

# Introduction

In the hills of San Martín Durazos, Oaxaca, Elfego was tending to his harvest of *setas* (oyster mushrooms). The mushrooms were placed in paper bags and stored in a partially constructed house belonging to Elfego's son. The *setas* harvest was part of Elfego's and other returned migrants' efforts to create sustainable employment in the pueblo. Elfego met the other migrants and received technical support for his *setas* project from the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB; Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations). FIOB's and Elfego's goal was to create sustainable, locally based employment to serve as an alternative to migration.

Elfego himself was a returned migrant, having spent nearly thirty years traveling back and forth to the United States. Elfego's trips were not authorized by the U.S. government, but he found ways to enter the country. He described his first trip in 1985 as "easy," because at that time there were few U.S. law enforcement agents patrolling the area close to Tijuana–San Diego where he crossed. Even after the United States heightened its border enforcement efforts, his trips were successful. Like many of his compatriots, Elfego adjusted to U.S. enforcement efforts by moving his trips farther east and hiring a *coyote*, or guide. Though he was arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol on each of his trips, he was released each time and made subsequent trips. In all, he was able to successfully enter the United States half a dozen times. Moreover, each time he entered, he found work—picking strawberries and other produce in California and Oregon, gardening in Oregon, or building homes in Washington State. During his nearly thirty years in various parts of the United States, Elfego never encountered interior immigration enforcement officials.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for all these trips to the United States was straightforward, according to Elfego: “I left because in my town there was no work. Nothing else but farming only corn. There was no other activity in the town.” Elfego took his first trip in 1985 when he was just sixteen years old. In subsequent years, he married and had four children. Once his children reached school age, he continued to migrate to provide his children with an education. As in other rural parts of Mexico, there was little access to public transportation, and the middle and high schools were located in far-off towns and charged fees that were difficult for families to pay. Elfego was able to educate his children through *secundaria* (middle school) but had to stop migrating before he could gather sufficient resources to pay for the more expensive *preparatoria* (high school). After nearly thirty years’ working in some of the harshest labor conditions in the United States, Elfego’s body gave out. He decided to return to Mexico permanently. Though he continued to work in agriculture when he returned to Mexico, he was now in better control of his working hours and conditions. When asked if he would consider going back to the United States, he said, “The body can only handle so much.” He was in his mid-forties.

Elfego’s eldest son, Jaime, benefited greatly from his father’s migration. He was able to complete a higher level of education than either of his parents. However, work continued to be scarce in Mixteca in the late 1990s when he completed *secundaria*. As a result, Jaime gathered resources and paid a coyote to take him to California in 2006. Unlike his father, Jaime has not been able to return to San Martín Durazos because the expense and danger of the journey has increased exponentially since his father’s last trip. As we spoke in the house that Jaime was building for his family, Elfego was wistful about the fact that Jaime would likely not return for many more years, until his goal of finishing the house had been completed.

The story of Elfego and his family is not unusual. This book profiles eight migrant communities in the states of Oaxaca, Tabasco, Tlaxcala, and Puebla. By “migrant communities,” I am referring to all of the people who live in communities from which migrants hail, including the migrants themselves and their family members, as well as community leaders and those who do not migrate. Two-thirds of the communities, like Elfego’s, strongly identify as Indigenous. Unique to this book, the communities I discuss represent distinct Indigenous groups with very different histories in the context of Mexico and differing migration patterns to the United States. San Martín Durazos and other migrant communities in Oaxaca that I discuss are Mixtec, whereas some of the towns in Tlaxcala and Puebla identify as Nahuatl. In contrast, the communities in Tabasco and one community in Tlaxcala did not report strong Indigenous group affiliations. Given this diversity, it was remarkable to find that most people living in these towns and villages face issues similar to Elfego’s: lack of economic activity, insufficient public resources, industries pulling them to work in northern Mexico or the United States, and the inability to fully fill the community’s economic gap with their earnings in the north.

The parallel economic gaps in the dusty hills of Oaxaca where Elfego lives, in the rich green tropical forests of Tabasco, and in the semiurban areas of Tlaxcala and Puebla are not naturally occurring. Rather, these gaps are the results of an economy constructed by economic elites in the United States and Mexico to enrich themselves. In order to benefit these elites, resources had to be divested and extracted, including the extraction of people dislocated by disinvestment. Once dislocated, people like Elfego were displaced into industries hungry for exploitable labor in the United States and in the northern borderlands of Mexico. While their earnings in these new spaces were higher than what they could earn at home, they were generally insufficient to allow their children and grandchildren to thrive in their home communities. Rather, a new generation began to move, seeking goals similar to their parents'. Moreover, the limited economic gains were outweighed in many families by the pain of family separation. Thus the overall experience of migration at the community level was one of dispossession, dismemberment of family relations, exploitation, and entrapment in a vicious cycle. Together, these interweaving experiences of migrants, their family members, and community leaders lead to an understanding of *migration as extraction*.

Considering migration as extraction may seem to discount the agency of migrants like Elfego by casting them as passive objects shuffled by large economic systems. Far from lacking agency, migrants discussed the choices they made in extremely limited and harsh circumstances. What is more, many migrants, like Elfego, participated in efforts to reverse extraction by fighting for self-determination rights for their communities, a return of resources, and investment in self-sustainability. This was particularly evident in Indigenous migrant communities. In Oaxaca, where Indigenous resistance to ongoing colonial efforts is particularly strong, community organizations like FIOB fight all of these battles as part of an effort to make migration more of a choice than the necessity that it currently is. Similarly, the Nahuatl communities in Tlaxcala and Puebla seek to reverse the effects of family separation and build sustainable economies. In Tabasco, where Indigenous identities and organizing are less apparent, individual migrants discussed the need to reinvest in their community's economic health. Thus agency in migrant communities is most clearly expressed in their resistance to migration.

#### MIGRATION AS EXTRACTION EXPLAINED

At the theoretical level, migration as extraction allows for an understanding of migration beyond the debates over what pushes migrants, what pulls them to certain industries or destinations, and whether migration can be a source of development. These debates generally treat questions about push, pull, and impact separately, implying that they function independently of each other. Elfego's story and those of others profiled in this book show that in fact these factors are closely connected. Migration as extraction seeks to represent these empirical connections in a

theoretical frame. Thus, under migration as extraction, push, pull, and impact factors are treated as three phases of the same overall dynamic rather than three separate dynamics. These phases are not necessarily chronological as they can and do overlap temporally. However, sequentializing each phase helps clarify the contours of migration as extraction, including the actors, policies, and dynamics involved.

