conditions and individual characteristics may affect levels of public insecurity. All these conditions interact with crime and violence to generate more uncertainty and, in some cases, social unrest . . . Fear of crime is a result not only of threats and vulnerabilities but also, and more important, of the representations people have about their social situation and their satisfaction with it. Mass media and processes of social communication, as well as perceptions of economic uncertainties, play an important role in boosting public insecurity.

Insecuritization is assembled. Ways of knowing, including government policies, media accounts, and civil society reports about the labour market, corruption, and organized crime, influence its manifestation. The actors and institutions that become the protagonists in this assemblage are policy makers, the police, perpetrators of violence, and everyday people who contemplate emigration. Technologies play a role by facilitating the surveillance and persecution of citizens. Finally, insecuritization demonstrates

the affective circulations of fear and uncertainty that have permeated Mexican society in recent years.

Cruz (2009) also draws our attention to the role of time and place in insecuritization. Economic restructuring, the effects of globalization, and insecuritization operate at local, national, international, and transnational scales. Specific places also figured prominently in participants' narratives of economic precarity and dislocation: the workplace, the streets, the home, and the police station. Proximity to insecurity, what I describe as *insecurity by association,* also affects this process. Finally, insecurity was described as an everyday, normalized experience: the belief that violence *could happen at any moment* and the lack of confidence in policing authorities.

Mexico's Neoliberalization, Precarious Livelihoods, and Economic Insecurity

Economic insecurity is one strand of insecuritization. It involves unemployment, underemployment, and the lack of a safety net for a population that faces a continuous erosion of social entitlements, forcing some to seek alternative income-generating strategies. Much has been written about the economic situation in Mexico as a reason for emigration, particularly to the United States (Massey et al. 1987). These processes have also influenced the precarious status migration of Mexicans to Canada.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Mexican government imposed a series of policy and economic adjustments that followed the logic of neoliberal restructuring. For instance, in 1985, Mexico signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the predecessor of the World Trade Organization. In 1988, the United States and Canada implemented a bilateral free-trade agreement, prompting the Mexican government to lobby for inclusion. While talks among the three governments took place, Mexico began internal preparations, including a revision of its constitution. For example, in 1992, changes to Article 27 virtually ended the *ejido* system of communal land ownership in place (at least in theory) since the 1930s to protect the lands and livelihoods of *campesinxs* from large agribusiness operations. The revision allowed the selling of *ejidos* in general as well as the selling of Mexican land to foreigners and corporations (French and Manzanárez 2004, 25; Pastor and Wise 1998, 65).

The United States, Canada, and Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993 and implemented it in 1994. NAFTA's objectives included integrating the three countries' economies and facilitating trade, but its effects on the working-class Mexican population were widespread and mostly negative (Carlsen 2008; French and Manzanárez 2004; Gomez Cruz and Schwentesius Rindermann 2009; Hing 2010; NACLA 2005; Rivera, Whiteford, and Chávez Márquez 2009). This neoliberalization intersected with the devaluation of the Mexican peso in the mid-1990s. International loans provided to "offset" the crisis included conditions that Mexico move to increase exports, reduce spending, and increase interest rates (Drachman and Shank 2003, 124). These national and transnational policies led to a growing gap between the rich and the poor that disproportionately affected rural *campesinxs* and the urban working class. NAFTA renegotiations began in 2017 and, by March 2020, all three countries had ratified the new US–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) (Ljunggren 2020). Changes are poised to impose more critical erosions of Mexican sovereignty and the country's agricultural and labour sectors, further affecting Mexicans' well-being (Cypher and Crossa 2019).

Temporal Reflections of Escalating Precarity and Displacement

> I come from places evacuated by emigrants
> Where agriculture is an expensive reality
> And a distant memory for many
> Places built through remittances, those who stayed behind, those who
>   returned and those who were forcibly returned (Villegas 2019c, 87)

Participants framed their experiences of living in the economic context and generalized insecurity outlined above using references to time. For instance, Eduardo and his wife, Rebeca, lived in Mexico City with their two children (a third was born in Canada). Like Leonel and Güero, Eduardo left his family behind when he travelled to Canada, and during our interview he referred to the insecuritization that they faced in Mexico as "el pan nuestro de cada día," literally "our daily bread." Echoing this sentiment, Lencho, a musician from Estado de Mexico who worked in a neighbourhood market, stated that

Oftentimes you don't have another point of view. Because a lot of people in Mexico, including myself, sometimes don't get out . . . So they don't have another perspective, they don't know how the world is outside their neighbourhood. Perhaps it's the crime we experience that ends up being an everyday thing. You see it every day. It's the norm. I don't know if you get accustomed to it because it's an everyday thing. It's normal. When I was in Mexico, I saw it as normal. I wasn't shocked at what happens there until I came here.

I asked Lencho if he thought that people adapted to such normalized violence, and he was adamant that one did not have to become accustomed because it was always present, ordinary, and intricately woven into the social fabric. By referring to the social fabric, my goal is not to identify Mexico and Mexicans as inherently violent, as has been done through references to the violent practices of Aztecs and other essentialist depictions. Lencho was adamant in making this statement despite knowing that he was implicated in it. My goal is to examine how local and transnational practices lead to the enactment of generalized and constant violence in Mexico, particularly for working-class families. Given this *cotidianidad* (everydayness or routineness), a literal or figurative distance allowed many participants to re-evaluate their experiences of insecurity.

One example involved how neoliberalizing practices displaced Mexicans from their lands and initiated a whittling away of rights and access to economic opportunities. Although I interviewed only one person who lived in a rural setting in Mexico, his experience is a good contrast to the narratives of urban participants. Sergio, an Indigenous *campesino* from the state of Chiapas, found it increasingly difficult to sell his crops for a decent price in the mid-2000s, so he decided to emigrate after he was invited to Canada by friends and relatives:

The harvest over there is cheap . . . The city people pay us a low price for our products. That is, what they pay us is very little. I'll give you an example, pineapples. If I sell pineapples, they pay me a low price. Then, if I buy their pineapples, they charge me a high price. So there is quite a difference . . . It's the same thing for soap, salt, sugar, they are also very expensive. Everything that comes . . . from the city is very expensive, and for us the

> rate paid for production is very cheap. It is cheaper every day. So . . . that
> is the reason why I'm here in Canada, because we couldn't afford to live
> working every day without a, a salary, a way to support my family or to
> have a way to generate more money. We couldn't do it because, even though
> we work a lot, they paid us very little, so I had to come here to get ahead.

