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## Staying Safe in Colombia and Mexico: Skilled Navigation and Everyday Insecurity

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### Introduction

Insecurity and violence mark the lived experience of individuals in parts of Colombia and Mexico. The contexts of narco-violence in Mexico and civil conflict in Colombia have created environments where people often feel fear in their local communities, and confidence in law enforcement and justice measures are low. It is important to avoid generalizations—insecurity is not distributed equally geographically in these two countries, and not everyone has negative perceptions of institutions—rather we are interested here in how the ability of individuals to develop capacity as skilled navigators in insecure environments is evident in trends and themes in large-scale survey data as much as ethnographic research.

In this chapter, we explain our theoretical concept of the ‘skilled navigator’ (drawing from Vigh 2009) and explore this idea within analysis of publicly available large-scale surveys as well as insights from our respective fieldwork in Colombia and Mexico, to draw attention to broader attitudes about insecurity and violence as they connect to everyday experiences of fear and risk mitigation. By doing this we demonstrate that the trends evident in the respective national surveys, as much as the ethnographic data, demonstrate the skill with which individuals in these environments navigate their everyday lives. Further to

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this, the surveys' results reveal that the perception of violence and the perception of fear impact how individuals navigate their social terrains.

This chapter first contextualizes the two countries, before explaining our methodology and data. The analysis proceeds in two parts: an exploration of public perception of the functioning and trustworthiness of institutions, or lack thereof; and then how individuals and communities develop everyday practices of navigation and security in response. We argue that the perceived corruption, state incompetence or threat from gangs can sustain a chronic condition of fear, even as the statistical evidence in some cases points to falling instances of violence and assault. Within this context, staying safe becomes a process of skillfully reading and evaluating external information, and navigation using acquired skill, and this capacity is evident in data collected by national governments and other measures.

## Insecurity and Violence in Mexico and Colombia

Violence features in the histories of both Colombia and Mexico. In Colombia, half a century of conflict has had devastating consequences on the lives of individuals and communities and created an environment where illegal activities—in particular drug cultivation and production—have flourished. Although Mexico has not experienced the civil conflict that Colombia has, its experiences of narco-violence have also had violent, significant consequences on some communities and individuals. In both countries, corruption and impunity have contributed to decreased trust in institutions and security providers (both local police and federal armed forces).

In Mexico, following the election of Calderon in 2006, tens of thousands of military troops were deployed to key states experiencing narco-trafficking. Although the official statistics have attributed 50,000 deaths to the conflict, general estimates suggest the number is closer to 80,000 (Basu and Pearlman 2016; Beittel 2015), resulting in the stagnation of the life expectancy in the country after six decades of sustained improvement (Aburto et al. 2016). This violence and insecurity caused by both drug cartels and state forces has significantly impacted Mexican society, with civilians and journalists increasingly becoming targets (Beittel 2011; Human Rights Watch 2015; Rosen and Martínez 2015). Despite a steady decrease in the homicide rate since President Peña Nieto took office in 2012, the impact has not decreased at a similar pace as the homicide rate; this is because the insecurity that targets the civilian population, such as disappearances and extortion, did not decrease (Magaloni and Razu 2016). The continuing violence has highlighted the incapacity of the state

to protect its citizens, which in turn led to an attempt by the citizenry as skilled navigators to 'do it ourselves' in the form of the rise of self-defense groups (*auto-defensas*). However, while the reason behind this development is a logical consequence of the current Mexican situation, the longer-term effect is a vicious cycle. By taking matters into its own hands, society creates more violent actors, more distrust, more disintegration and an increasing sense of being 'orphaned by the state'.

The conflict in Colombia has retarded development and resulted in poverty and widespread violations of human rights (see, e.g., Pecaut 2006; Richani 2002; Tate 2007). Over six million people have been internally displaced in Colombia (Edwards 2016), many living below the poverty line in insecure or illegal housing. In parts of the country, the government has had limited or no control over its territory. Human rights defenders, journalists and others risk death in the course of their work; in 2016, according to non-governmental organization (NGO) Indepaz, at least 117 human rights defenders were killed (Gonzalez Perafán 2016). A peace process, that had been underway since 2012, resulted in the signing of a peace agreement by the government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) in November 2016. While an important step toward peace in the country, it will not immediately resolve the issues of violence and insecurity for civilians, nor immediately build trust in institutions.