The first phase is *dislocation*, in which people are uprooted from their homes by their inability to make a sustainable living. The U.S. and Mexican governments have long colluded in colonial endeavors that move resources toward large corporate interests and foment dislocation. These endeavors reached a fever pitch under the neoliberal structural adjustment policies of the 1980s, which saw massive cuts to agricultural subsidies and spending on education and wage suppression. Of course, dislocation for Indigenous peoples, like the Mixtecs profiled in this book, began long before the twentieth century's neoliberal era, instigated at a large scale in the sixteenth century by the brutal Spanish conquest. For the Tlaxcaltecs, who collaborated with the Spanish conquistadors,<sup>2</sup> dislocation began more recently during the post-independence era of *mestizaje* (racial/cultural mixing) and other Mexican assimilationist policies. These cultural assimilation policies resulted in political and economic marginalization, which in turn brought on depictions of Indigenous peoples in Mexico as premodern peons who had to be uprooted in order to contribute to Mexico's growth.<sup>3</sup> Thus, calls for "modernizing" the Mexican peasantry in the 1960s during the era of the Bracero Accords with the United States and up to the 1980s neoliberal era are rooted in a much longer continuous thread of dislocations culminating with the migration of people like Elfego. Dislocation from the communities in Tabasco that identify less with any Indigenous group began much later, as neoliberal economic policies took hold across the country. In addition to its racial contours, these dislocations are gendered, with primarily male members of families migrating and most women experiencing either the "feminization of staying" or a highly feminized pattern of dislocation.<sup>4</sup>

These racialized and gendered scripts in Mexico were echoed in the United States, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexican workers were characterized as both bestial and docile to justify their *displacement* into the U.S. agricultural industry. Gendered patterns of displacement brought mostly men into the fields and mostly women into food processing. As U.S. capital expanded to manufacturing and carceral operations, so too did the displacement of Mexican workers into a range of highly abusive labor markets that continued to include agribusiness in both Mexico and the United States but now also included *maquiladoras* (foreign-owned factories) that employed a highly feminized labor pool in Mexico, and the construction and service industries in the United States with often strict gender differentials. Alongside displacement into particular workplaces, Mexican men were used as the racialized fuel behind efforts to expand incarceration in the 1920s and justify expenditures on surveillance, deterrence, and detention beginning in



FIGURE 1. Three Phases of Migration as Extraction.

the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> These displacements are most clearly visible in U.S. agribusiness's continuous extreme reliance on Mexican labor and the consistently high percentage of Mexican migrants among those incarcerated for unlawful entry.<sup>6</sup> The twin policies of labor recruitment and incarceration resulted in making Mexican migrants into a "caste of illegals" who had to increasingly rely on coyotes to complete their displacement north.<sup>7</sup> *Coyotaje* then emerges as a third source of extraction in the form of ever-increasing fees charged to guide migrants to their constructed destinations. Migrants went from crossing the border on their own in the 1980s to paying up to US\$8,000 in 2013.

Once in the United States, exploitation is not only situated in carceral spaces and places of employment, but also the economic extraction from migrants' efforts to improve conditions in their home communities and the emotional extraction of family separation. Formal and informal financial institutions and the Mexican treasury extract from migrant earnings and remittances, reducing migrant communities' ability to build self-sufficiency.<sup>8</sup> Migrants like Elfego attempt to leverage their earnings with programs like *Tres por Uno* (3x1, or Three for One) to improve conditions in their home communities and prevent their children from migrating. However, as was the case with Elfego's son, Jaime, the programs are not enough to overcome the gaps left by neoliberalism. Moreover, migrant families face a severance of family ties, what one interviewee called "family disintegration" and scholars have called "family dismemberment."<sup>9</sup> Women, specifically mothers, face the brunt of family separation as they navigate alienation from their partners, new roles within their family, and economic scarcity.<sup>10</sup> The result is an *entrenchment* of family separation and migration as a mode of economic stability. Entrenchment, in turn, leads to more migration, thus perpetuating the migration-as-extraction cycle.

As can be seen in figure 1, which shows the dynamics present in each phase of migration as extraction, migration is an integral part of a larger economic context of resource extraction and redistribution. This is qualitatively different from seeing



FIGURE 2. Traditional Theories of Migration and Extraction.

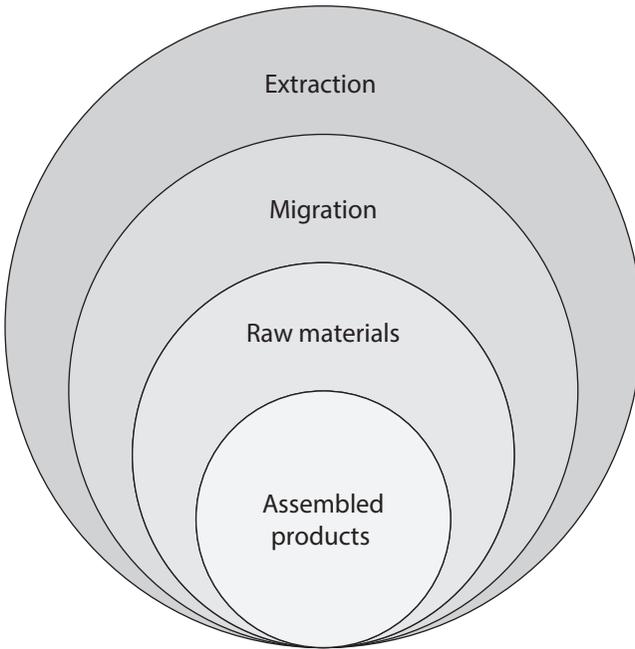


FIGURE 3. Migration as Extraction.

migration as impacted by extraction. Rather, it is more accurate to see migration as extraction itself (figures 2, 3).

#### MIGRATION AS EXTRACTION AND RESISTANCE IN COMMUNITIES

“Migration as extraction” refers to the structural nature of migration rather than the act of migrating by an individual or the particular experiences of one migrant family or even community. Thus the phrase was not explicitly used by migrant community members. Rather, it grew out of listening closely to the ways in which migrants, migrants’ family members, and community organizers described their

material conditions. In explaining both their decisions to migrate and the impacts that it had on their lives, migrants routinely referred to “the government [not] supporting us,” with some Indigenous migrants going so far to say that “the government does not even make it to us.” Returned migrants movingly described working until their bodies gave out, being injured, being *mal pagado* (badly paid), and, in the words of one Mixtec returned migrant, being “treated like slaves.” Similarly, the stories that unfold in the ensuing chapters show that the impacts of migration are beneficial for individual family members of migrants, but, at the community level, migration cannot overcome the structural gaps created by decades—or even centuries, in the case of Indigenous migrant communities—of resource extraction and facilitation of highly exploitative industries. Community leaders explained the limits of remittances by saying that they “did nothing for the pueblo as a whole.” And even individual family members who reported benefiting from remittances indicated that this was complicated by the “emotional loss” of family members that some referred to as “family disintegration.” Thus, though the exact phrase “migration as extraction” was not used in migrant communities, their lived and reported realities lead to a structural understanding of migration as part of an overall extractive process rather than a form of resistance to it.

This does not mean that migrant communities are passively participating in the migration-as-extraction structure. To the contrary, within the Indigenous migrant communities in particular, extraction is being met by strong, organized resistance. Like the individual interviewees, the migrant community advocacy groups, like FIOB, do not explicitly use the terminology of extraction or extractivism. However, their efforts and arguments denote an understanding that the antidote to mass migration from their communities is a return of resources and the repair of relationships. Tellingly, one of the most advanced efforts, led by FIOB, is called a “right not to migrate,” indicating the pernicious nature of migration and the desire, in these communities, to build a sustainable economy that does not require migration as part of its structure. The “right not to migrate” movement does not completely eschew migration as a strategy but rather seeks to make it a true choice, one that does not require a dangerous and expensive journey and that replaces the current exploitative employment relationship with robust employment rights. This movement and other efforts by FIOB to reverse the entrenchment of migration have been meticulously documented by FIOB members and academics alike.<sup>11</sup> In particular, these works have recognized the role that women have played in setting organizational agendas as well as the role the organization has played in transforming gender roles and family relationships.<sup>12</sup> This book builds on the insights into FIOB’s organizational process, strategies, and demands by connecting those organizational dynamics to the processes they are resisting.