Sergio compared two spaces: the community farm in which he participated based on cooperation, not competition, given its association with the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army) and the space of the city, where capitalist exchange occurred. NAFTA separated a number of agricultural products from the tariffs that had protected them in the past, making it difficult for Mexican products to compete with US. products flooding the markets (Pastor and Wise 1998). Although US farmers often receive government subsidies to remain in business, Mexican support was discontinued after NAFTA, leading *campesinxs* to fend for themselves (Gomez Cruz and Schwentesius Rindermann 2009, 5). One effect was that the number of agricultural jobs fell from over 8 million before NAFTA to 6 million in 2006 (Hing 2010, 14).

The community experienced fluctuating crop prices and rising costs of "city products" that could not be produced by its members. They felt forced to participate in additional capitalist forms of exchange to make ends meet. Sergio elected migration and marked his decision to migrate through space and time, explaining it as *salir adelante*, meaning to get ahead. *Salir* also refers to leaving, or exiting, inadvertently pointing to the fact that Sergio felt that he had to leave Mexico to pursue his dream of getting ahead. The decision, however, implied leaving his wife and children behind and experiencing a transnational household that had emotional costs (Abrego 2014).

In urban centres, participants' economic difficulties involved the ability to have secure, long-term work and adequate housing. Informal, contingent work increased in Mexico after NAFTA (Delgado Wise 2015). In 2005, when a number of participants were leaving or getting ready to leave Mexico, almost 25 percent of all employment was self-employment, whereas the informal economy generally accounted for one-third of jobs (Carlsen 2008; Oliver 2007, 91). And the few jobs to be had did not provide a reprieve from precarious conditions: "Of all the jobs created between

mid-2000 and mid-2004, 65% came with no benefits whatsoever, and frequently without a written contract" (NACLA 2005). Furthermore, since NAFTA, Mexican wages have declined, while the cost of living, inflation, and poverty rates have increased, the latter being above 50 percent (Alba 2010; UNICEF 2010).

Urban participants also described this insecuritization as a process of *increasing* precarity regardless of profession. For instance, Lencho's family business in their Estado de Mexico neighbourhood market faced deteriorating conditions:

> The economic situation at the business my parents owned, or still own, was not very good. We work at a market, and the market began to lose business after two stores opened nearby. One is a Walmart, and the other is a Bodega Aurrera. So the market lost its business. Sales decreased, and I didn't have enough money just working at the family business.

Time exacerbated Lencho's feelings of insecurity. He hoped to attend music school, but he could not pay his tuition by continuing to work in the family business. The arrival of big-box stores meant a big decline for specialized vendors, and the losses were significant at a time when a global recession was in full force, particularly since small businesses are often sites where multiple family members find employment.

Similarly, Leonel's work as a street vendor meant that his economic situation in Mexico became worse in the years preceding his emigration in 2001. Leonel described the neighbourhood context and situation for himself and his colleagues:

> My neighbour sold chickens and lived in his parents' house. The person who sold music . . . also lived in his parents' house. The vendor in front, and his children, all of them lived in his mother's house. They divided the property and built up, but it was still his mother's house. Another vendor in front of me did not own a house . . . Perhaps they did not live full of debt, and neither did I, but we lived *al dia* (hand to mouth).

Leonel identified different strands of economic insecurity over time. Neither he nor his colleagues could own land in the city because of cost

and overpopulation. In addition, he worked on a sidewalk, in front of the marketplace, which he took over from pedestrians since he could not afford to pay rent for a state-recognized business. He also thought that it was more profitable to have a visible business, at the entrance to the marketplace, than one hidden inside it.

Despite his approach to business, Leonel and vendors like him could only make ends meet. While living *al dia* is common, particularly in working-class communities, as soon as a job is lost, the economy goes into recession, or an unexpected expense arises it becomes unsustainable. Therefore, living *al dia* implies an inability to save or invest. For someone like Leonel, paying for merchandise at the point of purchase was the norm, meaning that he always had to have surplus money to restock his inventory. And, like Sergio, he was at the whim of vendors who could raise prices at any time and discount stores that sold the same goods for less money to his customers. Although Leonel did not normally have much debt, before he left Mexico he had surgery and owed $2,000 US, a significant amount given Mexican wages. He explained this temporal shift: "There were better times for me. But before I came here, the situation for me was not very good financially."

Eduardo had a good job in the 1990s and became accustomed to living comfortably. When he lost his job, however, he could not find something similarly remunerated:

> I was never able to find a job with the same salary . . . I was no longer able to pay for everything that we were used to, credit cards, with out-standing debt, the car . . . That was when my wife [Rebeca] began to take care of everything. At that time, I paid 3,300 pesos, maybe 3,400, for the house. I had to pay about 2,200 per month for the car, along with all our other expenses. Food, clothes, etc., etc. And my wages were about 3,000 [pesos], 4,000 if I worked overtime . . . So every passing month we were accumulating debt, especially with the house.

Like other participants, Eduardo identified *escalating* economic insecurity, referring to the growing amount of debt for his family each passing month. Monthly payments are timely reminders of potentially losing those things (e.g., a house) from which we create our conceptions of stability and wealth.

After losing his job, Eduardo found employment in a series of precarious jobs with flexible hours and low pay. Ironically, some of those insecure jobs were in the security industry, working for wealthier Mexicans. Thus, his job experience straddled in/security, providing security for others while becoming less and less secure himself economically.

Eduardo's description of his economic insecurity was also gendered. When Eduardo lost his job, the family began to depend on his wife's income to pay the bills. Yet, in his description of the family's inability to make ends meet, he discussed his earnings and not Rebeca's, effectively invisibilizing her contribution. He used *yo* (I) instead of *nosotros* (we/us), portraying himself as the principal earner. Therefore, in addition to having had better times in the past because of economic security, his stable job afforded him a sense of masculinized privilege in the home. Seeing himself as the primary provider for his family allowed him gendered privileges that he did not suspend when he lost his economic status.

Participants with university training were not protected from increasing insecurity. For instance, Liz had a good job before the economic recession hit in 2007, accumulating material goods that led to a comfortable quality of life:

> I worked in an import-export company. It was really good; I worked there for almost three years. However, during and a bit before the recession, companies were going under. We didn't have as many clients, and even though we tried to increase business the companies were not in a good state . . . Little by little, it happened, and my company went under. I was left with a lot of debt. I had a mortgage for an apartment that I had in Mexico, . . . a car that I was paying little by little, and credit debt. I looked for work, I did find some, I found work that paid very little . . . I remember that they hired me for 6,000 pesos, . . . and based on my debt and lifestyle I needed 18,000.