While the historical and contemporary experiences differ in Mexico and Colombia, in both countries individuals and communities have been affected by widespread insecurity, ubiquitous violence and collapsing trust in institutions. It is important to note that in both countries organizations and individuals have worked tirelessly, often at great risk to their lives, to respond to the violence: from journalists and human rights defenders to individuals within local communities. In some cases, this has been successful in effecting broader change, in others the response may be localized and limited. While providing this background of historical and contemporary challenges in Mexico and Colombia, we note that narratives and experiences of insecurity and risk are more complicated than such a brief overview can capture.

## Methodology and Data

As researchers whose engagements in Colombia and Mexico have been ethnographic and qualitative in approach, we are interested in how broader trends and attitudes relate to what we have seen in localized communities.

Accordingly, this chapter draws on publicly available surveys to explore attitudes and trends with respect to security and violence in each country, specifically annual national surveys from Colombia and Mexico. In Colombia, the *Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística* (National Administrative Department of Statistics [DANE]) annual *Encuesta de Convivencia y Seguridad Ciudadana* (Survey of Coexistence and Citizen Security [ECSC])<sup>1</sup> has been run since 2012. This survey covers 28 cities nationally (from the capital Bogota to smaller regional cities), and surveys all occupants of a house who are over 15 (DANE 2015a). The ECSC was established to improve the information available for the *Política Nacional de Seguridad y Convivencia Ciudadana* (National Policy of Citizen Security and Coexistence) that is outlined in the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan) 2010–2014.

In Mexico, the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI]) has conducted the *Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública* (National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security [ENVIPE]) annually since 2011. This survey is recognized as information ‘for the national interest’ and is intended to inform public policy and responses to insecurity and violence (INEGI 2015). The ENVIPE’s methodology aims to represent the population in relation to percentages of rural and urban respondents and across all departments of the country and surveys all household members over the age of 18.

While we recognize that these two surveys are not structured identically, and differ in methodology and survey instruments, it is clear that the questions being asked, the aims, and the thematic outcomes are similar and can be compared with the intention of gaining an impression of broader attitudes in both countries. Here we primarily use the ENVIPE and ECSC from 2015—both of which report experiences from the previous year (2014)—as the ECSC 2016 was not yet available at time of writing.

To augment these two national surveys, we also draw upon survey reports and resulting thematic reports from *Latinobarómetro* (Latinbarometer). This survey is an annual survey conducted with approximately 20,000 interviews across 18 Latin American countries, representing more than 600 million inhabitants. It is run by an NGO in Chile, and its database is publicly available, as well as summary documents and reports on trends and themes. Mexico was one of the initial eight countries in the first survey in 1995, and Colombia has been included since 1996 (Lagos 2005: 7). The inclusion of these data in our discussion helps situate the national level results within broader attitudes and experiences across the continent.