This book also offers insight into a less well-documented but equally powerful movement in Central Mexico. Like FIOB, the members of Centro de Atención de Familias Migrantes e Indígenas (CAFAMI; Indigenous Migrant Family Care Center) in Tlaxcala seek to build sustainable communities that allow migration to be a

choice. In contrast to FIOB's membership of mostly returned migrants, CAFAMI's members are all family members of migrants and all are women. This provides critical insights into the ways in which women's leadership, virtually unhindered by male presence, informs the makeup, decision making, and demands of an organization. It is telling that one of the first projects that CAFAMI's membership took up was rebuilding family bonds eviscerated by migration. It is equally telling that the organization sought to reclaim language and community medicines and toiletries. Through these projects CAFAMI's members are resisting the extractive, separationist forces of family disintegration and capitalist consumption by rerooting their bonds with kin and land.<sup>13</sup>

Even in the absence of ties to Indigenous or other forms of organized resistance, returned migrant workers in Tabasco seek (re)investment by the Mexican state in their existing entrepreneurial efforts. Farmers (mostly men) seek the return of agricultural supports that made local production sustainable prior to the 1990s, and restaurateurs (mostly women) seek infrastructure improvements that would allow more customers to access their businesses. As part of these demands, returned migrant women discussed the need to share the resources extracted from the state by oil production occurring within view of their *locales* (small restaurants) on the *malecón* (boardwalk). These demands, like CAFAMI's, have not been documented previously and provide a powerful window into the ways in which local communities seek to resist the extractive force of migration and demand a return of resources extracted to enrich U.S. and Mexican elites. Figure 4 demonstrates the relationship between all of these forms of resistance and the phases of migration as extraction.

The resistance exemplified in these communities requires some rethinking of prevailing legal theories describing acts of migration as resistance, decolonization, or reparations for the economically and ecologically extractive policies of neocolonial states like the United States.<sup>14</sup> The international legal scholar Tendayi Achiume has argued that individual acts of migration should be viewed as "acts of decolonization at the personal level" because they are attempts to overcome the structural inequalities created by colonization and achieve better outcomes.<sup>15</sup> Approaching migration with a slightly different lens, the legal scholar Carmen Gonzalez argues that migration should be seen as one of several acts of reparations for "climate displaced peoples" to provide these persons with "compensation for climate change and for the North's colonial and post-colonial domination of the South."<sup>16</sup> Achiume's and Gonzalez's insights are both supported and challenged by the experience of migrant communities. While it is certainly true that migrants move to better their own situations and that of their families, the narratives in this book show that their choices (whether or not to migrate and where to move) are constrained by the political and economic structures created as a part of and to maintain the colonial relationship between the United States and Mexico. Thus, their acts are more accurately seen as being a part of colonial domination rather than resistance

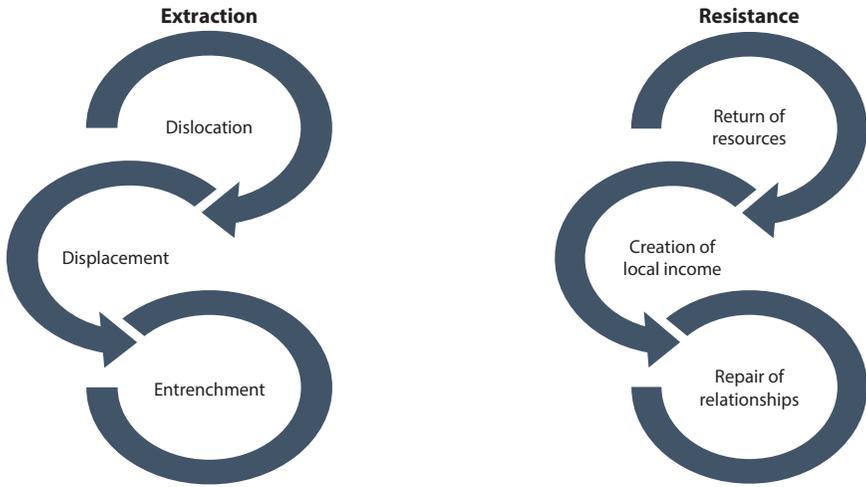


FIGURE 4. Extraction and Resistance.

to it. The resistance, exemplified by the work of Indigenous migrant organizations in particular, calls for a redistribution of resources that would lessen the need to migrate and convert migration into a more freely engaged in choice.

Migrant community members, while not specifically discussing U.S. immigration restrictions in terms of neocolonialism, did highlight the ways in which their labor contributed to the building of the U.S. economy. A number of migrants expressed frustration at being treated as illegal when their labor was what “built the country.” Still others were more direct, stating that “the United States would be nothing without us.” Thus, alongside demands for resources were demands for a more just immigration system that recognized the pivotal role Mexican workers in particular but also immigrant workers in general play in the development of the United States.

These demands overlap in some ways with Achiume’s notion of the “co-sovereign” relationship between former colonies (which she calls “Third World states”) and their colonizers (“First World states”) built by the benefits of colonization to the colonizers and under which the “First World nation-state . . . has no more right to exclude Third World persons from its institutions of equal political membership than it has over its *de jure* citizens.”<sup>17</sup> The demands correspond even more closely to Gonzalez’s formulation of migration as reparations for the U.S. role in the “economic precarity that renders Central America particularly susceptible to climate change” and in the “conflict and poverty” resulting from “countless [U.S.] military, economic, and political interventions.”<sup>18</sup> However, migrant community members placed much more emphasis on the ability to remain in their communities with their families and argued for migration only as a corollary to just resource distribution. Thus, they agreed with Gonzalez that migration was

not a “magic bullet” but went further, by fighting for a return of state resources to make migration a much less dominant part of their everyday reality. This book seeks to amplify the demands of these groups for renewed state investment and safe pathways to migrate and to expand those demands to include the need for the U.S. government to funnel resources to these communities and to create more migrant-centered immigration policies.

MIGRATION AS EXTRACTION AS AN EVOLUTION  
OF EXISTING CRITIQUES OF RACIAL CAPITALISM  
AND NEOLIBERALISM

Migration as extraction builds on decades of work by scholars in a wide array of disciplines. Earlier work provided in-depth but functionally separate examinations of migration’s push factors (dislocation), pull factors (displacement or transfer), enforcement mechanisms, and impacts (entrenchment). For example, Saskia Sassen, Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand, Dolores Acevedo and Thomas Espenshade, Bill Ong Hing, and Raul Fernández and Gilberto González have ably shown how U.S. interventions in the Mexican economy have created conditions pushing people to migrate to the United States.<sup>19</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernández, Deborah S. Kang, Joseph Nevins, Patrick Ettinger, Mae Ngai, Kitty Calavita, and Timothy Dunn have meticulously documented U.S. policies that displaced people from Mexico into certain industries in the United States.<sup>20</sup> Ngai and Calavita in particular have contributed to our understanding of Mexican workers, particularly agricultural workers, as colonized or captured labor that is simultaneously recruited and demonized.<sup>21</sup> Kevin Johnson, Yolanda Vazquez, Doug Keller, Tanya Golash-Boza, and Nicolas De Genova have more fully developed the demonization side of displacement, showing how racialized depictions of Latinos in general and Mexicans in particular are at the root of U.S. immigration enforcement policies.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the Mexico-based scholars Raúl Delgado Wise and Rodolfo Zamora and their collaborators have carefully and consistently demonstrated that the remittances of migrants, while potentially beneficial to individual families, cannot fill the structural gaps left by decades of disinvestment and resource redistribution and that migration results in a severe fracturing of family ties.<sup>23</sup>