The reference to companies going under "little by little" parallels Lencho's description of big-box stores taking over the business of small marketplaces. It indicates a creeping of economic insecurity across time through a reorganization of economic processes leading to lower earnings and fewer benefits for workers.

To supplement a decrease in earnings, some participants opened small businesses. Armando was studying architecture in Puebla before he emigrated to Canada. He opened a retail store using a loan from what he later found were fraudulent lenders:

> I opened a business when I was nineteen years old and signed a promissory note, . . . and I was paying it off little by little, . . . but I never asked for the promissory note back. So, after about three years, I got a summons saying that . . . I owed like 35,000 pesos, from an 8,000-peso loan! So, ugh, it was very difficult, and my mom helped me [to pay for the legal fight] . . . So I came here [to Canada], and that was part of my goal, to pay my mom back.

Armando's business experience and legal costs affected his ability to pay his university tuition despite also working at an architectural firm. His experience is an example of how corruption influences economic precarity, augmenting the effects of globalization and neoliberal restructuring. His solution was to ask his company for short-term leave so that Armando could travel to Canada and raise the money that he owed.

Maria Pérez held a business degree. Like Armando, she sought to supplement her income by starting a small business; however, her debt was compounded by the insecurity produced through property crime:

> Another reason that made me come [to Canada] was that I was in debt. I had a business there. I had an internet café. It was going well, but they robbed us, and afterward business suffered. The woman who rented the space did not want to help us improve security, . . . and I had a lot of expenses. Obviously, I incurred a loss of merchandise. And I decided, that was the reason I said, "I want to leave here." . . . So I ended up owing the bank and the credit card [company].

In her description of the events, Maria Pérez recounted, "casi casi salí, me salí corriendo," which translates into "as I left, it was almost running." This rushed exit demonstrates the urgency created by economic insecurity. She also discussed the ways in which technologies of surveillance can help to improve security, but they involved a cost too high for Maria Pérez to afford.

Finally, several participants discussed their families' economic situations as *one* reason for their emigration. Aquetzalli held an education degree and worked in the south of Mexico for some time after finishing university in Mexico City. Upon returning to the capital, she was unable to find work in her profession. Furthermore, her father became unemployed, and she stressed over seeing him increasingly depressed. Similarly, Emiliana Zapata, whose pseudonym came from Emiliano Zapata, a leader of the Mexican revolution in the early twentieth century who fought for land reform and redistribution, was involved in cultural rescue projects in Mexico, particularly related to Indigenous beliefs and traditions. She was politically active in her university and began to feel increasingly threatened by the police because of her politics. Emiliana Zapata also experienced economic precarity after graduating, describing the situation thus: "At home . . . we had less and less money. It was getting uglier [*cada vez más fea*]. We were starting to experience hunger, well, we had before, but now it was stronger." Her family's deteriorating situation led her to look for opportunities abroad. The fact that Emiliana Zapata and Aquetzalli, both single women, and not their male relatives, migrated also points to the reconfiguration of gendered migration trajectories in recent decades (Abrego 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar and Mahler 2003).

Tener y Hacer Algo (To Have and Do Something)

Another way to describe economic insecuritization is in relation to planning for the future. The general term that participants used to describe this was the desire to *tener algo* (have something). *Tener algo* can imply the ownership of commodities; however, for participants, the desire to *tener algo* also related to their stability. For instance, for Eduardo and Rebeca, owning a house implied having a more stable livelihood than renting. This belief influenced Eduardo's decision to emigrate in order to send money so they could keep their house. The same idea of stability influenced Sergio's view of communal land ownership and the yearning for a profitable business in Leonel's and Lencho's families.

In addition, for some participants, it was not only about *having* something but also about *doing* something, having the stability to pursue something of interest, to create or learn. After university, Emiliana Zapata received job offers as a linguistics expert in the south of Mexico. However,

she discovered that the jobs entailed working for the government and aligning herself ideologically with it. She referred to this as "selling out" and declined the jobs. Her decision, however, led to few employment opportunities. She was interested in continuing to learn about the rescue and maintenance of Indigenous knowledges, and she thought that she could do this in Canada while also contributing to her family's decreasing income.

Similarly, because of the displacement experienced in the family business, through the imposition of a Walmart nearby, Lencho did not have enough income to attend music school. Although he did not plan to work in the family business as a long-term option, his declining family income affected his short-term goals. As he related, "I no longer had enough for my expenses, and I wanted to do other things, I wanted to study other things. So I saw the opportunity to come here to Canada and work for a while and then go back, get some money." Lencho had toured with his rock band in Mexico and internationally, travelling to Canada for a few concerts. He also had family members in Canada. Both processes facilitated his migration decision.

Threats to Bodily Integrity: State Violence, Organized Crime, and Homophobia

State Violence

Another strand of insecuritization that participants identified involved violence. One example was institutional violence, which manifested itself in participants' workplaces and/or through a lack of police protection. This type of violence sought to discipline individuals and produce "docile bodies" (Foucault 1995). It was also systemic. Although participants' narratives were particularized, the violence was part of a system that allows the erosion of rights and entitlements of individuals, explicitly seeks to remove them when they have opposing views, or fails to protect them when they experience violence.

Libertad, a journalist who worked at a Mexico City university and whose pseudonym means freedom, explained this type of systemic violence succinctly: "In Mexico there is no freedom of expression, in Mexico there is no freedom of association, in Mexico there is no freedom of movement,

you are stopped only because of how you are dressed, what you look like, or the colour of your skin." Libertad pointed to a racial hierarchy ingrained in Mexican society. Therefore, while the freedoms that she discussed are often used to define democratic societies, which the Mexican state has tried to impersonate, participants' narratives depict some of the cracks in the mirage.

Leonel provided several examples, referring to police corruption and regular instances of extortion as people go about their day-to-day activities. He described how certain social spaces in Mexico City, including rock music concert halls, denied him entry because of the colour of his skin. He also faced harassment from the police because of his taste in music, which influenced how he dressed and styled his hair. In terms of his work, he regularly travelled to Mexico City, from its outskirts in Estado de Mexico, to purchase the goods that he sold in his business. He discussed the daily struggle of having to negotiate with the police: "When people go to wholesale markets to buy products, it is very common that the police stop you and extort money from you, for any reason." This action, commonly referred to as *la mordida* (a bribe, literally a bite) affected his freedom of movement. Leonel's experience also points to the relationship between insecuritization initiated by the police and economic insecurity: people often account for the money paid to the police for protection or through extortion in their already restricted budgets.