Finally, in drawing together themes from these surveys focused on insecurity and public safety, we also draw on our fieldwork experiences in Mexico and Colombia to provide vignettes or brief examples of how the themes of the data are evident in our everyday encounters with individuals affected by violence and insecurity in both countries. In Mexico, Charlotte ten Have spent three months working in the city of San Luis Potosí in Mexico in 2013 (see ten Have 2013), a city that is located halfway between the US border and Mexico City, which has made it an attractive location for business investment but also criminal enterprise. While the region previously was relatively stable, drug-related violence increased by 49 percent during the time of the research compared to the same period the previous year (Overseas Security Advisory Council [OSAC] 2013). During daytime, the city appeared relatively normal, with evidence of violence only through enormous increases in local and federal forces and missing persons' reports. However, the violence of the drug trafficking organizations, including assassinations, kidnappings and threats, caused occupants to feel an insecurity that was constant even though it fluctuated in intensity. In Colombia, Helen Berents spent September to December 2010 working in los Altos de Cazucá, an informal community that makes up part of Soacha, a city on the southern border of Colombia's capital Bogotá (see Berents 2015a, b). Cazucá, as it is known, is one of the largest recipient communities for internally displaced people in the country. Occupants live in conditions of poverty, and much of the terrain of the community is controlled by armed gangs associated with the broader conflict. Violence between gangs and the state forces is a constant source of fear for occupants, and the perception of those beyond the community is one of violence and delinquency. Such a framing does not recognize the reality of daily life for most occupants, in which individuals negotiate poverty and the absence of state care, and take pride and strength in their community (see Berents 2015a). In both locations research was conducted in Spanish, which both authors speak fluently. Previously we have drawn together thematic findings from our research (see Berents and ten Have 2017), and here we have briefly described our work to provide context to the use of ethnographic and interview material in our subsequent discussions.

## Theorizing the Skilled Navigator

Insecurity and fear become deeply ingrained and a matter of everyday experience for those living in situations of complex violence and risk. We have argued elsewhere that those who live in situations of insecurity and violence

(perceived or actual) develop skills and draw on their experiences to become 'skilled navigators' of the social and physical terrains of their everyday life in order to avoid, mitigate or minimize their risk of violence (Berents and ten Have 2017). These practices, while allowing individuals to move through unpredictable settings, do not necessarily lessen the fear of potential violence. Rather, fear becomes part of daily life that informs and guides the skilled navigator through their lives. Drawing on Green (1994) and Taussig (1992), we argue that fear can become a 'chronic condition' (Green 1994: 227) in which people live within 'illusions of order, congealed by fear' (Taussig 1992: 2). This idea of a skilled navigator draws on Vigh's notion of 'social navigation', which draws attention to 'moving in an environment that is wavering and unsettled' (2009: 420). Thus, we argue, that for Colombians and Mexicans, violence and fear are not acute, individualized episodes but can be understood as chronic—never normalized but an anticipated part of daily life (Berents and ten Have 2017: 6). We forward a notion of the skilled navigator as a way to understand daily practice and experience of those in the communities of Cazucá and San Luis Potosí but also a theoretical position that allows us to recognize the capacity and agentic potential of those in communities within those countries of the so-called global south. Accordingly, such a move is motivated by the theory building of authors such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (see among others 2002, 2007, 2014) and Arturo Escobar (see among others 1995, 2005, 2008), who challenge Eurocentric readings of places beyond the global north, and in varying ways seek practice-based understandings of action rooted in local communities. An idea of a skilled navigator returns expertise to the occupants and legitimizes both radical but also mundane actions within their everyday lives.

Koonings and Kruijt (1999) clearly describe how the short-term coping strategies noted above have long-term consequences in the form of 'societal products'. They state that the traumatic consequences of violent experiences, such as torture and intimidation, disappearances, executions and arbitrary arrests, and the minute detail of experiences of violent situations, contribute to the phenomenology of individual responses to collective violence. However, Koonings and Kruijt (1999) also argue that the subjective and initially individual responses become collective answers that take on, in the long run, the shape of societal characteristics. These characteristics contribute to 'a generalized climate of individual weakness, of permanent alertness without the possibility of escape, of collective powerlessness, of lack of control over daily life and the near future, and of a distorted perception of reality' (Koonings and Kruijt 1999: 19). Koonings and Kruijt (1999: 19) argue 'that in this situation facts and certainties become blurred, all news is threatening, and the bound-

aries between good and evil are veiled. Due to this felicity and hope are substituted by fantasies of suffering, feelings of vulnerability, worries and phobias, and self-blame'. Interestingly they argue that this self-blame is followed by self-censorship and the culture of silence, an avoidance of discussion and secrecy about trivialities. These phenomena all add to horror becoming a 'routine social phenomenon' (Koonings and Kruijt 1999). Scheper-Hughes describes this as a form of 'everyday violence (see 1993), where detailed attention is paid to the "little violences" that are constituted by "structures, habituses, and *mentalités* of everyday life"' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 19), while both Taussig in work on Colombia in the 1980s and Green in work on Guatemala call this state of existence, respectively, 'terror as usual' (Taussig 1989, see also 1992) and 'fear as a way of life' (Green 1994, 2004).