Building on this foundation, scholars began to connect the various processes that make up what I call migration as extraction. Key to these connections was an understanding of migration as part of racial capitalism, particularly as expressed in the neoliberal policies beginning in the late 1970s. Coined by the historian Cedric Robinson, the term “racial capitalism” explicates capitalism as requiring the creation of new or the deployment of existing racialized categories to justify the exploitation required to sustain capitalist accumulation.<sup>24</sup> One of the key racialized categories that Robinson highlights in his exposition of the origins of capitalism is the migrant laborer who becomes “raced” as a natural worker by extracting states

(i.e., as a “natural slave” in the case of the Slavs in England or the Tartars in Italy) in order to enrich the local elites.<sup>25</sup> Understanding the connections between racialization and capitalist accumulation proved fruitful in drawing parallels between what had seemed to be the separate policies of pulling resources out of marginalized communities and putting them into highly exploitative industries and policing/security practices. In the post-neoliberal era, scholars have expanded our understanding of the ways in which racial capitalism operates not only to naturalize the exploitation of workers but also to normalize economic disinvestment and the entrenchment of poverty and the creation and expansion of what Nicolas De Genova and Alfonso Gonzalez call the “homeland security state.”<sup>26</sup> Sassen’s notion of multiple logics of “expulsion,” Golash Boza’s articulation of the “neoliberal cycle,” Jamie Longazel and Miranda Hallet’s application of the concept “social death,” and Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego’s formulation of “legal violence” all connect the forces dislocating people from their homes with those that naturalize the displacement of migrants into highly racialized U.S. immigration enforcement methods, leading to ever increasing resources for the homeland security state.<sup>27</sup> A different portion of the displacement phase—that which pulls people into the United States—is combined with the dislocation phase in Raul Fernández and Gilberto González’s “empire theory of migration.”<sup>28</sup> And the Mexico-based social scientists Raúl Delgado Wise and Henry Veltmeyer have urged consideration of both the dislocation and entrenchment phases as part of a “development process” that includes forging a global labor market from the economically displaced and making those displaced laborers responsible for development in their home countries.<sup>29</sup>

In even more recent years, Latin American scholars have connected migration with “extractivism.”<sup>30</sup> Like other foundational works, discussions of extractivism have evolved from considering one phase of migration as extraction to considering two or more together. For example, the work of the Mexican sociologist Mina Navarro encompasses what I call the dislocation phase when she posits that extractivism is “the forced separation and violent deprivation of people from their means of subsistence.”<sup>31</sup> The Argentine social scientist and feminist scholar Veronica Gago connects the dislocation and displacement phases in her delineation of “extended extractivism” as acting to “loot, displace and redirect [people] into new exploitation dynamics.”<sup>32</sup> The displacement phase is connected to entrenchment by the Mexican economists Rodolfo García Zamora and Juan Manuel Padilla, who write that “the extractivist model [in Zacatecas] has primacy in the economy of the state, first extracting massive resources in the form of the labor force, such as migrants headed towards the United States depleting entire populations”<sup>33</sup> Zamora and Padilla further find that depopulation leads to “family dismemberment,” which then leads to divorce, domestic violence, and a host of other socially harmful behaviors.<sup>34</sup> These findings parallel those of Abrego and Deborah Boehm, whose ethnographic works

show that migrant or “transnational” families experienced severe affective and economic consequences.<sup>35</sup>

These contributions have set critical groundwork by delineating the connections between two of the three phases of migration outlined here. This book builds on these contributions by providing a more comprehensive explanation that connects all three phases of migration as extraction. Such a comprehensive understanding is informed by the remarkable similarities in migrant community experiences despite their ethnic, economic, and geographic differences in Mexico. Grounded in these lived experiences, migration as extraction ties together the connecting theories, showing that the neoliberal cycle includes displacement of people into certain labor markets, that the empire theory of migration includes the displacement of people into carceral spaces, that both of these theories can be expanded to include the entrenchment of migration by what Delgado Wise and others call the “development process,”<sup>36</sup> and that the existing understandings of social death, legal violence, expulsion, and extractivism can be adapted to encompass the full tapestry of migration that consists of threads that dislocate people from their home communities and separate families; displace them into exploitative work, carceral systems, and indebtedness; and entrench patterns of disinvestment that reincarnate the cycle of migration and family disintegration. The argument that migration *is* extraction rather than that it is caused by or has an impact on extraction further erases the boundaries between acts of migration and the surrounding economic and political conditions. It situates migration as one of several incarnations of racial capitalist relations rather than as a product of these relations.

#### A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF MIGRATION AS EXTRACTION AND RESISTANCE

Migration as extraction stemmed first and foremost from the lived experiences in migrant communities. The ensuing chapters retell these experiences in community members’ own words. But the narratives are bound by the time in which the interviews took place, expressing memories or experiences at that moment. Contextualizing these experiences in a broader economic and political context both contemporaneous with the stories and historically deepens the meaning of the narratives. The chapters detail the surrounding context, but a brief look into the larger pattern of resource extraction and resistance to it is necessary here to foreground the connectivity between the different phases of migration as extraction and resistance to it. In Mexico, as in large parts of the world, racial capitalist accumulation began in the form of colonialism by a foreign power. From the Indigenous perspective in Mexico, which is the perspective of about two-thirds of the contributors to this book, the process of racial capitalist accumulation through colonization moved from settler colonialism by Spain to political and economic control by Mexican *independistas* (ostensibly compatriots of Indigenous peoples)

to a neocolonial relationship with the United States. Each of these three phases of colonization brought with it dislocation and forced movement for Indigenous peoples as well as movements to defend land and achieve self-determination. Beginning in 1521, Spain forced its way to political control by slaughtering or enslaving Indigenous populations, stealing the subjugated groups' land, and replacing the dislocated or murdered with settlers from Spain. The former inhabitants were often forced to work as serf laborers under Spain's strict hierarchal racial caste system. These colonial maneuvers played out differently in the different regions discussed in this book. In Tabasco, different Indigenous groups, including the Chontales, warded off Spanish invasion for some hundred years but were eventually almost completely annihilated. This may explain the current lack of identification with Indigenous groups in the Tabascan towns profiled. In Oaxaca, the Mixtec, along with many other Indigenous groups, resisted Spanish forces but were eventually forced off their land and made to adopt Spanish agricultural practices that led to massive erosion centuries later. In Puebla, the Mexica fought for years to allay the forces of Hernán Cortés but were eventually forced into labor for the new colonial government. The history in Tlaxcala is perhaps the most complex as the Tlaxcaltecs joined forces with Cortés to wipe out their common enemy, the Mexica Empire, leading to colonial subjugation of the entire area we now know as Mexico. In exchange for their assistance, the Tlaxcaltecs were able to keep their territory intact, but this did not stop extensive exploitation of their resources in the centuries to come.

Three hundred years later, the descendants of the Spanish conquistadors became independistas, seeking to control the land they settled without interference from Spain. After gaining autonomy from Spain in 1821, the newly formed Mexican government continued the caste system put in place by the Spanish in many ways, including exploitative and repressive policies toward Mexico's Indigenous populations. Elfeño's ancestors in particular felt the brunt of these policies as they found themselves entrenched as peasant laborers on land they sowed freely prior to the Spanish conquest. But all of the communities profiled in this book were affected by policies seeking to erase indigeneity. The new government successfully imposed mestizaje, a uniquely "Mexican" race, on its inhabitants largely by outlawing Indigenous languages and cultural practices. Resistance to these laws was forced underground, but many groups like the Mixtecs and Nahuatl speakers of Central Mexico continued to preserve their language. Language preservation continues to the present day in Oaxaca, Tlaxcala, and other places as a form of resistance to colonial extraction.