After Eduardo emigrated to Canada, Rebeca experienced harassment from a neighbour who accused her of flirting with her husband. Although she went to the police station, she did not obtain protection because there was no evidence of the violence: "There [in Mexico] the law has no value. Not until you are killed . . . You can press charges if you have been assaulted, but you can't press charges if you are not injured . . . It wasn't until she hit me that I was able to press charges." Rebeca's referral to the "value" of the law demonstrates how the legal system is constitutive of insecuritization in Mexico. Although protections exist for citizens, they are not executed in practice, what Ahmed (2004b) describes as non-performatives: declarations that "do not do what they say" and instead maintain the status quo. Rebeca made a formal complaint when her neighbour physically assaulted her, but the police only sent the neighbour a court summons. Rebeca continued: "I had to pay for a police car only so she saw that I had

protection." In fact, Rebeca paid for a daily *performance* of protection in which the police were the actors and her neighbour the audience. And, similar to Leonel's experience of having to pay the police so he could transport the goods that he sold, it illustrates the intersection among insecurity, time, and money.

Other participants experienced police violence more directly. Manolo, a man in his thirties, worked as a political cartoonist and bartender in Mexico City. He was also active in neighbourhood improvement projects. That work involved producing and disseminating flyers explaining the political platforms of candidates vying for local office. Furthermore, he attended meetings with the local government to advocate for safety measures, including increasing the number of street and traffic lights to prevent crime and vehicular accidents. This type of work angered one local official who worked for the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) as a campaign organizer. Because of illegal polling, Manolo explained, the PAN official found out that his party was not doing well in Manolo's district and held Manolo responsible. Initially, he called Manolo out during community meetings, using offensive names for cartoonists such as *pintamonos*. Manolo explained that cartoonists in Mexico are often called *moneros*. *Pintamonos* translates into someone who paints monkeys. *Mono* means monkeys, and both words begin with *mon,* thus a play on words. When Manolo responded by calling him a *politiquito* (little politician), the man became more enraged. Manolo explained the process whereby the violence escalated:

> One day he attacked me along with some *madrinas*. What are *madrinas*? This is very important. *Madrinas* are people who work with the police in Mexico City – but actually the Mexican states also have their own *madrinas* . . . They are the people who follow orders. They are the soldiers. They go, trap someone, kill them, or anything else. They do all the dirty work . . . They do not have police plates, or names, or anything . . . They drive police cars without plates. They don't carry any identification. That's how they operate. They kidnap, rob.

Madrina, Manolo told me, comes from the word *madriza,* which refers to being beat up. A report by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) compiled research about *madrinas:*

> *Madrinas* [are] persons who work "in the shadows" (*a la sombra*) of the
> Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR . . .) [Attorney General],
> doing groundwork such as drug purchases . . . A 1999 report states that
> the *estibadores* or *madrinas* who assist PGR officers can be a small "mafia"
> that operates independent of changes in the PGR, adding that the net-
> works of *madrinas* remain in place and simply await new officers to deal
> with them . . . *Madrinas* have also been reported to have dressed as
> soldiers and manned highway checkpoints to extort drivers . . . and in
> the State of Morelos worked closely with judicial policemen who carried
> out a majority of the kidnappings for ransom in the state. (Immigration
> and Refugee Board of Canada 2001)

Madrina also means godmother. One could argue that persons who work
in the background, granting the wishes or desires of those to whom they
are responsible (in this case those who pay for them) can be seen as god-
mothers. The use of this gendered term for a task largely masculinized
complicates how violence is narrated and imagined in Mexico.

Another example of this gendered narration occurred the last time that
Manolo was attacked: "He told me that, if he saw me again, he would kill
me. That they were tired of me. They hit me, they assaulted me, one of
them punched my testicles, grabbed my testicles from behind hard." While
Manolo discussed the encounter as one of physical violence, the focus on
his testicles can also be understood as a form of emasculation by his
attackers.

Manolo was afraid that, even if he went into hiding, his attackers would
easily discover him. In fact, both Manolo and Libertad commented that it
was common for the police, or government officials, or anyone with enough
money to buy citizens' personal information kept by the Instituto Federal
Electoral (Federal Electoral Institute, IFE), now Instituto Nacional Electoral
(National Electoral Institute, INE), the federal agency that deals with
elections and issues electoral cards for the purposes of voting and identi-
fication. Information could also be bought regarding other government
databases and banks. A 2010 investigative report by the Mexican newspaper
El Universal found that one could buy a set of three external memory drives,
160 gigabytes each, in Tepito, a neighbourhood in Mexico City known for
the selling of extralegal material (Gonzalez 2010). The drives included "the

country's electoral register, the registry of all the cars and driver's licenses among other 'products.' The information has been acquired by organized crime groups as well as police officers who use it to work, since in their sectors that information is not available" (Gonzalez 2010). A *New York Times* story in 2017 also noted that "human rights lawyers, journalists, and anti-corruption activists have been targeted by advanced spyware sold to the Mexican government" (Ahmed and Perlroth 2017). These practices exemplify how technologies to produce docile bodies include not only verbal threats and physical violence, which create emotional and physical marks, but also an extensive "surveillant assemblage" of tracking marked bodies across national, and even international, spaces (Haggerty and Ericson 2000).

Like Manolo, Johann also experienced persecution because of his political work. Born in Veracruz, Johann lived undocumented in the United States as a child before returning to Mexico to attend university in the northern city of Monterrey. He hoped to become a lawyer and contribute to social change in the country. He became associated with the communist community and interested in the work of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN, Zapatista National Liberation Army). Through his involvement in the latter, Johann travelled with a caravan organized in 2006 to support La Otra Campaña (The Other Campaign), a campaign designed to operate alongside the presidential elections that year but whose goal was the creation of grassroots social change (Marcos and Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional 2006). During this time, flower vendors in San Salvador Atenco in Estado de Mexico were denied access to sell their products and brutalized. They previously had their land expropriated by the government to build an airport and successfully resisted it. To support them, the EZLN suspended the caravan, and Johann returned to Monterrey. By that time, the local Monterrey activist organizations to which he belonged were facing increasing repression from the police. When the EZLN announced that it was renewing the caravan and travelling to Monterrey, the organizations became more visible, and the repression intensified.