When individuals live in insecure terrains, their response to violence and risk is complex: they can respond as individuals, but through these individual responses build societal understandings, which are used to examine risk and navigate to the best of individual's abilities through unpredictable spaces. In contexts where the state does not have a monopoly on the use of force and cannot safeguard their citizens (or has abnegated its responsibility to citizens), individuals must develop skills to navigate a violence that is never normalized, but made every day.

## Perceptions of Institutional Trustworthiness and Effectiveness

The need for individuals to develop navigation skills for their everyday lives, in part comes as a result of the lack of confidence in, and support from, government and security institutions. The surveys discussed in this paper and other research highlights the perception of corruption and government ineffectiveness in both Colombia and Mexico. The ENVIPE and ECSC surveys provide some insight into why and how these attitudes are evident. The incidence of violence does not necessarily correlate to perceptions of insecurity; fear plays a key role in evolving attitudes. In this section, we explore the broad trends in relation to people's perception of the authorities' competence and trustworthiness to argue that these sentiments contribute to the structure that shapes individuals' navigation strategies in insecure contexts.

A Latinobarómetro report in 2012 notes that across Latin America, communities are perceived by individuals as more secure than their countries in general; a phenomenon that the authors argue exists because of lack of

knowledge: the more violent the country is perceived to be, the less confidence people have in the state being able to solve the issue (Lagos and Dammert 2012: 59). It is important to note that these trends exist across countries in Latin America, not just in Colombia and Mexico. A lack of confidence in police, the perception that the state has abandoned its citizens, a lack of social cohesion and the increase in crimes are explanations provided for higher levels of fear by respondents, along with other reasons.<sup>2</sup> However, cumulative evidence shows that these perceptions may be independent of the actual statistics concerning these topics. Thus it is clear that ‘... fear appears as a summary indicator, a cultural product independent of the acts that combine institutional distrust (/lack of confidence in institutions) and personal insecurities’ (Lagos and Dammert 2012: 60). This is the chronic nature of fear that affects communities and must be recognized when considering how attitudes toward violence and insecurity manifest and how individuals and communities work to navigate these experiences.

With the decreasing proximity of violence, peoples’ desire to deal with the violence increases. Two conditions are of major importance in such processes: being able to rely on the justice system to apprehend and effectively deal with perpetrators of violence and having access to adequate information. Societal institutions like the justice system and news media exist in order to meet these needs. Feelings of being under threat and of fear become stronger and increase when, as in the case of Mexico and Colombia, these needs are not met. As shown by the Latinobarómetro survey, both the media and the justice system are compromised and corrupted by the prevailing conditions.

In Mexico the traffic police, municipal police and state police along with members of the judiciary—judges and public prosecutors/state attorneys—are trusted by less than half of respondents, while the federal police are trusted by 56.2 percent of respondents, and there are high levels of trust for the army (77.6 percent) and navy (81.6 percent) (INEGI 2015: 47). In Colombia, the ECSC asks respondents about their perception of the contribution that different institutions make to public safety, ranking them from ‘much’, ‘some’, ‘little’, to ‘nothing’. The national average for local government (*Alcaldia*) sees them as largely unhelpful with 33 percent saying they help a ‘little’ and 39.6 percent saying they do not help at all. The federal police are seen by a majority to help ‘some’ (40.5 percent) or a little (32.4 percent) (DANE 2015b: Sheet 30). The responses to the army differ dramatically from city to city, and the national averages are not particularly revealing. These trends seem to demonstrate that respondents have less faith in institutions that are more present in their everyday life. In Mexico, local police are seen as highly corrupt and highly untrustworthy, while the Navy is seen as very trustworthy and not

corrupt (INEGI 2015: 48). The respondents in Colombia saw their local government as failing to provide security, while national forces occupied a more ambiguous position (DANE 2015b: Sheet 30).