Early in Mexico's life as an independent nation, it faced a new conquistador in the form of the United States. Under the philosophy of Manifest Destiny, the United States launched military operations in 1846 that forced the Mexican government to cede nearly half of its former territory in early 1848. The military conquest soon segued into neocolonialism, with the United States gaining financial

control over various aspects of Mexico's economy. As the Chicano studies scholars Gilberto González and Raúl Fernández remind us, building such financial control was a distinctly American version of empire construction.<sup>37</sup> The first sectors of the Mexican economy captured by U.S. financial elites under this new colonialism in the 1870s were mining, cattle farming, and cotton production. This capture was made possible by the willing participation of one of the first Mexican partners in extraction, President Porfirio Díaz (1877–80, 1884–1911). During Díaz's reign, company towns owned by U.S. business interests like Cananea, El Boleo, and Nacozari "sprang from virtual wilderness" in the northern Mexican states of Sonora and Baja California.<sup>38</sup> Díaz paved the way not only for U.S. companies to mine, farm, and produce cotton but also to build a railroad that would transport these goods more readily to the U.S. market.

The early twentieth century also saw the Mexican and U.S. governments collude to bring "surplus" Mexican labor to U.S. agricultural areas to replace the now-outlawed slave labor and newly barred Asian immigrants. In Mexico, President Díaz was supportive of sending Mexican workers to the United States as part of his effort to maintain a good relationship with his northern neighbor at the expense of creating sustainable work in Mexico. These policies soon led to the Mexican Revolution, which lasted for ten years, overthrew the Díaz dictatorship, and brought about important land reforms for the benefit of peasant farmers, including Indigenous farmers. However, even after Díaz was overthrown in 1911, the post-revolutionary government continued to passively support emigration "as an escape valve for revolutionary unrest and political enemies."<sup>39</sup> During the 1910s and 1920s, the United States imported tens of thousands of Mexicans to perform grueling manual labor in U.S. fields, casting them as "perfect workers" and "docile birds of passage" uniquely suited to the role.<sup>40</sup> So powerful was this depiction that it overcame the strong eugenics movement to bar all migration except for that from northern Europe. However, Mexican migrants did not completely escape the eugenicists' exclusionary gaze. In addition to being cast as perfect workers, Mexican migrants were the basis for and targets of new laws criminalizing unlawful entry, setting the stage for the massive carceral system that would come to characterize U.S. immigration enforcement.<sup>41</sup> These new laws were passed in the context of the Great Depression in the United States and the first massive deportation of Mexican workers.<sup>42</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, U.S. empire building in Mexico continued to involve cooperation with the Mexican state, including the Mexican public finance agency, *Nacional Financiera* (National Development Bank). U.S. investment banks like the U.S. Import-Export Bank, Chase Manhattan, and Bank of America began loaning money to *Nacional Financiera* to finance massive irrigation projects and manufacturing plants at the Mexico-U.S. border at the expense of smaller farming and industrial communities. These projects benefited many large Mexican corporations, including *Ceuta Produce* and *Negocio Agrícola San Enrique*, which would

derive most of their wealth from trade with the United States. The irrigation projects also allowed large U.S. agribusinesses like Anderson Clayton to relocate their operations to northern Mexico, profiting from cotton produced on Mexican soil by the labor of Mexican workers.

The workers for these new ventures were migrants from other regions of Mexico. Mexican corporate interests actively recruit Indigenous workers from the southern part of the country, extracting their skills in agriculture, textile production, and so on, for great profit. These programs were met with resistance by groups that sought a more equitable distribution of resources. However, corporate bosses had much more sway in the Mexican government, resulting in little change.

On the U.S. side of the border, agribusinesses like Mastronardi Produce (various locations), Windset Farms (California), and Village Farms (Texas) continued their predecessors' long history of actively recruiting Mexican men and women to perform the dangerous and arduous work necessary to build wealth. U.S.-based agriculture successfully officialized their recruitment of Mexican labor through the Bracero Accords, a series of bilateral agreements between the governments of the United States and Mexico that created lawfully sanctioned pathways for large farms to induce and exploit Mexican workers. Like the early agricultural workers, braceros were simultaneously deemed necessary and demonized as illegal, naturally criminal, and, ironically, taking resources from the country they are coming to work in. Efforts to exert control over the large bracero workforce led to massive raids with racially demeaning monikers like Operation Wetback and continued targeting of Mexican migrants for criminal prosecution for unlawful entry. Eventually political pressure from both anti-immigrant forces and civil rights advocates concerned with widespread labor abuses caused the United States to pull out of the program in 1965.

For its part, the Mexican government was initially wary of entering into agreements given the abuses of Mexican workers during the 1920s program and the massive repatriation that followed. However, it eventually agreed to the program, marking the first proactive steps to promote emigration to the United States.<sup>43</sup> More than five million Mexican workers labored as braceros during the twenty-plus-year program. The Mexican government became so dependent on the safety valve of emigration that it sought to convince the United States to continue the program for ten years after it ended.<sup>44</sup> Its failure to do so resulted in a return to passively engaging migration in what became known as the "policy of having no policy."<sup>45</sup>

Faced with a large unemployed population returning to Mexico, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz created the Programa Nacional Fronterizo (National Border Program) in 1965 in an attempt to create jobs. The program opened Mexico's northern border to foreign companies seeking to produce goods for export in a cheap labor market. The assembly plants, or maquiladoras, did create jobs but mostly benefited U.S. companies in search of cheap, exploitable labor and

Mexican officials seeking a new channel for surplus labor. The first maquiladoras were largely garment companies, but this expanded quickly to include the auto and electronics industries. Companies such as Chrysler, Fisher Price, and General Electric still have maquiladora operations in northern Mexico.

In the 1980s—the era in which the narratives in this book begin—racial capitalist accumulation began to be expressed as neoliberalism. Embraced by the U.S. and Mexican governments alike, the basic tenet of neoliberalism was that economies would grow faster with less state regulation. The three “pillars” of neoliberal policies were cuts to public spending, privatization of state-owned industries, and market liberalization. Mexico became one of the first Latin American states to agree to neoliberal reforms, known as structural adjustment after its debt crisis in 1982 forced it into a set of agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.S. Treasury Department. The U.S.-educated elites governing Mexico—including Miguel de la Madrid and his minister of planning and budget turned president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari—embraced structural adjustment, which led to the widespread removal of social safety nets, drastic reductions in social spending, privatization of state-run price supports for agriculture, and active suppression of wages. It also led the Mexican government to enter into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, making Mexican producers the least protected workers in the world at the time.

While the rhetoric surrounding neoliberalism emphasized economic growth and efficiency, in truth neoliberal policies created vast inequalities. The number of new millionaires in Mexico soared in the years following neoliberal structural adjustment, as did the number of small farmers, assembly plant workers, and day laborers forced to abandon their land, families, and communities in search of sustainable work. This led to widespread movements against neoliberalism, particularly in places like Oaxaca where Indigenous organizers had helped launch labor strikes in the 1970s. However, these movements were only able to slow the march of neoliberal policies that would disinvest from agriculture, small business, and sustainable wages. Moreover, government officials justified the spending cuts by categorizing the work of “peasant”—largely Indigenous—farmers and other trades as inefficient and needing “modernization.” Modernization meant implementing structural adjustment policies of dispossession, wage suppression, and service reduction. But it also meant displacing workers into industries at the Mexico-U.S. border or in the U.S. interior made thirsty for cheap exploitable labor by the same desire for capitalist accumulation that drove neoliberalism.