Johann's involvement in actively questioning the government's legitimacy led to a variety of attacks. Like Manolo, Johann identified the last attack as an important factor in his decision to emigrate:

> The last time they picked me up was after a May 1st parade [International Workers' Day], . . . and that day, when they picked me up, I thought I would not return home. Fortunately, nothing happened. They didn't kill me. They beat me up and whatever, but they didn't kill me . . . I feel my life is in danger though. Even though I feel supported by a group, just like during the dirty war, you never know when you won't return home or when they are going to do what they are threatening to do. So, due to all that, I decide, you know what? I'm going to escape for some time.

Johann's use of *la ultima vez* (the last time) draws our attention to the experience of a series of attacks and the continuous repression experienced by activists. His narrative also points to a normalization of violence. Furthermore, the unmarked aggressors who beat Johann could have been police officers, disrupting the assumed identity of the "criminal," a process to which Johann alluded through his reference to dirty war strategies and infiltration. Documenting violence becomes important after migration, particularly in refugee applications, but it is difficult to do this if the aggressors are not identifiable.

A similar example of the interlocking of different forms of persecution came from Arne Saknussemm, who chose his pseudonym after a character in Jules Verne's (2005) *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. A musician, activist, and journalist, Arne Saknussemm ran for local office in Mexico City in the early 2000s as part of a political party created to mirror the nineteenth-century party of Benito Juarez, the first Indigenous Mexican president. He participated because he was part of an ethnic minority, the *Gitanxs* or Roma. Although a number of Roma have identified the term "gypsy" as derogative and offensive, Arne Saknussemm did not share that belief and identified himself as a *Gitano*. Although he lost the election, his party performed very well in his district, attracting attention from the left-leaning Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), which won the election.

PRD officials sought revenge, affecting the livelihood of Arne Saknussemm in two ways. First, they conspired to terminate a contract that he had to produce music events across the country. Second, a PRD official in Mexico City publicly vowed to close his businesses, including a café that had become a general meeting place for the *Gitanx* community in the area.

The official succeeded. Despite these attacks, Arne Saknussemm found it difficult to believe that he was facing persecution: "People would tell me, 'Don't you think you're facing persecution?' And I would respond, 'No, of course not.' My lawyer regularly told me, 'Listen, I've never seen them be so fixated on a person. You don't get out of something when you're already involved in something else.' And I got used to fighting."

Arne Saknussemm also worked as an investigative journalist for several newspapers and magazines. He covered stories ranging from organ trafficking to political extortion. Some stories implicated government officials, including those from the PRD. As a result, he was detained and questioned by the police. His car and computer were also stolen. Mexico is a dangerous country for journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (2020), since 1994 ninety-five journalists and media workers have been murdered in Mexico, with the bulk coming after 2004. For instance, in 2010, thirteen were murdered, "targeted by drug traffickers, police and members of the army" often with impunity (Canada Newswire 2010). The violence has led a number of Mexican journalists to seek protection in the United States and Canada (Law 2012; Méndez Pineda 2017). In 2011, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urged Mexico to investigate the deaths, which it argued demonstrate the growth of general insecurity (Terra Networks 2011).

Immediately before leaving Mexico, Arne Saknussemm and his partner, also involved in activist work against the PRD, were beaten. At the police department where they went to file a complaint, they discovered "that the same people who had beaten us up arrived at the police station greeting the police officers with whom we were making the complaint." This meant that unmarked police officers (perhaps *madrinas*) had enacted the violence, making a complaint ineffective.

Libertad, also a journalist, worked at a university in Mexico City looking to expand from three to four campuses. She explained that the building of another campus would bring the university more prestige, particularly to administrators, commenting that it was common knowledge that top administrators, for instance university presidents, often moved on to hold government posts. However, the university was facing a serious deficit that led to the implementation of cuts. Because Libertad was active in her labour union, particularly in relation to gender-based labour discrimination, she participated in events to resist the cuts.

Despite its deficit, the university bought the land to build the campus. Surprised by this move, Libertad discovered that the land was covered under environmental protection, so very little of it could be used. She also found out that the university had overpaid for the land. She made the information public among students and outside the university, prompting her colleagues and supervisors to recommend that she stop "agitating." One day her employer sent her to cover a story at an isolated place, where three men were waiting for her, planning to sexually assault her. As feminist scholars have argued, the threat of sexual violence is a tool to silence women who engage in activist practices (Kaufman and Williams 2010). And, since there is a general problem with impunity in Mexico, a large number of cases go unpunished (Godoy 2011).

Libertad escaped from her potential attackers and decided to leave her job. However, the threat of violence led to a complicated escape from the city: "I lose my job, they [look] for me at my house, I move to other places within the city, I move to the neighbouring town, Cuernavaca, but then decide to go to Acapulco. They go to Acapulco and look for me at my [mother's] house." When "they," unmarked men, arrived at her mother's house, Libertad was not present. However, they spoke to her brother: "My brother . . . gets mad and hits me. Then, as he is hitting me, he gives me some fragmented details: 'You are a communist, you have always had those types of problems. Now you come here, you're putting us in danger.'" The reaction added another layer of gender-based violence, to which the rest of the family contributed by dissuading Libertad from pressing charges. At that point, her sister invited her to travel to Canada.

When I first interviewed Libertad in 2009, it was five years after she had left her university job. Yet her university email address remained valid. Curious, Libertad checked it from time to time and reported that she sometimes received "friendly" emails asking her how she was and where she was living, demonstrating the operation of a "surveillant assemblage" (Haggerty and Ericson 2000).

Organized Crime

Another aspect of insecuritization involved the drug trade and organized crime associated with it. Although the trafficking of drugs to and from Mexico can be traced to at least 1910 (Recio 2002), its policing intensified in recent decades. During the Calderon presidency (2006–12), Mexico saw

an increased emphasis on national security and the intensification of a "war on drugs" that continued with his successor, Enrique Peña Nieto.