From our research in both countries, participants expressed strong concerns about seeking the help of authorities who not only failed to provide security but sometimes acted in ways that worsened the situation. The city of Soacha, across every category in the relevant ECSC survey question, had a lower estimation of the ability of all institutions to contribute to security.<sup>3</sup> This is expected, considering the daily insecurity of many of their lives with barrios such as los Altos de Cazucá being hotly contested territory by gangs and subject to violent intervention by state forces, as well as abnegation in terms of service provision by the local council (Berents 2015a; see also Duque 2009). Individuals explained that police often sought bribes before pursuing reports of violence or theft, or would enter the community in violent raids late at night. This lack of trust in institutions and perception of police corruption is not unique to this community but evident in other research in Colombia (McIlwaine and Moser 2007: 131; Picon et al. 2006: 14).

In Mexico, few crimes are reported to police as it is seen as pointless or even dangerous (Briceño-León and Zubillaga 2002; Magaloni and Razu 2016). The situation is illustrated by Julia,<sup>4</sup> one of the respondents in San Luis Potosí. Julia described that months earlier she had been stopped by gunmen when driving her car, put in the trunk of the car and driven to a rural area outside town, after which the kidnappers had attempted to extort money from her family, and then stole the car. Julia explained that she was convinced that reporting the crime to the police would not get her belongings back and additionally mentioned that she had heard of rumors of people that had gone to the police station to report crimes and then themselves had been accused of committing a crime and detained. Julia did not want to take such risks. The Center for Research and Teaching in Economics in 2012 revealed that authorities frequently exercised some degree of violence against suspects, most likely in seeking to extract a confession (Magaloni and Razu 2016: 60). The ENVIPE survey estimates that in 2014, 92.8 percent of crimes were either not reported or were reported, but a preliminary enquiry was not started (INEGI 2015: 25). This is referred to as the 'dark figure', and many crimes were overwhelmingly *not* reported due to 'causes attributable to the authorities' (63.1 percent). Such causes include 'fear of being extorted, waste of time, long and difficult paperwork, distrust of authority, or a hostile authority' (INEGI 2015: 28).

At the same time, media also fails in its task due to corruption, insecurity and extortion. A study by Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez (2017) shows that, on average, a Mexican journalist who has been directly threatened as a result

of his or her work is 130 percent more likely to report self-censorship than a journalist who had not experienced threats. However, direct experiences were not the only determinant. Journalists working in states with higher numbers of attacks against the press were more likely to report self-censorship as a risk mitigation tactic despite not being directly targeted themselves. Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez (2017) pointed out that for each 10 additional reported attacks, there is an increase of 9 percent in reported self-censorship by journalists. In other words, with 100 recorded attacks on the press, a journalist is on average 90 percent more likely to report using self-censorship to reduce risk than a journalist working in a state with no recorded attacks on the press. As a Mexican journalist explains: ‘Just as a welder I as a journalist also work with dangerous heavy machinery: a pen’. He continued:

As a welder you take safety precautions, you watch out for your own safety and do not weld close to your hand or on the edge of a building, as a journalist you do the same in Mexico. I could hang the red flag right in front of the bulls eyes or I can dance around him and only get close and take risk when I think that it is safe enough and worth it. (Javier, 10 March 2013)

Both journalism and the justice system are designed to provide reliable information in order to orientate and to prosecute, register and judge. The failure of these institutions to provide these essential elements results in an attempt by society ‘to do it ourselves’. The ENVIPE and ECSC survey responses reveal societies where there are foundational concerns with institutions of authority and with the justice system, where fear and threats limit the capacity of citizens and professionals such as journalists to hold accountable the abusers of power.