In the United States, Mexican migrants had by now been made illegal by the termination of the Bracero Program and the addition of quotas to migration from the western hemisphere. This ratcheted up justifications for expenditures on what Nicolas de Genova and others call the “homeland security state,”<sup>46</sup> increasing surveillance, incarceration, and other abuses of Mexican migrants by U.S. immigration officials. But even as immigration enforcement became more and more

entrenched in the United States, so too did U.S. dependence on undocumented labor from Mexico and other parts of the world. Thus, more people were displaced into both the immigration carceral system (including surveillance, border apprehension, criminal prosecution, detention, and deportation) and the most exploitative segments of the labor market, enriching what Alfonso Gonzalez calls “the fractions of capital that depend on undocumented migrant labor and the policing of migrants and people of color.”<sup>47</sup> Border policing in particular gave rise to a third mode of extraction from migrants—this time by compatriots and others acting as guides for people seeking to cross ever more remote and dangerous terrain to avoid detection. The fees that migrants paid for these guides skyrocketed from lows of US\$50 to \$500 in the late 1980s to over \$10,000 in the mid-2010s. Even with these exorbitant fees, abuses by Border Patrol and other immigration agents continued.

The increased abuses of migrants both by border agents and by employers in the United States led to the formation of a number of transnational migrants’ rights organizations like FIOB and migrant community organizations like CAFAMI. It also included “hometown associations” made up of groups of migrants in the United States who sought to improve living conditions in their home communities and labor rights organizations in the United States. Mexican migrants also became more involved in Mexican politics, eventually forcing the Mexican state to pay closer attention to their issues. One of the outgrowths of this political power was the evolution of migrant-led projects to fund economic development in their home communities into the *Tres por Uno* program, in which the Mexican government matches the funds raised by a recognized migrant organization at a rate of three to one. Studies of *Tres por Uno* have pointed out that it and other efforts by the Mexican government have been a poor substitute for sustainable development as they suffer from underinvestment and continued adherence to neoliberal principles of individual responsibility.<sup>48</sup>

The failure of *Tres por Uno* mirrors the complex set of emotional and economic consequences in migrant communities. Because of heightened U.S. enforcement efforts and the cost of crossing the border, migrants and their family members are faced with long periods of separation, sometimes extending to decades. So profound is the separation that one daughter and sibling of migrants called it family disintegration. Economically, the impacts of migration are mixed. Once in the United States, an extremely high percentage of Mexican migrants send remittances to their families to help pay for basic necessities, schooling, and other costs. While some individuals are able to benefit, the underlying structural economic gaps caused by disinvestment cannot be reversed by remittance transfers. Even Elfego’s son, Jaime, who benefited from the education his father’s remittances afforded him, had to migrate himself to create the same opportunities for his own children.

Moreover, migrants seeking to send money to their families must contend with the remittance transfer industry which includes multinational banks and

corporations. These entities benefit from migrant remittances by charging fees to transfer money and by manipulating currency transfer rates. Governments also benefit from remittances which prop up a receiving country's GDP and foreign exchange reserves making it look more attractive to foreign investors. By 2006, remittances were tied with the likes of oil exports, as the leading sources of foreign exchange for the Mexican government.<sup>49</sup> By 2019, remittances had become *the* leading source of foreign exchange.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the only unconditional beneficiaries of remittance transfers by undocumented Mexican migrants are the very same private and government elites that produced the policies of dislocation.

#### A JUST RESPONSE TO MIGRATION AS EXTRACTION: MIGRATION AS CHOICE

These developments have led groups like FIOB and CAFAMI to push the Mexican government to move away from its centuries-long dependence on migration and instead invest in communities to allow migration to be a choice rather than a necessity. This book builds on the arguments of FIOB, CAFAMI, and individual migrants to redirect resources from exploitative projects like maquiladoras to sustainable localized economic development programs, to increase the participation of communities in economic and political decisions, and to help families reconnect after decades of separation. As the history described here shows, these communities are owed recompense from not just the Mexican government but also the U.S. government and the corporations they serve as these entities have benefited enormously from the dislocating policies of structural adjustment and the transfer of Mexican men and women into easily exploitable labor pools and carceral spaces. Making migration a choice would require replacing the current waves of resources channeled to exploitative industries and immigration enforcement with investments in sustainable economic programs. It would also require the creation of strategies to help repair the damage caused to families and communities by the migration-as-extraction cycle.

Migration as choice is a qualitatively different argument from that found in the literature either arguing for a right to migrate with fewer state controls or advocating financial investments that may lead to less migration. While I agree with both arguments—migration should be more unrestricted, and states need to reinvest in communities that they helped marginalize—as constructed, they fail to reckon with the long history and depth of extraction from migrant communities and therefore leave in place the extractive structures that propel successive cycles of migration. Right to migrate arguments assume that migration will be able to solve the economic gaps that push people to leave their homes. The narratives in this book show that while migrants are able to support their families better with earnings in the United States, they are not able to override the structural gaps in their communities. In fact, decontrolled migration “under existing

structures of statehood and global capitalism may fully unleash the brutal forces of [racial capitalist] accumulation,<sup>51</sup> including even more exploitative employment practices, wage suppression, and carceral structures. Alongside the potential to worsen the economic condition of migrants, right to migrate arguments ignore the very real emotional costs of migration that uproots people from their families and communities.

Policies aimed at addressing root causes of migration fail in different ways. These policies invest primarily in buttressing law enforcement efforts, exacerbating the extraction inflicted by these efforts and making marginal investments in human development programs. The focus on investing in security measures leaves intact and even magnifies the impacts of disinvestment that require people to leave their home communities. This book argues that investments must be directed at changing the structural relationship of migrant communities with those in power in both their home state (in this case, Mexico) and the destination state (in this case, the United States). In other words, rather than seek to prevent the migration their own policies fomented, Mexican and U.S. elites must replace investments in enforcement and security with those that support community development.

#### METHODOLOGY

The narratives that form the basis of understanding migration as extraction were obtained over the course of five years and were the result of a mixture of methods, including semistructured interviews; participant observation during group meetings, events, and outings; and focus groups that included study participants and nonparticipants. I originally set out to examine what was uprooting people from their communities of origin. I was particularly interested in what motivated people to migrate without authorization as debates about undocumented immigration raged around me in the early 2010s. From my position as a law professor running a legal clinic representing immigrants facing deportation, I was troubled by the narrow view of undocumented immigrant life in U.S. media and policy circles that began only after a person stepped foot in the United States. Analyses in these arenas seemed limited to the impact of undocumented immigrants on the U.S. economy and offered little insight into the relationship of the U.S. economy to these migrants. Increasingly, as I encountered more and more people whose reasons for departing their home communities sounded similar, I wondered what it would look like to examine immigration policies from the perspective of communities of origin. How similar were the conditions for people before (and after) they migrated to the United States? Legal rules required my students and I to focus on negative or harmful conditions in our clients' home communities *other than* economic harm.<sup>52</sup> But in getting to know clients, we all knew that the full story almost always included an economic component. I became interested in how to tell these stories outside the confines of legal argumentation. In my work with

various immigrants' rights groups in the United States, I met numerous individuals and families that did not qualify for any immigration status largely because they failed to fit into one of several strict categories. Through their stories, I was beginning to understand the connections between U.S. policies and migration. This made me curious to see how visible these connections were in communities of origin. I also wondered how a different perspective might change the way my students—most of whom sought careers as immigration attorneys—and fellow immigrants' rights advocates thought about immigration issues.