Calderon's strategies of increased militarization marked a shift in how Mexico engaged with narcotrafficking. From 2006 to 2010, 45,000 troops and 5,000 federal police were deployed to eighteen states in support of the "war" (Jimenez 2010). Although some leaders of organized crime organizations have been arrested, the cost, in both capital and lives, has been tremendous. Between 2007 and 2014, the death toll was 164,000 (Breslow 2015). Furthermore, from 2006 to 2010, almost 4,000 human rights abuses were committed by the army as evidenced by complaints submitted to the Mexican government (Jimenez 2010). In addition, 30,000 Mexicans were forcibly "disappeared" (Pastrana 2016). Thus, though the war on drugs was proposed as a way to stop drug trafficking, the violence has disproportionately affected a large number of non-military and non-narco civilians in urban and rural areas (Joynes-Burgess 2009). In addition to murders and forced disappearances, the Comisión de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights) identified over 280,000 instances of forced displacement between 2011 and 2015 (Pastrana 2016).

The war on drugs has always operated transnationally. In the 1970s, US President Richard Nixon "launched the original 'war on drugs' . . . This policy contained both domestic and very prominent international components, explicitly targeting Mexico as a key site for the eradication of opium crops and marijuana" (González 2009, 72). In the 1990s, in preparation for NAFTA, Carlos Salinas de Gortari allowed US Drug Enforcement Administration agents to operate in Mexico, demonstrating the links between economic neoliberal policies and those focusing on "national security" (González 2009). Transnational "collaboration" to combat the drug trade continued. For instance, in 2007, the United States sponsored the Merida Initiative, a $700 million assistance package to Mexico that included "$5m funding for human rights training for Mexican police, and $1m to support human rights monitoring by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Office" (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2010, para 17). Canadian officers have also participated in training Mexican police. In 2010, Canada sent "eight Spanish-speaking RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officers to train Mexican police" along

with $4 million "to help Mexico strengthen its judicial system" (Jimenez 2010, para 18).

The war on drugs and approaches to "managing" it led a number of Mexicans to relocate abroad in search of security. For instance, in recent decades, the number of asylum claims by Mexican nationals in the United States and Canada because of narcotrafficking increased (Hansen 2009). During my interviews with participants, Teresa, a photographer from the north of Mexico, was the only one who explicitly discussed narcotrafficking as a reason for emigrating. In doing so, she was reluctant given the potential for identification. In Mexico, Teresa had worked at a photography shop with close relations to organized crime. Although she never participated in illicit activities, she felt implicated in them:

> I think that I carried a bit of insecurity with me, in an indirect way, even when I did not have anything to do with the situation . . . The connection to those people is so strong . . . In some way, they have the power to observe you anywhere you go such that you don't have the option of simply changing jobs and pretending you have other things to do. In some way, you are still . . . connected to them. Your name never comes off a list of people there.

Teresa spoke of indirect insecuritization or what I call *insecurity by association*. Broadly, this refers to an exposure to increased insecurity because of loose or tight social relations. In Teresa's case, the insecurity by association involved being part of a web of people loosely associated with organized crime. Teresa thought that the police could not protect her from the wide lens of surveillance of the narcotraffickers, which as I described above, can draw on easily bought and sold police and government data. According to Teresa, narcos kept a "list of people" loosely associated with them, and once your name makes that list *nunca sales* (you never leave). Thus, relocation can be counteracted by a person's inability to leave the association, which Teresa was aware of, even in Canada.

Homophobia

Experiences of homophobia and the insecuritization that it produced also affected participants' lives and influenced their decisions to migrate.

We can think through these experiences using the work of queer migration theorists (Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz 2009; Luibhéid 2004; Luibhéid and Cantú 2005; Somerville 2005). Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz (2009, 37) argue that "sexual identities . . . are linked to capitalist development and urban migration," which migration scholars have not addressed adequately. They also emphasize sexual identities as part of an interlocking system of social relations.

The accounts of queer participants therefore not only diversify the experiences and subjectivities of participants pre-migration but also complicate my use of insecuritization. As Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz (2009, 161) state, we need to "[examine] homophobia and sexism as structural issues, as are poverty and racism." Thus, ways of knowing related to homophobia are part of an assemblage of general insecuritization that participants experienced in Mexico, and like other forms discussed above homophobia is affected by the general impunity, lack of police protection, and police violence that exist in the country. A 2010 poll on discrimination in Mexico found that 42.8 percent of lesbians, homosexuals, and bisexuals surveyed saw the police as the "most intolerant sector of society" (Nicaragua Solidarity Network of Greater New York 2011). The police have also been implicated in perpetuating violence against queer Mexicans, leading to increased distrust (Ortiz-Hernández and Granados-Cosme 2006, 134). This is in contrast to recent efforts to improve the rights of queer Mexicans, at least on paper, through the passage of same-sex marriage in Mexico City in 2010 (civil unions since 2007) and the right of transgender individuals to change their names legally since 2004 (Arce 2010; Outright Action International 2004).

For Teresa, the everyday insecurity by association of working in a business tied to narcotrafficking interlocked with experiences of homophobia at work and at home. She was cognizant of the lack of protection available for queer Mexicans:

> In terms of homophobia, even though Mexico supposedly has some tolerance, it is something that is quite invisible because the reality is that people who marry and/or have relationships with people of the same sex are not protected. It is subjective to say that as human beings we have rights that can't be infringed in terms of our security because they don't

really exist. Those rights are disregarded in terms of security, personal integrity, and no institution exists to really protect us. There are lots of [institutions] that claim to protect us, in fact, I don't know all of them [laughs] . . . But in reality they can't legally do anything to protect us. That means that one has to reach something like Amnesty International, after having experienced a number of atrocities, in order for them to call it an act of violence, aggression, homophobia . . . And, on the other hand, narcotrafficking is the same thing. You can supposedly go to the police, but unfortunately in Mexico they are all part of the same business. So there are no options on either side . . . Unfortunately, Mexico is not a safe country; in my opinion, it is a country that is about to explode. In terms of security, we are walking around with our lives hanging by a thread. And you had better not be part of a vulnerable group: gay or a woman. Because being part of either group means you end up losing.

Teresa discussed a contradiction between the mirage of tolerance, which the Mexican government tries to mobilize to seem "democratic," and continued homophobic violence. Therefore, though citizens in theory can access bundles of rights, Teresa identified her distrust of the institutions meant to implement them (the law, the police, the government, and international NGOs). Put differently, a disconnect exists between laws, marked on paper, and their non-performativity (Ahmed 2004b), which leads to precarity or living, as Teresa described it, *con el alma en un hilo* (with one's life, literally soul, hanging by a thread).