## Everyday Insecurity and Practices of Securing

When individuals do not feel they can turn to the police for support, or when their community is not being supported by the government—whether local or federal—then the community, and individuals within it seek alternative means to stay safe. As outlined in the previous section, residents of some communities do not trust those whose job it is to keep them safe. Accordingly, they develop strategies of navigation through insecure everyday contexts in an effort to stay safe and continue their daily lives. While we have observed these various actions in our fieldwork, they are evident in broad survey findings also. In this section, we seek to highlight how respondents to the ECSC and

ENVIPE note their skilled navigation strategies by identifying insecure locations and adapting behaviors in response.

In recent years, spectacular narco-killings in Mexico have undoubtedly caught more attention than the victims of perennial social struggles that often underlie them, even if these latter inequalities are the motivation for many of involvement in drug-related activities. And while the graphic imagery of victims of violence often dominates the media, the daily movements and activities of the skilled navigator are often more impacted by more prevalent, and what are sometimes considered less serious, crimes such as mugging and sexual harassment. However, these crimes cannot be seen as distinct from drug-related crime; Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) have in recent years become poly-criminal organizations engaging in a wide variety of criminal activities by branching into other profitable crimes, such as kidnapping, auto theft, sex work, extortion, money laundering and human smuggling (Beittel 2011: 12). Similarly, in Colombia, while the long-running conflict and its spectacular violence have made headlines, the daily experiences of those affected include more mundane forms of violence. Although connected to serious criminal activity and the broader conflict, extortion, assault, robbery and threats by local gang leaders shape the everyday lives of individuals in some communities.

Respondents to the national surveys in both countries indicated places where they feel most unsafe, and while the labeling of locations participants could indicate differed in each survey there are clear themes. In both cases at a national level, more than 63 percent of respondents noted that both 'in the street' (ENVIPE 67.6 percent, ECSC 74.3 percent) and 'on public transport' (ENVIPE 67.4 percent, ECSC 63.5 percent) were some of the most insecure places (INEGI 2015: 39; DANE 2015a: 22, b: Sheet 25).<sup>5</sup> The market or commercial sites were reported by just over half the respondents in both countries—54.2 percent in Colombia and 56 percent in Mexico—as sites of insecurity, with parks and recreation spaces were also seen as insecure by 47.9 percent of Colombian respondents and 49.6 percent of Mexicans (INEGI 2015: 39; DANE 2015a: 22, b: Sheet 25). In both surveys the responses do not tend to vary much over time (see for comparison INEGI 2012, 2014; DANE 2013, 2014: 23).

These findings indicate that the violence and insecurity is most felt by citizens in the very places where everyday life takes place. This is in one way self-evident: the places where people go in their daily lives are indicated as the places they feel least secure. However, it is important to note also that surveys such as these highlight the quotidian nature of insecurity in these countries.

Beyond the direct human suffering caused by drug or conflict related violence, such violence also undermines peoples' sense of security (Morris 2009;

Berents 2015a). Fear penetrates the whole of society both because of the real events and because the media make crime a daily headline. Through this process, the vicarious experience of fear and violence has more emotional impact than the rational calculation of the threats. As such, fear of being a victim of violence pervades all the inhabitants of a city. However, the impact is not equally distributed throughout the city. For example, the poor are disproportionately victimized by violence (Briceño-León and Zubillaga 2002).

The Mexican ENVIPE survey also asks participants what daily activities they ceased (the Colombian ECSC does not ask this question). In the 2015 survey, the top two activities were allowing children to go out (67.9 percent) and wearing jewelry (64.8 percent) (INEGI 2015: 43). Other activities that had been ceased by between a third and half of the population included taking a taxi (30.5 percent), visiting family or friends (32.2 percent), going for a walk (33.1 percent), carrying debit or credit cards (39.8 percent), carrying cash (49.9 percent) and not participating in nightlife (51 percent) (INEGI 2015: 43). These practices and choices are often informed by word of mouth and media reports. In Colombia, overall 89.9 percent of respondents indicated that ‘information seen in the media or heard on the street’ was a cause of their perception of insecurity (DANE 2015b: Sheet 24).<sup>6</sup> Research in particularly insecure communities in Mexico and Colombia confirms these findings but provides further context. In San Luis Potosí, Julia explained that instead of taxis she asked family to come pick her up because she felt safer that way although it affected the everyday life of her family as well as herself as she had to coordinate these trips and pickups. In los Altos de Cazucá, young people spoke about parents not allowing them to visit friends after school due to insecurity or particular individuals who were threats in the community.