Once I began to talk with people, I found that I had to broaden my research frame to include a more holistic picture of what migration is from the perspective of communities of origin. This included understanding what the journeys north looked like, how migrants fared in the United States, and what brought them back to their communities of origin. It required consideration of the stories of family members of migrants, including the emotional and economic impact of migration on them. It also included taking into account the efforts that returned migrants and others in migrant communities were making—either through community organizations or individually—to improve local conditions such that future generations would not need to migrate. The community organizations themselves became an additional topic of research as I learned more about their histories and vision for a more just future. And within all of these considerations, I had to carefully examine the impact that identification with indigeneity had on community conditions and community responses.

#### *Access through Academic and Community Interlocutors*

I chose communities in Mexico because I had previous experience living there during which time I had built networks of professionals who helped connect me with the various communities I visited. Fluency in Spanish allowed me to conduct all of my interviews without an interpreter, including those in Mixtec and Nahuatl-speaking communities. Though I did not rely on formal language interpretation, I was well aware that language fluency does not equate to understanding the syntax or context of the words being spoken. As a second-generation Indian American who is also fluent in my mother tongue, I have found that I needed my parents to “interpret” for me in many instances when spoken words hold hidden nuances of meanings that must be deciphered. And my work with clients from across Latin America has taught me that the same phrases or even words have very different meanings depending on where a person is from. I therefore sought out local interlocutors to help facilitate introductions to people to interview as well as to help me gain a deeper understanding of what my potential interviewees were saying beyond formal interpretation.

The first interlocutors were graduate students working under the direction of Jorge Durand with the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) at the University of Guadalajara (UDG). I was a Fulbright Scholar with UDG for the full academic

year, allowing me to participate in MMP's well-regarded community survey in Soyataco and Chiltepec, Tabasco. Once in Tabasco, the ability to shadow graduate students as they engaged in the MMP's standard semistructured interviews allowed me to observe the kinds of questions asked, the phrasing, and the extent to which people were interested in answering questions. I then used these insights to edit the questions I had previously planned for migrants and family members. This served me well as I followed up with people the MMP researchers had identified as migrants and interviewed new people in Tabasco.

Once the research in Tabasco was completed, I looked for similar connections in other communities, this time with community organizations that could facilitate introductions and help interpret responses. In addition to an institutional connection, I looked for communities with differing levels of economic marginalization (poverty but also factors such as the presence of running water, fabricated flooring, and educational institutions), differing primary economic activity (primarily agricultural, industrial, or other), different rates of migration to the United States, differing levels of participation in formal community organizations, differing levels of investment of migrant remittances in community-based projects, and demographic differences such as the rate of women who migrate and whether community members identified as Indigenous. The reason that I sought out communities that varied along so many axes was to see whether, even with these levels of differentiation, patterns would emerge as to the reasons people migrated, the places where they ended up working in the United States, and the extent to which migration improved community-wide well-being. I was fortunate to be connected to CAFAMI in Tlaxcala and FIOB in Oaxaca, communities that had the kinds of differences with Tabasco that I sought. It became particularly significant that the communities I connected with through CAFAMI and FIOB identified strongly with two very distinct Indigenous groups, Tlaxcaltec and Mixtec. Their responses and history triggered important follow-up questions for all of the interviewees.

In Tlaxcala, Itzel Polo and Norma Mendieta gave generously of their time. Norma is responsible for introducing me to nearly every person I interviewed in Tetlanohcan and Sanctorum, Tlaxcala, as well as the interviews I conducted in Puebla when I returned to Mexico in 2017. She was present for some of the interviews and helped facilitate mutual understanding between the study participants and me. She also invited me to various CAFAMI meetings and outings where I was able to connect on a more personal level with many of the interviewees. At some of these events, I would conduct trainings on U.S. immigration law as a way of contributing to the community that was giving so generously of their time.

In Oaxaca, I was fortunate to connect with Bernardo Ramirez Bautista, the Oaxaca coordinator of FIOB. Bernardo spent hours explaining FIOB's organizing strategy and introduced me to other FIOB organizers, Cipriano and Rosa Mendez. Together, these three organizers facilitated introductions to potential interviewees and helped me interpret nuance. They also invited me to FIOB meetings,

*encuentros* involving other academics and organizers, religious celebrations, and even a wedding. This allowed me to interact multiple times and in a variety of ways with potential study participants. It also allowed me to put what people were saying in context. FIOB members are particularly well versed in U.S. immigration law. Thus, I was less able to contribute to the community's knowledge base but contributed financially where it seemed appropriate and to help support the celebrations.

### *Participant Details*

Through these various interlocutors, I connected with study participants using the purposive sampling method to interview people who had (1) a past migratory experience to the United States, (2) a family member who was currently or had in the past year been in the United States without authorization, or (3) experience as an organizer in the community. Within the first two categories, I sought a heterogeneous sample to ensure maximum variation along key characteristics of each group: age, gender, marital status, presence of children, ethnicity/language group,<sup>53</sup> hailing from a low/medium/high migrant-sending state, date of first migratory trip, and relative with migratory experience. In the states with formal community organizations, I also sought to interview and observe the staff of these organizations and people they identified as community leaders. And in all states, I sought to interview local political leaders. Drawing from such a varied group of migrants, family members, and community leaders allowed for comparison of responses from multiple angles and for common themes from these responses to emerge.

I conducted the research in two phases. The first phase lasted from August 2012 to May 2013. Over these months, I engaged in in-depth interviews, sat in on meetings, and accompanied individuals and groups of migrants, family members of migrants, and community organizers in six migrant communities. During this first phase, I interviewed a total of 70 people: 28 in Soyataco and Chiltepec, Tabasco; 25 in Tetlanohcan and Sanctorum, Tlaxcala; and 17 in the municipalities of the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. Of the 70 people interviewed, 43 were returned or current migrants, 20 were family members, and 7 were volunteers or staff at community-based organizations in Tlaxcala and Oaxaca. There were no community-based organizations in the two municipalities I visited in Tabasco. Of the 43 migrants, 13 were women and 30 were men. All 20 of the family members interviewed were women. Three of the seven organizational staff members were women, and four were men. All of those interviewed in Oaxaca and the municipality of San Francisco de Tetlanohcan, Tlaxcala, including all of the organizational staff, identified as Indigenous (33). In Oaxaca, the interviewees identified as Mixtec or Triqui, and in Tetlanohcan, they identified as Nahuatl. The 37 interviewees in Tabasco and the municipality of Sanctorum, Tlaxcala, identified as mestizo or ladino, as the Spanish-origin or mixed-race peoples are called in southern Mexico.