Teresa also referred to a hierarchy of citizenship that privileges heterosexuality to the detriment of "vulnerable groups" such as queer Mexicans and women. Mexicano en Acción (Mexican in Action), who had lived undocumented in the United States as a child, before returning to Aguascalientes, where he attended university, also described this hierarchical citizenship: "There is no support when even heterosexual citizens don't have rights. Less so being a homosexual, they treat you worse. They even laugh at you, they almost throw eggs on your face." His comment refers to a lack of respect from the general population that interlocks with other systems of oppression.

A case in point is Berenice's experience. When Berenice was a newly graduated lawyer in her twenties, and living in the state of Guanajuato, she

worked at a government agency that provided subsidized housing loans to Mexican workers. After some time, Berenice discovered that some of her colleagues were asking their clients for bribes (*mordidas*). Concerned, she made it known to her supervisors. The first consequence was that she became more visible to a supervisor in the Mexico City branch who began to harass her sexually and from whom she narrowly avoided sexual assault. Therefore, like Libertad, Berenice experienced the threat of sexual assault as a way to silence and control her questioning of corrupt institutional practices.

Berenice's supervisor became increasingly violent when he noticed a picture of her and her partner on her computer screen. His response was to write, in English, "welcome to Lesbos" on the monitor and to attempt to sexually assault her again. He also outed her to her co-workers, something that she had not done in order to prevent homophobic violence. This interlocking of gender-based sexual and homophobic violence led Berenice to quit her job.

In addition to the workplace violence, along with her partner, Berenice experienced gender-based and homophobic violence at home. Although they did not publicize their relationship, Berenice thought that neighbours knew because of how her gay friends performed their sexual orientation through their mode of dress when they visited the couple: "[Our neighbours] knew that we were lesbians, and they did different things to us. They cut our water, they cut our electricity, they wrote graffiti on our house. One time we had to paint the whole house; I even have pictures and everything . . . They painted *machorras,* which is a pejorative way to say lesbian."

This violence demonstrates how place is used to regulate sexuality and enforce heteronormativity (Brown and Larry 2003). The actions marked the neighbourhood as heterosexual and punished, through the cutting of utilities and graffiti on the walls, anyone who deviated from the norm. Berenice and her partner became increasingly visible to other neighbours and passersby and potentially vulnerable to more attacks. We can return to the concept of insecurity by association here. The association of Berenice's home as a "deviant" space extended the violence (Valentine 1998).

Berenice faced an additional source of violence: her partner's brother. This was another example of family members disciplining women for their

actions (similar to Libertad). One night he arrived at their home and began to shout at them. This was a somewhat common event for the couple, who endured the violence whenever he was in town (he worked as a *coyote* or cross-border migration facilitator and had US permanent residence). This example also demonstrates how violence can move transnationally: if Berenice and her partner had decided to migrate to the United States instead of Canada, they might have had to encounter the brother's violence again. However, that night Berenice decided to put an end to the situation:

> So I open the door to put a stop to it. We were stupid! We exposed ourselves too much [laughs] by opening the door. He came in, and the first thing he did was to punch me, bam! And I fell to the floor. My partner came out and began to fight with him, and he also hit her . . . Then he took out a gun and put it on my head and began to tell us a bunch of things . . . Then suddenly my . . . partner stood up, he was very drunk, almost falling, and my partner hit him with a, it was like a figurine that we had, made of metal, and she hit him, but she only made him budge. Then he stumbled, and my . . . partner pushed him, and he fell. I stood up, and we pushed him. I swear I don't know how we did it . . . We closed the door.

The police augmented the violence by failing to protect the couple when they reported the incident:

> I arrived with my partner, [and the police asked us], "What is this about?"
>
> "Well," my . . . partner said, "my brother hit us."
>
> "Why did he hit you? What happened?" etc.
>
> "Because she's my partner." [Berenice claps] They changed like that.
>
> "Ahhh," like that. With an attitude you would not believe. "Oh, that's why he hit you?"
>
> My partner says, "Yes, because he doesn't agree with our relationship."
>
> They begin to tell [her] "Well, don't you agree? You have to understand how he feels." . . . Those type of stupid comments.
>
> So of course I got angry and said, "You know what? You shouldn't give your opinion. You should do your job and take her statement."

At that moment, the police asked Berenice to leave the room. Given her legal expertise, she tried to act as her partner's representative, but she did not have the proper identification to work criminal cases. Therefore, she had to wait outside. The police continued to listen to Berenice's partner's story while repeatedly telling her partner that she was too pretty to be a lesbian. However, they did not follow up, demonstrating again impunity for perpetrators and sending a tacit message that the violence was warranted and could be repeated in the future. This failure to protect them enforced heteronormativity and illustrates why queer folks distrust the police.

Mexicano en Acción experienced a more dispersed type of violence. He felt the pressure of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Connell 2000) as homophobic comments circulated constantly around him: "'Men don't cry, suck it up like a macho,' and 'Go play soccer,' and 'Go to the street and get dirty' [literally, drag yourself on the floor or dirt] . . . They always made humiliating comments . . . I don't know if maybe it was because I was young and perhaps they thought I acted effeminately." As a gay man, he found it increasingly difficult to bear such comments from his family, schoolmates, and the media, knowing that verbal abuse could always escalate to physical abuse.

Mexicano en Acción also experienced instances of homophobia at school, resulting in depression and leading him to contemplate suicide. He recounted leading a "double life," trying to hide his encounters with gay and lesbian friends from his family and school friends. This double life made it difficult for him to reach out when he experienced abuse:

> Then I met a guy, but he was older than I was . . . He saw I was naive, stupid, or whatever you want, and some unpleasant incidents took place, and how was I to ask my parents for help? . . . How and where could I find help? My own family did not support me . . . That was when I said, "Enough is enough. What am I doing in this country?" They treat me almost as bad as a stray dog.

Lack of family support and state violence are important push factors for queer migrants who often look abroad to places like Canada for protection (Murray 2015; White 2014). However, this strategy is not always successful.

Returning to the Transnational Production of Insecurity

Although participants focused on localized experiences of insecuritization, some also scaled up and discussed international processes, including imperialism and trade relations. US imperialism in Mexico is well documented (Gonzalez and Fernandez 2003; Johnson 2001; Ngai 2004). In the 1930s, President Lazaro Cardenas acted to nationalize a number of industries as a way to sever ties with international interests in Mexico (French and Manzanárez 2004, 26). He also distributed more land to *campesinxs* than his predecessors through the communal land ownership *ejido* system (French and Manzanárez 2004, 25). However, the rupture was short lived, and the Mexican economy again showed ties to foreign interests, particularly those of the United States, in the mid-twentieth century.