Individuals respond to insecure environments by altering their behavior in a conscious response to information they receive through various means. The everyday locations and experiences are evident in the national surveys where these are identified as insecure and linked to the absence of, or low trust in, police and other protective services. These behaviors and practices are skilled navigation techniques used to stay safe in unpredictable environments.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have contextualized national survey data alongside ethnographic work conducted in Colombia and Mexico to argue that the process of staying safe for individuals in situations of insecurity and violence requires understanding local circumstances and making informed decisions

and calculated risks. Respondents to the national surveys demonstrate a lack of faith in law enforcement and in the justice system; findings that are evident in the broader Latinobarómetro survey across Latin America. Our experiences as researchers in specific locations in each country exposed us to the nuances of strategies of skilled navigation by residents, tactics in response to the chronic fear and violence. Here, we have demonstrated that these navigation practices, while manifested in local ways, are present in the general population; individuals identify everyday places as sites of insecurity in both the ECSC and ENVIPE; the surveys additionally demonstrate common and shared strategies undertaken by these skilled navigators, such as not wearing jewelry or changing transportation methods.

The Latinobarómetro survey has repeatedly noted that insecurity is a common experience across the continent. National surveys such as the ENVIPE and ECSC are designed, in part, to help federal governments respond to the ways that insecurity manifests in particular cities and environments. What is also evident is that individuals are not passive subjects when trust in institutions is low or everyday environments are insecure. While navigation strategies may be limited in effect, they are undertaken by those most affected by insecurity and violence and with awareness of broader structural issues, as strategies to stay safe in complex environments in their everyday lives. Evidence of these navigation practices is present in national data collection as much as our ethnographic engagements.

## Notes

1. *Convivencia* is broadly translated as ‘coexistence’ but has a deeper connotation that is not easily translatable. DANE uses a definition from the Política Nacional de Seguridad y Convivencia Ciudadana (National Policy on Security and Citizen Coexistence): ‘Convivencia: Understood as the promotion of attachment and adhesion of citizens to a culture of citizenship based on respect of the law, respect of others and basic standards of behaviour and social coexistence’ (DANE 2016: 2). In previous research conducted in Colombia, respondents emphasized *convivencia* as a sense of being part of a community, of ‘living together’ (Berents 2014: 365).
2. These wide range of factors identified in the Latinobarómetro survey are evident in various ways in the national surveys also. Although we have chosen to focus in this chapter on trust and effectiveness of institutions and the media, respondents to both the ENVIPE and ECSC surveys identified issues like unemployment, poverty, lack of clean water, as well as gang activity and drug trafficking as contributors to a lack of public safety (see INEGI 2015: 31; DANE 2015b: Sheet 22).

3. In Soacha, just under three quarters of respondents combined indicated that the police contributed ‘little’ (48.3 percent) or ‘nothing’ (24.1 percent) to public safety, while the army was seen to overwhelmingly contribute ‘little’ (36.1 percent) or, as almost half respondents in Soacha indicated, ‘nothing’ (48.7 percent). The local council was even more poorly placed, with 59.6 percent indicating they contributed ‘nothing’, while another 30.9 percent said ‘little’. Such responses are understandable in a context where the city’s occupants are largely poor, often forcibly displaced, and with many living in insecure houses.
4. A pseudonym. All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.
5. The Colombian ECSC notes these two are the top two places; in Mexico, ‘ATMs [automatic teller machines] placed in a public thoroughfare’ were chosen by 81.3 percent of respondents to the ENVIPE.
6. This response, to a question where individuals were able to select more than one response, was the second most selected (the most selected being ‘because of common crime, robberies, assaults’) (94.8 percent) and just above the third most chosen option: ‘because of low presence of the *fuerza publica* (military)’ (87.4 percent) (DANE 2015b: Sheet 24).

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