The second phase of my research was conducted in 2017. During this phase, I followed up with a subset of interviewees in all of the communities visited during

2012–13 and visited two new communities of Mexican migrants in Ozolco and San Pedro Cholula, Puebla. In this second phase, I conducted 21 new interviews; all interviewees had some experience migrating to the United States, and 3 had become involved as community leaders. Among these interviews, 4 were women and 17 were men.<sup>54</sup> All of the new interviewees in this second phase identified as Nahuatl. By the end of this second phase of the project, I had spoken with 91 people, 64 of whom were returned migrants, 20 of whom were family members of migrants, and 10 of whom were involved as staff or volunteer organizers with a community-based organization. (Three of the ten organizational workers were also returned migrants.) Demographically, the study had 54 participants who identified as belonging to an Indigenous group, 40 women, and 51 men.

In order to gain the most holistic insights from all of these groups, I used a mixture of interviews, participant observation, and focus groups to better understand what migration meant to people. Drawing on decades of experience interviewing clients and training students to do so, I began each conversation by building rapport. Building on clinical legal pedagogy's use of client centeredness and critical interviewing,<sup>55</sup> I then moved to broad, open-ended questions to continue to build trust and to allow interviewees to control the information they shared. To ensure some level of consistency in the information that I was getting from each group of interviews, I had checklists of the kinds of information I wanted from each person.

For migrants, the checklist consisted of information concerning the following:

- When they left and why.
- Whether they migrated with authorization or not. For those who migrated without authorization, whether they sought an authorized path.
- Whether they were recruited by an employer in the United States.
- How many trips they made to the United States and if the reasons for each subsequent trip evolved over time.
- How their journey was: What did they pay to cross? Where did they cross? Did they encounter Mexican or U.S. border officials?
- Experiences in the United States: How quickly did they find work? Did they encounter U.S. law enforcement?
- For those who returned, why they did so.
- For those involved in organizations: What brought them there? What activities were they a part of, and what did they think of the organization's efforts?
- For those still in United States, what kept them there.

For family members, the checklist was as follows:

- When their loved one(s) left and why.
- Their experience of their loved one being gone.
- How much the migrant contributed to the household financially and whether this was sufficient to cover their expenses.

- Whether they themselves considered migrating.
- For those involved in organizations: What brought them there? What activities were they part of? What did they think of these efforts?

For the organizers, I asked the following:

- How they organized.
- Why they did so.
- What programs they were part of.
- What the overall vision of the group was.
- What challenges they faced as a group.
- How the group developed over time.

In addition to the insights gained from talking with people individually, I was able to observe the answers to many of these questions as migrants, family members, and organizers participated in community meetings or focus groups. I held a number of follow-up meetings with people after these larger gatherings to ensure that I was correctly interpreting their comments.

In interpreting the responses to my questions and my observations, I looked for points of convergence and divergence in the stories. I was struck by the level of similarity in the various reasons for migrating; experiences in the United States, including with law enforcement; experiences of family members; and visions of the community organizations despite the deep differences in community makeup, location, and main economic activity. It is these similarities that I focus on in this book while still paying attention to the nuances of place, ethnic origin, and individual experience.

#### LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, a language in which I am fluent but not bilingual and the first or second language of all the interviewees. To convey the ways that the interviewees communicated and to give full respect to their analyses, some of the language in their stories has been left in the original Spanish. For example, terms are left in Spanish to reflect the ways in which people talk about migration both within a particular region and across states. Things like the way a person migrated, the name for the person they paid to be a guide, or the manner in which they found work in the United States are all left in Spanish to illustrate how similar concepts are talked about using different terminology in different places. In addition, the original Spanish is used to convey certain colloquialisms unique to a place outside the context of migration. Therefore, the way a farmer talks about working the land or the way a day laborer talks about basic necessities is left in Spanish. The original Spanish term is also used when there is not a direct translation into English or the term requires some explanation.

In addition to choice of language, I use honorifics like “Don” and “Doña” where they are used by migrant community members in referring to themselves or

others. In some communities, like the Mixtec community in Oaxaca, these honorifics are used to signify a certain status in the community, regardless of age. Most Mixtec returned migrants have a relatively high status within their communities, so “Don” or “Doña” is used more frequently for these interviewees. In contrast, in the Tlaxcaltec and Nahuatl-speaking communities in Puebla and the largely non-Indigenous-identified communities in Tabasco, honorifics were used only to refer to those considered elders, so they are used much less frequently when referring to people from these areas. In order to avoid confusion regarding how people are named across chapters, an indication of the person’s age is included in their narratives, as well as a short explanation of the use of Don/Doña in that person’s region the first time it is described in the chapters. Though it might allow for less confusion to use Don and Doña in a more consistent manner, it would be a misrepresentation of the way in which these diverse communities are organized and therefore would provide a less than accurate picture of each place.

At the request of several of the interviewees, pseudonyms are used throughout this book. While the names have been changed, the honorifics match what the person is called, and all other details, including age, gender, indigeneity, dates of migration, and other details, remain intact. There are no composite narratives in this book.

In my analysis of the narratives, I use the term “migrant” to refer to people who moved across international borders and the term “unauthorized” to describe those who migrated without sanction of the destination states. I use “migrant” rather than “immigrant” as it is a more direct translation of the term *migrante* used by most of the people I interviewed to describe themselves or family members. “Migrant” also better captures the transnational nature of the narratives, including experiences moving back and forth across borders and family members who may never physically move but experience migration nonetheless. The term “unauthorized” is a descriptor of journeys that emphasizes the formal rules categorizing them.

Finally, another set of actors important to this book are policy makers, bureaucrats, and owners of private enterprises that set formal rules governing not just migration but also the distribution of resources. These actors are described with specificity and detail but are also collectively referred to as “elites” to reflect their relationship to migrant communities.

## CHAPTER PREVIEW

This book is arranged in four chapters, with the first three chronicling one of the three different modes of migration as extraction and the fourth outlining migrant community resistance to migration as extraction. Chapter 1 highlights the highly localized ways in which migrant communities experienced the resource extraction policies of the United States and Mexican governments as dislocation from their homes and families and contextualizes this dislocation in the larger story

of U.S.-Mexico relations. Chapter 2 moves to discuss how dislocated people from Mexico are then displaced into or relocated to highly exploitative labor markets in northern Mexico and the United States, to carceral spaces justified by the very movements that displace them into the United States, and by coyotes who profit from fees paid by migrants to circumvent ever increasing border controls. Chapter 3 demonstrates how extraction is entrenched at the municipal, family, and individual levels in migrant communities. Through stories of migrant families and entities that profit from migration, chapter 3 reveals how migrants' attempts to reverse the flow of resources to migrant communities is undermined by wealth extraction by U.S. and Mexican business and introduces the emotional layer of migration as extraction in the form of family disintegration. Chapter 4 outlines the resistance to migration as extraction, particularly in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca and the Nahuatl areas of Tlaxcala and Puebla. The resistance comes in many forms, from shifts in gender norms to movements for returning state resources to creating local sustainable sources of employment and earnings. The stories in chapter 4 chronicle the promise of collective action to address deep gaps in infrastructure and the limits to successfully addressing these gaps.

The conclusion connects the various aspects of migration as extraction exemplified in chapters 1 through 3 and builds on the arguments and strategies of migrant community organizations profiled in chapter 4 to argue that a reversal of the extractive nature of migration requires the United States and Mexico to divest from extractive policies such as immigration enforcement expenditures and employer-controlled immigration processes and invest in infrastructures of health, education, and work and employee-centered migration options. The conclusion situates the analytic and material shifts that need to occur in abolitionist and reparations frameworks, relating the demands and actions of migrant communities to these larger frames. As such, the conclusion seeks to concretize demands by Indigenous migrant groups like FIOB and CAFAMI and by non-Indigenous-identified migrants to make migration a choice.