Canadian imposition in Mexico historically has been less visible. However, it has had important effects: "After Cardenas, much Mexican capital operated in increasingly close partnership with U.S. and Canadian corporations" (Bacon 2008, 55). There are several examples of Mexico's growing ties with Canada (Gutiérrez-Haces 2015), including via NAFTA. Some theorists argue that "NAFTA ushered in political and economic dependency to a degree not seen since Spanish colonialism, with more than 85 percent of exports and the majority of imports oriented to the U.S. market" (Carlsen 2008). Although the emphasis is often on Mexico's immediate neighbour to the north, when measuring such dependency, "Canada's merchandise trade with Mexico has nearly quintupled since NAFTA came into effect," and "Canada and Mexico are now among each other's largest trading partners, while Canada has become a major foreign investor in Mexico" (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2011).

Of particular importance is resource extraction: "Mexican statistics rank Canada as the fourth largest investor in Mexico, with mining and oil extraction being the largest sector attracting Canadian investment" (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2011). Canadian mining and oil extraction accounted for 42.5 percent of direct Canadian investment between 1999 and 2009 (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2011). Furthermore,

> of 1800 mining projects up and running . . . 813 are transnationally owned, an astounding 87% of them Canadian, according to the Camimex,

the Mexican national mining chamber that oversees the industry. The Canadians are armed with revisions to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution . . . that give them carte blanche to 'buy, rent, or enter into association' with the nation's 2800 ejidos or farmers' rural collective production units. (Ross 2009)

Canadian mining companies foment violence and environmental degradation (Hoffman and Galloway 2009). In fact, a report by the Canadian Centre for the Study of Resource Conflict found that the percentage of environmental, human rights, and other abuses by Canadian mining companies around the world exceeded those from other companies (Whittington 2010).

Another example is labour importation through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), in which Mexico became a participant in 1974 (Service Canada 2004). The program sought to alleviate the demand for agricultural workers in Canada. However, it was also imagined as a sort of charity for Mexico. In sum, it was depicted as "a good foreign policy gesture, being a form of foreign aid and a safety valve for masses of frustrated unemployed agricultural workers, as well as a deterrent for illegal migration" (Basok 2000, 218). If we conceptualize Canadian imposition in Mexico as an imperialist process, then we can see that the effects of this insecuritization become exported to Canada through the SAWP and other migration flows.

Finally, imperialist relations play out through the imposition of an "American dream narrative" (Chavez 2001, 116). The hope of *arreglar papeles,* literally to fix one's papers or to regularize one's status, is powerful. That hope often arises from what *arreglar papeles* represents for individuals: security, economic stability, and/or an end to persecution. Yet, as the southern United States border has become increasingly militarized, migration patterns have diversified. In that process, the "American dream" has also undergone a reassemblage in which those who migrated to Canada, or had ties with migrants to Canada, could imagine a "Canadian dream."

Although participants did not mention Canadian imperialism specifically as a reason for emigrating, some did articulate imperialism as a cause. Johann's historicizing of the displacement of *campesinxs* by NAFTA is a

case in point. His activism linked questions of class struggle and the trans-national dispossession of land. One facet of his political work involved local *ejidatarios* who lost their lands because of changes to Section 27 of the Mexican constitution:

> Due to the free-trade agreement, where they started importing products that we used to consume locally, the land began to be destroyed, the people became impoverished, and the government wanted to buy their land, so the people had to sell huge tracts of land for very little. But it so happens that some time went by, I don't remember what the time period was, I think it was five or ten years. If during that period the land was not used by the government for the reason it had bought it, the land returns to the people. So the people begin to reclaim it . . . And the government doesn't want to give it up. Why? Because there's rumours that there's natural resources there.

Similarly, Manolo linked localized violence to other transnational relations:

> You're seeing that the police are colluding, that those who don't cheat don't get ahead in Mexico, that if you have money you can pay for anything in Mexico. That's because there's no jobs, the people live in an illegal manner. It's anarchy, its chaos, but ultimately this is all sponsored by the United States and other countries. It's sponsored by them because you can have a country, divide it, instigate chaos, and whoever brings peace gets the most out of it.

Manolo asserted that those who do not participate in "illegal" activities cannot get ahead in life, describing this process as *avanzar,* advancing (through time and space but also progressing in life or seeking a more livable life). In fact, he argued that people negotiate or make do with being unemployed or underemployed by resorting to extralegal means. This does not mean only engaging in criminal acts such as theft. For instance, as I stated above, street vendors such as Leonel took up sections of the sidewalk to make makeshift businesses and paid the police regular bribes (*mordidas*). Such practices are caused in part by a systemic and

institutionalized corruption in which the police and bureaucrats participate and that are supported by international interests.

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Focusing on migrant narratives and the social, economic, and political contexts in Mexico, in this chapter I have proposed a view of insecuritization in Mexico as economic instability because of poverty, underemployment, and lack of opportunities as well as the generalized threat to one's well-being. More specifically, I have outlined insecuritization through interrelated elements: the economic and political contexts in Mexico from which participants emigrated, the role of transnational imperialist practices in dislocating Mexicans, and specific narratives of insecuritization. Insecuritization is revealed as an assembled process that includes the production of knowledge about security and economic "development," often through the law, academic scholarship, and reports from nongovernmental organizations. They promote or resist ideas related to criminality, the punishment of dissent, gender-based violence, and homophobia. Knowledge is also produced by individuals who experience and enact insecurity: family and community members, the police, and *madrinas*. Organizations and institutions include workplaces, the police, the criminal justice system, and the family. These processes are facilitated by technologies that produce knowledge about those deemed in need of surveillance and capture. Finally, they also produce affective responses, including uncertainty and fear, which, given the extent of insecuritization, permeate Mexican society.

I have paid particular attention to how participants narrated their experiences through time. For instance, they used metaphors of time to describe their current conditions – living day to day or hand to mouth – as well as to describe their hopes for a better future. They also used time to historicize experience, for example by noting the opening of a superstore that displaced small business owners or the length of time that they experienced violence and the eroding of security. Such a process was something to withstand, aguantar, until enough was enough, and the opportunity or need to migrate ensued.

The implication is that illegalization is not a nation-state-bound process. In fact, experiences of insecuritization can mark and follow emigrants and continue to affect them post-migration. Thus, markers that affected participants in Mexico, such as socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and gender, continued to affect their migration and status trajectories. In the following chapter, I extend that analysis by discussing participants' experiences during transit.